

The answer to climate change is also a cultural one

COLLECTIVE

25 major corporate executives, researchers and artists are calling for more creativity in order to fight climate challenges

All eyes are turned toward the Paris Conference on Climate Change this coming December. That decisive occasion should enable us to limit the impact of climate change and guide our societies through their transition to a carbon-lean green economy. In order to be successful, politics and technology will need to be mobilized en masse.

A number of technical solutions will need to be identified and applied, far and wide and as quickly as possible, to meet this planetary challenge.

However, there is one dimension that is all too often eclipsed, despite the fact that UNESCO has long been citing it as a crucial part of the debates around sustainable development. And that dimension is culture. If we reduce the solutions proposed at COP21 to a techno-centric approach, and if we fail to incorporate the cultural dimension, we run the risk of continuing to come up against the same obstacles with which we have been dealing for decades now.

A POWERFUL LEVER

Of course, the answers provided by science and technology still take precedence in this matter. That being said, we can do better. The technical and scientific aspects will require assistance in order to make them more beneficial to humankind and the planet.

The inclusion of culture should help to raise awareness and change consumption patterns.

While it is vital to invest, for example, in public transit, it is equally vital for that transport to be appealing to its users and for there to be alternative, clean, energy-saving solutions for situations where it is not suitable. The cultural component could facilitate this change. This presupposes the systematic development of intangible content, diverse styles, artistic work, and the sensory.

Culture can help to reorient the economies of tomorrow, give renewed meaning to production activities, and curb blind consumerism.

Although the cultural paradigm does need to be promoted, this is not for exclusively ecological reasons: it is also because it is a powerful lever for growth and development.

THE PURPLE ECONOMY

The examples are legion, from digital to tourism by way of luxury goods and housing, all illustrations of the economic richness of cultural factors (education, information and communication, and all goods with a strong imaginative, sensory component).

We want a city with architecture that of course saves or even produces energy and allows for waste and rainwater recycling, but that at the same time creates a non-standardized environment that is respectful of the surrounding landscape, a living environment on a human scale with great sensory depth.

The companies with the best economic results are now those that combine technology with culture, the virtual with the experiential, and technical perfection with aesthetics. This techno-cultural alliance is promising for the future, because it meets the expectations of consumers who are increasingly focused on quality and better living. This creates an opportunity, not only for the green economy (by incorporating the concept of the ecological footprint) but also for the purple economy, which banks on the cultural potential of goods and services or, to put it differently, markets of experiences and the culturalized economy.

The main goal that we need to target is an economy of quality in which cultural aspects have a full role to play. Governments can facilitate this transition by encouraging observational, steering and incentive tools. It is crucial that innovation no longer be perceived from merely a technological angle.

We are counting on the Paris Conference to foster a virtuous circle made possible by combining technology, ecology and culture.

Pierre Bellon, Chairman of the Board and Founder of Sodexo; **Véronique Cayla**, President of ARTE; **Bertrand Collomb**, Honorary Chairman of Lafarge; **Pascal Colombani**, Chairman of the Board of Valeo; **Mercedes Erra**, Executive President of Havas Worldwide; **Emmanuel Faber**, Chief Executive Officer of Danone; **Pierre Fonlupt**, Vice-chairman of MEDEF International; **Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld**, Spokesperson for the *Pacte civique*; **Pierre-Antoine Gailly**, President of the Paris Île-de-France CCI; **Jérôme Gouadain**, Secretary General and Founder of Diversum; **Philippe d'Iribarne**, Sociologist; **Pascal Lamy**, Chairman of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics; **Gilles Lipovetsky**, Philosopher; **Jean-Pierre Masseret**, President of the Lorraine Region; **Gérard Mestrallet**, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of ENGIE; **Radu Mihaileanu**, Film-maker; **Jean Musitelli**, Former French Ambassador to UNESCO; **Grégoire Postel-Vinay**, Economist; **Jean-Jack Queyranne**, President of the Rhône-Alpes Region; **Odile Quintin**, Former Director-General at the European Commission; **Bernard Ramanantsoa**, Dean of HEC Paris; **Jean-François Rial**, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Voyageurs du Monde; **Franck Riboud**, Chairman of Danone; **Michel de Rosen**, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Eutelsat; **Pierre Simon**, President of Paris-Île-de-France Capitale Économique.