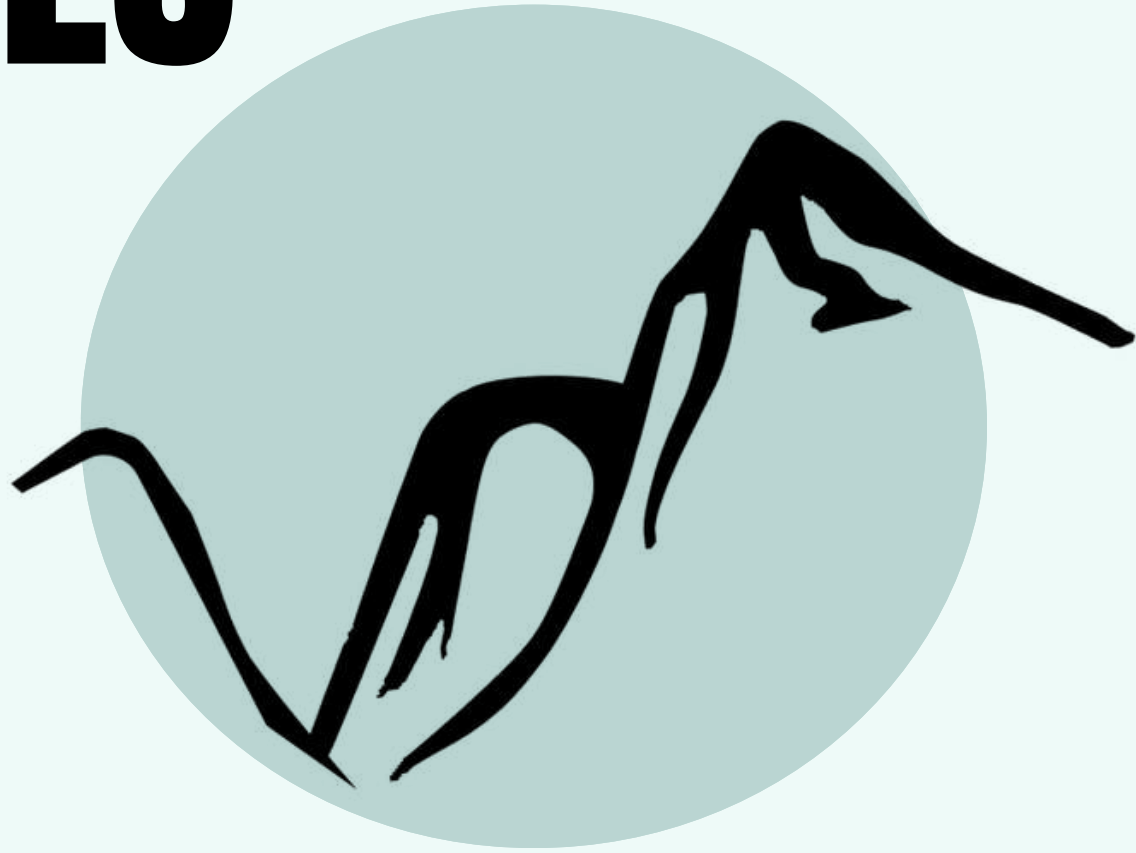


*The two*  
**HILLS**



**THE PHENOMENON OF SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SHIFT**

**Dive into the life stories of those  
who decide to take action**

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**Full report**

V4 - 27/03/2026

**KOSMOGONIA**

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# SUMMARY



## PART 1

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› SHARE WITH US YOUR PERCEPTIONS AND FEEDBACK ON THIS REPORT

# PART 1

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- 4-5** Introduction and background
- 6-7** The Kosmogonia project and the team
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- 15-16** The personas

# INTRODUCTION

**What if, what sometimes seems like a crisis, was a point of passage towards another relationship with the world?**

In recent years, the scale of socio-ecological issues has reached an unprecedented level. In response to this situation, there is the choice of inaction, denial, skepticism, but also action. Many individuals are indeed deciding to act, changing course, leaving the track of a life sometimes mapped out in advance. They are exploring and radically embodying other ways of inhabiting the world and rejecting certain models of deleterious success. **These are the ones who commit and move towards other ways of life.** This journey, which leads to a commitment to greater ecology and social justice, is not a fad, nor an "eco-trend," and is not limited to reducing meat or stopping flying. Nor is it a whim of repentant city dwellers, nor the preserve of privileged young people.

It is **a global reorganisation of one's relationship to oneself, to others and to the world.** A profound and multi-factorial identity transformation that causes a change in values, in ways of thinking, interacting, evolving, working, living, with a view to a more just and sustainable world.

- How do paths towards sustainable lifestyles emerge and develop?
- What are its ingredients, characteristics, dynamics and sustainability factors?

It is to answer these questions that Kosmogonia was born, delving into the deep paths of socio-ecological shifts through a research odyssey in Eurasia.

After three years of meetings, immersions and analyses, this project gave birth to a new sociological model: **The Two-Hills model.**



## DEFINITION OF THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SHIFT

**A profound, conscious and intentional life change in which an individual decides to align their behaviors, choices and life patterns with planetary boundaries, in a spirit of social justice.**



This phenomenon is far from residual and goes far beyond environmental issues. It goes beyond simple daily adjustments and an accumulation of ecological actions.

This shift leads to questioning dominant norms, narratives and entrenched beliefs, to reorganize one's life priorities.

The socio-ecological shift is "radical" in the etymological sense of the term; **it is therefore rooted in a search for alignment, meaning, and coherence.** It affects and disrupts all aspects of individuals' lives, from housing to social relationships, including work, mobility, consumption, imaginaries of success, the relationship to time, money, power, and sensitivity to life.

This report presents in detail the Two-Hills model, the result of the Kosmogonia project, led by Anastasia DEREPPE and Benoit MARIENVAL and the Kosmogonia Lab team. It is a complete version that will be supplemented by synthetic and accessible formats.

**The socio-ecological shift is not a leap: it is a path.  
Sometimes abrupt and unsettling. Often transformative, joyful and inspiring.**

# A RESEARCH ODYSSEY (1/2)

## > A JOURNEY THROUGH EURASIA

Keen to best embody a sustainable and inspiring mode of research, we traveled across Eurasia, avoiding any trips with plane, for 3 years to carry out this project, accompanied by a team of researchers. *(information on the project and the team pages 29-30).*

During this journey, we also co-initiated

the low-carbon travel collective "L'Alibi", in order to simplify access and sharing of knowledge when traveling without flying.

Beyond a research project on socio-ecological shifts, Kosmogonia is therefore a real embodied odyssey questioning our relationship to travel, time and commitment, with a view to encouraging the emergence of new, credible and desirable committed narratives.

Itinerary of the research odyssey by Anastasia and Benoit



- **80 individual** life story type **interviews**
- **12 group interviews** gathering 70 people
- Representing a **total of 150 people** interviewed.
- **57 organisations** met in **10 Eurasian countries**
- **142 hours** of interview recordings
- **2000 pages** of transcripts
- **389 days** of immersion

## > INSPIRING AND MOVING LIFE STORIES

Through this research odyssey in France and then in Eurasia (using only terrestrial means of transport), we met **people "shiffters" who decided to change their life trajectory** to anchor themselves **in a strong sustainability approach** in response to the ecological and social challenges of the 21st century.

Some have left their jobs to undergo complete career changes, others have launched ambitious collectives, changed their living space, joined an associative project with passion, or simply stopped doing "like everyone else" by turning away from dominant norms.

They could have continued on the traditional path that was proposed or imposed on them, but **decided to free themselves from it and act on their own level.**

This collection, unprecedented in its scope and embodied exploratory methodology, allowed us to compile a dense research material of 142 hours of recording, transcribed into more than 2,000 pages. This data then gave birth to the identification of 200 variables through the careful analysis and coding of thousands of quote statements, which we then gathered, weighted, conceptualised and synthesised to draw the model of the Two Hills.

These socio-ecological shifts go well beyond pro-ecological behaviors.

**The Two Hills model is the fruit of this long research odyssey, built step by step in a scientific, collective and enthusiastic approach.**

# THE KOSMOGONIA PROJECT

Initiated by Anastasia DEREPE and Benoit MARIENVAL and co-led by a team of researchers from different backgrounds, the project lies at the crossroads of sociology, political ecology and psychology.

The Two Hills model is one of the fruits of the Kosmogonia program.

**More broadly, the research program aims to:**

- study personal and collective paths of commitment,
- contribute to scientific advancement through the publication of academic articles,
- popularise and disseminate the results to make them visible to as many people as possible,
- produce popular, artistic and sensitive formats to share those collected stories.

This project is part of a series of research and careful distribution initiatives (reports, conferences, comics, workshops, visualisations) to reconnect science, engagement and society, in order to equip individuals and collectives working in the field.



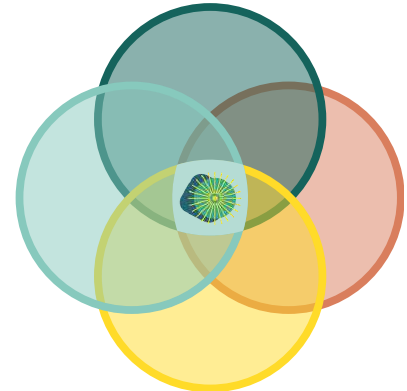
**Benoit MARIENVAL and Anastasia DEREPE**  
Photo © Born in PPM - Marylou MAURICIO

**On a personal level, Kosmogonia is also a way of getting moving again.**

After four intense years designing and implementing training programs on climate issues and planetary boundaries, as well as leading networks of transition actors Anastasia and Benoit felt the need to start a new adventure, to strive for a new balance by reinventing their way of getting involved.

This project was born at the intersection of several impulses: a desire **to engage differently**, explore new possibilities, **reconnect with the field, nourish ourselves with unique experiences, inspire** ourselves... but also to **contribute**, in our own way, to a finer understanding of the dynamics of shifts that lead to deep commitments.

Lying at the crossroads between a personal desire for inspiration and a desire to be useful in transitions, Kosmogonia has built itself as **a bridge between science, action, and the quest for meaning**. We like to call this our "alibi."



**Ikigai model**



**The Kosmogonia core team**

Through our **experience** teaching in higher education (on planetary boundaries, new economic models and the energy transition), we have crossed paths with researchers keen to explore more committed research work.

It was in the summer of 2022 that the project took the form we know it today: a collective, transdisciplinary, independent and committed research program.

The non-for-profit organisation (association loi 1901) Kosmogonia was created in April 2025.

# THE RESEARCH TEAM

Beyond the Two Hills model, Kosmogonia contributes to the field of academic research. It is a human, intellectual and committed adventure, carried out by a multidisciplinary team.

Kosmogonia brings together a team of researchers, analysts and project coordinators involved in scientific mediation in order to ensure the spread of the results to various audiences.

## GENERAL MANAGEMENT, FIELD COLLECTION, DEVELOPMENT AND SPREAD OF THE MODEL

The Kosmogonia research program was initiated in 2022 by two transition practitioners, Anastasia Dereppe and Benoît Marienval, after several years of field actions and the implementation of large-scale training plans related to climate change and the planetary boundaries.

The pair was joined by researchers from different backgrounds to carry out rigorous and grounded collective work on ecological shifts.



**ANASTASIA DEREPPE**

### Independent researcher, facilitator and trainer

- Co-author of the Sexism Frescoe
- Former Ile-de-France Climate Fresk responsible
- Co-founder of Essaim d'avenir
- Former Board Member of Printemps Ecologique
- Former strategist & data analyst



**BENOIT MARIENVAL**

### Independent researcher, trainer and designer of educational tools

- Co-author of the Climate Puzzle
- Co-founder of Essaim d'avenir
- Former pilot of the Climate Education Kick-Off (500,000 students reached)
- Former Board Member of the Climate Fresk
- Former consultant in management

## RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC ARTICLES COORDINATION



**CELINE DEL BUCCHIA**

### Researcher in critical marketing and ecological transition

- Teacher-researcher.
- Research work on socio-ecological shifts, gender issues and identity construction and consumption paradoxes.
- Creator of courses in biomimicry & regenerative innovation.
- 2025 winner of the educational innovation prize for her contribution to the ecological transition of the PMRE United Nations institutions.

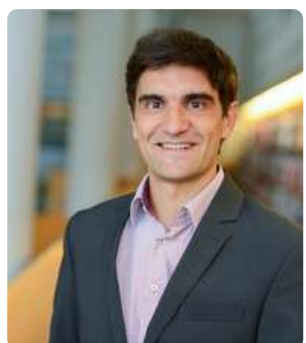


**ARNAUD STIMEC**

### Researcher in conflict management, social dialogue and ecological transition

- University professor.
- Mediator and leading author on negotiation.
- Director of the journal Negotiations (2008-2014).
- Former director of the Transitions Campus – Sciences Po Rennes.
- Member of the Scientific Council of Purpose-Driven Companies.

Céline, Arnaud, and José actively contribute as members of the core research team. They participated in structuring the project, contributing to the conceptualisation process, and identifying research themes. They co-authored academic articles and support the overall project's dynamic.



**JOSÉ MAILLET**

### Expert in transition issues and head of the Gaïa school

- Teacher-researcher.
- Head of the Gaïa School
- Expert in energy, climate and biodiversity issues.

## ASSOCIATE RESEARCHERS

We also work with a team of associate researchers on co-writing scientific articles on targeted themes and data from the Kosmogonia program.

### Two articles are published

- IJGE journal in the April 2nd 2025 on the theme of entrepreneurial ecological masculinities.
- ROR journal the September 15th 2025 on the theme of "new transition incubators"

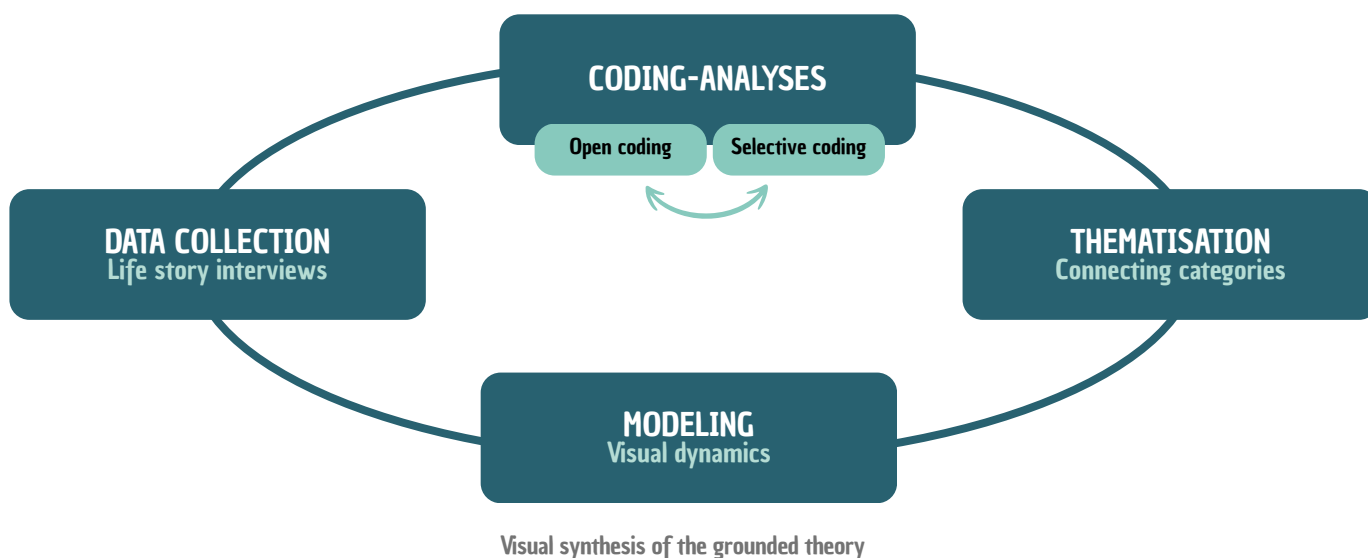
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## THE CHOICE OF THE METHODOLOGY - THE “GROUNDED THEORY”

The methodology we used is part of a research approach called **grounded theory** (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which is not based on hypotheses or a predetermined model, but which places reflection and analysis on the basis of exploratory data collection.

This is an exploratory and inductive approach where the **theoretical analysis model is gradually developed using the collected field data**, rather than applying a pre-existing deductive analysis model and verifying it in the field. To this end, we co-established a main exploratory interview guide and specific variations that take care not to frame the responses within predefined schemas.

We chose this model in order to free ourselves as much as possible from the potential biases of pre-established life trajectories, without prejudice or a determining activist orientation at the outset, in order to embrace the subject of socio-ecological shifts in an agnostic manner. Kosmogonia is an investigative approach, conducted with particular attention to the authenticity of the life stories collected. More specifically, we use the constructivist current of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).



The approach also allows for an abductive approach, notably through the encounter between existing theories and the field. For example, in our study, the identification of the entrepreneurial dimension of the people in our sample is inductive. The study of entrepreneurial masculinities is abductive because it was triggered by a call for articles that allowed us to realize this new dimension to exploit.

In this deep-rooted methodology that we followed during these three years, the interviews were **transcribed** and gave rise to **coding-analyses** carried out in teams. This allowed the progressive **thematization** of concepts in order to **feed a theoretical analysis framework** as the interviews were collected and analyzed.

As new areas were integrated, the complexity of the model was enriched, gradually refining itself towards a representative and credible vision.

Please note that beyond the Two Hills model, this vast dataset collected since 2022 is also the source of multiple publications of scientific articles written by the Kosmogonia team. Some of those articles are now available on the [website](#).

# THE PROCESS: FROM THE INTERVIEWS TO THE MODEL

## FRAMING AND TEAM

1



Collective definition of intentions, framing of the project and structuring of the team. Drafting of the first interview guides, definition of sampling criteria, training in the inductive research posture, monitoring and mapping of organizations, planning of the international journey, state of the scientific art and literature review.

## INTERVIEWS

2



This stage represents the core of the research material; it consists of all the interviews conducted with the project leaders. Over three years, a total of 80 individual interviews and 12 group interviews were conducted by Anastasia and Benoit during their trip to Eurasia. This corresponds to a total of 142 hours of recording and 389 days of immersion within organisations and collectives. The pair was supported by the Kosmogonia core research team for the analysis of the collected data.

## EXPLORATORY CODING

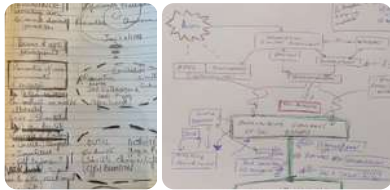
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The inductive, grounded methodology favored for this project led the research team to conduct initial exploratory readings of the data, without pre-established hypotheses. This stage is particularly dense and rich because it opens up numerous avenues. As the coding progressed, categories, axes, and segments emerged, which initiated a narrative structuring of the variables.

## CONCEPTUALISATION

4



Following the exploratory coding phase, initial theoretical conceptualisations can be established, capturing the recurring and relevant pathways observed through the analysis of life stories. These are called "memos," which are the first "stories of shifts." They open the opportunity to begin a more mature coding phase.

## AXIAL CODING

5



Based on the initial variables and research categories that emerged during the previous phases, it is now possible to carry out a structured analysis and open up conceptualisation perspectives. This is also the moment when we were able to launch a hybrid quali-quant method with certain automations and dynamic data, in order to obtain a weighted analysis. This is a concrete, tangible and objective step.

## MODELING

6



The structuring of axial coding allowed the development of a new, more mature and refined overall structure, based on a total of more than 3,000 carefully selected and classified quote statements. The modeling process thus becomes possible and offers a meta-vision that will give birth to the first theoretical model. This maieutic work lasted a total of 30 months, one of the fruits of which is the Two Hills model.

# SCOPE OF THE STUDY



**The individuals we met are contributing to the socio-ecological transition in diverse sectors and occupations.**

Entrepreneurs, employees, managers and volunteers who carry out various activities in consulting, project management, training, agro-ecology, research, reception, food, recycling, etc.

BREAKDOWN BY TYPE OF ACTIVITY		
Education/Schools	23	25%
Organisations dedicated to advocacy and the protection of environmental interests	19	21%
Workshops / training programs	14	15%
Socially responsible companies	11	12%
Consultancy/Coaching/Training	8	9%
Living space and reception	6	7%
Farming and hospitality	6	7%
Events	3	3%
Shops	1	1%
<b>Total général</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>1</b>

The activities of the individuals interviewed are relatively varied, which allows us to represent a diversity of life paths, profiles and contexts. This diversity also allowed us to compile a significant set of ethnographic notes through immersions, sometimes lasting several weeks.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION		
France	59	63%
China	8	9%
UK	7	7%
Hungary	6	6%
Türkiye	5	5%
Japan	3	3%
Laos	2	2%
Kazakhstan	2	2%
Georgia	2	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority (65%) of our interviews were conducted with a French audience, mostly in person during the first phase of collection in 2023. From 2024, we were keen to integrate an international approach in order to put the French results into perspective with other cultures and socio-economic contexts.

DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF STRUCTURE		
Non-profit	42	46%
Company	24	26%
Cooperative	8	9%
Teaching	7	8%
Collective	7	8%
Farm	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

The non-profit (associative) model is more prevalent than other types of structures, notably because socio-ecological issues are predominantly carried through this form. This trend is particularly pronounced in France, where the 1901 non-profit association framework plays a key role.

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE		
45-55	24	29%
35-45	25	30%
25-35	25	30%
> 55	8	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100%</b>

91% of our sample is between 25 and 55 years old. We encountered profiles from different generations, ranging from 26 to 86 years old.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION		
Male	47	60%
Female	31	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

We observe a slight over-representation of men in the profiles interviewed.

It is important to note that the majority of the driving forces behind socio-ecological transitions are women, who are also systematically underrepresented in decision-making spheres despite their potential for ecological leadership (OECD 2021, UNWomen 2024, EIGE 2021, TerraNova 2021).

Furthermore, the majority of the profiles surveyed have a high level of education (78% have a master's degree). Far from being an initial intention, this is a reality observed on the ground and probably linked to certain sampling criteria. We explain the sampling choices and scope in more detail in the following pages. We also return in detail on pages 36-37 to the many specificities to take into account when reading this report, as well as the numerous potential continuations on pages 41-43.

# SCOPES AND PROFILES OF THE STUDY

## SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

To ensure that the collection of life stories is relevant, comprehensive, and structured, we defined a set of structuring specifications prior to the collection. We chose to prioritise identifying organizations that place socio-ecological impact at the heart of their activities and to prioritise interviewing their founders, leaders, and active members.

We are indeed interested in profiles that are very advanced in their knowledge of the issues and their actions in everyday life. Focusing on managers or initiators allowed us to ensure a high level of reflexivity and commitment, offering the elements of a mature and broad vision of the shifting process. Indeed, the majority of the profiles go well beyond the framework of pro-ecological behaviors (already well documented in the scientific literature) and systemically integrate the issues into their lives.

The initial scope targeted four types of organisations: **citizen groups & NGOs, education, private companies, and public institutions**. We used **criteria specific** to each type (governance, activities, impact measurement, integration of issues, etc.) as well as additional **generic criteria** (a minimum of two years of seniority and direct and strategic participation in ecological sustainability issues).

The fieldwork revealed a heterogeneous distribution of these types of organisations, with an over-representation of non-for-profit organisations and the education sector, as well as difficulties in measuring all the criteria of the specifications. We therefore had to be flexible at times in the identification process, particularly in Asia.

In this large exploratory study, we also chose to interview individuals who are not directly at the origin of an organisation but who have a unique life path linked to a socio-ecological commitment.



## IDENTIFICATION OF ORGANISATIONS AND PROFILES

In France, we conducted extensive sourcing work right from the project's preparation phase. A detailed collaborative tracking file was created, quickly identifying dozens of potential individuals from various French activist and professional networks, with the support of our preliminary personal network. This initial core allowed us to structure the first months of research and launch the first interviews in a familiar setting, facilitating contact and establishing a climate of trust.

Then, a concentric circle effect was triggered where we were gradually put in contact with new organisations and profiles as our interviews progressed.

By matching opportunities and our sourcing based on the specifications, this allowed us to meet 57 organisations in Europe and Asia.

The Kosmogonia adventure led us to trust the field, synchronicities, and cross-referenced recommendations. Although it must be admitted that it was difficult to obtain feedback in certain countries, this combination of upstream structuring and emerging encounters allowed for a certain richness in our sample.

# THE CHOICE OF EURASIA



## REAL ACCESSIBILITY WITHOUT PLANE

In the context of the climate crisis, the use of low-carbon means of transport is a central issue. This choice is rooted in a modest exemplary approach, based on the idea that field practices can themselves become objects of reflection, demonstration, and inspiration.

We wanted to demonstrate the logistical feasibility of such a journey, while considerably reducing our carbon footprint, without resorting to excessively costly means.



## EXPLORE THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Often reduced to its status as the "world's leading emitter," China remains little explored in Western narratives in terms of its capacity for systemic action related to the transition. China occupied a unique place in this itinerary (5 months out of the 18 total). China has the capacity to implement systemic transitions on a very large scale. Understanding the logic at work in this context, beyond simplistic representations, seemed essential to us in order to grasp the plurality of possible paths. Beyond actors working on the ground, we were also able to meet representatives, elected officials, and the Ministry of Ecological Transition in Beijing.



## BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA

We firmly believe in the need to build bridges of mutual support and inspiration between territories. Asia is not just "elsewhere": it is a collection of dynamic societies, crossed by ecological experiments, forms of resilience and struggle. These bridges are essential for breaking out of homogenous circles of thought and enriching the imaginary world of transition.

This project is also based on the conviction that ecological transitions must be thought of from a transnational perspective. Building bridges between initiatives in Europe and those in Asia opens up spaces for dialogue, mutual inspiration, and cooperation. These circulations of knowledge, stories, and practices are at the heart of a relational and situated ecology.



## CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD

Finally, we are convinced that an ecological shift also requires a shift in our view of the world and its complexity, to stop looking solely to the West to find answers. Asia embodies other models, other relationships with time, the challenges of transition and modernity.



## A PERSONAL APPETITE

Our choice is also personal. Asia has long called to us out of curiosity and fascination for its stories, its tensions, its imaginations. This choice reflects a form of assumed subjectivity in the construction of the research field.

# THE KEY INGREDIENTS TO A SHIFT

The ingredients are the levers, events, meetings, experiences and resources that facilitate progress in the socio-ecological shift.



## COMMUNITY

A sense of belonging to a group that supports, inspires and normalises transition choices, sometimes breaking isolation and strengthening the momentum and enthusiasm for change.



## INSPIRING PEOPLE

Meeting or exposure to one or more individuals having a positive influence on the awareness, implementation or desirability of other perspectives and stories.



## VOLUNTEERING COMMITMENT

Getting involved in a non-profit organisation fuels the feeling of usefulness, structures commitment, and allows you to experiment with concrete forms of collective action.



## FINANCIAL SECURITY

Economic stability ensuring basic needs and allowing the field of possibilities to be opened up and profound changes to be undertaken.



## LIVING TOGETHER (COOPERATIVE)

Living, deciding, cooking or creating together develops relational skills, opens up new perspectives and makes other ways of life possible.



## FREE TIME

Having unconstrained and free periods of time allows us to think differently, question ourselves, slow down, explore and initiate new directions that would otherwise be inaccessible.



## EXPERIMENTAL FIELD

Spaces, places or contexts allowing us to try out and put into practice the acquired theory: to test, make mistakes, adjust and dare to try other ways of acting and being.



## BUDDY

A relationship of mutual inspiration with a close ally which allows for the sharing of doubts, awareness and commitments, facilitating action and emotional stability.



## SKILLS UPGRADE

Acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating sharp ecological awareness helps to strengthen cognitive understanding of the criticality of the issues.



## LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Meeting or exposure to individuals, often not too far removed from oneself but still more advanced in their journey, triggering a positive identification generating the motivation to act.



## TRAVELLING

An experience of geographical displacement that confronts the differences of other cultures, environments, lifestyles, norms, ideals.



## NEED FOR ALIGNMENT AND SENSE OF PURPOSE

Need for consistency between one's values, ideas, actions and contribution to society.



## BECOMING A PARENT

The experience of parenthood is profoundly transformative, shaking up priorities and postures of commitment.



## SHARP ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND ANXIETY

Legitimate anxiety linked to awareness of environmental crises and their scale. It can sometimes be a driving force for engagement or a source of suffering and dismay.

# THE MAJOR EFFECTS OF THE SHIFT

Effects are the direct consequences and transformations resulting from the shift path (*affects, emotions, feelings, behaviors, decisions*). They are found throughout the phases of the Two-Hills model.



## DISSONANCES

Whether it's with family, friends, or at work, feeling a growing gap between your core values and your lifestyle creates persistent tension and discomfort that drives action. This acts as a driving force for change.



## SYSTEMIC VISION

Understanding the interconnections between ecological, social, economic, and personal crises transforms our view of the world. This perspective guides our commitment to profound action.



## JOY AND ENTHUSIASM

A feeling of happiness and satisfaction experienced through nurturing social connections, commitment to a cause, or a relationship with nature. This fuels momentum, lightens the burden of commitment, and fosters hope.



## ALIGNMENT AND MEANING

The feeling of acting in accordance with one's deepest values provides a decisive inner strength to last over time and overcome certain obstacles or doubts.



## ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

A desire to create, to bring about concrete projects with an impact, with a strong intention to pass on their knowledge in turn. Entrepreneurial momentum facilitates the transition from theory to practice.



## OVERWORK

State of physical, mental or emotional exhaustion resulting from excessive intensity of socio-ecological commitments coupled with a lack of balance or recovery.



## SNOWBALL EFFECT

One change leads to another. Altering one aspect of one's life opens up gaps that bring ideas, encounters, and desires in a chain reaction, accelerating and propagating the dynamics of change around oneself.



## INSPIRATION FROM THOSE AROUND

Through visible embodiment and consistency, the individual becomes a source of inspiration for those around them. This raises awareness and makes others want to act.



## INTENTION TO TRANSMIT

Intention and willingness to share and transmit knowledge, principles and values to others.



## WORK VS PERSONAL INTERESTS

Interweaving of professional and personal spheres where socio-ecological commitments cross all dimensions of existence



## PRO-ECOLOGICAL BEHAVIORS

Actions, behaviors or attitudes that promote ecological sustainability in a direct and measurable manner.



## FREEDOM

Development of new possibilities, fewer constraints in one's lifestyle and choices, more power to act and autonomy.



## EVOLUTION OF ONE'S SOCIAL CIRCLE

Evolution of one's friendly, intimate or professional relationships for greater alignment and resonance with one's committed convictions and vision of the world.



## SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Developing deep, authentic, supportive and sincere relationships with loved ones and others, going beyond superficial and routine matters.

# PERSONAS

To better understand the dynamics of shifts and the drivers of individual commitments, we identified three typical profiles that recurred throughout the interviews conducted.

These personae are not fixed boxes, but archetypal figures: they give substance to transition stories by embodying common trajectories. They help to put the results into stories.

Each personae is nourished by real quotes, by multiple journeys, and allows us to grasp what pushes some people to question everything in order to seek greater meaning, usefulness, or coherence.

These personas allow:

- to concretely illustrate the socio-ecological shifts analysed in the model,
- to identify common patterns despite the diversity of stories,
- to better support or recognise those who experience shifts in their life.

Three major personas stand out:

- **The Pathbreaker, who refuses to fit into the world promised to her/him,**
- **The Exfiltrated, who leaves a settled life to start another,**
- **The Non-conformist, who was never really able to play the game.**

These composite portraits are reading tools, points of support for thinking differently about transformation trajectories and recognizing the multiple paths towards a deep commitment.

To branch out, to escape, to refuse to conform: three gestures, three stories, three singular figures, which help us to better, read and understand the different forms of socio-ecological shifts.



**The pathbreaker**



**The exfiltrated**



**The non-conformist**

Although each persona embodies a strong trajectory, many individuals recognise themselves at the crossroads of several profiles, because the transition paths are often composite, shifting and not fixed.

# THE PERSONAE IN DETAIL

## The pathbreaker

She had everything she needed to follow the promised path: a good student, a valued academic career, and the possibility of entering "great careers."



- She discovers a void of meaning and cynicism in her studies.
- Human, relational and ethical skills are absent or relegated, as are systemic considerations.
- The prospects seem useless to her, even harmful to the world.
- She rejects the "systematic" professional integration and dares to change direction.
- She looks for alternatives where she can feel useful, aligned, alive.

- **Main drivers:** early lucidity, search for meaning, desire for alignment, rejection of standard models.
- **Challenges:** initial loneliness, legitimacy, reinvention of a success story, family conflicts.
- **Examples of anchoring:** engineering schools, preparatory classes, business schools, universities

## The Exfiltrated

He followed the script. He did what was expected of a good father: studies, career, family. But one day, it didn't work anymore. He decided to change course.



- He realises that the race for success, comfort or social recognition lacks meaning.
- A burnout, a breakup or a key encounter can trigger an inner change.
- He discovers other stories, other models, other emergencies.
- He leaves a job or a stable life to follow what has more meaning.
- He begins to learn again, to doubt, to experiment, to live.

- **Main drivers:** overwork, existential quest, quest for coherence, taking responsibility
- **Challenges:** loss of bearings, rebuilding skills, temporary social downgrading, dissonance, relationship difficulties.
- **Examples of anchoring:** executive/leader position in a company, doctor in a public hospital, lawyer, civil servant → reorientation towards craft, educational, ecological or activist professions.

## The non-conformist

From childhood, he felt that something was wrong. The world seems absurd, violent, or incoherent. He refuses to conform to it, rebels against it, and explores alternatives.



- Strong sensitivity to injustice, suffering, and the absurd
- Academic or social difficulties: refusal of norms, boxes, codes
- Constant search for other avenues of expression: art, alternative culture, communities
- Sometimes a visceral refusal to contribute to a destructive system.
- Moves early towards alternative, collective, committed forms of life.

- **Main drivers:** dull or blazing rage, creativity, lucidity about social structures, need for total coherence.
- **Challenges:** precariousness, marginalisation, family or social tensions, anxiety.
- **Examples of anchoring:** independent paths, very young activist commitment, self-training, experiences of collective or nomadic life.

# PART 2

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**17-28** Diving into the Two-Hills model

**29-30** Table of main variables

**31-33** Detailed model readings

# DIVING INTO THE TWO-HILLS MODEL

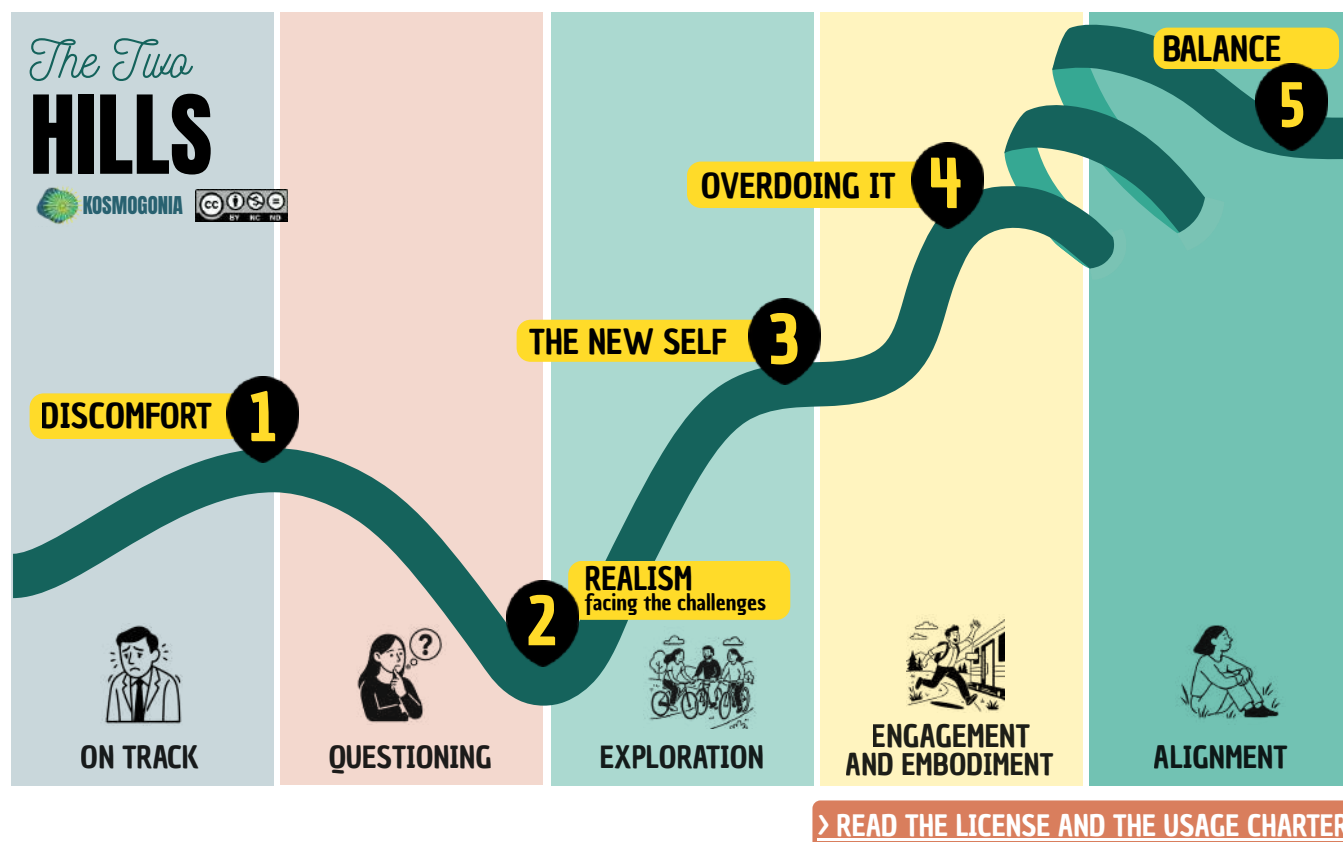
This model is based on a **visual metaphor** in the form of two hills, symbolising the journey that individuals go through in the process of socio-ecological shift. It synthesises a sociological analysis of the processes of identity transformation, based on collected life stories. We climb, we fall, we explore, we stop, we rebuild ourselves, we climb, we tire, sometimes we loop, then we relearn to move differently to strive for a new balance.

The Two-Hills model presents a trajectory in **5 phases**, punctuated by **5 key thresholds**.

**The phases** are represented by the vertical bands of color in the background.

**The key thresholds**, numbered in yellow, materialize the transition from one phase to another.

Each phase is supported by **hundreds of qu statements** from the interviews.



## READING THE MODEL

To better understand this model, you will find the details of each phase in the following pages of this report:

- **The detailed characteristics** of each phase.
- **The key threshold** that allows you to move on to the next stage.
- **The ingredients** that allow us to evolve and move towards the next phase.
- **The effects** that individuals go through in this phase.
- **Quote statements from the interviews** associated with the phase. They will be associated with a variable and a representation rate in the sample (the occurrence ratio from the analytical coding stage).

## READING PRECAUTIONS

Many specificities and reading keys are to be considered and are addressed on pages 35-36-37. It is important to note that **our figures cannot be considered as statistics**. Although our corpus includes more than 90 profiles, which is rare in qualitative research, the figures we present reflect trends internal to the sample. They are not generalisable, but allow us to highlight typical profiles, recurring dynamics and robust hypotheses on the processes of socio-ecological shift. It should also be noted that a preponderant part of our sample is made up of French project leaders.

# PHASE 1: ON TRACK

In this phase, it is a **state of conformity**, often comfortable in appearance, but internally unstable. Individuals advance on a trajectory perceived as stable or reassuring, relatively **in agreement with what society values** (studies, employment, couple, consumption). This trajectory is often the result of **an unconscious, implicit or forced adherence to social norms**.

Being on the rails can offer comfort and social recognition. This doesn't mean that everyone feels comfortable there, but following another path often seems **difficult, even unattainable**.

In the case of a switch, this preliminary stage can last more or less time depending on the profiles; it marks the beginnings of major transformations in their lives.

We have found that certain characteristics or experiences in individuals promote emancipation from the railway. It is particularly noteworthy that an initial **social sensitivity** strongly encourages individuals to question and rebel against injustices. Being sensitive, curious, and open to this is one of the fertile grounds that makes future ecological commitment more likely.

On the other hand, **a trip** in the lives of these individuals during their youth has often played a transformative role in shifting their perspectives and questioning norms.

Finally, some individuals have inherent characteristics that we define as non-conformist: they have always had a tendency to deviate from the norm or to reject it.

## > KEY THRESHOLD: DISCOMFORT

This situation of apparent stability gradually begins to waver and a feeling of unease sets in. The "on track" lifestyle can last for a longer or shorter time depending on the individual, but experiencing a feeling of unease is essential for the rest of the journey.

It is a diffuse feeling of shift, of misalignment that triggers the questioning of the current way of life. This key passage sometimes occurs abruptly, sometimes it has already been latent for a long time. It settles in until it becomes uncomfortable, with no possibility of turning away from it. Individuals are then confronted with a **strong need for alignment** and meaning, a certain **malaise**, sometimes **emotional suffering**, episodes of **shock or rejection** as well as sometimes profound moments of **existential crisis**. Sometimes a health concern or a family or social ordeal can play a catalytic role in the malaise.

The timescales for this phase 1 vary from one profile to another. Indeed, having interviewed individuals between the ages of 26 and 86, the exit from this "On track" phase occurred at different points in life, depending on individual but also societal contexts. The exit from this "on track" phase can occur at the beginning of a career or after many years of experience.

***Note:** We have encountered individuals who seem not to have experienced this phase, feeling a malaise since adolescence that led them directly to phase 2 without going through the key passage of malaise. We have created a separate persona, "the non-conformist" (pages 15-16).*

## > THE ROOTS OF THE SHIFT

It is important here to mention certain roots, which sometimes act as predispositions to the shift, developed during the childhood or adolescence of individuals. These roots can be a significant family education, access to nature, early curiosity, a significant trip or even an acute sensitivity to injustices and to the living. These ingredients do not in themselves cause the shift, but prepare a fertile ground, on which the first shifts in the "rail" can germinate. We will not develop these roots further in this report, however this subject may be the subject of a supplementary note later.



Two Hills Model - Phase 1 (On Track)



## DISCOMFORT / SUFFERING

frequent > 50%

"Bathroom, mirror, and then, I say out loud the words, 'I'm not okay.' And all of a sudden, I realise that I'm extremely ill. And at that moment, I realize that for eight years I've been developing a terror, which I've been repressing as much as possible. And there, in front of my mirror, I say to myself, 'I'm extremely ill.'"

"I was working like a maniac. And every Friday night, I was looking for an outlet, which I found in going out to, I think, avoid asking myself the real questions and letting go. It was incredibly unhealthy."

"Before, I had this feeling of a very violent professional space for employees, with very little space for expression where there is something really very pyramidal, which crushes personal initiative, which crushes ideas and which causes a lot of suffering."

## NEED FOR ALIGNMENT AND MEANING

frequent > 50%

"But for me, there was no single turning point, there was an ever-increasing feeling of being fed up and then a search for coherence, which increasingly manifested itself as being non-negotiable in some way."

"I had some difficult moments, in particular a big down phase of questioning a lot of things where I wasn't doing very well and I saw that my work wasn't nourishing me enough, wasn't giving me enough resources and meaning to overcome that episode. I saw that it wasn't what made me tick. So, that was also a bit of a trigger to go and find what made me tick."

## SOCIAL SENSITIVITY

frequent > 50%

"What gives me a lot of emotion and what particularly touches me are a lot of things related to injustice and also a lot of subjects of power relations."

## TRAVELLING

recurring > 33%

"Through this trip, I became aware that everything I did in my life, or what my parents did, weren't really choices... Before, I felt like there was only one way to do things, because when you grew up in that, you don't ask questions, that's how you do it. You get up, you go to work, you grow up, you have children, etc."

## SHOCK/DISGUST/REJECTION

recurring > 33%

"Every morning, I walked past the A86, which was clogged every day, four rows of cars, with only people alone in their cars. There were a few buses, but the buses too, there was only one person in them, it was the driver. And wow...! It really had a strong effect on me, where I said to myself: I'm collaborating on something shitty. I'm collaborating. Really, that's it... I said to myself: this isn't possible, I have to stop."

"The day Nicolas Hulot resigned live on the radio, I remember being paralysed for several hours (...) to think that a Minister of Ecology was leaving the government because he felt powerless and was crying on the radio, that really shocked and upset me."

## EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

recurring > 33%

"That's when I also visualised myself in 30 or 40 years... I often imagine the image of my death, at my funeral, and I have my brother or my friend who comes to the funeral speech. I imagined him saying: "In 40 years, he was a great entrepreneur in tech, he sold a great B2B SaaS software that allowed companies to reduce their management time," when in fact, we are living through one of the worst stories in humanity. It was the kind of electroshock that made me say: this is no longer possible, I have to get off my ass, and for the rest of my life, I will try, in my small way, to contribute to the changes."

## WAKE-UP CALL

recurring > 33%

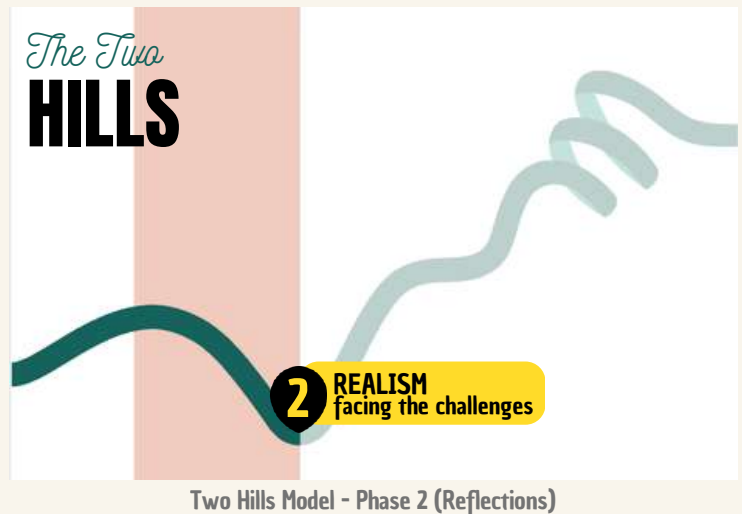
"I was really shocked. I said to myself: 'If this is true, it means that I have false certainties on a major subject. And therefore, there are probably plenty of other certainties and foundations of my beliefs in life that must be false.'"

# PHASE 2: QUESTIONING

The initial discomfort turns into a period of **deep questioning** and therefore **a search for answers**, both **technical, societal and existential**.

It is a period that is **often uncomfortable** with internal tensions because it shakes up, confronts beliefs, and opens new perspectives on the state of the world and the future. It is also exciting because it opens up a wide field of knowledge and discovery.

These realisations **confront individuals head-on with their habits, attitudes and behaviors** established until then, as well as those of people around them.



Certain **ingredients** help the transition from this phase to the next stage of the journey, in particular the **development of skills**, attending **training**, the **confrontation of ideas**, the establishment of a **professional part-time job** or what can be described as **a professional “bandage”** (change of mission, skills sponsorship, continuing training on new subjects, etc.), the **influence of an inspiring person** or **cultural references**.

The individual progresses in his knowledge, this changes his priorities and he arranges his daily life to find small spaces of commitment on his scale.

## > KEY THRESHOLD: FACING REALITY

The second key step is now: realism in the face of the challenges. **Illusions** are shattered, sometimes painfully. The search for information, **training, skills development**, and certain inspiring encounters transform the worldview to a point where individuals feel a need for profound change in order to rebuild on more just, sustainable, and desirable foundations.

It's no longer just a vague malaise or recurring questions. This is the moment when **intuition becomes lucidity**. When what we sensed becomes clear: the world is not turning right, and the socio-ecological issues are profound, critical, and urgent.

This passage opens a powerful inner impulse to get moving.

Some share the role of an article, a film, a workshop, a training, a discussion, or even just a simple number, which acts as a powerful trigger. Others describe a gradual collapse of their beliefs about the notions of progress, growth, or personal success.

This realism, which sometimes acts like a cognitive and sensitive vertigo, triggers a cascade of awareness:

- The socio-economic system is unsustainable in the long term.
- Institutional and collective responses are largely insufficient.
- Their life choices, even well-intentioned ones, often contribute to reproducing the problem.

Individuals are then confronted with **multiple dissonances** (professional, friendly or family), periods of **solitude**, and a form of progressive deconstruction of certain previously anchored beliefs. Peaks of **sharp ecological awareness (or eco-anxiety)** are also frequent during this phase. It is therefore a phase punctuated by difficult moments, but also by a certain relief to finally see things more clearly and to identify levers for action.



## DISSONANCES (work, family, friendships) **almost systematic > 75%**

"At that point, I was still in my job, but it was starting to become complicated to reconcile the two. I had teams, I had to motivate them, inspire them. I was starting to tell stories that I no longer believed in."

"My husband follows me on a lot of points, but he's the one who does the shopping. I don't look, it's better if I don't see, otherwise it hurts me. And then, he takes the plane all the time because his job makes him travel a lot. I close my eyes because otherwise, it hurts me too much."

"What frustrates me the most is a kind of indifference. There's a lot of respect in this group of friends with whom I'm still quite close. I'm the only one who gets involved, which is something that really annoys me."

## QUESTIONS **frequent > 50%**

"I talk a lot about integrity because I was questioning myself about it. Am I being honest about my values? Am I doing things to have a positive impact or just for my own ego? Is it really useful?"

## CONFRONTATION OF IDEAS **frequent > 50%**

"I really think the turning point is starting to take ownership of the issues yourself and wanting to convince others. Going out and discussing with others and comparing my perceptions with those of others."

## FACING REALITY **frequent > 50%**

"Really, there was a point of no return: the more access I had to information, the more impossible it was for me to pretend that nothing was happening."

"There was a moment of great solitude, a great emptiness, where I said to myself: "But how is it possible that we have known since the 70s the emergency in which we are and that in 2019, when I discover this observation that we have done nothing for 50 years, how is that possible?"

## SHARP ECO-AWARENESS and ANXIETY **frequent > 50%**

"The bottom line is pain. Because I see absolutely no way out of the fact that we have a climate that is drifting to a point where things will probably be irrecoverable. After reading and cross-checking information, I have come to this very painful conclusion that it will only be a matter of time and that I am powerless over it."

"As I've trained (...) there are still a lot of things that haven't evolved that quickly. So my eco-anxiety has actually gotten worse and worse year after year."

## SOLITUDE **recurring > 33%**

"There was no one else bringing up these types of issues. The office is a theater of posturing. We all have to show that we are extremely strong. There is no room for weakness."

"There are very few people who share this political vision. I am very alone in my school."

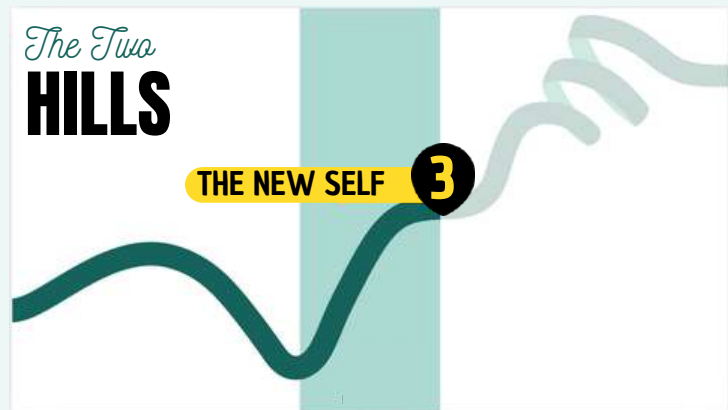
## PART TIME / PROFESSIONAL "BANDAGE" **recurring > 33%**

"Now that I've had part-time work, I've had free afternoons where I've said to myself: "OK, free afternoons, I'm going to devote time to these activities, since I have a much more open slot," volunteering and going to the media library to borrow books and find out more."

# PHASE 3 : EXPLORATION

After an intense awareness phase around the general state of the world, individuals begin a phase of concrete exploration, sometimes even experiencing a form of rebirth.

This is the beginning of the ascent of the second hill, a period teeming with **new experiences**, movements, and personal and collective changes. It **opens up the field of possibilities in an enthusiastic surge** and confronts new collectives that will inspire them.



Two Hills Model - Phase 3 (Exploration)

Certain **ingredients** facilitate the transition from this phase to the next stage of the journey, particularly access to more **free time**.

(transition to part-time or part-time work, unpaid leave, logistical arrangements, etc.).

Individuals also join **communities** (practices, reflections, actions), **learn from peers** (people who are a little more advanced on eco-socio subjects, but not too far away for it to seem accessible to them).

They have access to a **testing ground** in order to **move from theory to practice** and develop or deepen a relationship with a **pair** (or a trio), who will often play a central role as a **tipping partner**.

A certain **financial security**, even temporary, is an equally important ingredient to fully embrace this phase of exploration, ensuring basic needs and opening up the field of possibilities.

## ➤ KEY THRESHOLD: THE NEW SELF

This transition is often not a specific moment; it is gradual, intimate, and sometimes unnoticed at the time. And yet, it permanently transforms the way we look at ourselves and the world.

This is the moment or period when the individual realises that he or she is no longer the same person as before. A new identity emerges: more knowledgeable, conscious, committed, and radical (in the etymological sense of returning to the root of causes and subjects). This key passage marks the profound dimension of the ecological shift phenomenon. It is a profound process that leads to a **multi-factorial identity change** and **often leads to renunciations** (on models of success, on a certain career, on a way of developing relationships, on one's values, on certain postures, etc.).

In this phase of exploration, culminating in the **development of a new identity**, we find mostly positive effects. It is an exciting and inspiring chapter.

The individual touches on a **certain alignment** and meaning, realises **his power to act**, sees his **thinking evolve**, experiences **an evolution of his social circle**, achieves a **better knowledge and self-esteem**, a **strong feeling of freedom** and emancipation, of feeling useful and **contributing to something greater than oneself**.

In our sample, we did not observe any major reversal in the shifting process once the key passage to the new self was reached.

# PHASE 3 : EXPLORATION



## CHANGE OF THOUGHT

almost systematic > 75%

"I deconstructed this dream of the successful entrepreneur to rebuild my own dream, have a more balanced lifestyle and set up entrepreneurial projects that maximize impact before profit."

"Every day, there's news that shocks me on a political and social level. I wasn't like that at all before. Historically, I clearly come from the right, and I've 100% shifted to the left and even the far left. I don't understand how I could have thought differently before."

## ALIGNMENT AND MEANING

almost systematic > 75%

"It's truly a feeling of rebirth. I feel like I have an infinitely richer life, because we're talking truthfully, it's much more relaxing. I'm no longer trying to pretend to be, I am."

"The first few months were incredibly enriching. I was going to events, meeting lots of people all the time, having really interesting discussions with people I didn't know. I felt a connection with these people and I felt like I was speaking the truth like I'd never done before. I finally felt like I was alive."

## EXPERIMENTAL FIELD

frequent > 50%

"I started going to these places and I realised how much going to places and being immersed in places that present alternatives to ecology and living together gave rise to a lot of desires in me. It actually made me become a vegetarian."

"At the very beginning of this moment of change, I set off for two weeks by bike on my own, saying: 'Embody what you want, go, travel.' There, for two weeks I met lots of people who put stars in my eyes, lots of seeds in my head. It proved to me that it was possible, desirable, it was cool. It allowed me to start fueling this new dream of a more eco-friendly lifestyle."

## BE PART OF A COMMUNITY

frequent > 50%

"Faced with all this anxiety, being able to have places where we have the right to talk about this, to be able to transmit this, with people we trust who share our findings, feels good."

"It's exciting to have these types of discussions with peers who will teach you things to take your commitment further, whether on the psychological aspect, the pragmatic aspect of solutions to implement, or even on your way of life. It's inspiring and supportive."

## FREE TIME

frequent > 50%

"I have more time today than before, and above all, I have much more freedom and choice in my daily life, and so typically, I do more sport. It's something you can't buy."

"I went from working 60 hours to 35 hours in a job with lots of responsibilities to a job with fewer responsibilities. I had a lot of freed up time and energy."

## EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL CIRCLE

frequent > 50%

"Obviously, by spending time with new people, you make new friends. I love having committed friends who teach you, who nourish you."

## PAIRING

frequent > 50%

"We don't validate anything. We don't need to validate together how much we're going to earn, whether we're taking our breaks. It's really based on absolute trust in each other. She's the person with whom I practice the most what we try to convey to the outside world. We've gone deep into questions about ego, jealousy, and many other subjects. She's my main mirror for moving forward with myself."

## FEEL USEFUL

recurring > 33%

"It gives meaning to my existence and it gives me joy. The joy of feeling useful in my place. So, I think that as long as I feel useful, like that, I can feel happy."

"Creating projects, building teams, developing activities, that wasn't enough for me. I needed to contribute to repairing, healing, or alleviating the pressure on living things, to find something better, something useful."

# PHASE 4 : ENGAGEMENT & EMBODIMENT

The new identity anchor allows individuals to **take action** with a degree of **assurance** and **confidence**, socially surrounded, with a strong intention of positive impact on the world.

Individuals must make personal and ethical choices, which sometimes involve profound sacrifices and enormous investment, transforming their daily lives.

A form of radicalism is taking hold, in the sense that individuals wish to address the root causes of issues, accompanied by an increasingly systemic vision and sometimes marked expertise.



Two Hills Model - Phase 4 (Engagement and Embodiment)

Certain **ingredients** facilitate the transition from this phase to the next stage of the journey, particularly: **community involvement**, **experimentation with collective life** ranging from the fleeting discovery of eco-places to settling into a shared lifestyle. We also find the development of a culture of cooperation, something new for many individuals until then. It plays a fundamental role in the desire to continue because the **modes of collaboration are then healthier**, more positive, constructive and **leave room for initiatives**.

In this phase, we find a large number of positive effects for the individual. A **strong emergence of joy**, the development of **an entrepreneurial spirit**, a **systemic vision**, the **intention to pass on**, a new **relationship with time and money**, strong **personal development**, more **caring and supportive social relationships**.



## KEY THRESHOLD: OVERDOING

This dynamic is highly embodied, and **difficulties can arise** when the **boundaries of engagement are no longer clear**, leading to overcommitment and sometimes a **feeling of being overwhelmed**. The socio-ecological urgency and the acquired systemic vision sometimes make **the weight of responsibilities** and the desire for impact overwhelming. The **porosity between professional and personal life** becomes difficult to manage.

Over-commitment often marks a break in rhythm, a threshold where the militant momentum, the intensity of the commitment or the desire to be aligned at all costs can reach a form of saturation.

This key passage should not be interpreted as a failure, but rather as an inner alert, a strong signal from the body, mind or relationships, which invites us to slow down and redefine the contours of our commitment. It arises in a phase where the individual, although having found meaning and an anchor in action, forgets himself, risks becoming exhausted or lost in a spiral of impact or self-giving for the benefit of the cause he defends.

This key passage marks an often necessary stage of maturity in commitment and opens the need to take a step back and accept a phase of slowing down in order to move towards a new balance.

# PHASE 4 : ENGAGEMENT & INCARNATION



## JOY

almost systematic > 75%

"It's an impressive, social, cultural effervescence. A place where we experiment a lot with collective life, with the approach to daily sobriety, things that we don't internalise in a traditional life where we don't ask ourselves these questions. It's very joyful."

## SNOWBALL EFFECT

almost systematic > 75%

"Everything we've learned about this place, about its development, about what worked and what didn't, we'd like to make available so that other project leaders can repeat more or less similar projects elsewhere."

## INTENTION TO TRANSMIT

almost systematic > 75%

"We were motivated by the desire to build something to spread information. We really had a common motivation to share."

## EXPERIMENTING WITH COOPERATIVE MODELS

almost systematic > 75%

"Being part of a collective project and a project of living together is very important to me, and I discovered this emulation. I said to myself, 'Yeah! We're doing important things together.'"

## VOLUNTEERING FOR A COMMUNITY

almost systematic > 75%

"I went from working 60 hours to 35 hours in a job with lots of responsibilities to one with fewer responsibilities. I had a lot of free time and energy. That's when I took the opportunity to volunteer once a week after work."

## ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

almost systematic > 75%

"We practice what we call self-management. That is to say, if we think we have a good idea and that it is consistent with the association's overall operating rules, we go for it, which offers a lot of freedom and proactivity."

## CULTURE OF COOPERATION

frequent > 50%

"Having this common background and this common language fosters cooperation. Having each experienced it because we have gone through similar training allows us to put a lot of things into practice here, and to do so with trust and sincere joy."

## RELATIONSHIP TO TIME

frequent > 50%

"I'm much more in control of my time and I've become aware that the real constraint in life is time. And in my previous life, I didn't have time and little freedom."

## DEEP SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

frequent > 50%

"It's the strong connection with people and networking that brings a lot of joy. On your own, it's sometimes not enough, but doing it with others and in joy, in connection and knowing that we can encourage each other, I really feel that that's the most powerful impulse."

## OVERWHELMING

frequent > 50%

"It's tiring me out and stressing me out. My patience buffer is starting to get depleted. So, inevitably, when I get home, it's my loved ones who get hit in the face. So, it's not cool. It's not what I want to experience. I also see the signals my body is sending me."

## CONTRIBUTE TO SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOURSELF

frequent > 50%

"Actually, it doesn't really matter whether it's possible or not. My position is: if it were possible, it would be really stupid not to try. I'm fine with taking on this task, this cause."

"It's not at all a dissonance and living with this contrast which is that it's shit on a planetary level, but we are together to be better and to try to make it less shitty. It's still a noble cause, to contribute to that."

# PHASE 5 : ALIGNMENT

We are now entering the final phase of the model, Alignment.

Individuals are able to achieve a state of balance between the urgency of changing things and the limits of their power to act. The weight of the burden on their shoulders, that of "changing the world," is considerably reduced, which is accompanied by a new evolution in their way of being in the world. This is a phase of great maturity.



Two Hills Model - Phase 5 (Alignment)



## KEY THRESHOLD: BALANCE

Often after a period of overflow that has led them to have to readjust their relationship to commitment, they seek and find their place in a balanced way, know their limits and assume certain compromises, which induces adjustments in their commitment and desire to "change the world". To use the words shared during an interview, it is no longer so much a question here of "saving the world", but rather of saving the world, while maintaining a strong clarity on the issues at stake.

In this phase of alignment, we find a **"let go" attitude**, the feeling of **finding a just and peaceful place**, an **acceptance** of the fact that it is not possible to change the world on one's own scale but that simply contributing to it by **accepting its limits** is necessary to be happy. It is sometimes a new form of mourning. Individuals become free again, anchored in their convictions, and no longer the object of a struggle. This does not mean that they no longer act, quite the contrary, simply their modes of action evolve.

There is a **change in attitude, less moralising** and more in the care of relationships, which often results in **inspiration from those around them** and a certain **recognition from their loved ones**. This phase is also marked by a form of **serenity towards the future**.

The desire to achieve this new state of balance induces certain **adjustments and compromises** in their lifestyle, their relationship to the world and a form of necessary and **intentional self-protection**, which reflects a certain **maturity in their relationship to the world** and to themselves. This phase is therefore not an end, nor even a linearity, but rather a cyclical process where individuals juggle between alignment and the return to the commitment of the previous phase, gaining maturity with each cycle.



## SPIRALLING TOWARDS BALANCE

In the Alignment phase, the path ceases to be linear. It becomes spiral. It is not a linear continuity, nor a return to the past, but a succession of enriched returns, like an ascending progression where each loop builds on the previous one. Individuals who reach this stage no longer seek to prove, convince, or transform everything. They assume an anchored commitment, integrated into their daily lives, where radicalism sometimes becomes gentler, without losing clarity and strength. This opens a form of intentional slowing down that can be accompanied by a joyful lucidity.

**It's not a vicious circle, it's a virtuous spiral.**

The spiral signifies that we revisit certain stages of our lives, but with a broader, calmer, more mature vision. We sometimes fall back into doubt or an overabundance of commitments, but we react more quickly, with new resources. It is not a single summit reached, but a living movement, which reconciles interiority and action, self-care and care of the world.

# PHASE 5 : ALIGNMENT



## LET GO

almost systematic > 75%

"I feel that I have a form of confidence, a confidence in the future. I can't know, at my level, what will happen exactly and how it will happen in the coming years, and it will surely be difficult. So I might as well live as best I can today by being aligned."

"It's a form of protection because we're in action, it protects us from eco-anxiety because at least we feel like we're being useful and doing something in the right direction. I'm also in a form of letting go of these things that I feel are beyond me, I do things at my level and make choices at my level, which seem to me to be the right ones."

## MAKING COMPROMISES

almost systematic > 75%

"One of the questions is where do you place the cursor each time? Sometimes, you'll put it very far in a very radical and systemic questioning of the system. Sometimes, you'll accept more compromises."

## DOING YOUR PART

frequent > 50%

"I choose a solution, I choose a way to move forward. I choose my little hummingbird stone. It really makes sense, I am firmly anchored in the fact that it makes sense. Now, I move forward with it and I don't need to re-examine it every three minutes. That's soothing."

## INSPIRE THOSE AROUND YOU

frequent > 50%

"Actually, it's quite funny because if I take the example of the family, they have evolved a lot in two years on this issue. They consider themselves to be flexitarians. They started a process on their own just because I confronted them with it."

"Seeing a friend, then two in the group of school friends who become vegetarians, who change their habits... I think that my commitment triggers a domino effect."

## SERENITY AND HOPE

recurring > 33%

"Today, I am much more serene about the relationship between my actions and my behaviors in relation to this subject that animates me, the place of humans in the global ecosystem. That doesn't mean that I am satisfied with what is happening either, but my own actions respond to my agitations, and therefore calm them."

"This project has changed my vision of things in the sense that, in fact, this project, for me, materialises and makes concrete the fact that yes, it is possible to live differently, to create society differently, to inhabit differently. It makes this possible. It's the first time that I've seen a project work with shared governance, with self-management, with a collective that goes beyond conflicts."

## FINDING YOUR PLACE

recurring > 33%

"For me, to be at peace, I tell myself that we are where we need to be. That we could have been in many places that would not have contributed to acting to fight against these crises and for these issues, and that, in this case, we made a choice."

"I finally feel like I've found a place where I can make a difference on my own scale and do something useful. I'm also enjoying doing it; I'm learning a lot. I'm meeting some really cool people, and I'm feeling proud and positive about it."

## ECO-ANXIETY CARE

recurring > 33%

"Today, at the end of 2023, I don't consider myself to be eco-anxious about the issues and considered by the gravity and urgency of the situation. It doesn't worry me more than that now because I know that I am in a situation in which I am doing my best to the best of my abilities and also on different scales."

## SELF-PROTECTION

punctual < 33%

"I'm in a form of voluntary denial. To be able to live, I quickly realised that I had to protect myself from certain readings, from certain sources of information. Otherwise, it's too hard."

# CLASSIFICATION OF VARIABLES



Here is a summary table of the main research variables, sorted by phase and according to their representation rate. This is an excerpt of the most represented variables out of a total of 200. We divided the variables into four categories: Quasi-systematic (>75% coverage among interviewees), Frequent (>50%), Recurrent (>33%) and Punctual (<33%).

	<b>QUASI-SYSTEMATIC</b> <b>&gt; 75%</b>	<b>FREQUENT</b> <b>&gt; 50%</b>	<b>RECURRENT</b> <b>&gt; 33%</b>
<b>PHASE 1: ON TRACK</b>	-	Discomfort / Suffering	Travelling
	-	Need for alignment and meaning	Shock / Disgust / Rejection
	-	Social sensitivity	Existential crisis
	-	Non-conformism	Wake-up call
<b>PHASE 2: QUESTIONING</b>	Dissonances (work, family, friendships)	Cultural and media reference	Solitude
	Facing reality	Confrontation of ideas	Part-time and professional "bandage"
	Questions	Sharp eco-awareness and anxiety	Need a community
	Skills development	Inspiring person	Need to slow down
<b>PHASE 3 : EXPLORATION</b>	Change of thought	Experimenting	Well-being and health
	Alignment and meaning	Be part of a community	Feeling useful
	Action and power to act	Free time	Self-confidence
	Enthusiasm	Evolution of the social circle	Lag with family
	Freedom	Peer learning	-
	Financial security	Buddy	-

# CLASSIFICATION OF VARIABLES



	<b>QUASI-SYSTEMATIC</b> <b>&gt; 75%</b>	<b>FREQUENT</b> <b>&gt; 50%</b>	<b>RECURRENT</b> <b>&gt; 33%</b>
<b>PHASE 4 : ENGAGEMENT ET EMBODIMENT</b>	Joy	Culture of cooperation	Self-knowledge
	Snowball effect	Relationship with time	Social links
	Intention to transmit	Supportive relationships	Eco-place
	Volunteering for a community	Contribute to something greater than yourself	The evolution of one's needs
	Entrepreneurial mindset	Overwhelm	Renunciations
	Experimenting with cooperative models	Relationship with money	-
	Impact	Systemic vision	-
	Pro-Perso Blend	Radicality	-
<b>PHASE 5 : ALIGNMENT</b>	Letting go	Serenity and hope	Recognition of loved ones
	Making compromises	Doing your part	Finding your place
	-	Inspiration from the surroundings	Eco-anxiety care
	-	Non-moralistic posture	Political commitment
	-	Self-esteem	Relationship to power
	-	-	Thinking local

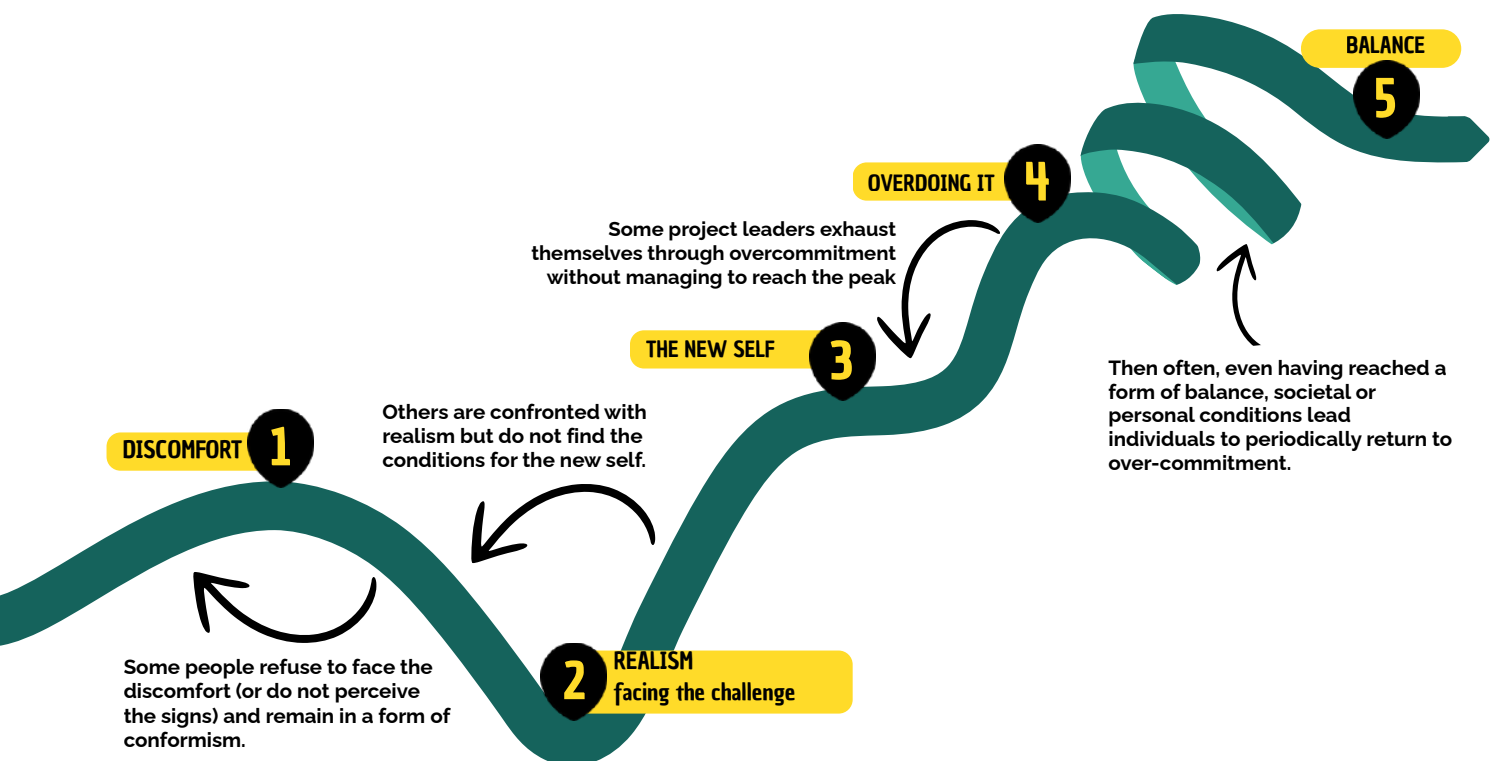
# A NUANCED MODEL

The two-hills model requires a nuanced reading inherent in human dynamics. It is not a normative grid and does not claim to fix the trajectories of individuals who tip over.

It pays tribute to people who decide to radically change their way of being in the world, their relationships with others and themselves. The model brings to life their stories of transformation and commitment by recognizing certain back-and-forths or doubts in their journeys.

However, **once the plateau of the "new self" is reached, it is probably irreversible**: the identity change is so profound that we have not observed any turning back, beyond a few compromises and adjustments. The balance of the last phase, however, remains in almost permanent **tension**. This is all the more the case in a society marked by instability, which implies **re-engagements of individuals at certain times** (geopolitical, democratic or economic crises, environmental disasters, etc.). Certain personal life events such as parenthood or the experience of a health concern are also elements that can favor these spiral movements. In addition, the chronic and irreversible degradation of the conditions of planetary sustainability also generates rebounds of sharp eco-awareness state.

The path of the two hills remains open and **has no end point**: alignment takes place through attempts and adjustments, in the trajectory of a balance between **impact and well-being**.



The experience of socio-ecological change therefore does not systematically follow a linear progression but embraces the complex movements of human experience and therefore a certain diversity.

Like **Sisyphus** condemned to rolling his stone endlessly, some people engaged in a profound transition experience back and forths, relapses, moments of exhaustion, surges of resistance or doubts which encourage them to relive previous phases.

In the case of socio-ecological shifts, **these steps backward are not in vain**: they contribute to the transformation and promote greater maturity in the paths of engagement as well as **better self-knowledge**.

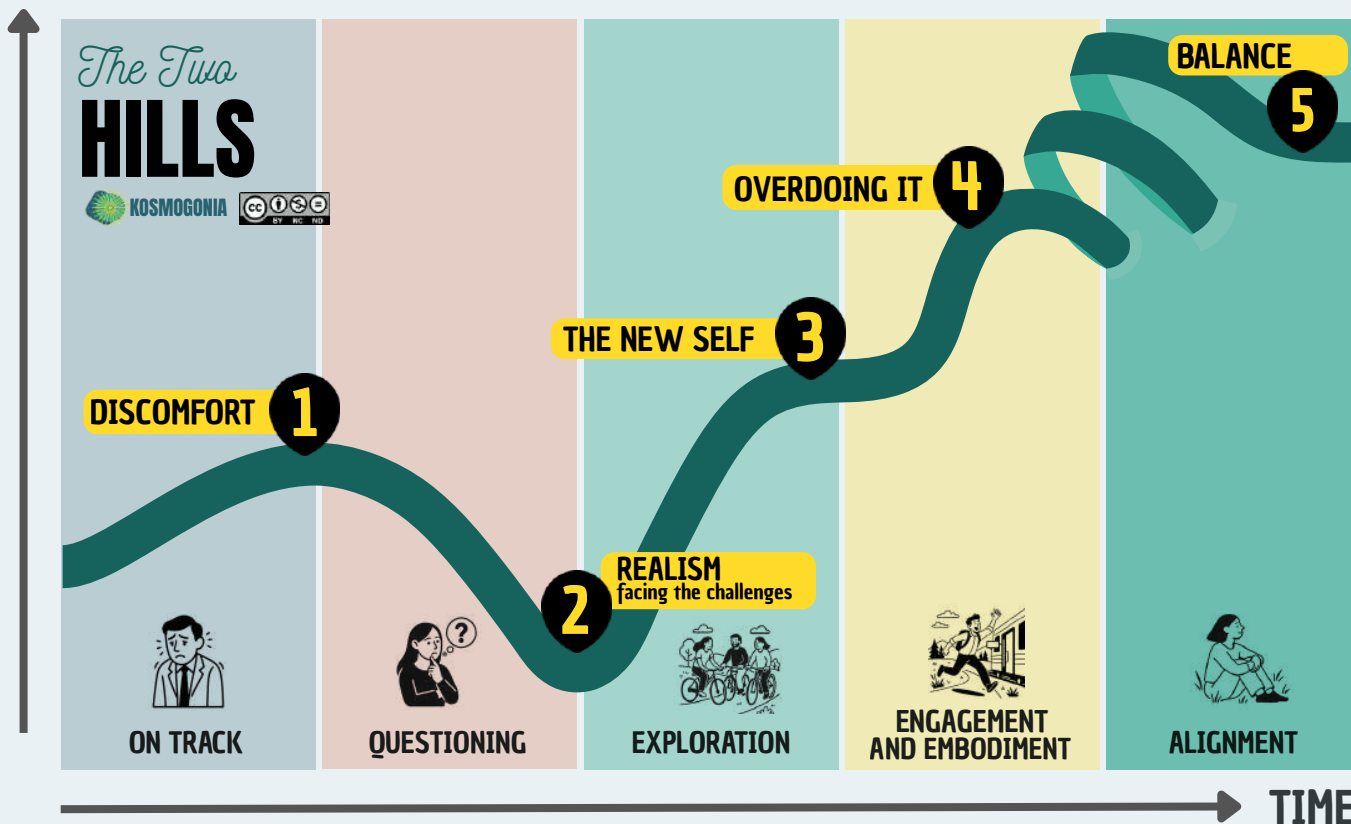
These paths must be imagined as evolving spirals rather than a fixed posture, particularly for the last phase of the model.

Each of these episodes allows us to question the foundations of our choices, to revisit our convictions, our life ethics, and to readjust our practices. Far from a linear or sacrificial heroism, the Sisyphus of the socio-ecological shift is not tragic. **It is resolutely alive.**



# IN-DEPTH READING

## AGENCY



We have decided not to indicate coordinate axes (abscissa and ordinate) on the generic image of the model in order to prioritize its symbolic scope and simplify its reading. However, it is important here to provide some clarifications.

The image above represents the Two-Hills model along two fundamental axes.

- ➔ **The horizontal axis (abscissa)** represents time, that is, the chronological progression of the individual's journey, without it being linear or universal. It is not proportional, that is, the duration of each phase is subjective and varies from one individual to another.
- ➔ **The vertical axis (ordinate)** represents agency. This term is derived from the Latin root *agere* and refers to the ability of an individual or group to be the source of actions that have an effect on the world. We can also represent it as the power to act (on oneself, on others, and on the world).

The higher one climbs the two-hills (the equivalent of altitude), the more the individual develops a sense of right action consistent with their values and deep aspirations. Conversely, low or descending areas signal periods of misalignment, doubt, or even crisis.

This double marker allows us to visualise how socio-ecological transition paths oscillate and alternate between zones of temporary ascents and descents. Using the image of two hills, it is a series of unevennesses that litter the life paths undertaken.

Through this reading and by integrating the spiral dynamics during phase 5, we understand that the model is neither fixed nor linear, but reflects the living tension between inner transformation and commitment to the world.

# A NARRATIVE READING OF THE MODEL

Taking a step back, the Two-Hills model can be seen in the tradition of great stories of human transformation, like the monomyth or hero's journey described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

## PARALLELS BETWEEN THE HERO'S JOURNEY AND THE TWO-HILLS

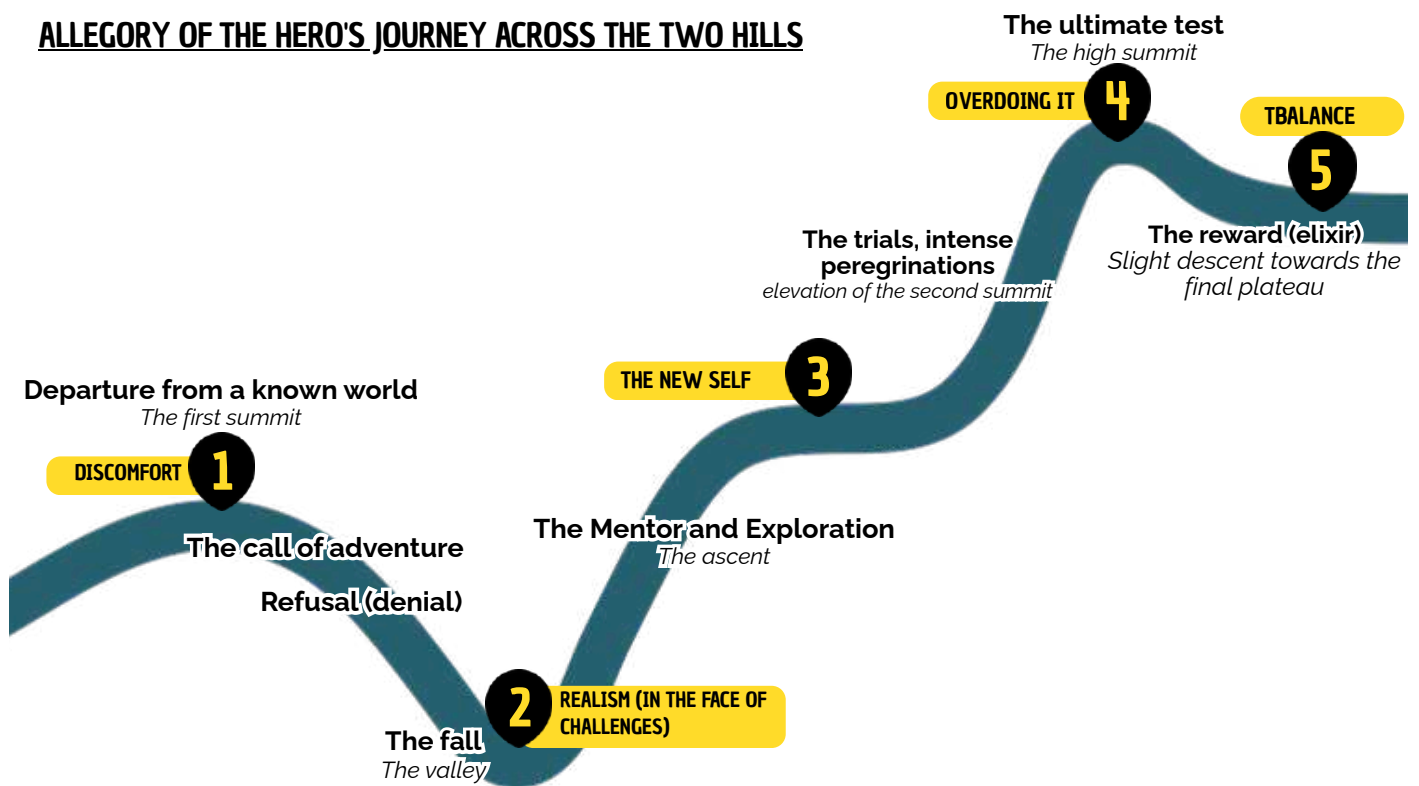
The hero's journey consists of 3 main phases:

- **Departure:** The hero leaves his ordinary world following a call to adventure for a new world.
- **Initiation:** he goes through multiple trials which transform him profoundly.
- **Return:** he returns transformed, bringing new wisdom (elixir in the fantastic vision).

The Two-Hills model reflects a similar structure:

- **On track:** the initial phase where the individual follows a pre-established trajectory, in the "ordinary world".
- **Questions:** the emergence of doubts and challenges, a call to adventure.
- **Exploration:** the crossing of the valley, representing the trials that shape his new identity.
- **Commitment & Embodiment:** the integration of new knowledge and values that he experiences.
- **Alignment:** an evolution towards a mature and peaceful vision, bringing about a profound and inspiring transformation.

## ALLEGORY OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY ACROSS THE TWO HILLS



The Two-Hills model updates the monomyth in a contemporary reading:

- It is anchored in contemporary stories based on a field study of life stories.
- It emphasises the socio-ecological dimension of life paths.
- It offers a topographic visualisation of two hills separated by a valley, which provides a visual and symbolic representation of the transformation journey.

We can therefore draw parallels between the Two-Hills model and the Hero's Journey, offering an accessible and popular reading of the trajectories of socio-ecological shifts. It allows us to understand the stages, challenges and resources mobilised, while highlighting the collective, bold and sometimes epic dimensions of the life paths undertaken.

# PART 3

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- 35-37** Model and sample specifics
- 38-40** Literature review and bibliography
- 41-43** Continuing research
- 44-45** Distribution and license of use
- 46** Thanks
- 47-48** Glossary

# THE SAMPLE AND ITS SPECIFICITIES 1/3

## THE PRIORITY CHOICE OF PROJECT LEADERS OR INITIATORS

In order to anchor our research in rich and profound stories, **we have chosen to primarily interview those who are carrying out or initiating ecological and social projects.**

**This bias can be explained by several reasons:**

- First, a desire for inspiration: meeting those who are working concretely allowed us to nourish our own commitment and to explore trajectories of shifts experienced in an intense and embodied way.
- Then, this methodological choice aimed to have more complete material collected: these people, often at the origin of the projects, are able to trace the overall history of the initiative, its tensions, its developments, its bifurcations.
- Finally, this filter allowed us to further ensure that the people interviewed were truly engaged, beyond a few pro-environmental behaviors.

In some cases, when possible, we supplemented these interviews with ethnographic immersions, formal or informal exchanges with active members, employees or other stakeholders.

The aim was to interview people who had made a conscious, profound and lasting choice to transform their lives, with a high level of knowledge of the issues and a demanding and embodied implementation. This conscious selection choice reinforces the internal coherence of our analysis, while nevertheless placing limits on the generalisation of the results.

## SAMPLE LIMITS

Although Kosmogonia's approach includes life stories from **non-Western contexts**, including the **Deep South and non-white people**, it is important to highlight particularities in the sampling.

Indeed, **the people interviewed are those who could be identified and responded positively to a research interview.** They therefore naturally have characteristics that allow them to grasp the interest of the research. They also know how to make themselves visible, are generally networked with other actors, and have a general command of English. They may therefore have been able to benefit from **certain socio-economic privileges**: studies, skilled professions, cultural heritage and sometimes access to international networks. This allowed them to get involved, to change their life trajectory, to undertake and thus to be identified by the Kosmogonia research teams.

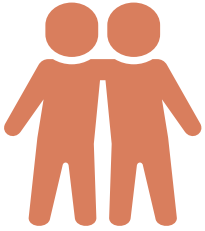


**Even those profiles that might be considered disadvantaged have, in their context, specific resources or levers,** inherited or acquired over the course of their lives. These privileges take on their full meaning when placed in the social and geographical context specific to each individual. They are therefore absolute (objectively measurable) or positional (relative to the situation of others in the same social environment).

In other words, we chose to primarily interview project leaders. The people interviewed were those who identified with **the profile, considered themselves legitimate to speak, and validated interviews on their own. These are therefore mostly profiles who have a certain ease in expressing their capabilities.** It should also be noted that the interviews conducted are only **a part of many other requests made**, without responses. Other research and data collection can continue the analysis. We discuss these prospects for further research on pages 41-43 of this report. Finally, **we did not have a dedicated budget or direct institutional support** for the identification of profiles and international logistics. We managed sourcing independently, thanks to online research, contacts via international networks, and rebound networking. We were faced with many contacts left unanswered. This is one of the reasons for the preponderance of French profiles in the sample.

# THE SAMPLE AND ITS SPECIFICITIES 2/3

## SPECIFICITY OF PROXIMITY AND ACCESS



Part of the initial sample was drawn from activist, associative, academic, or professional networks in which we were involved in France. This facilitated the identification of initial profiles and the quality of the interview relationship, implying a specificity of proximity. Some authentic and intimate sharing of life stories was probably facilitated by this privileged and confidential relationship, which probably helped to avoid biases of embellished stories. When we left France (and more broadly Western Europe), the opportunities for meetings were more tedious and sometimes delicate.

## GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SPECIFICITIES LINKED TO EURASIA



Our sample is exclusively composed of people encountered in around ten countries in Europe and Asia, geographical areas that we traveled through as part of our land travel (train and bus). These contexts share certain cultural heritages and offer very contrasting sociopolitical configurations.

This Eurasian terrain allowed us to explore tipping points in very different environments, sometimes repressive or sometimes favorable to experimentation on the socio-ecological theme, but it also induces limits.

In particular, the stories collected come mainly from educated, mobile people connected to alternative or activist networks. This influences both their comfort and desire to talk about it, and their access to certain resources (time, cultural capital, networks). Also noteworthy is the strong preponderance of French profiles (nearly two-thirds of the sample).

## SPECIFICITIES OF "SUCCESSFUL" SHIFTS



By interviewing primarily people who are now "settled" in their commitment, we obviously focused on trajectories perceived as successful. This could be likened to "survivorship bias." Although partially represented, stories of stagnation, failure, backsliding, or ambivalence remain less prevalent. However, they are part of our study scope and are crucial for understanding the complexity of these journeys.

To address this risk of analytical under-representation, additional research projects are planned to explore these more ambivalent narratives, and our interactive conferences will include times for discussion and qualitative collection on these less visible but equally structuring dimensions.

## AN ACTIVE ROLE OF RESPONDENTS IN THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

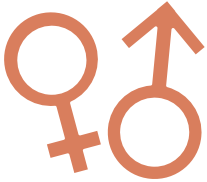


The sample is made up of individuals who, for some, have a reflective practice, or even an activity of transmission or analysis (training, facilitation, action research, writing, etc.).

This sometimes makes them co-producers of knowledge: their stories are not always "raw," but sometimes already interpreted, organized, or even pre-theorized. This reflexivity of certain participants in turn nourishes our own investigative stance. This often reinforces the density and depth of the data, but must be taken into account as an element of subjectivation of knowledge.

# THE SAMPLE AND ITS SPECIFICITIES 3/3

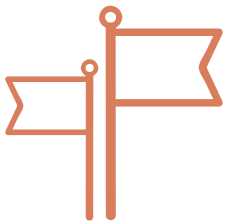
## GENDER SPECIFICITIES



Our sample includes around 40% women, a relatively low figure when we consider that women are more committed than men to social and ecological issues (IFOP for CESE, 2023).

This underrepresentation in our sample may be linked to structural factors: women are often very present in engagement, but less visible in positions of responsibility or public speaking, which may limit their access to the networks from which we recruited. Although we actively sought to counterbalance this imbalance by diversifying our recruitment approaches, this was not always possible.

## SPECIFICITY OF NATIONALITIES



Our sample shows a markedly unbalanced distribution of nationalities surveyed: 65% of respondents are French. This overrepresentation is explained by the project's launch in France in 2023, where the first phase of data collection took place. Furthermore, it is clear that French dynamism has been unique in recent years on socio-ecological issues. This context has facilitated access to an already existing network, as well as greater logistical ease for conducting interviews.

This distribution is assumed but may limit the intercultural scope of the analysis as it stands. In 2024, we opened an international approach with interviews conducted in England, Hungary, Turkey, Georgia, Kazakhstan, China, and Laos in order to broaden perspectives, integrate contrasting socio-economic contexts, and open the comparison to other cultures. This new data made it possible to complete and nuance the trends from the French sample. It will be relevant to continue this international opening to fully test the model with a fully international sample.

It should also be noted that the French associative fabric is particularly fertile, structured and visible, notably through the legal structure of the 1901 law as well as relative government support and a civil society that is largely in favor of the ecological transition. These elements facilitate the structuring of committed organisations, unlike the majority of other countries crossed where the dynamics of engagement exist but are often more diffuse, informal, less recognised or sometimes even limited or severely restricted.

## STRUCTURAL SPECIFICITIES



Nearly half of those surveyed are stakeholders in associations (44%), which reflects the central place of this format, particularly in France.

In other countries visited, the forms of engagement are sometimes more individual or professional. This confrontation with the reality on the ground may be a limit to the diversity of the forms of organisation represented in our sample.

## CONCLUSION

**Specificities are inherent in any research project.** The challenge is not to eliminate them, but to identify them, to explain them rigorously, and to make the methodological choices that underlie them visible. Moreover, our sample is not so much **a selection bias as a reflection of the current sociology of impact entrepreneurship**: a universe strongly structured around long-term higher education diplomas (baccalaureate/A-level+5 years in high studies), predominantly male, and anchored in European or French-speaking networks. **This observation therefore calls less for questioning the methodology than for questioning the inclusiveness of the ecosystem itself.**

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## ACADEMIC REFERENCES

We draw on the theoretical framework of individual bifurcations (*Otto Scharmer's Theory U - 2009*), the *Transtheoretical Model of Change* by Prochaska & DiClemente - 1983, and the *Self-Determination Theory* by Deci & Ryan - 1985), while considering that in our case, they are integrated into a socio-ecological project driven by knowledge of the state of planetary emergency and critical systemic risks. We therefore join the emerging framework of socio-ecological shifts and bring new elements to it.

## POSITIONING VERSUS OTHER EXISTING MODELS

The Two-Hills model brings a new perspective to certain existing models of individual and collective transformation, such as Theory U, the Kübler-Ross grief curve, Self-Determination Theory, the transtheoretical model or the Dynamic Spiral. While assuming a certain complementarity and the relevance of a cross-reading, the Two-Hills model is distinguished by its methodological construction, its immersion field of study with profiles specifically focused on the theme of socio-ecological engagement and its anchoring in contemporary life stories.

By embracing certain similarities and resonances with certain existing models, the Two-Hills model opens a new field of research and provides keys to understanding a contemporary phenomenon that has still been little studied through scientific research.

### **Anchoring in lived experience**

The Two-Hills model is the result of a qualitative study based on around a hundred narratives. This approach gives the model a deeply embodied dimension, reflecting the lived realities of individuals, unlike the models of Theory U (Otto Scharmer - 2009) or Spiral Dynamics (Clare W. Graves, Don Beck and Christopher Cowan - 1996) which are above all conceptual models, constructed from general observations or typological approaches, without relying on an in-depth analysis of individual life stories. For its part, Self-Determination Theory (SDT Deci & Ryan - 1985) sheds light on the motivations of the stages of individual change, while the Two-Hills model illustrates the concrete trajectories of individuals, in a narrative and contemporary manner.

### **Allegorical visualisation of the transformation journey**

Clare W. Graves' Spiral Dynamics describes, in psychology, the evolution of individual and collective value systems through a series of stages corresponding to hierarchical levels of development. The Two-Hills model, on the other hand, offers a non-hierarchical visual representation of the process of socio-ecological transition, holistically integrating the different aspects of human life (relationships, work, cognitive development, spirituality, etc.)

### **Holistic and profound scope of change**

Unlike the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), which focuses on the evolution of specific behaviors according to a sequential logic (e.g., weaning, eco-gestures, new habits), the Two-Hills model explores a process of global identity transformation. It is not about acquiring virtuous behaviour, but about reconfiguring one's way of being in the world. Whereas the transtheoretical model describes intentional and measurable transitions, our model highlights complex, affective, and systemic pathways, often rooted in life stories. The result is a more radical, profound, and holistic vision of change.

### **A field of research specific to the socio-ecological subject**

The Two-Hills model is distinguished by a field of research centered on life stories engaged in socio-ecological transition. Unlike the grief curve (Kübler-Ross, 1969), which originated in a clinical context—that of patients at the end of their lives—and was constructed to model the emotional stages linked to loss, our model is anchored in experiences of voluntary and existential transformation in the face of contemporary systemic crises.

Although the Kübler-Ross curve has been used metaphorically in certain social or ecological contexts, this transposition remains theoretical and has little empirical basis.

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# CONTINUED RESEARCH (1/3)



The Two-Hills model provides a synthetic and visual representation of a process of deep socio-ecological engagement. It is one of the fruits of the Kosmogonia research program, on the broad theme of socio-ecological shifts.

In the future, further research is expected, which could lead to new theoretical models and new academic articles. The Two-Hills model is destined to be confronted with new terrains, tested, refined, and refined. It thus opens up **new avenues for research**.

## DIVERSIFY THE PROFILES ENCOUNTERED

A first perspective consists of extending the diversity of life paths analysed, in order to better represent the plurality of social, cultural and geographical contexts. The current corpus, although already varied, remains marked by a high proportion of people from so-called upper social categories (when placed in their national context), educated, living mainly in urban or peri-urban areas, and already relatively close to committed or activist circles.

To go further, it will be relevant to meet profiles from rural areas, racialised people, so-called working or precarious classes. This also implies a focus on the Global South, where the dynamics of change can take other forms, be less visible or expressed differently.

Some examples of questions to ask for this additional collection: how is an ecological shift experienced in a context of resource scarcity? We had the opportunity to have several meetings in Asia of this type that the model has not yet fully explored.

## UNDERSTANDING NON-FAILURE CASES

Another relevant perspective is to interview individuals who do not shift, even though they seem to possess the ingredients and fertile sociological ground for doing so. What happens when a person "checks the right boxes" among those we have mentioned in this report, but does not structurally transform their life to the point of initiating a transformation? What are the blockages? The resistances? The factors of immobility?

These trajectories, which could be described as stagnation, refusal, or denial—whether temporary or assumed—constitute a valuable mirror of the Two-Hills model. They could help identify the negative or inhibiting conditions of the socio-ecological shift, and make visible what the model does not yet sufficiently model (even if it already evokes and nuances it): the gray areas, the blind spots, the potential for strong reversals, the variables of brakes and immobility.

## ANALYSE UNSUCCESSFUL OR ABORTED SHIFTS

In addition to the previous point, another angle of analysis deserves to be developed: that of aborted, prevented or incomplete shifts. These life paths where the momentum towards radical transformation is interrupted or fails, probably leaving its mark.

Why do some attempts fail? What are the ingredients of this failure? What was missing? By investigating these aborted paths and assuming that they exist, we could enrich our understanding of the difficult and "dark" side of the shift.

# CONTINUED RESEARCH (2/3)

## STUDYING THE COLLECTIVE EFFECTS OF THE SHIFT

Socio-ecological shifts are never strictly individual. Many of the individuals interviewed spoke of a certain snowball effect of positive dissemination and described how their own transformation had a ripple effect, a "positive contamination" and inspiration on their private and professional circles, and more broadly on organisations.

The analysis of these collective links opens up an exciting field of research: under what conditions does an individual shift become contagious? What relational or emotional mechanisms must be activated so that those around them can set in motion the desirable conditions for a shift in their turn?

Furthermore, it would be relevant to undertake dedicated research on the scale of activist circles, in order to identify how individual shifts influence or not collective dynamics. Then, beyond that, what are the interlinkages and knock-on effects on local, territorial, and national scales? By studying these perspectives, we will ask the question of the socio-political role of the socio-ecological shift. This is a field of research that we will open in 2026.

## STUDY THE APPLICATION OF THE MODEL AT THE ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

Another promising avenue lies in applying the Two-Hills model at the organisational level. It would be relevant to identify whether there are similar phases at the level of a group or organisations in transition. Work and reflection on this topic are underway.

Is there an "organisational malaise," a phase of collective exploration, or an organisational overflow? The model could potentially become a self-analysis tool for organisations themselves, to better understand their own transformation cycles. Adapting the model's phases to organisations would allow for strategic thinking on systemic socio-ecological transformation, well beyond the individual.

## TESTING THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE MODEL OUTSIDE THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FIELD

The Two-Hills model was designed to analyse life shifts in the socio-ecological domain. But other trajectories of profound change could follow a similar logic. The models cited above (Theory U, the Kübler-Ross grief curve) are sometimes used in the context of socio-ecological transition, without being initially applied to it.

We can therefore consider the opposite approach with the Two-Hills model: applying it to other typologies of transformations. Could its phases and key thresholds be transposed to areas other than socio-ecological issues?

Testing the model in other fields (professional, spiritual, class transition, etc.) would allow us to verify its conceptual robustness and ultimately contribute to a broader sociological analysis and understanding.



This Two-Hills model is therefore not an end in itself, but a new framework for interpretation.

It opens up numerous avenues and perspectives for practical application as well as continued research in the coming years. **Always with a dual aim: to advance knowledge and make it available to those who take action.**

# CONTINUED RESEARCH (3/3)

## A QUANTITATIVE DEEPENING

The qualitative study conducted as part of Kosmogonia is based on the detailed analysis of more than 90 life stories and 150 participants in total (individual interviews and focus groups) constructed through long and open interviews. This narrative richness allowed us to bring out variables, conceptualisations and dynamics of socio-ecological shifts that we structured within an inductive analytical framework. These results provide valuable insight into the trajectories of individual transformation, in their depth and diversity.

However, **this approach does not aim to produce statistics that can be generalised** to the entire population. It reveals trends within our corpus, but does not allow us to measure their actual frequency in society (because the sample is not representative), nor to rigorously prove correlations between variables.

This is why **a complementary quantitative approach** would constitute a fruitful continuation of the research. By drawing on the qualitative results already consolidated (typologies, variables, tipping scenarios), it would be possible to construct an exploratory questionnaire disseminated on a wider scale.

This additional work will allow:

- **to test the robustness of the model** in other social, geographical or cultural contexts
- to objectify certain trends observed in the qualitative study (frequency, intensity, overlaps)
- **to identify correlations or structural effects** (age, gender, level of education, territory, etc.) likely to influence the shifts
- **to contribute to the emergence of a broader mapping** of the dynamics of individual ecological transformation, useful for researchers, institutions, trainers or actors of change.

This articulation between qualitative data and quantitative approach will strengthen the external validity of our results, while respecting their sensitive and situated anchoring.

It would be part of a mixed research approach, still rare in the field of socio-ecological transitions, but particularly suited to exploring both the embodied singularities of the stories and the quantitative scale of the phenomenon.



## EXAMPLES OF QUANTITATIVE PURSUITS

- ➔ **Representative survey:** construct a questionnaire inspired by the variables of each phase of the Two-Hills model and distribute it to a large sample to measure their coverage.
- ➔ **Modeling trajectories:** developing a model coupling social parameters and qualitative individual variables to test their impact on shifts, using our qualitative empirical data.
- ➔ **Territorial simulation:** applying a resilience or socio-ecological well-being index to different communities, cross-referencing the results with the Deux Collines model.

To carry out these research pursuits, the Kosmogonia team will be keen to work in partnership and close collaboration with other committed projects sharing the intention of combining research and teaching.

# INTENTIONS OF KOSMOGONIA WORK'S DIFFUSION

## RESEARCH WORK



### THE TWO-HILLS MODEL

This model is intended to be alive, disseminated and confronted with other fields. It is made available under a Creative Commons license (see details on the next page).

### SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES

Writing scientific articles is an integral part of the Kosmogonia program. Beyond this model, many research themes are explored in depth and published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Learn more at [kosmogonia.org](https://kosmogonia.org)

➤ **Kosmogonia welcomes researchers who wish to get involved in the collective and publish on the themes of socio-ecological shifts.**

## TEACHING FORMATS



### LIVE CONFERENCES

The Two-Hills Model hosts lively conferences that combine field stories, spread of learning, introspection, and interaction. These conferences invite you to understand the dynamics of ecological change, move beyond preconceived ideas, and take part in it.

### WORKSHOPS, GAMES

This project proposes workshop formats for thinking, feeling, debating, and creating together. Collaborative workshops and educational games allow participants to explore the model's stages, situate themselves within it, and share experiences in a supportive environment.

➤ **Kosmogonia wishes to co-construct educational formats with committed partners, in a collaborative and open spirit.**

## WIDER BROADCASTING



### ARTISTIC WORKS

The symbolic significance of the Two-Hills model can fuel artistic creation. Illustrations, music, exhibitions, and performances allow us to experience the depth of socio-ecological shifts. These works translate science into emotions, stories, and images.

### BOOKS AND COMICS

Editorial work is underway to translate the wealth of research material into accessible and impactful formats. Narrative essays, documentary comics, logbooks, and atlases—these hybrid formats aim to disseminate the lessons of ecological shifts to a wide audience.

➤ **Kosmogonia wishes to collaborate with artists from different backgrounds to disseminate research results in sensitive and impactful ways.**

# LICENSE AND USE FRAMEWORK OF THE MODEL

The Two-Hills model, developed by Anastasia Dereppe and Benoit Marienval as part of the Kosmogonia research program, is an analytical tool resulting from nearly three years of qualitative research on individual socio-ecological shifts. It is based on life stories collected across 10 Eurasian countries, using a rigorous, sensitive, and embodied methodology.

In order to promote its dissemination, this model is made available under the **Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license**, accompanied by **an ethical charter of use which it is important to respect**.

*For any commercial use requests, contact the team ([contact@kosmogonia.org](mailto:contact@kosmogonia.org))*

## TERMS OF USE

- Any use, even partial, must explicitly mention:

***“Two Hills Model (2025), created by Anastasia Dereppe and Benoit Marienval. Resulting from the research work of the Kosmogonia program. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license with ethical charter. [www.kosmogonia.org](http://www.kosmogonia.org)”***

- *Adaptations, modifications or derivative versions are not permitted without agreement.*
- *Commercial use of the model is not permitted without the prior agreement of the co-authors.*
- *A voluntary contribution is welcome from the Kosmogonia association.*

> [Make a donation](#)

## SPREAD OF THE MODEL

Use it, distribute it, comment on it, keep it alive while **respecting the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license and the ethical usage charter**.

## CHARTER OF ETHICAL USE

In addition to the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license, the co-authors of this model request compliance with certain use principles.

> [READ THE CHARTER OF USE](#)

## CHARTER OF ETHICAL USE

The use of the model must respect six fundamental principles:

- 1 ■ **Respect for the qualitative origin** of the data and the field.
- 2 ■ **The model is derived from real life stories:** it is not an abstract universal tool.
- 3 ■ **Avoid simplistic reading. This is not a linear grid;** the steps are nuanced.
- 4 ■ **Support the holistic scope** (cognitive, affective, relational and existential dimensions).
- 5 ■ **Encourage sensitive and popular uses and help bring out positive stories.**
- 6 ■ **Include use in an intention of care and constructive debate.** The transmission of the model must remain within an open, benevolent and non-injunctive framework.

## CONTACT US!

For any specific request (presentation, training, partnership, special use)

[contact@kosmogonia.org](mailto:contact@kosmogonia.org)

> [SHARE WITH US YOUR FEELINGS AND FEEDBACK ON THIS REPORT](#)

# THANKS

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➔ Find them on the [site](#)

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# GLOSSARY (1/2)

**Qualitative research:** A methodological approach that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of social, human, or cultural phenomena using non-quantified data. It relies on methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to capture the meaning that individuals give to their experiences. It prioritises the exploration of subjectivities, contexts, and processes, rather than statistical generalisation.

**Inductive research:** A methodological approach that begins with the observation of empirical data to gradually bring out concepts, hypotheses, or theories. It contrasts with the deductive approach, which begins with a pre-existing theoretical framework to test hypotheses. Used particularly in qualitative research, induction aims to understand phenomena from their emergence in the field, without imposing a priori interpretative grids.

**Abductive research:** A type of reasoning that involves formulating an explanatory hypothesis for an observed fact, often a surprising or unusual fact. It is a process that seeks to find the most plausible cause of an event.

**Open, axial and selective coding:** These three steps describe the analysis process in grounded theory:

- Open coding: First phase of analysis where the data is fragmented into units of meaning, in order to bring out categories without preconceptions.
- Axial coding: Second phase where the categories are linked, through links of cause, conditions, context, consequences, etc.
- Selective coding: The final phase consists of identifying one or more central categories around which the entire material is organised, by integrating the relationships between categories into a global model.

**Life story interview:** A qualitative method that aims to capture an individual's entire journey through their own narrative, emphasizing subjectivity, temporalities, ruptures, and continuities in their existence. The respondent is invited to recount their life or a significant part of it, often chronologically, with minimal interruptions. This method allows us to understand the social, identity, and biographical dynamics at work by restoring the meaning that people give to their experiences. It is commonly used in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and oral history.

**Focus group (or discussion group):** is a qualitative research method consisting of bringing together a small group of participants (generally between 6 and 12) to discuss a given theme, under the guidance of a facilitator. The objective is to collect opinions, perceptions, motivations or attitudes, through collective interaction, in order to explore in depth social representations or decision-making mechanisms.

**Empirical saturation:** Refers to the point at which the collection of new data no longer produces new information or codes. It marks the stability of the analysis categories and can justify stopping the field research. Saturation does not mean that "everything has been said," but that additional contributions become redundant with regard to the research objectives.

**Hybrid research:** Or mixed approach, combines qualitative and quantitative methods within the same research protocol, in order to cross-reference perspectives and strengthen the validity of the results. It allows, for example, to explore individual journeys in depth while measuring certain trends on a larger scale.

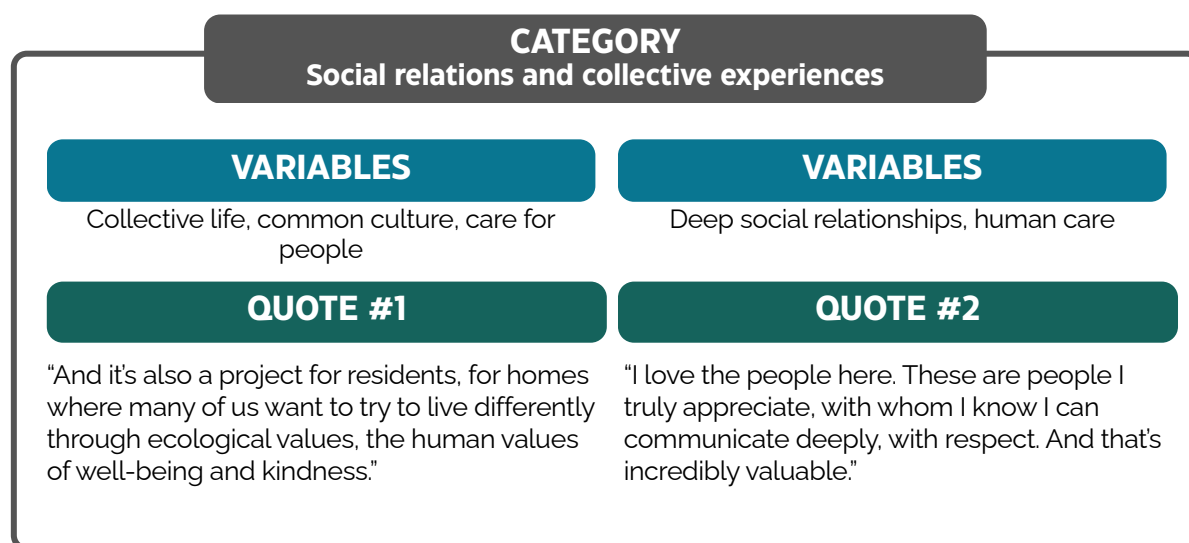
However, it is relatively rare in the social sciences for qualitative work to produce statistics, because samples are generally small, non-representative and chosen for their richness of meaning, not for their frequency.

# GLOSSARY (2/2)

**Quote:** In qualitative research, a quote transcript refers to the faithful, word-for-word transcription of what a participant said during an interview or focus group. It constitutes the raw material for analysis, preserving the richness of the language, nuances, spontaneous formulations, and contextual elements of the statement. The quote transcript is then coded, categorised, and interpreted to reveal elements of understanding.

**Variable:** In inductive qualitative research, a variable refers to a recurring significant element identified in the quote statements. It is a relevant factor, theme, or motif that researchers extract from the empirical material (e.g., joy, alignment, community engagement). These variables are not predefined but emerge from the field; they help describe, understand, or connect dimensions of the experience lived by the people interviewed.

**Category:** A logical and interpretative grouping of several variables sharing a common theme or similar meaning. It acts as a conceptual umbrella that helps structure and organise the analysis. For example, the variables joy, alignment, and meaning can be grouped into a category such as "positive experience of the switch."



Example of conceptual articulation Quote > Variable > Category

**Socio-ecological shift:** Refers to a profound, conscious and intentional change in life, aligning behaviors, choices, commitments and life models with planetary boundaries in a spirit of social justice.

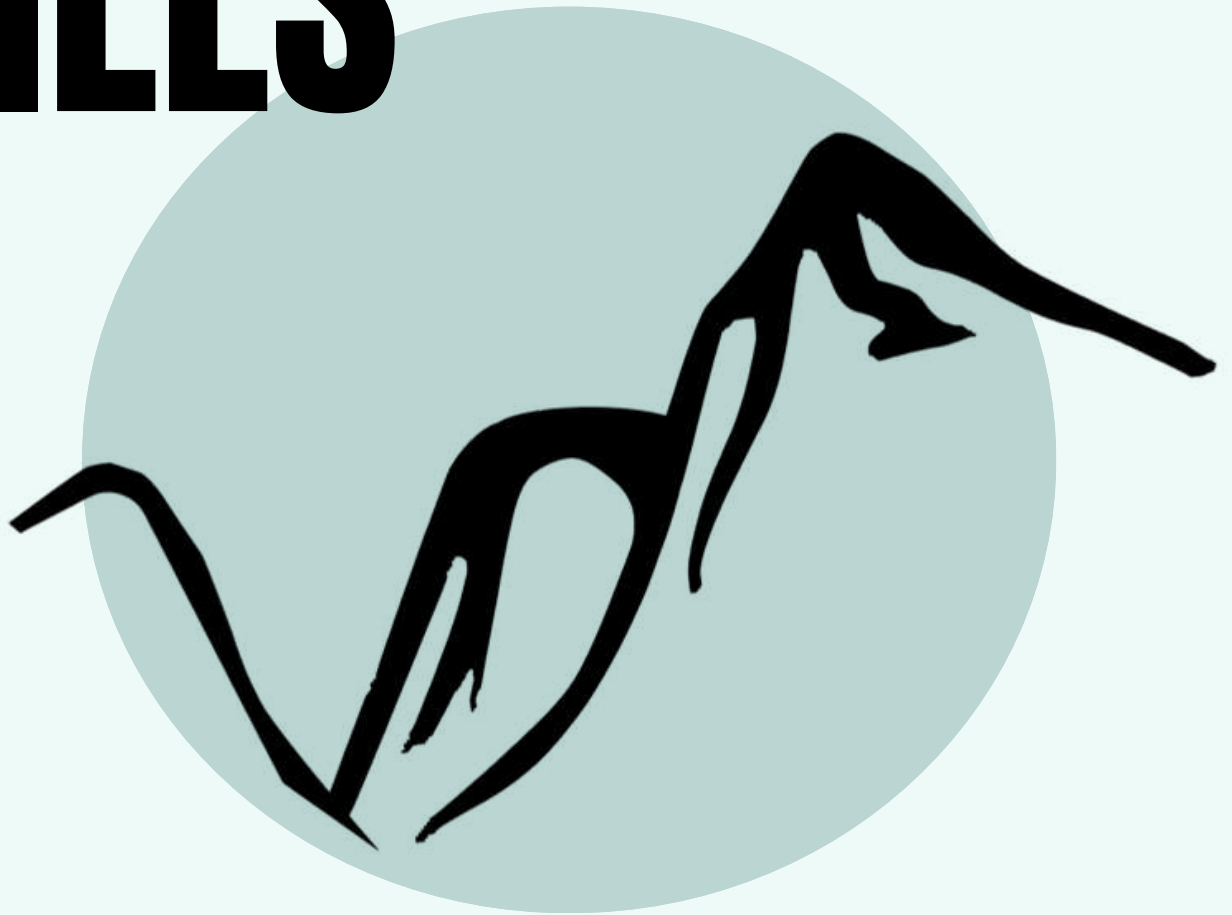
**Research axis:** A cross-disciplinary analytical dimension that links several categories together in a more comprehensive analytical logic. It serves to structure the theoretical framework or to draw a framework for understanding pathways. For example, an axis such as "pathway to change" can integrate categories such as ruptures, triggers, social influences, each containing several variables.

**Ecological trigger:** In the collective imagination, the "ecological trigger" refers to a sudden and decisive moment marking an individual's shift towards ecological awareness or commitment. However, this representation is often a myth: ecological trajectories are generally constructed along a continuum made up of multiple influences, gradual accumulations, and successive realisations rather than a single triggering event.

**Core Team:** The core group behind the Kosmogonia project. The core team designs the methodology, manages the development of research projects, analyses qualitative data, and coordinates the scientific dissemination of results. It combines academic expertise with educational design.



*The Two*  
**HILLS**



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