

# Convivence

*Beyond Cohabitation and Conviviality*

By

Robert Lanquar

**Convivence**

**By Robert Lanquar**

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To my wife Isabel  
To our grandchildren

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# Preface

by Jacques Moreillon

This book is all about One Single Word. A word that is little known and little used, but which, we believe, should become common for the good sake of humanity: CONVIVENCE, meaning “the art of living together in harmony” for any group of people...from three to many more, locally and universally.

It is not conviviality. Nor is it coexistence...contrary to what most artificial intelligence translators claim or suggest. It is convivence in English and American English, from the very much used Spanish “convivencia” or “convivance” in French (with an “a” since the French Academy so decided in 2004), however not very much used in Molière’s language, or the often-used Arabic, “Altaeayush” - التعايش.

To illustrate the difficulty of introducing that very useful word and concept into common, colloquial language, when Sheikh Khaled Bentounès convinced the UN General Assembly in 2017 to unanimously adopt May 16 as the « International Day of Living Together in Peace», he knew that the word “convivence” would have avoided the periphrasis, but found no one - except for Hispanophones - to understand it well or able to translate it properly: it was not in the UN vocabulary ...nor is it in that of UNESCO or of the European Communities, nor of any other international body that we know of. And yet...convivence is in the objectives of all these bodies!

There is one very special institution, in a very special city that since 1990, made the propagation and dissemination of the word and

concept of convivence its very “raison d’être”: the Paradigma Cordoba Foundation for Convivence, in the eponym city of Cordoba symbol of convivence through the myth of the al - Andalus period and its unforgettable “Mesquita – Cathedral”.

It has done so in three places: In the “Torre Calahorra”, which hosts the « Living Museum of al - Andalus » (that could be called “Museo de la Convivencia”), the Baïlio Palace” (property of the Geneva-based Ousseimi Foundation) which hosts the “Living Library of al - Andalus” and has become an essential cultural focus for the City of Cordoba and a reference on all matters linked to the concept of convivence and the third, the “Cordoba Forum, World Convivence Forum”, first held in May 2019, which brought together some sixty entities from all continents to create a lasting network of institutions that, each in its way, contribute to a world of greater convivence.

The author of this book, Prof. Robert Lanquar is the Commissioner of the Second Cordoba Forum and webmaster of its internet site. In the pages that you are about to read, he will take you through the various definitions of convivence and -possibly more importantly- the history of innumerable actions and references to convivence that have practiced and/or advocated the notion...without using the word.

So, this book's main objective is to promote the concept of convivence and its systematic implementation and to put the word where the action is, to put it onto the “common language map” of today’s world. The action can follow the word and the word can create the action. A word and an action that is required in so many situations and that fits them better than any other ...and yet is not used to describe them. A militant word and a concept, a notion, an

ideal, a key to building our common future both locally and universally:

CONVIVENCE.

Jacques Moreillon, PhD

President of the Second Cordoba Forum, World Convivence Forum

Vice-President of the Cordoba Foundation for Convivence

Former Director General and Member of the International Committee of the Red Cross  
(ICRC)

Former Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM)

# Introduction

Pursuing peace between nations and peoples is the main objective of the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations is the founding document that mandates the United Nations and its member states to maintain international peace and security, uphold international law... and promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion". The Charter was signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945. On the same day, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was created, culminating in a long process of developing methods for the pacific settlement of international disputes, per international law.

In London, is constituted on 16 November 1946, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This UN special agency stated: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be constructed". Three years later, on 10 December 1948 in Paris, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly which enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings, drafted by a UN committee chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, the widow of the US President Franklin Roosevelt. This Declaration is a milestone document for its universalist language. It does not refer to a particular culture, political system, or religion. It directly inspired the International Bill of Human Rights, completed in 1966 and entered into force in 1976.

Peace programs have multiplied with the creation of the United Nations. Its predecessor, the League of Nations (1920 – 1946), the first intergovernmental organization formed to "develop cooperation among nations and to guarantee them peace and security", had the same goal. All recognize that peace is not only the

absence of conflicts but requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.

At that time was published, translated into various languages, and largely debated in, the Samuel P. Huntington book (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*<sup>1</sup>. For Huntington, people are now grouped according to their cultural affinities, not their political borders. What matters today are first and foremost religious, ethnic, and intellectual barriers. This book was a companion to *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) written by the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, identified as one of the most important essays of the late twentieth century. Three decades later, it was contradicted by the impacts of climate change and the rise of geopolitical clashes.

In 1999, the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace was called the Universal Mandate for the International Community to Promote a Culture of Peace and Non-violence that benefits humanity, particularly future generations. 2000 was the International Year for the Culture of Peace<sup>2</sup>.

## **The Alliance of Civilizations**

On September 11, 2001, four coordinated Islamist suicide terrorist attacks were carried out by al-Qaeda against the United States. On March 11, 2004, terrorist bombs exploded almost simultaneously in four commuter trains in Madrid, Spain. The newly elected Spanish Prime Minister Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero formulated the

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<sup>1</sup> Huntington S.P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster, New York

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly's Resolution 53/25 of 10 November 1998 proclaiming the period 2001–2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, and resolution 71/252 of 23 December 2016, adopted under its agenda item entitled "Culture of Peace".

idea of an “Alliance of Civilizations” in the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 21, 2004. He expected to fill a policy gap in the governance of cultural diversity, which growing divisions between communities threatened, the rise of violent extremism, the polarization of attitudes and world perceptions, and frequent manifestations of intolerance, xenophobia, antisemitism, islamophobia, and racism.

So, in November 2006, a United Nations High-Level Group’s report published recommendations that became the guiding principles of the Alliance of Civilizations, to reduce cross-cultural tensions and build bridges between communities: “The Alliance of Civilizations should bring a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective approach: Youth, Education, Media, and Migration”.

A year later, from 29 to 31 October 2007, the UN Agency for Tourism, UNWTO, organized in Cordoba (Spain) the conference on “Tourism and Religions: A Contribution to the Dialogue among Religions, Cultures, and Civilizations” to study the relationship between tourism and religions, with their pilgrimages, processions and gatherings, to help harness tourism’s potential to stimulate and facilitate the dialogue among different civilizations; as well as to analyze religious tourism as a powerful instrument for raising awareness regarding the importance of safeguarding one’s heritage and that of humanity<sup>3</sup>.

The UN General Assembly recognized the mandate of the Alliance of Civilizations<sup>4</sup> on 10 November 2009. Six years passed, and on 6 July 2015, the concept was adopted by consensus. It was only after

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<sup>3</sup> UNWTO (2007). *Tourism and religions: a contribution to the dialogue among religions, cultures, and civilizations*. UNWTO, Madrid

<sup>4</sup> Resolution A/RES/64/14 “The Alliance of Civilization,” acknowledging the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in promoting tolerance and expressing its continuous support for the work of the Alliance of Civilizations.

22 December 2016, that the UNAOC - United Nations Alliance of Civilizations was settled with its axiom "Many Cultures, One Humanity" to embrace and promote cultural diversity, religious pluralism, and mutual respect.

Nowhere, however, appeared the word Convivence, not even connected with its Spanish root "Convivencia".

Finally, on 8 December 2017, on the initiative of Algeria, the UN General Assembly, during its seventy-second session, declared 16 May, the International Day of Living Together in Peace (IDLTP), a periphrasis to mobilize the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding, and solidarity.

The UN Declaration underlies that "Living together in Peace" is all about accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect, and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way and reaffirming the United Nations Millennium Declaration linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals which assert that "development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability".

In Spanish, this International Day was called Día Internacional de la Convivencia. This word had been used for several centuries. In the other UN official languages, a periphrasis was similarly used in French, also in Arabic (Altaeayush). In Russian, one word was used: Konvivensiya; in Chinese, one sinogram: Gòngcún.

Many arguments were found to justify this periphrasis in the UN documents as "Acknowledging that living together in peace is accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way" or "Recognizing the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the

world, of choosing dialogue and negotiation over confrontation and of working together”.

Besides, was highlighted: “Acknowledging the active engagement of the United Nations system with faith-based and cultural organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations in the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and in bringing together people of different cultures, religions, faiths or beliefs to discuss common issues and objectives” or “ Recognizing the important role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) and the work of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) on intercultural dialogue, as well as their activities related to the culture of peace and non-violence”.

### **Living together in Peace**

“Living Together in Peace” is a periphrasis when a single word could express it: Convivence. The French Academy included it in its Dictionary in 2004: Convivence. Why Convivence is not listed in most English and North American dictionaries where cohabitation, conviviality, coexistence, cooperation, or collaboration... are mainly used?

However, little by little, dictionaries and encyclopedias (even virtual) are integrating the concept of Convivence, its roots, history, and future. Dictionaries are often a reflection of their time, their content generally evolves from year to year, impregnated with the national and international context, especially globalization.

We must therefore understand what is Convivence beyond cohabitation and conviviality or coexistence, not only at the international level, based on the initiatives of the United Nations and its agencies, but in everyday life, in the territories with their communities facing geopolitical, climatic, and identity or nationalist

risks. These threats are increasingly serious, perhaps leading us to conflicts much more serious than those experienced since the beginning of our millennium<sup>5</sup>.

A certain optimism can be maintained in the face of the multiplication of initiatives by civil society and local authorities, since the introduction of the International Day of Living Together in Peace. Conferences, symposiums, and forums on Convivence are increasing in many countries. Every May 16, this day provides member States who have committed to it with a means of regularly mobilizing their efforts in favor of Convivence.

On May 16, 2019, the Cordoba Forum, World Convivence Forum was launched as an initiative of the Paradigma Cordoba Foundation for Convivence. After the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2024, with the support of the city of Geneva, AISA International NGO<sup>6</sup> continued its awareness-raising and mobilization efforts among UN Member States, NGOs, schools, and civil society to contribute to the global effort for the advent of peaceful and inclusive societies. The core theme of the 2024 edition was Peace at the Heart of Education, to program a global dynamic aimed at placing education to the Culture of Peace at the heart of school education and pedagogy<sup>7</sup>.

At the same time, new thoughts on Convivence emerge in international organizations, not only in the UNAOC but in UNESCO, UNWTO, UNDP, UN Environment...With the benefit of hindsight, some UNESCO former civil servants and experts consider that if peace in the world has never been achieved, despite the

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<sup>5</sup> Especially since state military spending fell after the end of the Cold War and would have been the lowest as a percentage of gross domestic product in millennia, it has recovered considerably since the second decade of the third millennium. Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2024).

<sup>6</sup> AISA International, NGO founded by Sheikh Khaled Bentounès.

<sup>7</sup> Called JIVEP in French, Journée internationale du vivre-ensemble en paix - International Day of Living Together in Peace.

declarations and solutions proposed, shouldn't we have started with education for peace, as was the main goal of UNESCO as well as with the cultural identity of peoples. The essential thing is to understand how to live fairly together. UNESCO should have taken advantage of the window of the 90s to introduce into its narrative the concept of Convivence.

This concept seems essential when "certain ideologues and politicians are trying to oppose the "Global South" to the "Collective West". Unable to wage war by force of arms and to win it, some states cultivate cultural confrontation by trying to shape the minds of men in a direction contrary to that of Convivence"<sup>8</sup>.

As Alain Modoux pointed out in his interview with the author, the concept of Convivence seems to have an "activist and militant" connotation, because it is a condition *sine qua non* for the survival of humanity in the face of the continuous deterioration of the natural environment. The survival of humanity requires, in fact, a true Convivence between individuals, communities, and peoples who must learn not only to live together despite their differences to "raise the defenses of peace", an expression enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution but to change lifestyles and rethink the relationships with nature by collectively taking the necessary measures to prevent the planet from becoming uninhabitable.

Will this still be possible in the coming decades, especially in democratic Europe? Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and professor at Columbia University (New York) believed that we are moving from a global world to a fragmentation of the world<sup>9</sup>. For him, the European Union does not

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<sup>8</sup> Discussion with the author (15 May 2024) of Alain Modoux (Switzerland), Assistant Director-General for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace.

<sup>9</sup> Guéhenno J-M. (2021). *The First XXI Century, from Globalization to the Crumbling of the World*. Flammarion, Paris

have strong institutions to overcome the doubts and divisions that undermine it through power, which would deprive it of the ethical cement that brought it together and the capacity for influence that could make it respected.

NGOs – non-governmental organizations are busy multiplying projects with the objective of convivence or coexistence. At the regional level, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Organizations also do so. One of the European Union's greatest successes is the Erasmus program for students and teachers, which is extended beyond education for apprentices and young workers, as well as from Europe to Latin America, North Africa, and the Middle East. This achievement brought Europe into the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to project a similar instrument for North Africa, the Middle East, and South-West Asia, the Ibn Khaldûn program.

The Council of Europe, through its European Cultural Routes, - the most prestigious of which are the Way of Saint James and the Mozarabic Camino<sup>10</sup> -, has made it one of the keys to its activities in favor of the protection of human rights, the strengthening of democracy, and the rule of law in Europe.

Finally, the concept of "modernized" Convivence would therefore be based on two pillars of solidarity: Peace and Environmental Protection.

Given that the fundamental texts of the United Nations system were drafted and adopted when environmental concerns were not a

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<sup>10</sup> These paths were also traveled by non-Christians, as shown in the book by Fernando Santos Urbaneja and Isidro Rodríguez (2023, Publisher Cajóndesastre, Cordoba) with the example of Al-Ghazal during the year 846.

priority, the link between peace and environmental protection was only unclear for decades.

## **Introducing Convivence into UN Vocabulary**

Introducing the concept of Convivence into the UN vocabulary would "perhaps" make it possible to highlight this link. We cannot live harmoniously on this planet if a part of humanity, however small, is condemned to be submerged by the rise of the oceans, starved by desertification, thirsty by the drying up of lakes, rivers, and groundwater, poisoned by atmospheric pollution, etc.

Convivence makes it possible to become aware of these serious problems and to seek solutions together through a surge of transnational solidarity.

Today, we are all sailing on the same boat, the planet Earth! This debate of ideas thus makes it possible to broaden the concept of Convivence beyond its Andalusian historical significance and to adapt it to the realities and needs of the twenty-first century.

We must therefore start by explaining how the concept of Convivence was born. Its root comes from the Spanish word "Convivencia", emerging in the 12th century. During the year 2004, the French Academy included it in its Dictionary as "Convivance". It means a situation where different communities and human groups live together, maintaining neighborliness, harmony, and exchanging relations.

Today, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has not yet caught up either with that reality or with that wording to the extent that, in most cases, it still translates the Spanish "convivencia" into "co-existence"; the same in French, English, German or other languages. More geopolitical and cyber analysts believe today that artificial Intelligence could be and will be an instrument of convivence,

allowing us to forecast the consequences of geopolitical decisions linked to human rights.

## **Cordoba, City-World**

The history of the word Convivence has been magnified around the city of Cordoba, the city-world from the 9th to the 11th century<sup>11</sup>. Many stereotypes must be invalidated. The important thing is to show that Convivence is a now modern notion that sums up many Human Rights.

The battle for Human Rights has a long history, perhaps even before Cyrus' declaration, a copy of the cylinder of which is on display at the United Nations headquarters. Many philosophers, writers, artists, and political scientists have often defined it in other terms with the same meaning.

This book explores the main issues and needs around Convivence at the local, regional, national, and international levels. It is in the interest of researchers and students in peace studies, sociology, and international relations, as well as those working on community issues in governments, NGOs, and the private sector, with the importance given to CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility as our fragmented world is facing vast crises: climate change, migrations, growing inequalities, geopolitical clashes, a rise of nationalism, identity conflicts, and racism and largely the crisis of democracy.

## **Convivence or Barbarism**

Convivence and tolerance would therefore be modern ideas. The concept of tolerance emerged after the seventeenth century and was asserted with the Age of Enlightenment. Until this Age, everyone was convinced of the excellence and superiority of his religion, as all

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<sup>11</sup> According to the expression developed by the French historian Fernand Braudel.

theological disputes show over and over again until the 20th century. While discrimination is the result of this premise, it was not always accompanied by persecution. Convivence can be a driving ethical issue of tomorrow as projected situations, described in a series of scenarios, explicate what paths should be followed to make this aspiration for peace, for solidarity beyond tolerance, coexistence, and cohabitation. A cosmopolitan ethic is then possible with the term of Convivence.

Emilio Martínez Navarro, professor of philosophy in Murcia, the city where was born Ibn Arabi, the Sufi master of convivence, believes that the contrast between the mere coexistence and the living together of the peoples calls for formulating cosmopolitan ethics principles for international relations and a growing commitment to these principles. He outlines this cosmopolitan ethic as one that is recently being developed successfully in several fields of modern social life. In this context, the concept of applied ethics as hermeneutic critical ethics offers a good base for the formulation of the principles of cosmopolitan ethics for international togetherness, namely, convivence.

Finally, there are only two possible futures:  
Convivence or Barbarism.

## **Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge.

# Chapter 1

## Convivence: Myths and Reality

Do dictionaries serve to give birth or rebirth to words and tell their history? “The dictionary does not give existence to words” alleged Pedro Álvarez de Miranda, an expert in historical lexicography and on the history of the Spanish language and member of the Royal Spanish Academy<sup>1</sup>. Like many of his colleagues, not only in Spain or the Spanish-speaking world, he believes that a dictionary is the work of a team, it is built up over time and is adapted to new uses.

Archaeologists have found the first bilingual dictionary, back to Sumerians to facilitate communication between the Akkadians of the north and the people of the south of Mesopotamia, around 2300 BCE. Abraham, the first of the Patriarchs, recognized by the three monotheisms, originated from the Sumerian Ur.

A historical dictionary explains words from their roots without elucidating their current usage. How did the word Convivencia emerge in the Spanish language? How has it been translated into other languages? And how it is becoming an ethical word in favor of peace and solidarity for a better adaptation to the geopolitical and climate crises, helping to reduce inequalities in the world?

In Spanish-speaking countries, the word Convivencia is largely used. How can we make the word Convivence an activist, a militant and modern word to achieve the objectives of peace and solidarity, apart from the Spanish-speaking world?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rae.es/academico/pedro-alvarez-de-miranda>. The Royal Spanish Academy was founded in 1713.

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) invades our writings and arts, if in mid-2024 you ask ChatGPT, this conversational agent developed by Artificial Intelligence answers that in English there is no word equivalent to *Convivencia* in Spanish, nor *Convivance* in French to mean “living together in harmony” or with a friendly and pleasant relationship. Terms like *conviviality*, *sociability*, or *companionship* can convey a similar idea...so say AI!

## The Castilian Origin of *Convivencia*

The past never dies.  
We must not even believe that it is past.  
William Faulkner

The Castilian "*Convivencia*" appeared after the year 1000 in Spain which was experiencing its maximum fragmentation between Christian Kingdoms or *taifas*, emirates, or caliphates, up until twenty-five Muslims and eleven Christians. In the north, were multiple Christian kingdoms (Asturias, Leon, Navarre, Aragon, Castile, Catalonia...), as well as in the south Al-Andalus (from Extremadura, present-day Andalusia, Valencia, Balearic Islands... and the south of Portugal, the Algarve), until the end of the Reconquista with the capture of Granada in January 1492. This year marked the expulsion of the Jews (March) from the whole Spanish territories, followed by Portugal in December 1496.

The word comes from the Latin “*cum vivere*” – to “live with or together”. Coexistence or cohabitation? *Convivencia* was created to organize rules of such cohabitation, a capacity for sociability and respect to be shared in community, especially in the Christian kingdoms, between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The medieval troubadours were inspired by it according to Alem Surre-Garcia<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Surre Garcia A. (2024). *La convivencia* (essai). Éditions Troba Vox, Montsérret

Should we make a literal or a literary translation of *Convivencia*, since this word is very much linked to religious and cultural interpretations? As for exegesis, an author can use *Convivencia* to deepen the study of a historical or ethnographic text, especially when it comes to relations between religions and cultures.

In 1948, Americo Castro considered the theme beyond the Hispano-Muslim civilization. The word "*convivencia*" is found in the 2001 Edition of the Dictionary of the Spanish Real Academia. It is under the fields of sociology, psychology (including that of family), civic education, school pedagogy, and artistic culture; nothing on the economy, management, and administration of businesses, organizations, and territories, not on CSR (Corporate social (and environmental) responsibility). In Spanish, three words are linked to *Convivencia* in the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE, 22nd ed., 2001): *convivialidad*, *conviviente*, *convivir*. *Convivir* is defined as the action of living in the company of another or others; its synonyms are coexistence, cohabitation, tolerance, and relationship<sup>3</sup>.

In its latest edition, the Tercentenary (2024), the RAE explains how words are added or removed. Rafael Sarraalde<sup>4</sup>, in an article in *The Conversation*, reminds us, in particular of words related to human rights or those of the genre, that "The dictionary is not the moral work that prescribes what words to use; it is not a catechism, nor a book of good manners, although the Academy, in the same preamble, recognizes that "there is a naïve pretension that the dictionary can be used to alter reality". The dictionary reflects the society that uses language, its virtues and vices, its goodness and evil, and its changes. That is why it varies, reflecting outputs and

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<sup>3</sup> RAE (2024). Latest edition of the academic dictionary, the Tercentenary, Madrid

<sup>4</sup> Sarraalde R. (27 June 2024). *La Real Academia Española y la homosexualidad*. *The Conversation*, Madrid

entrances of words and meanings, according to the use of the speakers”.

Currently, the most widely used dictionary in Spain is the Maria Molina, the Dictionary of Spanish Usage<sup>5</sup>. For Maria Molina, the word Convivencia means the "action of living together". It adds that it is “the relationship between those who live together, particularly, the fact of living in good harmony with one another”.

In the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking world, the word Convivencia often has similar but not identical definitions. In Mexico, the word Convivialidad is the most used. It means camaraderie or invitee in a banquet, then it is also the meeting of workers who provide their services in exchange for food. The word is not even mentioned in the Diccionario esencial Santillana, if not convivir and its synonyms coexist, cohabit. In Catalan, convivència is a feminine word that means living in common with one or more people: “living together is always difficult”. On the administrative level, it indicates a household<sup>6</sup>.

In Occitania, the word convivencia existed as early as the Middle Ages. As stated by Alem Surre Garcia, the Occitan academic Charles Camproux devoted a chapter in 1965 in his book "Le Joy d'Amour des Troubadours" to convivencia, "this faculty and natural facility that the populations of Oc have to accept, within themselves, the coexistence of multiple opinions and diverse groups". The term convivencia was then defined in the most restricted way, both in Spanish and in Occitan, namely “vivir con armonia”, to live harmoniously.

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<sup>5</sup> Maria Molina, (2016). Diccionario de uso del Español (Dictionary of Spanish Usage). 4<sup>o</sup> ed. Ed. Gredos, Madrid

<sup>6</sup> <https://tradukka.com/dictionary/es/ca/convivencia?hl=es>

Using the method of deconstruction, dear to the French Sephardi philosopher Jacques Derrida, its pioneer, a distinction must be made between the prefix con-, interpreted as an ensemble, and the word *vivère*, contemplating its existence. Therefore, in dictionaries and encyclopaedias of Latin-based languages, *Convivencia* is part of the individual's physical and emotional need, promoting collective strengthening and new knowledge based on individual experiences, in the pursuit of personal and social development.

What are the equivalents of *Convivencia* in English and French? Dominique- D Junod (Abell)<sup>7</sup> tried to explain it in a little booklet. The Oxford English Dictionary is considered the largest and most popular historical dictionary of the English language, aiming to cover all words. Until 2024, it did not contain the word *convivence*, just *cohabitation*, namely “Living together under one roof in a marital, *de facto* marital, or marriage-like relationship in the absence of a formal marriage, whether the partners are heterosexual or homosexual”. The word *coexistence* is defined as the state of being together in the same place at the same time, to live in uneasy/peaceful coexistence within one nation.

*Convivence* does not exist in the 2009 Edition of *The Historical Thesaurus of English* largely based on data from the Oxford English Dictionary. It may be found in the *OneLook Thesaurus*<sup>8</sup>, as well as in the *Webster – Multilingual Translation Thesaurus*, which does not precisely define *Convivencia*, only explains its medieval Andalusian origin: “The expression is often used to designate the interaction of cultural ideas between Jews, Muslims, and Catholics and the ideas of religious tolerance”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Junod D-D. (2015). *La Convivencia et ses équivalents en français et en anglais. Le mot et la notion*. Editions Florent Huet – Divergent Editions, Metz (France)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.onelook.com/thesaurus/>

<sup>9</sup> [www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/coexistence](http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/coexistence)

In France, after a long debate, the French Academy decided to introduce and translate in 2004, the word *Convivance* from Castilian, Catalan, and Occitan to mean "life with each other". As Alem Surre Garcia pointed out, it is an underlined concept of integration without assimilation: "According to the academician Florence Delay, 'convivance' would encompass coexistence (too broad a notion), cohabitation (which can be desired or endured), and conviviality (a term borrowed from English and with festive connotations). Nevertheless, what about respect for differences in equal treatment? Ivan Ilyich, whose message has been somewhat neglected, gave conviviality a meaning very close to the one that we value today and which is opposed to the current binary system of inequality: a simultaneity of belongings rather than their hierarchization or erasure"<sup>10</sup>.

In 2006, Abdewahab Meddeb redefined *Convivencia* as "the knowledge and the overcoming of origins"<sup>11</sup>. He highlighted it again with Benjamin Stora in January 2009, when a banner bearing the word *Ta'ayush* was unfurled on the West Bank border. Both have directed the history of relations between Jews and Muslims from the origins to the present day published in France and the United States of America<sup>12</sup>.

Alem Surre Garcia added that, if not all attempts to make it a keyword in Occitan culture were successful, however, "*Convivencia* is now an art of living together that does not require one of its parts to amputate its personality. It is important not to merge the components into a fusional whole, just to make them meet without dissolving their specificities", i.e., coexistence must be accompanied

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<sup>10</sup> Surre Garcia A. (2023). op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> Medeb A. (2006). L'Islam majoritaire est figé dans des réponses obsolètes. *Philo Magazine* N° 4, oct-nov 2006. 59100 Roubaix - Fr

<sup>12</sup> Meddeb A. & Stora B. (2013). *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day*. Princeton University Press, Princeton (N.J.)

by conviviality and mutual enrichment respecting the different communities and in a spirit of equality, the opposite of entrenchment and reduction to one unity.

The presentation of this neologism newly inscribed in the Dictionary of the French Academy was made by Florence Delay<sup>13</sup> on October 26, 2004, during the annual public session of the five Academies<sup>14</sup> under the title "Une très vieille convivance -A very old convivence". Referring to the Association Pro Europae Unitate, founded in 1988 in Rueil-Malmaison, which is said to have developed a European Christianity of coexistence, and to Pope John Paul II, who had twice pronounced the Italian term "convivenza", the French academician wanted to use "convivance" rather than conviviality employed by the media.

Naturally, F. Delay turned out for "convivance" (with an a) which "resonated in my head in her Spanish form of Convivencia" recognizing "in the originality of homo hispanicus the fruit of a history marked by this convivence". She made more mentions of Toledo than Cordoba in her line of reasoning.

Then, Mrs. Delay added in her passionate speech: "Was it necessary for the feeling of belonging to something other than religion to be strong for the Jews expelled from Spain to have taken, by dispersing throughout the world, the name of Sephardim, that is to say, Spanish, spreading the language and culture of Sepharad, the Hebrew name for Spain?". She finalized: "Please forgive me for concluding this moment dedicated to harmony on the emotion that invades when the hope of living together has been lost».

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<sup>13</sup> French academician and actress, known for portraying Joan of Arc in Robert Bresson's movie *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (1962).

<sup>14</sup> Since 1795, the Institut de France is composed of five Academies (Académie française, Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Académie des sciences, Académie des beaux-arts, Académie des sciences morales et politiques).

For sure, the media rarely use the word *convivance*, sometimes writing it *convivence* in French as in English. Now, in the French Larousse, it is a feminine word that means: "The ability of different human groups to coexist harmoniously within a local, national, federal, community entity, etc.". In the *Petit Robert*, very popular among linguists, philologists, and grammarians, the online search of this word is surprising: it does not exist, although it offers similar words such as *trust*, *coexistence*, or *conviviality*...

### **Convivence and the Myth of Al-Andalus**

The city of Cordoba may wish to be considered as the World Capital of *Convivencia*. Cliché for tourism or sincere reality?

In 1986, the Garaudy Foundation, created by Roger Garaudy, obtained from the municipality of Cordoba to create and manage the Living Museum of Al-Andalus (*Museo vivo de al-Ándalus*) in the Calahorra Tower<sup>15</sup> and dedicated to the history of the medieval Spanish Arab kingdom of Al-Andalus. In a context that is still difficult to clarify, Roger Garaudy was convicted by the European Court of Human Rights on 27 February 1998 for contesting crimes against humanity and racial defamation, e.g., the Shoah. The Foundation became the Paradigma Cordoba Foundation and in 2022, the "Cordoba Paradigma Foundation for Convivence".

Some authors as Ramin Jahanbegloo<sup>16</sup> take the Muslim city of Cordoba as an ideal example of cultural *convivence*. This Iranian philosopher denounces mainly Islamophobia, the subject of an OSCE conference in Córdoba in 2007 as well as anti-Semitism and other religious discrimination against the Sikhs or the Yazidis. Professor Jahanbegloo asked to be halfway between Martin Luther

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<sup>15</sup> The 2016 edition of the *Andalusian Backpacker's Guide* indicates these facts and mentions that the texts are spoken in the Museum with a lyricism that can "move... or annoy".

<sup>16</sup> *Diario El País*. Madrid. 10 May 2018. <https://elpais.com/autor/ramin-jahanbegloo>