ARTICULATING CRISIS AND CREATING RADICAL ALTERNATIVES

Insights from weavers of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives

Shrishtee Bajpai
Vasna Ramasar

GLOBAL TAPESTRY *of*
ALTERNATIVES

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Global Tapestry of Alternatives **is an initiative seeking to create solidarity networks and strategic alliances amongst all these alternatives on local, regional and global levels.** It locates itself in or helps initiate interactions among alternatives. It operates through varied and light structures, defined in each space, that are horizontal, democratic, inclusive and non-centralized, using diverse local languages and other ways of communication.

For more information please see: https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/introduction

Abstract

This report presents the experiences of a process of weaving the pluriverse called The Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA). GTA is an initiative seeking to create solidarity networks and strategic alliances amongst radical alternatives on local, regional and the global levels. It locates itself in or helps initiate interactions among alternatives to the destructive hegemonic system. GTA has been working to create spaces of collaboration and exchange, in order to learn about and from each other, critically but constructively challenge each other, offer active solidarity to each other whenever needed, interweave the initiatives in common actions, and give them visibility to inspire other people to create their own initiatives. It seeks to facilitate people seeking transformative change, hopefully eventually converging into a critical mass of alternative ways that can support the conditions for the radical systemic changes we need.

The report traces the history and experiences of the GTA process, drawing from in-depth reflections from the GTA facilitation team as well as contributions from weavers and endorsers to the process. This is grounded in community and activist articulations of what radical alternatives and a pluriverse are. The authors, as members of the GTA facilitation team, share the findings and process to bring the voices from the global south/majority world together in both conceptualising the polycrisis and responding to it. As an on-going experimental and organically developing process, the GTA offers lessons from an effort to co-develop an inclusive and dynamic knowledge and praxis of progressive alternatives. We highlight the struggle of pluriversal transition from, for example, different cosmologies or understandings of alternatives to the mundane and practical elements of language and time zones. The GTA continues to develop and grow as a result of the opportunities that are constantly present and these are highlighted such as the profound human connection; solidarity and will to build a global commonist project.

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Acknowledgements

Last but not the least, we are indebted to and would like to acknowledge, thank and dedicate this report to the innumerable communities across the world, who continue to be an inspiration by resisting structural, social, political, environmental injustice and unsustainability and protecting, resurrecting and recreating just and equitable systems towards wellbeing of all. We do hope that the worldviews and ways of being of these peoples will be guiding human society in the future.

1. Introduction

The world is going through a crisis of unprecedented global scale created by a dominant regime which has resulted in deepening inequalities, increasing deprivation in old and new forms, the destruction of ecosystems, catastrophic climate change, ruptures in socio-cultural fabrics, and the violent dispossession of living beings.

However, there is an increasing emergence and visibility of an immense variety of radical alternatives to this dominant regime, contesting its roots in capitalist, patriarchal, racist, statist, and anthropocentric forces. These range from initiatives with a specific focus like sustainable and holistic agriculture, community led water/energy/food sovereignty, solidarity and sharing economies, worker control of production facilities, resource/knowledge commons, and inter-ethnic peace and harmony, to more holistic or rounded transformations such as those being attempted by the Zapatistas in Chiapas and the Kurds in Rojava and some indigenous communities in India. Alternatives also include the revival of ancient traditions and the emergence of new worldviews that re-establish humanity's place within nature, as a basis for human dignity and equality.

This report presents the experiences of a process of weaving the pluriverse called The Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA). GTA is an initiative seeking to create solidarity networks and strategic alliances amongst all radical alternatives on local, regional and global levels. It locates itself in or helps initiate interactions among alternatives to the destructive hegemonic system. GTA has been working to create spaces of collaboration and exchange, in order to (1) learn about and from each other, (2) critically but constructively challenge each other, (3) offer active solidarity to each other whenever needed, (4) interweave the initiatives in common actions, and (5) give them visibility to inspire other people to create their own initiatives. It seeks to facilitate people seeking transformative change, hopefully eventually converging into a critical mass of alternative ways that can support the conditions for the radical systemic changes we need.

The existing academic literature around analysis of the crises and responses doesn't adequately bring in the analysis of building grounded alternatives by communities[1]. To understand the nature of crises it is crucial to visiblise the analysis emerging from

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[1] With exceptions of Pluriverse

the ground as well as how those are being challenged through everyday practices. This report has attempted to document the processes used by the weavers of building regional networks of radical alternatives. How have they arrived at these processes, what are their historical moments of change and movement, what has worked and what has not?

As an on-going experimental and organically developing process, the GTA offers lessons from an effort to co-develop an inclusive and dynamic knowledge and praxis of progressive alternatives. We highlight the struggle of pluriversal transition from, for example, different cosmologies or understandings of alternatives to the mundane and practical elements of language and time zones. The GTA continues to develop and grow as a result of the opportunities that are constantly present and these are highlighted such as the profound human connection; solidarity and will to build a global commonist project.

This report traces the non-linear history and experiences of the GTA overall process, drawing from in-depth reflections on the process from its weavers and endorsers (defined below) to the process. The material is presented as grounded in community and activist articulations of their understanding and interpretations of the poly-crisis,

and of the meanings of what radical alternatives and the pluriverse are. We, the authors, are members of the GTA facilitation team (a group of activists who help hold the process of weaving), are sharing here the findings of a process of in-depth and co-created conversations carried out with the GTA facilitation teams and the weavers in Mexico, India, Colombia, and South-East Asia. The aim is and process to bring the voices from the global south together into both a conceptualisation of the crises and the responses to them.

The report is structured to first present our methodology in brief terms followed by some background and context to the GTA itself in section three. Section four reflects the articulations of the polycrisis as expressed by different groups within the GTA. In the face of this polycrisis, there has been an emergence of weaving of alternatives and the genealogy of the weaving within the four GTA weavers is presented in section five. Section six offers expressions of what alternatives are from the perspectives of the different weavers. In section seven, we highlight some of the tools used for weaving whilst section eight reflects on some of the aspects associated with weaving at the global level and how we approach this task of moving from local weaving to global weaving across time and space. We offer some concluding thoughts in section nine.

2. Methodology

The conversations were in the form of semi-structured interviews, and deliberative discussions and focus groups where knowledge was co-created. The sampling of the participants was done in a purposive manner to get a wide range of experiences and thoughts with representation from different geographical, cultural, age, gender and knowledge backgrounds. The sample was drawn from GTA weavers and endorsers. A total of 12 people were interviewed representing the four weaver movements within the GTA with three each from Vikalp Sangam and Crianzas Mutuas Colombia and four each from Crianza Mutua Mexico and MASSA (Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia). The interviews and group discussions were mainly conducted virtually to minimise resources and travel. Some of the interviews were conducted at the GTA Assembly in Kenya 2023.

The authors of the report used an iterative process where the initial inputs from Weavers and Endorsers was condensed into a summarised form after analysis by the project team. The report was then shared back with the participants to stimulate further reflection. After this data gathering phase, the materials will be developed for communication for the GTA community and for public outreach.

We adopted a research ethics approach and ensured that there was full transparency as well as consent for participation. We refer to interview respondents in the report with their first name and the weaver they belong to. Where necessary, some sources were treated anonymously for protection.

3. Background and Context to GTA

The idea of GTA emerged from the Indian process called Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) in discussion with other similar processes such as Crianza Mutua in Mexico. **Alternatives** are defined within the GTA as activities and initiatives, concepts, worldviews, or action proposals by collectives, groups, organizations, communities, or social movements challenging and replacing the dominant system that perpetuates inequality, exploitation, and unsustainability. In the GTA we focus primarily on what we call "radical or transformative alternatives", which we define as initiatives that are attempting to break with the dominant system and take paths towards direct and radical forms of political and economic democracy, localised self-reliance, social justice and equity, cultural and knowledge diversity, and ecological resilience. Their locus is neither the State nor the capitalist economy. They are advancing in the process of dismantling most forms of hierarchies, assuming the principles of sufficiency, autonomy, non-violence, justice and equality, solidarity, and the caring of life and the Earth. They do this in an integral way, not limited to a single aspect of life. Although such initiatives may have some kind of link with capitalist markets and the State,

they prioritize their autonomy to avoid significant dependency on them and tend to reduce, as much as possible, any relationship with them.

Such a global process of weaving was first proposed at the 5th International Degrowth Conference (Budapest) in 2016. The idea was shared and tested by members like Ashish Kothari with several networks including Beyond Development Working Group, Commons Network, European Commons Assembly, ECOLISE, Transition network, Global Sustainability University, Great Transition Initiative, Defend the Sacred who were interested and supportive of a process like GTA. In 2018, Ashish Kothari and the late Gustavo Esteva got together to explore this idea as similar ideas were being discussed among the Latin American groups - Esteva and Arturo Escobar were exploring the possibilities of regional networks on alternatives in Mexico and Colombia respectively. At the Degrowth conference in Malmo and Mexico, the idea of GTA was presented by then members Ashish Kothari, Arturo Escobar, Vasna Ramasar, Shrishtee Bajpai, Marta Music, Alex Jensen, Enric Duran among others. Several regional, thematic and global networks were reached out to, to collaborate, endorse and seek comments on the GTA idea.

Early connection with current funders began at the Edge Funders conference in Leipzig and collaborations were fostered. The process was launched in early 2019 after seeking endorsement from many key regional and global movements and networks. A dedicated website (www.globaltapestryofalternatives.org) containing relevant documents, names of endorsers, reports of activities, and publications started simultaneously. The GTA is now endorsed by more than 80 international organizations and networks and many individual referents (activists, public intellectuals, academics, etc.). This list is constantly growing as a reflection of the increased attention and relevance of this ongoing process.

Members from the weavers Crianzas Mutuas Colombia were brought into the team and they agreed to be a GTA weaver. Alternatives Centre at the University of Philippines were working on alternative regionalism and joined the GTA group on the invitation of Indian colleagues who knew of their work. They were already bringing many networks together and were encouraged by the GTA to formulate a regional network called Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA).

The following are the networks that currently weave the GTA.

1. Vikal Sangam - Alternatives Confluence, India (VS)

2. Crianza Mutua Mexico (CMM)

3. Crianzas Mutuas Colombia (CMC)

4. Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA)

Over the next few months and years to come this list may expand, with the possibility of adding a weaver each in Europe and Africa

GTA is now a network of networks and each of those networks in different parts of the planet are documenting, identifying, connecting and weaving a tapestry of alternatives, hence they are our weavers. We define a **weaver** as a local, regional, or national network or organization that connects or consists of multiple Alternatives on different themes/spheres, in an inter-sectoral way. A global network cannot be a Weaver, neither only a thematic one. It should be a collective process of some kind, rather than only a single individual or single organization. By being a "weaver", they are committed to participate in the GTA, developing ways of dialogue, interconnection, collaboration and solidarity with other Weavers. GTA promotes the interconnection of the Weavers, identifying a series of common criteria for the weaving of Alternatives described further on in the document.

GTA intends to "support change, through inspired leadership, effective networks and the influencing of norms, for reviving cultures of interdependence and reverence". Hence, GTA aims to foster networks that seek to establish alternatives for a more just and sustainable world. In doing so, the communities, cultures, initiatives and networks that the GTA involves or supports include those that explicitly recognize the deeper connection between humans and non-human nature; the need for climate balance – especially in addressing the fundamental flaws of the current economic system; and foster regenerative economies that support biocultural systems. Thus, one effort towards this larger goal is to create spaces for dialogues, exchanges, documentation, research, collaborations among regional networks of alternatives in different parts of the world. Ultimately creating a critical mass for transformative systemic change.

The GTA process has no central structure or control mechanisms. The intent is that it spreads step by step as an ever-expanding, complex set of tapestries, woven together by already existing communal or collective webs, building on already existing and new alternatives to dominant regimes. It promotes or joins regional, national and global encounters, when the conditions allow for them, as well as close and synergistic linkages with existing organizations, like the World Social Forum. A small group of committed individuals from around the world hold the process of the GTA. This team combines people who collaborate on strategic decisions, conceptual definitions, political opinions and the direction of the process. There is also a subgroup of "facilitators", who are in charge of the daily maintenance of the infrastructure and the usual operational tasks. Part of this team performs partially paid tasks, but to a large extent the labor contributions are voluntary.

The GTA facilitation team currently comprises 22 members from different parts of the world including South Asia, South East-Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, North America, Australia-Asia. Many of these members come from racially marginalized groups and geographically colonized territories. These members range from community members, organizers among others working with grassroots movements, academics, scholar -activists, and researchers. The facilitation team brings rich experience of being involved in social justice, environmental justice, democratic struggles of governance, economies as well as theoretical understanding of these struggles in transformations. Several members are involved in such work on the ground through networking at regional, national and global levels. The group combines

the core of individuals who initiated the GTA process in 2018, along with others who joined in 2019 with the public launch of the initiative. New members continue to be needed as gaps and needs arise. This mix of founding members and "newcomers", with a very wide range of ages, is intended to respond to the dynamic nature of the GTA process, which is built on a set of basic and consistent principles. The logic of decentralization, decisions by consensus, a non-bureaucratic approach and relationships of friendship and trust give shape and meaning to the dynamics of collective work that we have been building. It is by no means a perfect or conflict-free process but the approach is to be self-reflexive and learn as we go along.

This facilitation core team is only meant to hold the process, the decision making on next steps, plans of activities and networking is done through GTA Assembly which comprises regional network (Weavers) and endorsing networks/organizations. Currently, the GTA Assembly is formed by 4 Weavers, 22 facilitation team members and more than 75 Endorsers.

4. Articulation of the Polycrisis – From Local to Global Dynamics

Across all weavers, endorsers and other members of the GTA, there is an understanding that the polycrisis is indeed an intertwined crisis manifesting in different forms such as inequality; climate change; land appropriation; war and conflict; loss of traditional and indigenous languages, cognitive injustice in ways of living and knowing and many more destructive trends that are risking the possibilities of continued life on the planet. Our shared analysis is that the roots of the polycrisis seem to lie within the hegemonic system of political, social and economic relations that is driven by historical and present patterns of capitalist, colonialist, modern, patriarchal, racist, statist, and anthropocentric forces. The dominant regime is the one that has managed to create a hegemonic narrative of stages of progress that all humans must (forcefully, violently) must go through to become civilised and so-called 'developed' beings. It is a narrative that has universalised human beings and their experiences by creating homogenised atomised humans rather than ones who are born out of relations, practices, discourses and cultures. It is a story that has pushed the imagination of scarcity, competition, hierarchies based on species, gender, caste, class, race. It has been able to push for the politics of fear, competition to acquire through productivity, growth and continued expansion and has made accumulation desirable and obvious to have power and gain as if it is intrinsically connected to human existence (Escobar et al, 2024) [2].

In terms of the global dynamics, there was widespread recognition that whilst the forces may be the same, the expressions of them are different in different contexts. This has also led to some variances in the articulations of the struggles that people are fighting and what they are resisting. As Itzel from Crianza Mutua Mexico explains,

> *When we talk about crises, we all face the same situation and we try to take care of that in our specific spaces. Environmental crises are something that we all face".*

The hegemonic system has negative consequence as a whole or to important elements of the system, such as:

- appropriation of labor, land and resources

[2] Escobar A, Osterweil M, and Sharma K. (2024). Relationality: Remaking and Restor(y)ing Life. Bloomsbury Press. US

- the exploitation of people and their environment

- the commodification of 'nature' as external to humans

- the privatization or state ownership of the means of production, in both cases alienating them from producers and workers

- the non-local market as a tool to decide on which goods to produce and how to distribute

- consumerism as an economic and cultural phenomenon

- competition as a guiding principle

Based on our interviews and discussions at the GTA Assembly in Kenya in 2023, we describe the different manifestations of the polycrisis below.

In the Latin American context, there is a strong articulation of the threat to life and territory in both Colombia and Mexico and thus much of the emerging alternatives relate to defense of life and territory.

4.1 CRIANZA MUTUA MEXICO

For **Crianza Mutua Mexico**, there has been a deep connection to food and land, especially how food is grown. Paulo Roberto articulates how in Mexico, food also has a relationship with violence with for example, the avocado mafia (Aguirre & Goméz, 2020). The crisis here is visibilised through matters of health, land, and corporatisation of food. However the approach to weaving is not
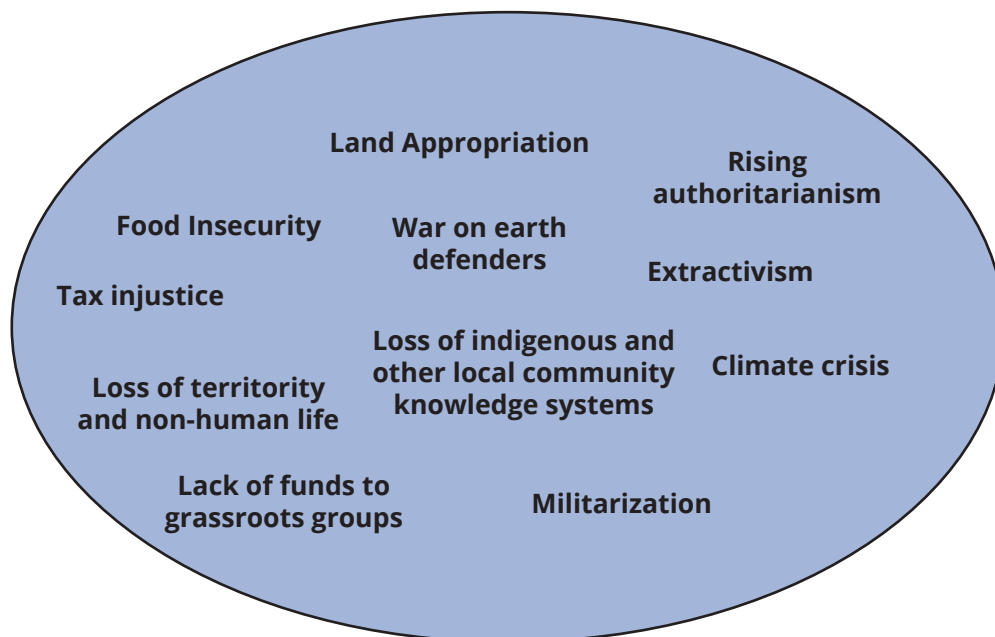

Figure 1: Different faces of the polycrisis as articulated by the GTA Assembly members in Kenya, 2023

to only focus on food in a silo mentality but rather to see food as a way to enter other aspects of the polycrisis. Mauricio del Villar elaborates that there are deeper and hidden aspects such as ways of knowing and being that are also inter-related

" *So we see that defense of territory, it also considers defending the way we are thinking, the way we are learning the way we are healing ourselves, the way we are eating. So it constitutes many of the daily lives of the daily things we are doing in life now. And it's very clear that in many communities, they don't separate how you eat, how you heal, how you share, how you say, how you learn - and all of that is in the same pot. So defending territories is defending all of the different areas of life".*

Additionally, the crisis is not seen simply from an anthropocentric lens but rather situating people within nature. Mauricio goes on to explain that

" *they (indigenous communities) don't put the human as*

the center of life. Now, they consider the human as part of nature. So when you change that, and, you see yourself as a humble person that belongs to a nature that it's bigger than you".

The notion of the polycrisis is thus expansive in that it is destructive to all of life.

4.2 CRIANZAS MUTUAS COLOMBIA

In **Crianzas Mutuas Colombia**, the polycrisis is evident in different threats to life. On the one hand, there is what is called the Project of Death - narco-capitalism in the regions. There are also serious armed conflicts with strong militarised groups threatening communities. This specific context of narco-capitalism in Colombia has shaped much of the history and present crisis faced by communities. It is also a risk factor for the work in building alternatives as people are fearful of engaging. It has thus created a crisis of trust and risk of death for people involved.

At the same time, CMC recognises that their work is also tied to older colonial roots of the polycrisis as they defend their ancestral and sacred territories and protect Afro-Colombian

communities and women who face racialised violence. Andrea from CMC notes that

❝ *we need to focus on territory and defend the territories and essential elements there".*

She attributes part of the problem to struggles that began with Spanish colonisation and the forms of violent extractivism that have taken place in mining, deforestation, pollution and such. According to Global Witness' 2022 report (Global Witness, 2022) Colombia was found to be the deadliest country in the world with 60 deaths in total last year - more than a third of all killings globally. Despite Colombia ratifying a key legally binding regional agreement in October 2022 requiring the government to prevent and investigate attacks against defenders, this figure is almost double the number of killings reported in 2021. At least 382 defenders have been killed in Colombia since Global Witness began documenting deaths in 2012, making it the country with the highest number of reported killings globally during that time. This is a stark reality that is also happening in Mexico, where at least 157 land defenders have been murdered since 2017. This trend expands to many countries in the Latin-American region. Andrea also notes that extractivism, which has become the prevailing way of looking at the world form a

Western-hegemonic perspective, is also epistemological as and academic extractivism and the exotisisation of practices entails a loss or co-optation of traditional knowledge, ways of seeing the world and others, as well as and rituals through a form of "spiritual mining".

4.3 MASSA

For **MASSA**, a part of the polycrisis which motivated for the weaver network to form lay with the neoliberal agenda which was part of ASEAN along with rising authoritarianism. In some ways, the hegemonic system was represented by a nation-state centred approach to development in the ASEAN region. They recognise that much of the development being conventionally promoted has led to marginalized communities; state repression, land occupation and human rights violations. Some elements of the polycrisis identified include imperialism; corporate capture; continuation of extractive industries which has led to the displacement of farmers and indigenous lands and cultures as well as exploitation of rural and working class poor. MASSA thus formed to offer a different type of regionalism and a different vision for development – also acknowledging that much of the regional geographies are a damaging colonial legacy. Authoritarian dictatorships as

exist in Myanmar and Hong Kong are significant manifestations of the crisis that grassroots organisations face.

4.4 VIKALP SANGAM

According to "The Search for Radical Alternatives (2017), the **Vikalp Sangam** process consciously avoids detailed discussion on social, economic, ecological problems we face, or into their root causes; it believes that this context is widely discussed in other forums, and that the participants of the Sangam process share at least some basic common understanding of this context. In just a few lines, the Framework notes the structural roots of ecological unsustainability, inequity and injustice, and loss of life and livelihoods, including: "centralised and hierarchical state systems, capitalist corporate control, patriarchy and other forms of social and cultural inequality (including caste), alienation from the rest of nature and from our own spiritual selves, and undemocratic control of knowledge and technology". India's economic growth and development paradigm, in its achievement of several conventional parameters of progress (GDP growth rate, size of economy, etc.), have also been characterized by serious ecological damage and unsustainability, socio-economic inequities, and dispossession of land/forest/water-

based communities and livelihoods. Several important laws and policies especially related to environment and people's rights are being diluted at a rapid pace. Important biodiversity sites are being sanctioned for development projects in the name of development. These consequences of the pandemic have also exposed the serious fault lines in Indian society (as it has for humanity as a whole). There is an increasingly capitalist state that is more and more callous towards the poor, unwilling to accept this mass reality, or lacking the imagination and wherewithal to deal with it. In hundreds of places, civil society organisations, community groups, and individuals have had to step in to generate resources and provide relief.

Other fault lines exposed are India's chronic casteism and gender inequality, and an increasing religious divide encouraged by its right-wing hyper-nationalist ruling party. India at the moment is facing communal divide and a majoritarian form of government with significant vilification of particular minority communities. Interviewees suggested different forms of these structural roots. One VS weaver narrated the problems with a state-led dam development in Maharashtra which showed how problematic solutions themselves can be when not rooted in local conditions and communities. In this example, the

medium sized dam would lead to displacement of communities and loss of ecosystems. Through the work of grassroots mobilisers, they realized that there was already a good irrigation project underway and development needed to align with this rather than grand solutions which are destructive to local ecosystems and communities. Similarly, another weaver spoke of how there is a crisis of the rural areas in that young people don't see possibilities for careers and development in rural areas. There is a crisis of imagination in what people think is possible.

Common to all the weavers is the experience of state, capital and colonial forms of slow violence as well as more localised forms of patriarchy; religious, caste- and class-based inequalities. Importantly from the contexts of the weavers, three important fundamentals were clear:

1. The crisis is not just one of material conditions but also of losses of ways of knowing and being in the world

2. The polycrisis cannot be viewed from an anthropocentric lens but from our place within nature

3. The struggles all have the same foundational roots but require different forms of mobilisation in different contexts

At a more global level, this is similarly articulated through a process run by the Global Tapestry of Alternatives with Adelante and led to the Adelante manifesto which articulated the crisis we face as described in Appendix 1.

5. Emergence of a Tapestry of Networks

In the face of the polycrisis which different groups have articulated, the different weaver networks have been established and evolved in the context of the particular circumstances of their geo-political and socio-cultural situation. In this section, we summarise some of the ways that weavers have developed.

5.1 CRIANZAS MUTUAS COLOMBIA

Crianzas Mutuas Colombia (CMC) is a weaver group which developed through connections between grassroots organising groups in two regions, Cauca and Manisalles in Colombia. The network was guided by two scholar-activists, Patricia Botero and Arturo Escobar. Both had long-standing relations of trust with communities in Manisalles and Cauca, respectively. Through their interaction with each other, they facilitated the collaborations between the two areas. After interacting with Gustavo Esteva, they were inspired by the Crianzas Mutuas network in Colombia and decided to join forces to form Crianzas Mutuas Colombia in 2017. The term Crianzas Mutuas is an indigenous word from the Peruvian Andes meaning mutual nurturing.

Arturo Escobar highlighted that the motivation for the network is

" fostering the networking, the conversations, the convergence among the people in relatively isolated and fragmented struggles, environment, environmentally, environmentally struggles, anti racist, anti patriarchal struggles, on climate change, food sovereignty, and water".

Lina Alvarez noted that CMC also serves the purpose to

" build another kind of knowledge which does not separate thinking and doing".

In its constellation, CMC holds the elements of the places and people that were part of its initiation. There are some academics and scholar activists who have close relations with the communities. In terms of Colombia's history, there is also a strong presence of Afro Colombian activists and Afro Colombian black feminist that has influenced CMC's work.

5.2 CRIANZA MUTUA MEXICO (CMM)

Crianza Mutua has been a network process in **México** since 2018. It's inspired by Zapatismo and emerged within the autonomous Universidad de la Tierra in Oaxaca, Mexico. It seeks to identify, document and connect groups through communal webs which are actively dismantling hierarchies in everyday life, putting principles of sufficiency into practice and constructing and extending their autonomy from the market and the State. One of the founding members of GTA, Gustava Esteva was also a founding member of CMM and offered inspiration and guidance to both processes before he passed away.

In their own documents, Crianza Mutua[3] is defined as an initiative:

- to identify groups that have broken with the dominant regime and taken a new path;

- to document their experience,

- to facilitate their interaction to learn from each other, and

- to articulate them

    ◊ for mutual solidarity and

    ◊ to inspire discontent with the current situation by giving visibility to what can be done.

They invite *"entramados comunitarios"*[4] that are already living out of the dominant rules. They think that a new world has already been born with the communities who are struggling at the grassroots. Two or more people, who have a practical arrangement to act together, constitute an *"entramado comunitario"*. They share motives, rather than goals, to be together –for sheer survival or in the name of old ideals. They may or may not be part of collectives, groups, organizations, communities, or social movements, but they are expressions of 'societies in movement' that currently characterize Latin America.

Affection and friendship constitute the glue that nurtures the *entramados*. It is not mere 'sentiment,' but ways of relating to each other that have become political categories. The *entramados* can be seen as the cells of a new society.

We include *entramados* which:
- Have been created and act of their own accord. The *entramados*

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[3] *Crianza mutua* expresses among the Andean indigenous peoples the caring and mutual relation they have with all beings around them, plants, animals, hills, everything. It alludes to an attitude about the other, shared by those interacting, that includes learning, caring, 'upbringing'...

[4] The expression does not have an appropriate translation to English. "*Entramado*" can be translated as framework, but it is not; it rather alludes to fabric, tapestry, and intimate weaving. "Comunitario" can be a community. A few people can constitute an "*entramado*"; the qualification alludes to the communal spirit of the fabric.

could have been born by the initiative of one person, even by someone who does not belong to the *entramado*, but those who constitute it are there by their autonomous decision and shared motives.

- Dissolve, in their concrete practices, any hierarchy in the relations between those belonging to the entramado and in their interaction with other peoples or groups.

- Their basic attitude and action is focused on taking care of life, adopting behaviors that are respectful to Mother Earth and all living beings.

- Openly challenge all forms of racism and sexism, with their attitudes and behavior within the entramado and in its surroundings.

- Break with dependencies on the market and the State, through the construction of autonomy and joyous creativity. The rupture is never complete, not even in the sphere of everyday life from which the entramado emerges.

- Avoid shaping their activities as commodities and try to reduce production and consumption of commodities in all areas of everyday life.

5.3 MASSA

At the time of writing, MASSA is the newest of the GTA weavers. However MASSA has a longer history in a different form. MASSA is a network with members across the South East Asian region. Unlike the other three weavers, MASSA therefore crosses national borders and there are representatives from 11 countries. The initial form of MASSA was within the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF). ACSC aims to provide a safe space for peoples' voices and strengthen an intersectional and cross-movement and cross-border solidarity among ASEAN civil society and peoples' movements. It aims to generate sharing and learning and build solidarity towards an alternative regionalism amidst the rise of militarism and authoritarianism and backsliding democracy. It is also to urge ASEAN Member States to better address inequality and human rights issues stemming from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Myanmar crisis[5], climate crisis, and other threats to human rights and regional stability. ACSC and MASSA has been supported by UPCEDS AltDev in the Philippines and a large part of the initial work has been to document grassroots alternatives in the region. As a founding member, Ed Tadem notes,

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[5] https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/report-myanmar/

> *So the thing to do really, is to make them aware that they are not alone, that what they're doing is being replicated, and in many other parts of Southeast Asia".*

He goes on to articulate a motivation for MASSA as

> *what we're really looking at in terms of our final goal is to really develop a new paradigm of development. And we hope that this paradigm of development can be sourced from what people are already actually doing on the ground. So the point is, to try to make sense of all of these experiences, what is common among them, but what is it that drives people together? And what is it that they have been able to do actually already come up with, in terms of basic principles, that can form the building blocks for a new paradigm of development."*

It is driven by a steering committee of 14 members. MASSA means "people"

in several languages in the region and thus has been a name that was taken on by this weaver in 2021.

5.4 VIKALP SANGAM

The Vikalp Sangam process began with questions: What is our vision of a better future? What are our answers to questions of poverty, hunger, energy insecurity, and other deprivations? How do we meet human aspirations, and can it be done in ways that do not destroy the earth or leave half of humanity behind? Are there pathways of 'development' or well-being other than the destructive one? If we do not want patriarchy, capitalism, statism, casteism, racism, what do we want? The process began with a trust that many of these answers already exist among communities and peoples processes at the grassroots but are not visible and or connected. Many of them are working in their own silos lacking cross-sectoral dialogue and intersectionality. The process began with a proposal from Kalpavriksh in 2013 to create dialogues among several networks and key actors in social movement spaces in India assessing the need of a process focussed on alternatives. The process idea received validity & support of several networks. After a few meetings, a group of organisations formed the initial cohort that launched

the Vikalp Sangam process in 2014 in Bengaluru at 'Economics of Happiness' gathering. The first Sangam was held in the first Timbaktu (Andhra Pradesh) in 2014, Kalpavriksh introduced a note "In Search of Alternatives: Key Aspects and Principles"for discussion. This is an ever-evolving note (now in its 7th version) that has synthesis of the understanding of the key trends, principles, and strategies emerging in myriad grassroots initiatives in the various sectors. It includes wisdom and concepts expressed by 'ordinary people' in communities and movements. This note has since then been discussed at most of the Sangams (physical confluences of alternatives), as far as possible in local language versions. Between 2014 and 2023 several hundred people have been part of these discussions, and the current (seventh) version (as of october-2023) of the note includes key elements from the very rich insights that have been obtained.

The VS process has five primary objectives namely 1) Research and documentation 2) sharing and collaborations 3) Outreach, visibility and advocacy 4) Processes for Macro change and 5) Future Envisioning. Documentation and outreach is a core objective of the VS process and a website focussed exclusively on visibilising and connecting alternatives was launched in 2014 (www.vikalp- sangam.org) and by end-2023 it has about 2000+ stories and

perspective pieces, across the full range of human endeavour. The VS process is just that, a process. It is not a project, it is not an organisation, not even a formal network (though it does function like an informal one). Its loose structure has a national general assembly (consisting of over 85+ movements and organisations as of end-2023), and a facilitation team representing ten groups within the Sangam that helps in holding of the network. The general assembly is the decision making space that meets annually physically and online once in 6 months. The facilitation team plays an important role in steering the group and meets online every month. Each Sangam is organised by one or more hosts, usually from amongst groups that have volunteered to organise a Sangam or been requested to. As emphasized from the start, as a process or a platform, VS is open to be used by anyone who broadly agrees with the kind of conceptual framework that has evolved (described above).

VS process envisions and deploys a number of strategies and actions that are needed to forge the pathways towards a sustainable and equitable future. These include:

1. Resistance, civil disobedience, and non-cooperation (both collective and individual) towards the forces of unsustainability, inequality, and injustice

2. Decolonization of mindsets, attitudes, education and institutions, to remove hierarchies and dichotomies, e.g. between science and other forms of knowledge, modern and traditional, intellectual and physical labour

3. Initiatives in re-commoning including of previously 'enclosed' or privatised commons

4. Facilitation of voices of the disempowered/disprivileged (dalits, adivasis, women, landless, disabled, minorities, nomads, 'denotified' tribes, workers, etc) in forums of decision-making

5. Encouragement of public innovation and experimentation in solutions in various sectors; networking of alternative initiatives at regional and thematic levels

6. Alternative ways of learning and socialization based on the listed principles and values. introducing this in schools, colleges, and other platforms

7. Facilitation for non-violent communication and resolution of disputes; methods of healing trauma (individual and community)

8. Use of all available democratic means of redressal and transformation, including policy forums and the judiciary

9. Integrating art into everyday lives, fostering the creative in every individual and collective, bringing work and pleasure together

10. Fostering public understanding of historical and structural roots of the contemporary crises, and collective search for solutions

5.5 COMMONALITIES AMONGST WEAVERS

Most of the movements emerged in the face of need and in response to the crisis described in section 4. The form and constituent groups in the weavers are not all consistent but rather organically determined by those organising on the ground. Scale is thus an interesting aspect of what makes weavers. What is clear is that if a group decided to self-identify as a cohesive unit, then that is sufficient. In some cases, individual leadership has been critical to help the new processes take seed and establish themselves. Moving forward there have been different processes for weavers. Within the GTA process, we acknowledge that there are a lot of networks and are now looking at how GTA can facilitate networks of networks in different places such as Germany, Brazil, South Africa. At the Kenya Assembly in August 2023, a critical point made was that many of the endorsers are also weaving, especially those who are rooted in local communities and taking action to build alternatives.

6. (Re)Generating Radical Alternatives: Articulation of Alternatives

All the four weavers began with the intention of building a process of highlighting the multiple ways of organising, doing, being and thriving, towards more just, equitable societies. These processes emerge from the space of distress among activists, academics, community members, researchers and others of how little attention is being paid to the proactive responses to the multiple crises the world faces—ecological, socio-cultural, political, economic, spiritual. They emerge also from the space of resurgence and hope that these responses to the crises can possibly dismantle the systems of oppression and create or sustain alternatives to them.

They range from movements of resistance to the dominant ecologically destructive and socially inequitable model of "development" that has been imposed across the world, to people's initiatives at constructing or sustaining ways of life that meet human needs and aspirations without despoiling the earth and exacerbating inequalities. They constitute everyday practices and ways of being. These are not big organisations or famous groups but rather small community initiatives trying to imagine life beyond the current crises, finding or sustaining ways of eating, learning, healing, organising, and building in autonomous ways.

What each weaver says

The current four weavers of GTA - Vikalp Sangam (India), Crianzas Mutuas (Colombia), Crianza Mutua (Mexico), and the MASSA (Southeast Asia) - have a diverse yet connected articulation of current crises and alternatives to it. As described in section 4, these processes are rooted in the radical critique of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, colonialism, the nation-state domination and anthropocentrism that destroy the fabric of life. The grounded understanding of crises and ways to respond have nourished the creation of the GTA and determined the shape of the criteria to identify and weave "alternatives".

Most of these processes encompass dignified rage against the systems of oppression as well as practices on the ground to articulate what it means to resist and reconstruct. These

diverse initiatives form a *pluriverse* - to paraphrase the Zapatista movement, "many worlds within a world" - in which we can discern key common threads. Such movements seek systemic, radical transformation (i.e., in the structures and relations of oppression, inequity, and unsustainability mentioned above), not succumbing to the superficial and often counterproductive solutions of market measures and techno-fixes. "Anything that tries to propose an alternative to the dominant way of doing things. A different system other than just solidarity not just confined to resistance strategy but also showing resilience, regeneration and ways of responding" say MASSA weaver members in South-East Asia. There is a need to redefine alternatives so that it is clear that they are focusing on non-state initiatives and a level of autonomy ranging from political-social-economic alternatives, but also building intersectionalities.

transnational levels, these weavers know that they have to build on community processes; for **MASSA** it is about 'regionalism from the below'. Most regional organising is manufactured by the global, bureaucratic institutions who organise based on nation-states but organising beyond nation-state boundaries is essential to build radical solidarity. MASSA focuses on nurturing people's own creative responses to the crises in an inclusive manner that crosses borders and enables non-extractive modes of organising and living life. MASSA focuses on 1) visibilizing alternatives through documenting, researching, and storytelling. 2) creating a space for people 2 people (P2P) dialogues and exchanges within South-east Asia as well as with other regions. 3) creating a process of forming collective expression and initiating different forms of campaigns that can bring together groups that have similar origins.

6.1 MASSA

While attempting actions and articulations at national and

6.2 CRIANZAS MUTUAS COLOMBIA

For the members of **Crianzas Mutuas Colombia**[6] alternatives emerge in the

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[6] On the concept of "Sub/alter(n)/nativities"

The concept-experiences of sub/alter(n)-nativities stems from the thought and action of diverse grassroots collectives in several bioregions of the southwest of what today is called Colombia. It is being proposed by UniTierra – Editorial Color Tiera in Manizales, Colombia to denote the resurgence of new worlds out of ancient worlds (indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant worlds), and the emergence of newer worlds out of the practices of resistance and re-existence by women, youth, environmentalists, and marginalized urban groups. While the terms "subaltern" and "alternatives" are well-established, the term "nativities" seeks to name the plural births and re/emergences aimed at defending and re-affirming what could be called a politics of life free of subordination. Sub/alter(n)/nativities imply those novel millenarian re/births that endure in

process of engaging and negotiating with existing structures, but from the position of autonomy.

" *We all exist in state conditions, liberal democracy conditions and modernity conditions but through everyday practices we can challenge these dominant & hegemonic forms of being. Our articulation of alternatives is a collective one"*

says one of the members of CMC. Crucially, alternatives are built around:

- processes that heal and constitute the web of life

- initiatives based on re-existence; rooted in histories of resistance and creation; rooted in a place – all of which provide the cue to transformation and moving forward with the existing situations.

- relationality and the conviction that we are individuals but interdependent.

- production and reproduction of commons.

- everyday practices, produced not from theory but rather embodied in practice of living and being. These are not just people involved in social movements but 'regular' people practicing and transforming currently dominant structures.

- strongly anti-patriarchal with critique of all kinds of hierarchies. It is not about men and women but a way to understand life in general.

- an embedded understanding that every knowledge is an element of life.

For CMC, weaving of alternatives is about building and showing the possibilities

the rooted autonomous daily practices, ways of feeling-thinking, and struggles inhabiting the negated worlds of subaltern groups; they may be seen at work in the expressions of hope, poetics, and minor revolutionary inspirations in everyday life. They signal, finally, those emergences anchored in long-standing rootings that have not been completely colonized, but that might exist in the shadows, the eloquent silences, and the productive secrets at the service of life maintained by people at the margins, engaged in marginalizing the dominant systems, and that, as such, do not need to be un-veiled or revealed. By adding "nativities" to "subaltern alternatives," these collectives point at the multiple present-oriented and subterranean births and re-emergences out of ancestral philosophical practices, which are difficult or impossible to coopt. As the subjective narratives emphasized by Hannah Arendt as central to the construction of the public and hence of politics, stifled by modern rationality and objectivity (integral to Nazi totalitarianism), these narratives –or nativities as we now say--, have a liberatory potential and embody an entirely different imagination. They are essential for understanding the politics of autonomy and re-existence in the midst of the ongoing Third World War with its extractivist, militarized, and neo-fascist propensities. Nativities are also related to the Crianzas Mutuas (mutual co-arisings), meaning the confluence, weaving and re-weaving of transformative alternatives in Abya Yala/Afro/Latino América and beyond.

in responding to violence, unrest and crises (in specific to Colombian context).

> 66 *We have a market area where rural and urban people get together here in Uniterra and at the same place there are drug dealers and prostitution. So all of these places have coexisted and show the possibility that good can exist amidst bad. It is about building solidarity networks around learning, eating and healing"*

says a CMC member.

CMC focuses a lot on building spaces of convergence and dialogue among community members through different processes. One of their projects is based on designing systemic regional transitions in times of social and climate emergency with a perspective of pluriversal territorial peace for the geographic Cauca River valley. The project convenes alternatives and brings the groups together that are working on cross-sectoral themes. One of the most important collectives in CMC, is the urban orchids in city and biological corridors. Manizales is a university city where the CMC members create an alternative learning to the conventional universities. CMC is working towards strengthening other ways of learning by stressing that we all are teachers and learners in the university of life. They are also organising gatherings of the groups who are part of the collective.

6.3 CRIANZA MUTUA MEXICO

In similar terms, for **Crianza Mutua Mexico**, "alternatives" are those which

- tend to suppress **hierarchies** in everyday activity—which implies dissolving power, command, and control structures (though forms of coordination are maintained and legitimate hierarchies respected);

- adopt in practice the **principle of enoughness**, though they might not call it by that name, which means they try to have and use what is enough (sufficient) to live well[7]; and

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[7] The principle of sufficiency means that they are not looking to acquire more or better. They don't adopt the "premise of scarcity" that constitutes economic society, that is, the assumption that people have unlimited ends (they want everything), but their means are limited. This assumption creates the "economic problem": the allocation of limited means to unlimited ends. The principle of sufficiency implies joyously accepting what one has, and if necessary transforming and enriching the means that one has—for example, improving the plot of land where you cultivate your own food.

- construct **autonomy** in at least one sphere of everyday life, but tend to naturally extend it to other spheres without looking for autarky.[8] Like the other weavers, for CM Mexico too, what they do comes from the community itself by creating processes that are horizontal without any leaders. Actively trying to break dependency on the state and the market, there might be relations with them but continuously trying to eliminate the dependency on these systems.

Through these CMM is trying to create visibility of alternatives and nurturing 'hope' with tangibility. CMM aims to 1) create physical spaces of gathering and part of CMM is to have tangible processes that can create experiential encounters. 2) foster common spaces for collectives working on healing, eating, learning and others can engage with each other. One such encounter happened in the Chiapas on healing in spiritual ways, healing with land, healing with communities. 3) visibilise these experiences and processes.

6.4 VIKALP SANGAM

For the members of **Vikalp Sangam**, "Alternatives can be practical activities, policies, processes, technologies, and concepts/frameworks, that lead us to equity, justice, sustainability. They can be practised or proposed/propagated by communities, government, civil society organizations, individuals, and social enterprises, amongst others. They can simply be continuations from the past, re-asserted in or modified for current times, or new ones; it is important to note that the term does not imply these are always 'marginal' or new, but that they are in contrast to the mainstream or dominant system." For VS too, a crucial outcome of such an approach is that the centre of human activity is neither the state nor the corporation, but the community, a self-defined collection of people with some strong common or cohesive social interest.

VS proposes that the alternatives are built on the following spheres (or overlapping spheres) seen as an integrated whole; in this or other forms these have been expressed by many in the past, but are re-emerging in the present context. VS has an evolving & living document called the Alternatives Framework Note that captures the philosophy & practice of the process.

In practice, **Vikalp Sangam** attempts to (i) help document, understand and make more visible ongoing practical

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[8] Autonomous construction means that those who make up the *entramados* have formulated their own norms to do what they do. They govern themselves and try to do things by themselves, reducing, as much as they can, dependency on the market and the State. It does not imply isolation or avoiding all exchange in the market.
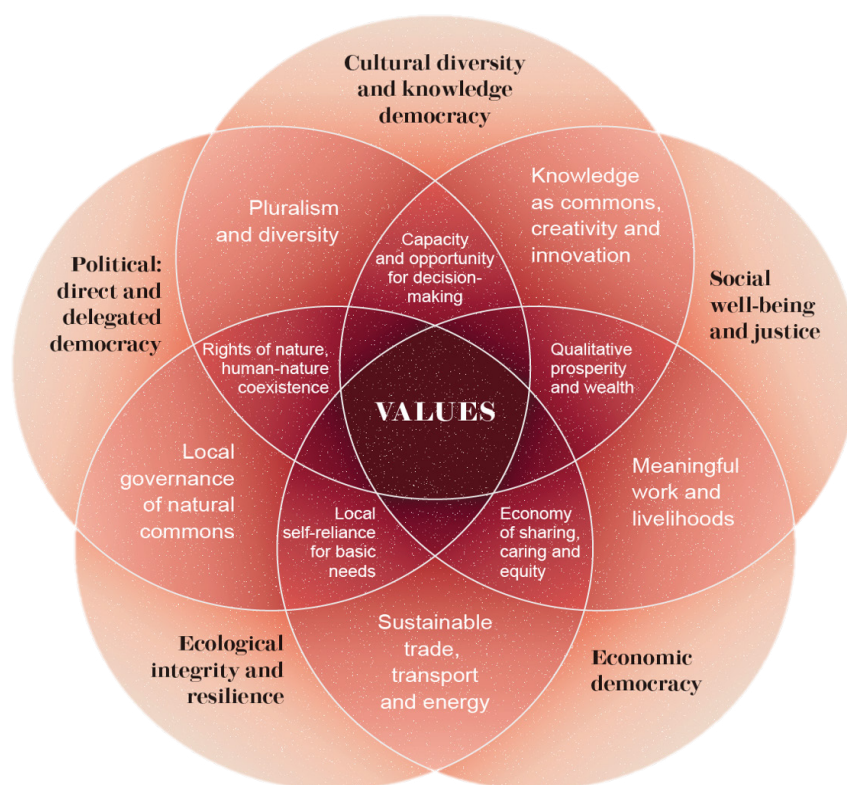
Figure 2: Credit: Federica Fragapane; "Alternatives Transformation Format: A Process for Self-Assessment and Facilitation towards Radical Change," prepared by Kalpavriksh for ACKnowl-EJ (*chart reference*)

and conceptual alternatives in all fields of human endeavour; (ii) provide a platform for people working in these to come together for sharing, learning, and collaborating, especially across sectors; (iii) be a forum for collective visioning of a better future and pathways to it; and (iv) contribute to the possibility of a critical political mass that can more effectively challenge and change the system(s) or systemic forces mentioned above. Of these, the first three can be said to be ongoing processes, beginning early on in the process and continuing for its life; while the fourth is a more long-term objective.

6.5 COMMONALITIES AMONGST THE WEAVERS[9]

Alternatives are pluralistic. Accepting and encouraging this diversity is key – whatever is being developed as an alternative to the prevailing systems needs to be context-specific. Alternatives stress the need for values and practices that are fundamentally different from those followed by the dominant system, e.g. cooperation, solidarity, equality and equity instead of competition, the commons instead of privatisation, inclusion instead of exclusion, togetherness instead of individualism, conserving life and nature instead of

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[9] This is the result for a collaborative process to identify common elements that facilitate the process of weaving/ interconnecting the GTA's Weavers, contributed by Vikalp Sangam, Crianza Mutua Colombia, Crianza Mutua Mexico and future Weavers of this ongoing process. https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/weavers:criteria

exploitation of nature, diversity instead of homogeneity. The alternatives have different initial triggers and focus areas. Some start from basic needs, others from a desire for more autonomy or reviving identity, others as a reaction to external threats, yet others from internal struggles for equality (gender, caste, class, race, etc.). The weavers of the GTA have together articulated some of the pillars of alternatives and these are presented below:

- **01. The care and respect for the life of women, queer, trans and gender non-conforming people** to break down patriarchal hierarchies, toxic masculinity and racist, sexist, transphobic, homophobic, and other violent attitudes.

- **02. Eradicate racism, sexism, casteism, and classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism and rural-urban hierarchies in** our behavior, transforming the agreements and institutions that normalize discrimination and exclusion, placing us in a new pluralistic horizon.

- **03. Suppress hierarchies** in everyday life—which implies dissolving power, command, and control structures through forms of caring organization and

autonomous ways to organize collective decision-making.

In terms of breaking with the hegemony of the nation-state and the system of liberal democracy

- **04. Strengthen rooting processes** that recognize life at the local level while fostering weaving processes with other groups that are building alternatives in other places, based on the principle of interdependence, whether urban or rural, traditional, new or emergent (e.g., the reinvention of ancestral practices and knowledge in other places).

- **05. Defending the territory** which constitutes resistance to systemic domination. The defence is not only determined by geography but by all the various areas of daily life such as eating, healing, learning, sharing, dreaming, and living.

- **06. Contribute to decolonizing and deconstructing the colonization process of the Global South**, which persists after centuries, guided by current forms of neo-colonialism. Support and expand to the multiple efforts to revive the diversity of ways of being and knowing on the earth, and respect the dignity of the

different languages, cultures, and faiths.

- **07. Communitising life** as an alternative organization of social life to the State, private property and the market. It entails discussing, agreeing, executing and celebrating collectively in all dimensions of life. The power lies in the rooting in the territory, in the joint decisions that imply a broad and equitable distribution of power among people in their communities and groups.

- **08. Fostering direct, radical forms of democracy** where people can take decisions in face-to-face settings, through consensus or other collectively decided modes, and strengthening mechanisms by which larger level decision-making institutions are accountable to these grassroots communities.

In terms of breaking with the capitalist system

- **09. Break with the processes of bigger and bigger scale**, that seek to globalize existence and end the forms of life at the local level that today represent hope in the face of the crisis of the system.

- **10. Adopt in practice the principle of sufficiency**, which means trying to have and use what is enough (sufficient) to live well, according to the context, while of course enhancing access to basic needs for those who do not have enough.

- **11. Break with dependencies on the market and the State**, through the construction of localized autonomy and joyous creativity that are part of community economies. Avoid seeing our activities and the natural world e around us as commodities and seek new ways to balance the production and consumption of goods in relation to the care of life. This means that all human activities related to the production, transformation and exchange of goods to satisfy genuine needs, need to be embedded in the regenerative cycles of the Earth.

- **12. Beyond individualism, the groups share motives, rather than goals, to be together**. Affection and friendship constitute the glue that nurtures relations. It is not mere "feelings", but ways of relating to each other that become political forces. Affection and friendship become political categories that require the organization of social mechanisms/forms/institutions

that encourage proximity, trust and reciprocity among the members of a given community.

- **13. Autonomous and inter-related construction of knowledge** appealing to living traditions and those emerging or re-emerging in the daily actions of many of the communities. It seems to us that it is urgent to recognize and make visible these alternatives, as inspiration for others, and promote their encounters for mutual learning.

- **14. Making visible the importance of care work.** This implies a shift from the anthropocentric emphasis of the economy on the "production" of goods to a relational conception of the economy that emphasizes the "regeneration" and sustainability of the fabric of life, cooperation and mutual aid.

In terms of breaking with the culture of anthropocentrism

- **15. Re-integrating ourselves into nature,** removing the human-nature divide; and in the case of Indigenous Peoples and others who still embody such integral living, processes to sustain them.

- **16. Taking care of life**, considering the daily activities that represent the tangible processes in communities, whether rural or urban, indigenous or otherwise. The care of life not only from an anthropomorphic way and considering the care of everything on mother earth.

- **17. Bringing back respect for Mother Earth**, other species, and the rest of nature, including (in so far as the language of rights is relevant to humans) recognizing that all of nature has inherent rights, especially in urbanized, modernized societies and communities.

7. Praxis of Weaving Alternatives

In this section, we focus on the praxis of weaving and how different groups are weaving in their territories and networks. Theory emerges from the everyday practices of resisting, creating, living and doing. Hence, all the weavers stress on visibilising grounded practices of communities, peoples, networks who are resisting the oppressive systems by creating different ways of doing things. Another important element of praxis is creating the spaces of exchanges, learning, cross-sectoral dialogues, and solidarity. In addition to nurturing such encounters, some of the weavers also focus on creating alternatives collectively among diverse groups of people. We understand that the active process of weaving is more important than the concept of a weaver and thus focus on weaving as a social relation - acts of mutual support, conflict, negotiation, communication and experimentation (Bollier and Helfrich, 2015). Here we share some examples of the practices of weaving, drawing from both experiences from weavers locally and also from the work of weaving globally that GTA fosters.

7.1 PEOPLE 2 PEOPLE COMMUNITY DIALOGUES AND WEAVERS' EXCHANGE

A strong praxis of learning and exchanging is community dialogues wherein people can exchange about their struggles & practices with each other autonomously. Especially if these dialogues happen at territories of respective groups then the conversations get grounded and meaningful for the participants. Visiting community centers enable robust understanding but crucially offer a space for direct -physical connection which is very crucial for communities at the grassroots.

Since 2022, one of the main goals for the GTA has been to strengthen and support the work of Weavers at the local level. The attempt is to enable "weaving" between alternative practitioners and create a learning platform where participants exchange their stories, campaigns, and sustainable practices. This form of a dialogue and exchange intently exposes alternative practitioners with those outside their region to learn about common themes of struggle.

7.2 CONFLUENCE AND GATHERINGS - DESIGN AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL OF ORGANIZING

Bringing the community of practice at the common space to share new ways of being and doing, new forms of organising that respect the local cultures and nature, and draw from them. The

members celebrate as well as challenge each other constructively, to grow into a strong political force of change in the regions they belong. These spaces are also for co-inquiry, co-visioning and co-creation of a holistic pathway for the New Society/ies; pathways which attempts to acknowledge and embrace all ecological, social, political, economic, cultural and spiritual realities, simultaneously.

Hence, these confluences or gatherings must be designed keeping such components of community-building where members feel safe to bring themselves into the space with a sense of ease in connection, sharing, joy and celebration, as well as opportunities for challenging others and being challenged.

The VS process for example, has a detailed design document for their gatherings.

7.3 ADVOCACY

Advocacy is an important tool being used by several groups to build the dialogue on alternatives in discussions related to 'development' and related issues, and to shed light on false alternatives such as those focusing only on technical, managerial and financial 'solutions'. Various networks with a critical mass of organizations, movements, collectives and individuals with multifaceted lens and expertise are trying to advocate for alternatives for policy shifts. These efforts are directed towards reforming and changing the current exploitative, extractive, expropriative, hegemonic and hetronormative structures.

7.4 ECO-CULTURAL MAPS AND CALENDARS

The eco-cultural map and calendar is a sketch drawn by communities working within the African Biodiversity Network. They represent the knowledge of people about their territory and highlights the ecological features that matter to a community. The maps are used to reveal deep geography, cultural vision and meaning of community in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem services. In the eco-calendar, represents the seasons that used to be, that are today and that communities want to see in the future. It is important to note that the past, present and future are never seen as disconnected or as linear. The 3 maps are constantly communicating with each other where the past forms the basis to analyze and understand present and what might happen in future.

When time, space and territories come together they merge into an integral or holistic vision that allows for renewed knowledge to emerge and flourish.

7.5 COMMUNITY ECOLOGICAL MAPS

Within CMM, most communities based in territories imagine their landscapes as eco-regions or bioregions since their lives are so immediately dependent on the rivers, spring waters, lands, that they live upon. Hence, the community ecological maps are tools that are immediately relatable for people to engage in dialogue but also a way of collective remembrance to have more-than-human in our conception of planning, dialogue, learning and sharing.

7.6 INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

Intergenerational learning and dialogue among several communities is a crucial praxis of weaving as it enables the knowledge exchange between elders and younger generation in a horizontal way.

7.7 COMMUNITY CARE GUIDELINES

An important element of establishing a community is ensuring that there are shared values and ethics amongst the people participating. These are often taken for granted norms but it is increasingly becoming important to have these norms discussed, agreed upon and written down by the members so there is collective agreement and ownership. Within some weaver groups, such norms as no alcohol during gatherings have been established. Within the GTA as a whole, a set of community care guidelines has been established laying out how we want to meet and connect within a frame of decolonial and feminist ideas of care and intentionality. Some of the practices articulated in the community care guidelines include deep listening; practicing humility and being conscious of taking up space; acknowledging cultural and identity differences respectfully.

7.8 FUTURE ENVISIONING

One of the crucial aspects of weaving is collective future visioning, and has been perhaps its most important and innovative element. It relates with—our modern-day inability or unwillingness to dream and envision utopias. It attempts to break through this, not so much by recalling the visions that the significant figures like M K Gandhi, Karl Marx, B R Ambedkar, Rabindranath Tagore, etc, had set up, but instead through visioning from below without discounting the former. For example, within the VS process interactions at the Sangams and occasionally in discussions have focused not only on practices of alternatives, but also on concepts and visions. Various groups, communities

and organizations are actively trying to work towards this by working on what they call 'Life Plans' or 'Mapping the pathways'.

7.9 GLOBAL WEAVING

In this section we write more about the actions GTA takes to foster weaving.

A. Assemblies - The GTA holds an Assembly every 3 months to have common space for reflection, planning, strategizing, sharing and thinking for GTA activities. The first ever physical assembly happened in Kenya in 2023 bringing people from communities, networks, organisations, universities from South Asia, South-East-Asia, Middle-east, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North-America to share experiences of weaving alternatives against oppressive systems and what it means to move forward with our collective struggles and visions for future. Assembly is an important space to thread expressions are threading possibilities of defining life and wellbeing beyond capitalist modernity.

B. The GTAMap project seeks to create a decentralized free open source software platform for collaborative mapping and documentation of Alternatives. This includes experiences, practices, organizations and processes. Each registry would be created and

enriched by GTA's core team, but also collaborators, endorsers and observers of the process. In a brief way, the GTAMap project seeks to:

1. provide a collaborative meta-mapping technology, firstly implemented in GTA communication context (to map Endorsers, Networks, Cases/ Stories and other collections/ datasets. The implementation is called AltMap and is available in the following link: https://map. globaltapestryofalternatives.org/

2. promote multiple implementation of the tool, enabling different deployments in a distributed way allowing each Weaver document and map their alternatives. The differents maps would converge in a common automated meta-map, like a general integrated view of the maps in a common tapestry

3. collaborate with Endorsers to do adaptations for their own specific documentation and thematic maps, strengthening the relation of GTA with them in specific co-created projects.

4. enrich and improve, in a general sense, the quality of the documented and collected knowledge about the alternatives, implementing

quantitative (i.e semantic data values that allow dynamic visualizations and comparisons) and qualitative features (i.e. multimedia, audiovisual, transmedia capabilities)

C. Weaver Dialogues are an important tool for weaving in GTA. These dialogues are meant to enable better understanding of commonalities and differences among the weavers. Crucially, to expand the networks of alternatives that can lead to future solidarity building and cross-regional collaboration. Such exchanges serve as a learning platform where participants share their stories, campaigns, and sustainable practices. This form of a dialogue exposes alternative practitioners with those outside their region to learn about common themes of struggle. Dialogues between different groups help in creating bridges between differing communities working on different spheres. A collective working on how to heal ourselves are also interested in defending their territory, there is always a desire to move beyond current practices and expand into more holistic processes. A link to these dialogues can be found here: https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/weavers:dialogues

D. Visiblising alternatives through periodicals and regenerative stories is a critical part of GTA's weaving. GTA's periodical called 'Weaving Alternatives' seeks to articulate new strategies for the replication of content through our networks of allies in a decentralized dissemination format.

It contains perspectives, news on activities being seeded through GTA, as well as perspectives/news/thoughts/questions from tapestry weavers and endorsing organisations and networks are shared. Periodical is a space for knowing work on alternatives engaging with ideas, facilitating collaborations and initiating co-writing and co-learning processes. Link to these periodicals can be found here: https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/newsletters:index

Another project of this collaborative production of content on alternative processes and grassroots experiences, is a series of reports (in written, oral and other forms) that take as their theme the multiple global crises and how grassroots alternatives respond to them, especially focusing on resilient, regenerative strengths of communities. These reports can be found here: https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/reports:index

The attempt with this documentation is to make stories and processes visible and create horizontal dialogue among its actors and the construction of networks of learning and trusting relationships. This includes our series of regular webinars: webinars:index We hope to strengthen the GTA as a space for collaboration, activism and learning for those who actively join us. During these years, on several occasions, we have had the contribution of volunteers and interns from various universities who collaborate in specific initiatives; we intend to strengthen this involvement.

E. Working groups and project emerged during the Assembly in Kenya aim to further strengthen the above by focusing on

a. *Dictionary of concepts:* focused on fostering a collaborative process to identify the key concepts of the narrative of the various alternatives, an initiative co-created by GTA and other organizations, strongly inspired by the tradition of dictionaries, glossaries and encyclopedias of development criticism and alternatives.

b. *Common declaration:* to shape agreements and common perspectives based on what was discussed in Kenya, taking as one of its main inputs the document "Manifesto: Declaration on Global Crises and Radical Alternatives" prepared by Adelante and promoted by GTA since 2022, as also the 'criteria for alternatives' document that the weavers are together evolving.

c. *Toolkit for weaving:* a document or platform that compiles collective learning about the various ways to promote the creation of local networks that connect alternatives, presented in a didactic and practical way to encourage the emergence of new processes.

d. *Learning exchanges:* as part of the efforts to strengthen the dialogue between fabrics and the strengthening of links between people and organizations in a decentralized key, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning; possibly linked to PeDAGoG.

e. *Virtual Assembly facilitation and planning:* as a permanent workspace to nurture the quarterly Assembly and as a space to think and experiment with better ways to carry out the processes of exchange, debates and decision-making in the context of GTA.

8. Weaving a Global Tapestry

In this section, we make some general observations regarding the work of actively creating a global process based on the experience of the last six years.

8.1 CROSS-BORDER WEAVING AND BUILDING SOLIDARITY

Cross-border weaving is an important element of weavers' focus as they believe that it is through people to people exchanges and processes both at regional as well as global level, that we can truly mobilise the communities and enable transformations to happen. Alternative regionalism that is beyond nation-state and beyond the forces of extractive markets, is an important element of the weaving process, building on transnational solidarity of marginalised people.

> **"** *Oppression is possibly contextual but there is a regional character to it and grassroots movements' power is only in numbers. Our resources are scarce. So from a transnational point of view, it is important to organise and offer active solidarity ",*

as articulated by MASSA members. Transnational weaving is important to understand the global level impact of our crises as well as processes of responding to them. This kind of networking provides an idea of expansion, but a horizontal expansion like tree roots which are slowly expanding and strengthening the ground. It also gives the opportunity to understand other struggles and transformative practices. Crucially, processes of creating & "imagining different worlds" makes us feel that we are not alone, that we are together in this. This acts as an important catalyst for solidarity". It is crucial to also experiment on how to give up the idea of vertical scale, how convergence can happen politically and socially in a horizontal manner, and how are these addressed in practice?

8.2 GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Being 'local' or regional, these networks of alternatives, connected globally to other similar networks, combine into a complex picture. As one of the core team members of GTA effectively articulates, "the 'global' is an artifact of the heteropatriarchal modern capitalist ontology of separation of place and space (among other constitutive dualisms) necessary for the appropriation, normalization, and at times obliteration of what it construes

and actively constitutes as "the local." Strictly speaking, the global doesn't exist"[10].

The crucial question is then: why 'global weaving'? Feminist theory and praxis informs us that all knowledge is produced socially and is situated in historical contexts. Indigenous traditions tell us that knowledge is produced in embodied practice and everyday living. Examples of alternative processes tell us that they emerge through radical interdependence, recognizing their unique contexts and place-based nature, and hence are connected through the web of life. Hence, GTA is attempting to create a pluriversal politics[11] that creates processes of sharing and exchanges among these processes of emergence and transformation. It calls for "radiating out" horizontalism, rather than scaling-up, and attempting to create equitable, distributed yet connected ways of transformation. "Glocalism and bioregionalism are notions seeking to give more power to place and "region."[12] They challenge the dichotomy of global and local through designing strategies that allow for convivial sharing societies in autonomous ways.

8.3 HORIZONTAL WEAVING

GTA weaving experience informs us that the macro-transformation does not happen from individual initiatives acting alone: large shifts become possible when a critical mass of movements for radical resistance and constructive alternatives is able to coalesce through horizontal networks[13]. It is not about the replication of successful initiatives (or simply copying from one to another, which different contexts make inappropriate), nor is it about *upscaling* (since making one initiative bigger and bigger tends to lead to bureaucracy, lack of nimbleness, and the weakening of original values), but rather about *outscaling*.

Hence, GTA through its activities aims to stimulate horizontal weaving of networks and platforms where they exist and also stimulate weaving where it doesn't yet exist. Finally, it aims to generate collective envisioning of alternative futures, while respecting the plurality of alternatives across the world. These visions are plural and diverse but certain common principles and values enable this horizontal weaving to connect.

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[10] https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/global-local-escobar

[11] See, for example, Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta, eds., *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (Delhi: Authors UpFront/Tulika, 2019)

[12] https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/global-local-escobar

[13] https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/global-tapestry-kothari-bajpai

Hence, if we would look at the Alternative Tapestry, it would be filled with different colours and patterns but would be weaving collectively threading a tapestry of possibilities.

8.4 SCALE

Within the ambitious project of weaving a global tapestry, we understand that there are complex dynamics across scales and between scales as well as the potential for inter-scalar interactions. In all of the work of building radical alternatives, one can scale issues from the global through to the body and all scales matter and each give us a different perspective on issues. When weaving, all of the levels are acknowledged and it is evident from the experiences of weavers that the individual person, the interpersonal and the community are as important as the relations to the local, national; regional and international connections.

Through the work of weaving, it also becomes evident that scales and levels are constructed and based on how we understand the world. For example, climate change may be global but it is experienced in our everyday lives and localities. Within the GTA, we privilege the "earthy" lived experience as a source of knowledge that is often ignored in global processes. Being rooted in

territory is a description often used by weavers.

GTA not interested in scaling up and also not looking to replicate successful alternatives. This is a practice that has been rife in development initiatives globally and suffers from the notion that there is a one-size-fits-all model which can work. It is rather about allowing the tapestry to grow organically and in rhizomatic ways having outward expansion. Our focus is on how convergence can happen in practice. A challenge that is acknowledged by weavers is that these conditions of movements begin to produce effects beyond their locality to achieve systemic effects without re-creating the politics of representation and verticality through our slippages (Escobar interview, 2023). We work from an acknowledgement that (1) we are a constantly evolving process; (2) that the process is slow and imperfect; (3) that we make the path as we walk it; and (3) that we want to go far and thus go together.

8.5 KNOWLEDGES, WORLDVIEWS AND PLURIVERSE

A fundamental aspect of the approach to weaving a tapestry of alternatives is to make space for all ways of being, doing and knowing in the world to have space and be equally valid as each other. In

this sense, weavers speak of a tapestry where each thread is different and together it makes a pattern of different colours, textures and compositions. Acknowledgement of different ways of being, knowing and doing in the world is aligned with a decolonial approach that makes space for indigenous and traditional knowledges, wisdoms and cosmologies. Within the GTA, this is an important element to the cognitive justice that underlies the work. In line with Zapatista thinking, this is complementary to the idea of a pluriverse or a "world where many worlds fit". Additionally, life is centred within this approach and people are placed within nature.

Such an approach recognises that the current hegemonic system has been deeply destructive to the plurality of ways of being and doing and part of the work of weaving is to bring into re-existence and to regenerate ways of being that have been denied and destroyed. The struggle is also to protect life not just in the material resources of our territories but also from the extractivism of knowledge; identities and wisdoms which have been appropriated and commodified. A pluriversal approach requires working out of an understanding of interdependence and care. As articulated by Arturo Escobar, the work of weaving is to create design

conditions to begin conversations with relevant social actors.

8.6 THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Within the idea of a pluriverse, the GTA acknowledges that in different contexts, the state is experienced very differently. The role of the state in alternatives may be constructive and/or destructive. Commonly among the weavers, it is recognised that the centralisation of power in the hands of the nation-state was one of the bases of capitalism: in practice, capitalism is carried out through the political, legal and military institutions of nation-states. Nation-state was supported by an ideology asserting that capitalist modernity is the only way to organise lives, and that this justifies taking over territories of Indigenous peoples and local communities for national goals like development and security. Nation-state symbols such as one flag, one language and a single identity submerge and often disrespect diverse biocultures – combined biological and cultural human environments[14].

Whilst most of the groups are identifiable as non-governmental and community-based organisations, some endorsers and communities do have relations with the state - whether local government or national and international regimes.

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[14] https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/nation-states-are-destroying-the-world-could-bioregions-be-the-answer/

Some of the weavers articulated concerns with state capture by capital and religious groups which shape the way state's operate in the interest of an elite few. Thus within the GTA, explorations of radical democracy continue in line with a commitment to sovereignty and self-determination.

8.7 RESOURCES FOR WEAVING

A great deal of the work of weaving the tapestry of alternatives is currently voluntary although efforts have been made to support some general coordination and specific activities such as the production of periodicals and resilience cases. Most of the facilitation team offer their time and intellectual contributions on a voluntary basis to hold the process. However resources have been secured for basic infrastructure needed for a global network, for example to maintain a functioning website and for specific activities such as the periodicals and resilience documents. To date GTA has been mainly supported by two funders with additional resources secured from time to time for specific activities such as the physical Assembly in Kenya. Some considerations that come into play when considering financial resources is the the funders have aligned values with the GTA and whether the GTA has the capacity to deliver on the commitments

made when applying for funding. The strategy to date has been to work slowly and grow organically rather than rapid expansion which may lose the core spirit and focus of the weaving.

8.8 THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF CONNECTING GLOBALLY

Weaving a global tapestry is an ambitious project that requires connecting a very diverse range of people and movements - many of them who have mostly worked rooted in their own communities and territories. This brings with it many challenges - some at a fundamental level and others more practical.

At a fundamental level, we explicitly acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the pluriverse we live in. This requires acknowledging that there are many differences coming from the alternatives/territories are we located (taking into consideration the diversity of alternatives according to the different territories and the internal diversity) and finding a way to establish dialogue that weaves together (not as an academic but as owners of our own process) - gender, culture, race, class, ability, linguistic, etc. This involves acknowledging the diversity and how people are constructing their different alternatives to take care of

life in different ways according to the struggles they face and the varied types of resources they can access. This also includes respecting the different cosmologies and lived experiences of all those weaving.

In practical terms, global encounters require tools to enable dialogue and sharing. Factors such as language, time zones and the different vocabularies we have for different experiences and concepts are constantly being negotiated. For example, the GTA continues to work predominantly within the colonial languages of English and Spanish so as to reach the largest number of people. However, efforts are always made to provide resources for interpretation, for example to allow people to talk in their mother tongue, where feasible. Recognising the plurality of meanings given to words in different languages and also when translated to English, requires slow and patient work amongst those weaving. Finding words which resonate in cultures and hold different significance to different groups requires careful navigation. As such, a project to develop a dictionary of alternatives is underway to start to gather the rich vocabulary and offer support when we translate across languages and cultures.

8.9 THE QUESTION OF POWER

Within the GTA, we recognise that systems of oppression have entrenched power hierarchies that have historical roots in patriarchy, anthropocentrism, capitalism, racism, casteism etc and have been exacerbated by inequalities and injustices that have deepened with economic globalisation. However, grassroots movements emerging across the world signal a gradual shift to direct or radical democracies, coupled with making representative democracy more accountable. For us, radical transformation implies one which refers to a transformation of power structures and relations, from a situation of domination, injustice, violence and unsustainability to one of reduced violence, increased equality and flourishing. It entails challenging the sources of domination and oppression, including capitalism, patriarchy, state-centrism and inequities along lines of race, caste, ethnicity, gender, ableism, sexuality and others – and it is thus multidimensional and intersectional, balancing ecological concerns with social, economic, cultural and democratic spheres.

The weavers of GTA, for example, are trying to challenge the hegemonic power structures by building counter-

hegemonic spaces for exchanges, dialogues, engagements by trying to create possibilities beyond the systems of oppression. We understand that power of domination is not always exercised coercively, but through subtle mechanisms. In this sense, domination can manifest in the form of visible (Weber, 1971), hidden (Giddens, 1984) and invisible/internalized forms of power (Foucault, 1971). And we see how several of these movements through their organising are challenging both visible and invisible power structures by transforming 1) the institutions, legal and economic frameworks, 2) people and their networks, and 3) discourses, narratives, knowledge and ways of seeing the world.

In that way, GTA is trying to create solidarity networks among these diverse groups to build possibilities of macro-change and political & economic power of grassroots struggle. It is not about doing away with power but rather re-distributing social/economic/political power by organizing, networking, and building beyond the centers of power (Kothari and Das, 2019). By working in a decentralised manner which seeks to share resources with existing grounded networks and alliances, the GTA seeks to build where groups stand rather than create something new and parallel. As

most of these groups are marginalised or outside the mainstream, supporting their activities on radical alternatives, supports a shift from the current western, capitalist, colonialist, modern hegemonic power base. An important dynamic of the GTA is that the process is dominated by groups from the Global South[15] or majority world and this is itself a shift in political and economic power from the current international status quo. Those groups from the Global North or minority world are also often representing less mainstream alternatives.

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[15] Global North' includes privileged and powerful sections in the geographical South; conversely, "Global South" includes oppressed and marginalized peoples in the geographical North.

9. Conclusion

The report has presented a glimpse into the journey of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives as an example of prefigurative politics taking place in the present and moving from the local to the global scales. Drawing on the experiences of members of the GTA weavers and facilitation team, we have highlighted some of the transformative praxis that is being undertaken to create another world - one where many worlds fit in.

We do not underestimate the enormous challenges a process like GTA faces. Not only are we up against the most powerful political and economic forces in history, but also against the very human frailties of territoriality, ego, and narrow-mindedness that inhibit collaboration. The GTA must also work to encourage and sustain a sense of common purpose while respecting the plurality of GTA's constituents and affiliates. If collectively held through horizontal weaving, this can create a vision, not imposed from above as happens in a conventional party or organization, but which binds us together from below for coordinated global action.

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