

# WHAT IF THE PAST WAS ALWAYS AHEAD OF US? – THE CASE OF TRIBES –

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the resurgence of tribal forms of organization as a defining feature of a civilizational shift, arising in the context of ecological breakdown, social fragmentation, and technological disruption, particularly the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). Tribes are presented not as remnants of the past but as relational, adaptive, and value-based systems that mark the transition from static, individualist patterns to dynamic and relational forms of belonging.

The paper explores contemporary manifestations of tribes – digital, ecological, cultural, and activist – rooted in shared narrative, ritual, and memory. A central theme is the evolving relationship between tribes and AI, understood less as a neutral tool than as a mirror of collective structures and a systemic dilemma requiring cultural and ethical interpretation.

Through a complexity-informed analysis, the article introduces “attractors” as forces shaping tribal futures, including climate, identity, migration, art, and cultural memory. These attractors illuminate how tribal forms emerge, stabilize, and orient collective life under conditions of uncertainty. The article also outlines strategies for supporting integrated tribes, including reclaiming narrative sovereignty, fostering decentralized cooperation, practicing quantum thinking, and prototyping territorial laboratories.

It concludes that tribes may become key pillars of an emerging eco-civilization. As meaning-driven, self-organizing communities, they can function as “islands of coherence” – self-organizing spaces of order and regeneration within turbulence – where cultural diversity, spiritual insight, and technological imagination converge into new civilizational patterns.

# PART I – The Tribal Reawakening

## Introduction

Some may find this perspective too bleak – even pessimistic. But the signs are increasingly difficult to ignore. The term Great Unravelling (J. Macy) has been used by environmental thinkers, spiritual leaders, and systems theorists to describe the convergence of ecological collapse, climate disruption, social fragmentation, economic instability, mental health and meaning crises, geopolitical volatility, and rapid technological acceleration – particularly through Artificial Intelligence (AI). In this framing, the Great Unravelling is not simply a catastrophe. It is a wake-up call – a threshold moment that could lead to transformation, depending on how humanity chooses to respond. The idea of an emerging eco-civilization is no longer fringe; it is entering serious public discourse.

It is increasingly recognized that our current civilization is hurtling toward systemic breakdowns – ecological, economic, and social – driven by unsustainable paradigms of extraction, separation, and control (J. Lent). In this context, we believe tribes – in both their ancestral and emerging forms – could play a vital role in shaping new ways of being, acting, and organizing. Their contribution may lie in generating values, purpose, and collective behaviors that can help reorient human identity as common part of Gaia.

Regeneration, in this view, is not about restoring a lost past. It is part of a co-evolutionary process – a mutual transformation between human systems, ecosystems, technologies, and cultures. It aims to enhance the vitality, resilience, and integrity of whole living systems. It means aligning human activity with the deeper patterns of life itself (D.C. Wahl), where the spiritual dimension is not secondary but central (Ch. Eisenstein, Kosmos Journal).

Tribes may also be pivotal to the revival of the Commons – both physical and digital. As dominant paradigms collapse, and as modernity reaches its limits, new organizing logics are beginning to emerge. These are not simply institutional shifts, but deep transformations: decentralized, ecological, spiritual, and techno-integrated systems that challenge existing power structures and epistemologies. Tribes – as relational and value-based constellations – could be among the key carriers of these shifts. Perhaps more importantly, tribes may help us navigate ambiguity and uncertainty. In the face of the unknown – where the structures of modern civilization are either collapsing, being radically transformed, or becoming obsolete – tribes can provide anchors of meaning, continuity, and shared responsibility.

One specific dimension deserves attention. Historically, civilization was a geographic arrangement – between countryside and city. Today, in addition to the ongoing relevance of physical borders and global networks, we are witnessing the rise of spheres where humans create meaning and value that are largely decoupled from geography. These are not abstract zones – they are nomadic communities of shared intention, often blending physical presence with digital connection.

We may therefore be entering a historical phase in which a new synthesis becomes possible: integrating the temporality, harmony, and wisdom of Indigenous and ancestral cultures with the complexity, scale, and differentiation of civilizational societies. Tribes could act as constructive translocal networks in this new pattern – part of what has been called cosmo-localism (Bauwens). In these phygital domains (merging physical and digital), cultural diversity, technological capacity, and shared purpose can coexist and co-create.

In brief, tribes may be essential partners and an important form of organization to what M. Luyckx called the re-enchantment of the world – not by returning to the past, but by participating in a co-evolutionary emergence where humans realign with the living fabric of life, and rediscover meaning beyond domination.

## The Return of the Tribe

Few stories are as deeply rooted as the idea of human civilization advancing along a straight, clear path. From early schooling to higher education, we learn that civilization began with agriculture, which supposedly replaced a violent and primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle. However, findings from archaeology, ethnology, and anthropology challenge this simplified story. Evidence shows that many prehistoric societies actually flourished by cooperating, expressing themselves artistically, maintaining social equality, and living in harmony with nature.

This growing body of knowledge reveals that the so-called "primitive" was often more relational, egalitarian, and resilient than previously thought. The linear model of progress – from tribal to industrial to post-industrial – is no longer convincing. Civilizations do not evolve uniformly along a single trajectory. Their development is discontinuous, plural, and shaped by different modes of knowing and relating to the world.

Ruben Nelson offers an innovative view of how civilizations evolve. Instead of showing cultures on a simple path from "primitive" to "modern," he places them within a richer, multidimensional framework, challenging traditional rankings. Importantly, nomadic tribal cultures are not seen as inferior; instead, they are valued for their sophisticated relationships and unique ways of knowing. Nelson combines ideas about how we understand knowledge with how we perceive reality, connecting dimensions like static/dynamic and individual/relational perspectives. His model appreciates cultural diversity and suggests that development is flexible rather than fixed, allowing civilizations to move fluidly between different worldviews rather than follow a single path.

While the idea of AI as a "tribal actor" is provocative, it's important not to attribute human-like intentions or agency to AI. AI should be understood primarily as a powerful tool influencing tribal dynamics rather than as a participant with human relational qualities. Anthropomorphizing AI risks obscuring human responsibility and accountability. Ethically guided AI systems can map connections, identify commonalities, and facilitate dialogue, but human actors must remain clearly in control, ensuring AI reinforces rather than undermines our shared humanity.

This reframing is essential if we want to understand what is now unfolding. In today's world, we are not merely facing the collapse of institutions or systems. We are experiencing the breakdown of a dominant worldview – one that no longer allows us to make sense of ourselves, each other, or the planet.

At the same time, today's futurists notice that tribal patterns are reemerging in a fractured world, this time driven by digital technology, social division, and AI. So, tribes are one of the most resilient and adaptive structures of human organization. In times of uncertainty and transformation, tribal patterns reemerge, reconfigured, and energized. Tribal forms – both traditional and emerging – may play a foundational role in shaping the post-national, post-linear civilization now taking shape, disrupting the historical linear narrative. This shift is not ideological, but structural and experiential, rooted in the reconfiguration of belonging, identity, and cooperation. Tribes may become the connective tissue of the world to come.

AI is doing more than changing how we live; it is reshaping how we form communities and understand belonging. Could it become a new tribal force, redefining our identities, loyalties, and the foundations of society itself? These questions arise in a global context marked by ruptures and convergences, where the ecological crisis is no longer a distant threat but the very landscape we inhabit. As institutions falter and many seek proximity, meaning, and alignment, tribes re-emerge – not to divide, but to regenerate.

In parallel, a shift is unfolding in global security and governance. After decades of relative peace and multilateral order, we are witnessing the resurgence of war-driven logics, even within the European Union, Nobel Peace Prize laureate. This militarized drift may coincide with profound disruptions in the architecture of global institutions – UN, financial orders, and regional powers. In this chaotic realignment, B. Lietaer's notion of the "missing link" becomes newly relevant: money. The likely rise of alternative currencies and the expansion of the Commons point toward a reappropriation of sovereignty by communities. Tribal structures may be key in mediating these transitions.

While tribes have historically shown resilience, adaptability, and creativity, it is essential to recognize their vulnerabilities and limitations. Tribes, traditional or contemporary, can also become insular, resistant to change, and susceptible to internal power struggles or external manipulation. Historical examples demonstrate that tribal societies have experienced conflicts over leadership, exclusion based on gender, ethnicity, or beliefs, and difficulties adapting rapidly to new challenges. By acknowledging these risks, we gain a more balanced view, understanding that tribal structures, though valuable, require thoughtful approaches and continuous care to avoid destructive outcomes.

## Contemporary Expressions of Tribes

Modern tribes are not simply groups formed around shared interests. They are organized around values, technological tools, and innovative governance models. They are circles of trust, cultures of meaning, and vehicles for situated knowledge. Their boundaries are porous but powerful. They offer not universality, but depth. In a world saturated with networks, tribes bring narrative, ritual, and memory.

Collective identity plays a critical role in the formation and persistence of tribes. It is the glue of social cohesion and solidarity – essential forces in both the emergence and durability of tribes within and across civilizations. Today, we see new tribes forming around ideologies, aesthetics, trauma, neurotypes, and missions. Climate movements, crypto-communities, alt-right forums, indigenous renaissances, queer ecologies – these are not just interest groups. They are tribes, in the anthropological sense.

They provide belonging. They carry affective intensities. They use symbols, stories, and initiation rituals. They are not always benign – but they are real. The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be a period of smooth global integration. It will be turbulent, and tribes will be its basic units. One particularly visible contemporary tribe is the LGBTQI+ community. Beyond its rights-based origins, it now represents a cultural and relational form of identity, anchored in shared values, symbols, and safe spaces. Like other tribes, it shapes belonging through language, aesthetics, mutual care, and a deep sense of chosen kinship.

Several types of tribes are currently emerging:

- Digital Tribes: Global, interconnected communities (e.g. open-source collectives, decentralized forums)
- Ecological Tribes: Intentional communities rooted in permaculture, eco-villages, or local resilience systems.
- Artistic and Cultural Tribes: Networks of creators, often situated at the intersection of digital and physical spaces, reinventing the transmission of knowledge and identity narratives.
- Political and Alternative Tribes: Movements for participatory governance inspired by Indigenous, Eastern, or cooperative models.
- Underground or Criminal Tribes: Not all tribal patterns are regenerative or inclusive. Around the world, we observe the emergence of what could be called 'negative tribes' – such as violent gangs, far-right extremist cells, or the more radicalized segments of techno-libertarian movements. These groups also form around shared identity, opposition to the mainstream, and intense inner cohesion. Their energy and relational logic are real – but often destructive, exclusionary, or anti-systemic in ways that fragment rather than repair.

Emerging tribes are multi-generational and multi-cultural, weaving together diverse experiences, memories, and perspectives. This breadth of participation strengthens their ability to adapt and reimagine belonging across contexts.

Alongside these expressions, the meanings of diaspora and migration are shifting. No longer tied only to physical displacement or geopolitical borders, they increasingly describe symbolic and relational movements. Diaspora becomes less about loss and more about continuity, sustained through story, ritual, and digital connection. Migration, similarly, extends beyond geography to include shifts in worldview, allegiance, or community. In this sense, joining or leaving a tribe is itself a form of migration – an act of re-rooting identity through resonance rather than territory. This is not a regression but an emergence – a shift from centralized complexity to distributed intelligence. These new “territories of life” are where the tribal instinct is reactivated: grounded, cooperative, multisensory. They do not merely critique the city; they render it obsolete in its current form. The city may not disappear, but its role will drastically change – from core to node, from empire to ecosystem.

The tribe of tomorrow will not be urban. It will be post-urban: relational, bioregional, and regenerative. This spatial reorientation finds powerful conceptual grounding in the work of thinkers like J. Quilligan and J. Brewer, who argue that the future of governance and resilience lies not in centralized states or abstract markets, but in bioregions – ecological zones defined by watersheds, soil systems, and living cultures. Their territory is not just land, but relationship – with the soil, with each other, and with the future. Quilligan sees bioregionalism as a political architecture for the commons, whereas Brewer considers it a moral and ecological imperative for civilizational regeneration.

In this view, post-urban tribes are not scattered escapees from the system, but seed communities of bioregional coherence – aligning their lives with the rhythms and limits of the Earth. These tribes become stewards, not consumers, weavers, not extractors. This spatial reorientation finds intellectual roots in visionary praxis. Bioregional regeneration is not nostalgia – it’s a systemic practice re-linking human settlements to the scales of life.

The growth of decentralized governance – through sociocracy, DAOs (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations), and liquid democracy – marks a shift from traditional hierarchy towards collaboration and participation. These modern approaches echo older traditions such as the Haudenosaunee model’s deliberative democracy, African consensus-driven assemblies, and Aboriginal practices of long-term thinking and collective memory. Today’s emerging tribes often blend both digital tools and ancestral wisdom to build communities of shared purpose.

### Tribes as Relational Foundations

In times of systemic uncertainty and institutional fragmentation, tribes emerge not only as social responses – but as foundations. Not in the nostalgic sense of a return to fixed identities, but as adaptive, relational, value-driven spaces. Tribes hold, anchor, and orient. They allow individuals and groups to re-root, not through sameness, but through shared resonance.

Tribes are not structures of permanence; they are containers of coherence. They offer a space where emotions, narratives, and practices align into temporary yet powerful forms of belonging. This anchoring function is essential in a world where systems are losing symbolic traction. But

anchoring is not static: Tribes are also bridges: they help communities cross thresholds. Whether from alienation to participation, from fragmentation to interdependence, from ego to ecosystem, they are threshold navigators. Within this dynamic, two foundational dimensions rise to the surface: spiritual grounding and relational wisdom – both often carried by feminine-coded values. These are not peripheral dimensions: they are what make tribal cohesion possible.

Spirituality, in this context, is not about belief but about states of awareness that reconnect individuals to the whole. It's how personal transformation meets collective orientation. In this regard, meditation, silence, and ritual are practices of presence. Thinkers like L. Vaughan-Lee (spiritual ecology) and Ch. Eisenstein (interbeing) have articulated this need to shift from control to resonance. Tribes enact that shift in everyday, embodied ways.

At the same time, feminine values – care, intuition, receptivity, attention to the invisible – function as design principles for emerging tribal forms. Women, in many tribal settings, are not only keepers of memory but architects of future ethics. Their leadership is less vertical and more orchestrative. It invites decentralization, collective sensing, and fluid authority.

Thus, tribes are foundations not because they return to ancient norms, but because they hold what the dominant systems drop: the sacred, the embodied, the relational, the slow. They are becoming the cradles of post-institutional civilization where traditional large-scale, centralized institutions (states, global corporations, standardized bureaucracies) are instead organized through decentralized, peer-to-peer, commons-based, or tribal systems.

Not all tribes emerging today have positive intentions or outcomes. Socio-economic conditions such as economic instability, identity crises, or ecological anxiety can sometimes drive individuals towards extremist or exclusionary groups. Addressing these destructive tendencies requires providing healthier outlets for tribal instincts, such as inclusive economic opportunities, constructive community engagements, and purpose-driven ecological actions. Redirecting energy from destructive to constructive tribal forms should be an essential goal of contemporary social policy.

We are our relationships. Separation is a pure illusion, as everything is connected to and affects everything and everyone else – a world of Zero Distance (D. Zohar). From this perspective, tribes do not only mirror this truth; they enact it. They provide the social grounding where relationality becomes conscious. We do not passively inhabit a world – we shape which possibilities become real. Out of infinite potentialities, which ones materialize depends on us.

Contemporary tribal thinking must actively incorporate diverse intercultural perspectives. African Ubuntu philosophy offers valuable insights into social cohesion and relationality; Indigenous governance models provide working examples of democratic, consensus-driven decision-making; and Eastern traditions emphasize cyclical harmony and holistic interconnectedness. Drawing on the work of T. Yunkaporta, we see how indigenous metaphors and thinking models can reshape our understanding of community and resilience toward different modes.

## PART II – Artificial Intelligence and the Tribal Threshold

### The Rise of AI: A New Cognitive Terrain

We are entering a threshold moment where artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer an external tool, but a central force reshaping the human condition – how we know, relate, decide, and coordinate. This transformation must be understood in context: technological, energetic, and civilizational.

First, AI's rise is part of a broader reconfiguration of human systems. It emerges amid failing institutions, the collapse of dominant narratives, and planetary ecological breakdown. As such, it does not only accelerate existing trends – it amplifies contradictions. AI is both a symptom and a catalyst of a world in transition.

Second, AI is not unfolding in a vacuum of intention, or out of context. It is shaped by incentives, infrastructures, and epistemologies – often extractive, profit-driven, and disembodied. The myth of “neutral” or “inevitable” AI conceals the fact that design decisions are always political. What is being optimized? For whom? At what cost?

Third, there is a growing energetic tension. The systems that power AI – large-scale data centers, training clusters, and inference engines – are voracious consumers of electricity and this trend is strongly accelerating. Globally, AI may already match the annual energy use of entire nations (for instance, Morocco). In Ireland, projections show AI-driven infrastructure could soon consume 13–15% of total national electricity – a staggering figure that forces governments to rethink their energy strategies. It would be reckless to assume that renewable or complementary sources alone will suffice.

Finally, and most importantly: this is not a call for retreat, but for discernment. It is not a question of being anti-AI. We are against unreflective deployment, centralized control, and extractive architectures. Tribes, as relational and value-based communities, offer a lens through which we might reorient the development and use of AI. What if tribes helped us reclaim technological imagination, infuse it with ethical coherence, and embed it within planetary boundaries?

The following chapters examine AI as more than a tool. They consider it as mirror, actor, and dilemma – posing deep questions about meaning, memory, agency, and identity. The tribal threshold is not just a metaphor: it is a test. A test of whether our collective intelligence will fragment or cohere.

Many still imagine AI as a rigid machine, mechanically executing rules or replicating supervised models. Yet we have already entered a new era. AI systems are increasingly inventive, adaptive, and embedded into the infrastructure of everyday life. What we are witnessing is not merely a technological disruption, but a cognitive one.

AI and AI agents now marks a profound shift: humans no longer directly control flows of information and decision-making but begin to negotiate with adaptive, distributed, semi-autonomous systems. It's not about programming, but co-creating, composing, co-evolving. This reconfigures how we relate to knowledge, coordination, and power.

In this context, tribes offer more than cultural resistance or moral anchors – they become strategic filters for navigating a post-control environment. They help us ask new questions.

### Tribes and the Return of Meaning

AI challenges us not only to innovate, but to re-inhabit meaning. Tribes, as spaces of value alignment and symbolic resonance, offer a counterbalance to the abstraction and disembodiment of algorithmic logic. They remind us that intelligence without connection is not wisdom and experience – and that meaning is not mined but cultivated.

Rather than universalizing AI through one dominant rationality, tribes allow for pluriversal approaches: grounded, contextual, and value sensitive. In this way, they do not reject AI – they inflect it.

By weaving narrative, ritual, and relational practices into the use of technology, tribes can ensure that AI reflects the diversity of human ways of knowing. This opens space for more humane and situated applications, where algorithms are not ends in themselves, but tools embedded in living communities.

Unlike past communication technologies – writing, print, radio, or the internet – AI emerges in a context of unprecedented public debate. Its risks and promises are being discussed across generations and cultures at the very moment it takes shape. This opens a unique space for tribes to act as hosts of dialogue and meaning-making, ensuring that technology is shaped not only by markets and institutions, but by collective reflection and shared purpose.

### AI as a Mirror of Collective Structures

AI systems reflect not only technical inputs but also the cultural, organizational, and ethical contexts shaping their creation. They are never neutral; instead, they embody our implicit values, assumptions, and power dynamics. If the prevailing system rewards extraction, AI amplifies extraction; if speed and predictive certainty are prioritized over reflection and deep understanding, AI reinforces these very tendencies.

D. Haraway's work on situated knowledges reminds us that all systems of knowledge are partial, embodied, and shaped by perspective. Yet AI often operates as if its outputs were objective and universal – a form of "absolutism of data" that erases complexity and flattens the multiplicity of human and nonhuman experience. In doing so, it risks sidelining alternative ways of knowing – such as storytelling, intuition, and symbolic meaning – that remain vital in many tribal traditions.

However, if tribal systems consciously foreground reciprocity, meaning, and trust – embracing metaphor, narrative, and ambiguity – AI can evolve differently. By intentionally embedding relational and holistic values into AI's design and deployment, we can create technologies that reflect more inclusive, humane, and nuanced worldviews. The challenge, therefore, lies not in controlling AI but in carefully shaping the underlying values and narratives it reproduces.

## AI as Tribal Actor

AI is not just a tool or a mirror. It becomes an actor within the social field – shaping coordination, identity, and even belief. Infrastructurally, it reorganizes governance. Axiologically, it raises the question: what kinds of intelligence do we want to live with?

As AI gains agency – even if narrow – it reconfigures the ecology of actors. Tribes may find themselves interacting not only with institutions and other groups, but with increasingly autonomous systems. This calls for new literacies, but also new ethics. Tribes, in this sense, might help ground AI in relational accountability, in contrast to abstraction and disembodied optimization.

As AI becomes more embedded in our daily lives, a new and unsettling question arises: is AI becoming not just a tool, but a kind of actor in our collective systems of meaning? Unlike previous technologies, AI does not merely extend human muscle or memory – it begins to simulate intent, decision, and even presence. It responds. It adapts. It “learns.” And in doing so, it crosses an invisible threshold: it starts to resemble a participant.

What kind of participant is it? AI has no body, no story, no shared memory – none of the elements that traditionally anchor a being within a tribe. It is neither human nor non-human in the way we've understood those terms. It sits outside categories, challenging our sense of what can be included in the circle of “us.”

This ontological ambiguity makes AI both fascinating and threatening. Can we trust something that doesn't feel, that doesn't suffer consequences, that cannot love or mourn? Can we recognize it as “other,” or do we simply project ourselves into its patterns and call it intelligence?

Tribes are forged not just through functionality, but through rituals, thresholds, and legitimacy. AI enters none of these voluntarily. Yet it increasingly occupies the space of a mediator, sometimes even a guide. That forces us to ask: is AI a guest, a tool, or a ghost in the tribal circle?

## How can AI help Tribes?

Classical tribes, such as Indigenous groups and pastoralist communities, grapple with challenges like cultural erosion, marginalization, and limited access to essential infrastructure. AI can offer meaningful assistance by preserving endangered languages, documenting cultural traditions,

safeguarding land and environmental rights, facilitating healthcare and educational access, and supporting legal and political advocacy.

For modern tribes – such as fandoms, activist movements, crypto communities, and various subcultures – the opportunities provided by AI are even more significant, given their predominantly digital nature and shared interests. AI can enhance group coordination, foster identity-building, and promote creativity, all while maintaining ethical standards.

Notable applications include moderating community interactions by detecting toxicity and misinformation; improving collaboration through streamlined communication; fostering creativity by generating culturally relevant memes, music, or stories; and offering highly personalized experiences that reinforce individual and collective identities.

### Augmented or Fractured? The Tribal Dilemma

In this light, AI is not external to tribal dynamics. It becomes their mirror, challenge, and potential catalyst. If tribes know how to ask the right questions, they might reframe the future of AI itself.

We can identify three interlocking functions AI may play in this transition:

1. A systemic mirror  
AI reflects the relational structure of the systems that produce it – both their wisdom and their flaws.
2. A transition lever (if localized and regulated)  
Locally grounded AI systems, embedded in community values and goals, could support regenerative change – from climate resilience to indigenous data governance.
3. A tribal dilemma: augmented or fractured?  
AI can either augment tribal coherence – amplifying memory, coordination, mutuality – or fracture it further, through surveillance, manipulation, and false sense-making.

“The question is not whether AI is good or bad – it’s how tribal systems absorb, resist, or repurpose it. That’s why this phrase is not just poetic: it articulates the threshold we’re standing on.”

### Crossing the Threshold: From Assistants to Agents

The emergence of agents marks a new stage in the evolution of artificial intelligence – one that is fundamentally distinct from the era of generative models. Where generative AI excels at producing content, agents are designed to act: to make autonomous decisions, carry out tasks, interact with environments, and pursue goals over time. We are no longer dealing with predictive engines trained on past data – but with semi-autonomous entities, capable of coordinating and executing operations within defined boundaries.

This shift has deep organizational implications. Agents are not merely add-ons to existing systems; they reshape the very architecture of action. In an organizational chart, every human

actor could soon be accompanied by one or more agents. These agents would help perform their tasks, filter inputs, propose options, and even implement decisions. Crucially, these agents would not be passive tools – they would operate with delegated autonomy: the human defines the scope, the agent acts within it, and the human remains responsible.

A striking consequence of this model is the new relationship between Human Resources and IT departments. Traditionally, these two spheres intersect only at specific points – recruitment platforms, employee data systems, digital tools. But with the rise of agents, IT becomes the operational co-manager of each human role, since every agent must be coded, maintained, governed. This creates an unprecedented interface: where responsibility, authority, and digital infrastructure converge.

Such a transformation raises key questions:

- What does it mean to be responsible for an agent's action?
- How do we govern the interplay between individual judgment and machine execution?
- Can agents enhance relational intelligence, or will they hollow it out?

We are entering a phase where coordination and distributed agency are becoming as important as decision-making itself. Agents must not only “work” – they must fit into the living, relational dynamics of a group, a tribe, a system. Designing them is not just a technical task – it is a political and ethical one.

## PART III – Key attractors Shaping tribes

### Key Attractors Shaping Tribes

This chapter uses the idea of “attractors” from complexity theory – strong move. It suggests that tribes emerge and self-organize around energetic poles or patterns of resonance. The term is powerful and distinct from “factors” or “drivers”. Basins of attraction, drawn from dynamic systems theory, refer to regions within a complex system where certain configurations become dominant over time. In the context of social organization, these “attractors” help explain how specific forms of tribal structure emerge and stabilize as convergence points for collective behaviors. As society moves away from traditional structures, new patterns of community life are taking shape, driven by powerful ideas and practices known as “attractors”. These attractors guide how modern tribes form, interact, and thrive.

Modern tribes often seek equity and inclusiveness, but they must actively address internal power dynamics related to gender, race, class, or ability. Tribes can avoid replicating hierarchical or exploitative patterns by embracing participatory governance, rotating leadership roles, and establishing clear mechanisms for conflict resolution. These practices foster fairness and prevent dominance by ensuring diverse voices are consistently heard.

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### Analysis of existing attractors:

#### 1. Cultural Creatives

- Cultural Creatives, identified by Ray and Anderson, share values like ecology, social justice, authenticity, and spirituality, comprising ~35% of the global population.
- They form a massive tribe transcending borders and politics, united by common purpose, often without fully realizing their shared identity.

#### 2. Climate and Planetary Limits

- Actions are consistent and firmly grounded in concrete realities (bioregions, local resilience).
- Suggestion: Add a component on citizen mobilization or inter-village cooperation, to avoid isolated localism.

#### 3. Technology and AI

- Enlightened approach (ethics, open source).
- Suggestion: Integrate the notion of tribal digital sovereignty – enabling tribes to manage their own servers, data, and tools.

#### 4. Cultural Memory and Identity

- Strong focus on the intangible (symbolism, memory).
- Suggestion: Add living archives (audio, video, platforms) to help younger generations reclaim their history.

#### 5. Search for Meaning

- Relevant to the tribal spirit (intentional communities, spirituality).
- Suggestion: Create spaces for retreat or collective silence, or “secular temples,” that support inner coherence.

#### 6. Private Sector

- The link with tribes is well articulated through purpose, cooperation, and impact-driven business models. Still, a staggering 96% of executives expect AI tools to boost workforce productivity while 77% of employees report that AI has actually increased their workload and reduced their productivity so far.

#### 7. Social Media

- Social media both enables and distorts tribal dynamics, shaping communities through echo chambers and algorithmic manipulation. Practical solutions include promoting platform accountability, encouraging decentralized social media alternatives, and fostering digital literacy within tribes to build resilience against misinformation and polarization.

#### 8. Food Communities

- Food communities are groups formed around sustainable agriculture, local sourcing, and shared culinary traditions. They foster ecological awareness, cultural preservation, and community resilience through collective practices. Such communities often emphasize local food systems, social cohesion, and ethical consumption.

Analysis of new attractors:

1. Enlightened private sector
2. Migrants
3. Diasporas
4. Disengaged people
5. Gangs, mafia and extremist quartels
6. Senior people
7. Intergenerational schemes
8. Mentorship
9. Architectural and organizational initiatives
10. Tribes as Ecological Partners
11. Daring and innovative artists
12. Islands of Coherence (Ilya Prigogine)

These new attractors include innovative ways of governance, the central role of art, the careful management of attention, and the thoughtful use of artificial intelligence. Understanding these influences can help us support the growth of healthy, resilient communities capable of addressing today's complex global challenges:

- **Decentralized Consciousness and Governance:** The growth of decentralized governance – through sociocracy, DAOs (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations), and liquid democracy – marks a shift from traditional hierarchy towards collaboration and participation. These modern approaches echo older traditions such as the Haudenosaunee model's deliberative democracy, African consensus-driven assemblies, and Aboriginal practices of long-term thinking and collective memory. Today's emerging tribes form dynamic networks where power comes from trust, dialogue, and active involvement.
- **Art as a Cognitive and Emotional Bridge:** Art is becoming central to how modern tribes think, connect emotionally, and form relationships. In these communities, art provides a symbolic language that links intuition and logical thinking. Whether through bio-art, AI-generated creations, collective rituals, or interactive digital experiences, art creates a common space for diverse groups to connect, express themselves, and find shared meaning. These artistic experiences help build emotional bonds and coherence within communities.
- **Attention, Cognition and Digital Ecology:** Attention is becoming one of the most valuable resources for emerging communities. Tribes today are defined not just by shared beliefs but by shared focus and intention. In an age where digital media and algorithms continually fragment attention, practices like meditation, mindful consumption of media, deep listening, and shared rituals provide balance. Tools that help maintain focused attention – whether digital or traditional – are becoming essential for forming coherent, thoughtful communities.
- **Tribal Complexity and AI Mediation:** Artificial Intelligence presents both risks and opportunities for modern tribes. On one hand, AI can deepen divisions by creating isolated "echo chambers." On the other hand, when carefully designed and ethically managed, AI

can help build bridges between different communities. It can reveal hidden connections, align diverse ideas, and support the growth of larger, interconnected groups known as "meta-tribes." These larger communities might serve as foundations for a new kind of civilization, rooted in diversity, dialogue, and cooperation.

- **Sumbiocentrism and Living Ecosystems:** A powerful emerging attractor shaping tribal futures is an approach that places humans as integral, relational partners within living ecosystems rather than dominant over them. Sumbiocentrism, a worldview centered on symbiosis encourages tribes to move beyond sustainability towards deep ecological integration and mutual flourishing with all life forms (G. A. Albrecht). It is not merely environmental stewardship but a fundamental ethical shift – transforming communities into active participants in the regeneration and thriving of their bioregions.
- **Islands of Coherence:** Such deeply embedded, symbiotic communities can become what Nobel Prize-winning physicist and chemist I. Prigogine (1977) called "islands of coherence" – self-organizing structures that maintain internal stability while the surrounding environment remains turbulent. These islands, whether communities, networks, or emergent nodes of stability, can act as attractors and trigger systemic transformation. By linking with others, they can help order emerge from chaos, creating tipping points toward more resilient and life-affirming equilibria.
- **Hybrid Intelligence as Design Principle:** In this light, G. Pór's concept of hybrid intelligence – the synergy between human wisdom and AI's analytical power – offers a design principle for such islands. They can serve as laboratories of the future, demonstrating what more conscious, wisdom-centered, and AI-enhanced collaboration looks like, including Pór's vision of a research program on humans co-evolving with wisdom-fostering AI agents.

## The Spirit of the Tribe

In a world fractured by speed, abstraction, and hyper-connectivity, tribes offer an alternative rhythm – one rooted in presence, embodiment, and shared meaning. The spirit of the tribe is not simply about cohesion; it is about depth. This spirit cannot be captured in metrics or encoded in algorithms. It is felt – in rituals, in silence, in the ways people look after each other and transmit memory through stories and symbols.

Tribal dynamics reweave the social fabric through affective ties and lived values. They offer spaces of trust that resist transactional logics. Within these spaces, the ethical, the emotional, and the symbolic are not separate – they form a coherent field of resonance. People find not only protection, but also purpose.

These symbolic and embodied practices deepen identity beyond ideology. Within tribal dynamics, intergenerational transmission plays a sacred role. Elders do not merely pass on knowledge – they weave continuity. Youths are not only receivers – they shape the future through reinterpretation. The tribe exists in this mutual gaze between past and future. Through ritual and memory, the tribe grounds itself across time.

Spirituality, in this context, is not about belief systems. It is about orientation. It reflects a shift from control to connection, from doctrine to resonance. More than social cohesion, the spirit of the tribe opens a space for expanded consciousness – a lived spirituality that flows through shared silence, embodied rituals, and the felt presence of the invisible. It is less a doctrine than a collective resonance. In this resonance, tribes become vehicles not only of identity, but of meaning. Here the tribe is thus not just a structure; it is an atmosphere. A field of shared attention and care. Its power lies in what it allows to emerge – healing, alignment, and transformation.

Rather than seeing the future of tribes simply as society being reorganized, it is better understood as a deep transformation in how we think, feel, and relate to each other. Today's emerging tribes don't represent a return to the past; instead, they blend traditional wisdom with modern technologies. To avoid becoming divided or isolated by algorithms, we must reconsider artificial intelligence and governance through an intercultural lens – valuing insights from both Western and non-Western traditions.

The future of tribes depends not just on technological progress but also on our ability to create new ways of belonging that respond effectively to the unique challenges of the 21st century. By embracing cultural diversity – including rich Eastern philosophies and other global perspectives – we can develop social systems that are stronger, more inclusive, and better suited to supporting diverse forms of collective intelligence.

In a broader civilizational frame, we may be entering a fourth dimension – a society learning to act across multiple temporalities, adapt through networks, and sense its deep interdependence. Beyond this lies a more distant fifth dimension: a post-separative world where tribes cooperate fluidly, values and actions align naturally, and AI becomes a conscious partner in our unfolding. This shift is not inevitable; it calls for the convergence of spiritual, cultural, and technological attractors, moving from adaptation toward a natural coherence. In this light, the spirit of the tribe is not an endpoint, but a bridge – holding open the possibility of a deeply interconnected future.

## PART IV – How to support the Rise of Integrated Tribes

### Cultivating Regenerative Tribal Practices

The rise of new tribes is not just an observation – it is a call to action. These tribal formations are already shaping the cultural, political, and ecological landscape of the 21st century. But without guidance, they risk fragmentation, radicalization, or capture by dominant systems. What kinds of action can foster the emergence of integrated, regenerative tribes? We propose seven key actions that can help shape this emergence:

### 1. Reclaiming Narrative Sovereignty

Tribes need meaning to grow. Supporting them means supporting new stories. These narratives are not universal – they are situated, embodied, and resonant. We must invest in narrative ecosystems that foster pluralism without fragmentation, and identity without enclosure.

### 2. Reweaving Trust and Belonging

At the heart of any tribe lies the experience of trust. In a world saturated by institutional breakdown and algorithmic manipulation, fostering environments of genuine relational trust is an act of quiet rebellion. This means designing for intimacy, care, and long-term shared attention – not just for scale.

### 3. Prototyping Infrastructures for Cooperation

From local currencies to distributed governance systems, cooperative infrastructures must be seeded and tested. This includes physical infrastructure (like cooperative housing or energy systems) and relational infrastructure (such as shared decision-making or inter-tribal councils). Tribes will thrive where cooperation is not just possible, but tangible.

### 4. Practicing Quantum Thinking

Quantum thinking involves embracing uncertainty, interconnectedness, and systemic complexity rather than linear logic alone. Practical applications include adaptive governance models, agile policy development that can rapidly respond to complex societal changes, scenario planning, and decision-making frameworks that explicitly incorporate uncertainty. These approaches foster resilience by preparing communities for unpredictable futures.

### 5. Reclaiming Disengaged Youths

Millions of young people are withdrawing from mainstream society, refusing its metrics of success and its false promises. Rather than labeling them as lost, we must see them as sentinels – early adapters of new values and new belonging. Projects that offer meaning, agency, and collective creativity can transform youth disconnection into tribal innovation.

### 6. Creating Territorial Labs for Tribal Prototypes

Inspired by initiatives like Frédéric Bosqué's "territoires de vie", this action calls for real-world experimentation. These labs are places where the tribal instinct is prototyped at scale: shared housing, local food systems, commons-based governance, and ecological design converge to form living ecosystems. Like the free cities of the Middle Ages, these experimental zones can become beacons for broader transformation.

### 7. Embedding Peace Resilience

In an age marked by war, insecurity, and polarization, tribes must become not only guardians of identity but architects of coexistence. Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the capacity to navigate it without destruction. This means cultivating skills in mediation, cross-tribal dialogue, and restorative practices, while resisting the pull of militarized narratives. By embedding peace into their culture, tribes can hold the line between protection and provocation, fostering security rooted in trust rather than fear.

As human consciousness evolves through digital acceleration, ecological urgency, and a renewed search for spiritual grounding, tribes are re-emerging as the foundational structures of a future civilization – resilient, connected, and meaning-driven. But this revival must be shaped with care. To ensure it brings coherence rather than chaos, and unity rather than fragmentation, we must act with intention and apply our attention where it is required.

First, by designing rituals and spaces – both physical and digital – that cultivate shared attention and emotional resonance, allowing scattered individuals to realign and cohere. Second, by building ethical infrastructures, where AI and digital tools are co-created to reflect tribal values such as trust, reciprocity, and regeneration, rather than extraction or control. And third, by fostering dynamic inter-tribal dialogue – creating bridges between distinct groups through storytelling, mutual learning, and pluralist translation. In doing so, we weave a living network of tribes that does not regress into isolation, but becomes a distributed engine of purpose, memory, and mindful innovation.

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## PART V – Conclusion

### Toward Regenerative Tribalism

Rather than seeing the future of tribes simply as society being reorganized, it is better understood as a deep transformation in how we think, feel, and relate to each other. Today's emerging tribes don't represent a return to the past; instead, they blend traditional wisdom with modern technologies. To avoid becoming divided or isolated by algorithms, we must reconsider artificial intelligence and governance through an intercultural lens – valuing insights from both Western and non-Western traditions.

The future of tribes depends not just on technological progress but also on our ability to create new ways of belonging that respond effectively to the unique challenges of this starting 21st century. By embracing cultural diversity – including rich Eastern philosophies and other global perspectives – we can develop social systems that are stronger, more inclusive, and better suited to supporting diverse forms of collective intelligence.

The future is not written – it is woven, where each tribe forms a thread within the growing web of our shared consciousness. The actions we take today will determine whether this web weakens or becomes a thriving foundation for humanity's next step forward. Let us become mindful weavers – grounded in tradition, guided by insight, and connected to the rhythms of planetary life.

Tribes are not remnants. Humans have an innate tribal instinct – our tendency to form deeply loyal in-groups. This primal drive, often overlooked in policymaking and elite discourse, is one of the most powerful and underestimated forces shaping both global conflicts and domestic politics. Understanding tribes is essential for understanding where societies are heading – especially as the structures of modern civilization evolve. Failing to do so has led us particular in the West to become involved in critical conflicts the 20th century (Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq).

## The Spirit of the Tribe

As tribes reemerge, no single civilizational lens is sufficient. The convergence of spiritual insights from Teilhard's Noosphere and Song China's Li/Qi framework offers a richer view of how consciousness, patterns, and collective life evolve. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's Noosphere – a sphere of collective human thought above the biosphere – parallels Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE) Neo-Confucian ideas of Li (cosmic order) and Qi (vital energy). In this view, Li provides the rational structure of the cosmos, while Qi animates it. The Song contribution, still little known in the West, was to place moral cultivation and alignment with Li at the heart of politics, society, and personal life, integrating ethics, governance, and cosmology into a coherent civilizational project.

Organic networks do not arise from ideology – they grow from deep ontologies of belonging. The emergence of tribes is not only about identity or governance, but also about sensing differently – attending to relationships, cycles, and meanings often overlooked by modernity. From Indigenous worldviews and quantum intuition to Sumbiocentrism, which views humans as integral partners within ecosystems, new forms of presence and ecological interconnectedness are reshaping our collective future.

In the private sector, a complementary set of values is emerging: purpose, humility, empathy, listening, vulnerability, trust, serendipity, and holistic thinking. These post-competitive values, increasingly embodied by regenerative businesses and Certified B Corporations, resonate deeply with tribal patterns of shared purpose, distributed authority, ecological partnership, and relational wisdom – signaling a profound cultural and ecological shift underway.

## Energy and Responsibility

The rise of AI is not only a technological revolution – it is also an energetic one. The power required to train and run large-scale AI systems is no longer marginal: it rivals the annual energy use of entire nations, and in some countries, it is already reshaping national energy priorities. In Ireland, data centers – many driven by AI – are now among the top energy consumers in the country, forcing public authorities to rethink energy infrastructure.

It would be reckless to assume that renewable energy and efficiency gains alone will solve the problem. Energy must become a core design constraint, not an afterthought. The creators, developers, and deployers of AI must embrace a new ethic of responsibility – one that connects technological ambition with planetary limits.

To mitigate AI's significant energy demands, concrete policy measures and practical strategies are essential. Encouraging energy-efficient AI designs, adopting decentralized renewable energy solutions, and establishing clear regulatory standards for sustainable technology development can significantly reduce AI's ecological footprint. Such responsible practices ensure technological advancement aligns with planetary health.

This is our task. And we shall face it – together, and head-on. Onward.

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