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NORRAG SPECIAL ISSUE

Education for Societal Transformation: Alternatives for a Just Future

About NSI

NORRAG Special issue (NSI) is an open-source periodical. It seeks to give prominence to authors from different countries and with diverse perspectives. Each issue is dedicated to a special topic of global education policy and international cooperation in education. NSI includes a number of concise articles from diverse perspectives and actors with the aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice as well as advocacy and policy in international education development. The content and perspectives presented in the articles are those of the individual authors and do not represent views of any of these organizations. In addition, note that throughout the issue, the style of English (British, American), may vary to respect the original language of the submitted articles.

About NORRAG

NORRAG is the Global Education Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute and a global network of more than 5,800 members for international policies and cooperation in education and training. NORRAG is an offshoot of the Research, Review, and Advisory Group (RRAG) established in 1977 and at the time funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Swedish International Development Authority (Sida). It was charged with critically reviewing and disseminating education research related to the Global South. Since our move to Switzerland in 1992, NORRAG has been significantly supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, and, for a period, the Open Societies Foundation (OSF).

NORRAG's strength lies in addressing under-researched questions of quality and equity in key issues in education and development and in amplifying under-represented expertise, particularly from the South. NORRAG's core mandate is to co-produce, disseminate and broker critical knowledge and to strengthen capacity for and with the wide range of stakeholders who constitute our network. Our stakeholders from academia, governments, NGOs, international organisations, foundations and the private sector inform and shape education policies and practice at regional, national and international levels. Through our work, NORRAG contributes to creating the conditions for more participatory, evidence-informed decisions that improve equal access to and quality of education and training.

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Education for Societal Transformation: Alternatives for a Just Future

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Foreword

In the context of our contemporary existential crises, which have been caused by climate change, widened inequality and the erosion of democracy, we find ourselves standing at an important crossroads. This NORRAG Special Issue, *Education for Societal Transformation: Alternatives for a Just Future,* seeks to explore how we can reimagine education for it to bring meaningful changes for more just, equitable and sustainable societies.

The guest editors—Frank Adamson, Rezan Benatar, Michael Gibbons, Mark Ginsburg, Steven J. Klees, Giuseppe Lipari, Carol Anne Spreen and Deepa Srikantaiah—who are part of The Alternatives Project (TAP), have collected contributions that present diverse ideas and approaches challenging the fundamental structures and ideologies embedded in our society, particularly in education systems. The richness and variety in their problematisation and proposed ideas are underpinned by agreement on the importance of education's role in pursuing just and sustainable futures but only with the reimagination and reform of current education systems. As the editors acknowledge, the alternatives presented in this Special Issue highlight participation, cooperation, solidarity, ecological mindfulness, arts integration and well-being.

Drawing on diverse cases from Brazil to South Africa, covering topics from Indigenous knowledge systems to education in conflict and emergencies, these contributors from across the world emphasise that education can be a powerful space for resistance and activism when it respects alternative pedagogies, decolonised knowledge and Indigenous ways of being. They also acknowledge that education can be a tool to fight oppression, recover from colonial legacies and help marginalised groups define their own futures. To reimagine and reform education, the contributions call for reconsidering current economic systems, responding to climate change, promoting social justice, implementing new education models and engaging with youth, to name a few.

Importantly, the 39 contributions included in this Special Issue demonstrate again and again that there is no single path to education reform. Meaningful changes should be grounded in the specific histories, cultures and needs of local contexts. Therefore, the alternatives that each contribution explores are diverse and reflect the complexities of the educational challenges across unique contexts.

Now more than ever, it is critical to explore innovative educational solutions in the face of climate change, societal inequality and political uncertainty. More than 100 abstract submissions to the open call of this Special Issue reaffirm the importance and timeliness of the topic. Although this Special Issue offers a glimpse of the possibilities for change through education, it is not an exhaustive list of alternatives. Furthermore, education can only be transformative when other economic, social and political changes accompany it, as the editors also noted. Whether or not one agrees with the alternatives explored in this Special Issue, everyone would agree that education can and should bring about powerful changes. We invite you to explore the alternatives presented here, continue the conversation and take action for new, sustainable and just futures.

We sincerely thank the guest editors, authors, reviewers and publication team for dedicating their expertise and time to this publication, and most importantly, we thank you, the reader, for your curiosity and active engagement with the ideas presented in this Special Issue.

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NORRAG SPECIAL ISSUE

NORRAG Special Issue (NSI) was launched in 2018 with the ambition to be an open-source periodical giving prominence to authors from various countries and with diverse perspectives. In line with NORRAG's strategy and seeking to bridge the gap between theory and practice, each issue focuses on the current debates that frame global education policy and international cooperation in education. The issues aim to stimulate discussion and present different viewpoints on a topic; therefore, they do not necessarily represent the views of NORRAG as an organization or the wider NORRAG membership.

In addition to English, all NSIs are available in Regional Editions in AR I ES I FR I RU I ZH.

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At a critical time when our world teeters on the brink of disaster, this NORRAG Special Issue fosters hope. We face crises on multiple fronts—a polycrisis—and we urgently need economic, social, political, and, of particular relevance here, educational alternatives to current dominant thinking and practices. That is what this special issue is about!

The special issue is an undertaking of The Alternatives Project (TAP), a diverse, transnational collective of progressive academics, union members, civil society activists, and social movement participants concerned with building a global collective critical voice focused on education and societal transformation. TAP envisions and works toward a foundational rethinking of education and society globally. Through TAP, we seek to support building a movement that offers a collective challenge to hegemonic ideas and policies on education and "development." We use our research and writings, grassroots action, advocacy campaigns, and efforts to connect with those building alternatives.

Formed in 2019, TAP first developed a Statement—a manifesto, if you will—entitled "Education Justice for Societal Transformation: A Framework for Action" (see immediately below). We translated the statement into 12 languages, garnering over 500 individual and 35 organizational signatures to date from around the world. A slightly updated version serves as a fitting beginning to this special issue.

Please feel free to go to our website and sign the original TAP statement!

The Alternatives Project Statement

We, the undersigned, believe that current social, economic, political, and educational arrangements reproduce relations of power that engineer profound inequities and will ultimately threaten life on the planet. We stand for alternative pedagogies and for just, regenerative education systems that will support the social transformations we need to create a richer, more equitable, and sustainable world.

Co-existing and inter-related global crises are pushing humanity and the living planet towards political, social, economic, and ecological collapse. These crises—seen in the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, structural inequalities, police brutality and racism, entrenched patriarchy, accelerating climate chaos, and the constant threat of wars—are driven globally by capitalism and militarism. We must seize this unique historical moment to reconceive and radically change public education as an entry point for deeper transformations that will build human solidarity and cooperation bringing an end to racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. We reject the notion that education's priority is to build "human capital"; we assert that education's priorities should include regenerative ecosystems and further social justice for current and future generations. This requires the creation of just education systems, which we can only achieve as a part of a broader struggle for social transformation in all other spheres, especially the economy and in politics.

Progressive struggles are necessary to form new social contracts that serve the collective interests of the many rather than the self-interests of the few. Human history reflects a series of complex and interlinked social transitions shaped by power relations: from agrarianism to industrialization, through colonial conquest, authoritarian dictatorships, post colonialism, neoliberal globalization, and the digital revolutions and collusion between surveillance capitalism and the national security state we see today. Each new dominant class produces an ideology that perpetuates its domination, justifies the inequalities it invariably creates, and fosters pessimism that change is possible at all. These ideological hegemonies almost always involve adherence to, and create education systems that reinforce, hierarchical assumptions and rigid binary conceptions—human/non-human, male/female, mind/body, secular/spiritual, superior/inferior, urban/rural, us/them—that assume the right of conquest and to exploit the natural world and all living species. The contemporary authoritarian, nativist, patriarchal, and settler-colonial populisms emerging worldwide in the wake of globalization and the increased migrations due to conflict and climate change sharpen these binary oppositions and provoke social insecurities to tighten their grip.

Today, education systems around the world are forged in the mindset of neoliberal capitalism and ideas of efficiency, rate of return, choice, competition, and economic growth. This ideology affords wealthy supranational corporations' and billionaires' unbridled power to reshape the global economy and national political systems, perpetuating extractive, carbon-based, economic activity and resulting in unconstrained consumption and the critical degradation of ecosystems. Organized in this way, education systems serve to reinforce and legitimize social inequality, segregation, and stratification within and across nations. Yet, as much as it reflects the prevailing hegemonies, education is also a pivotal site of contestation. Authoritarian states, knowing full well that education can be a force for transformation, move swiftly to wield it as a tool for ensuring compliance and control.

Consequently, for many children and young people, this world is bleak. The quality of education that they receive is increasingly segmented by the socio-economic status and geographic location of their families. Education is increasingly organized in competitive markets that create and entrench race, class, and gender inequities where private providers and contractors, as well as teachers and students compete by, and are ranked on, cost efficiency and standardized tests: a commodified education model delivered via constrained public budgets, focusing on outcome benchmarks, human capital formation, and economic rate of return and value-for-money. This model reinforces human exceptionalism, racial prejudice and white supremacy, denigration of difference, legitimation of economic and political inequalities, hyper-individualism, unbridled economic growth, an uncritical reception of advertising rhetoric and compliance with authoritarian rule. One consequence is the bizarre contradiction that the most widely educated population in human history is collectively triggering the eco-collapse of the living planet's systems, an act of collective suicide and ecocide.

Over the past 30 years, sustained advocacy by civil society and education unions moved the world to embrace the right to education and aspiration of education for all: Compulsory schooling has expanded to unprecedented levels of scale, engaging nearly two billion children each day. Most families now assume that completing 8 to 12 years of schooling is essential for the future of their children and most governments assume that providing free public education to all children and youth is sound public policy. But we are nowhere near achieving this. In part, wider structural injustices caused by the past four decades of market fundamentalism have driven sustained social-sector underspending and disparaged all government activity as "ineffectual" and "wasteful." Consequently, the financing of education has been woefully inadequate, and much more funding is required and is possible, from national governments as well as bilateral and multilateral international organizations.

It's not that there is no money; governments always find money to spend on the military, the police, security and surveillance, and corporate welfare. To confront this ideology, we must expose scarcity as a myth and austerity as a deliberate policy choice to drive the agenda for neoliberal privatization.

While spending targets on education reflect a global consensus, most governments do not even meet the target of spending 20% of their budgets and 6% of their GDP on education. The international community has promised for decades to spend 0.7% of their GDP on Official Development Assistance yet allocates only a fraction of this. And all these targets greatly underestimate the need.

We need to win these arguments in the public sphere. The problem goes beyond funding. International financial institutions—such as the IMF and the World Bank—are neocolonial institutions promoting neoliberal, so-called Washington Consensus policies throughout the world. The IMF and the World Bank have had a key role in influencing education (and other social) policy. Instead of supporting education, the IMF restricts country spending on hiring teachers and other public sector workers. The World Bank pretends to be a research-based source of objective advice, but for the last four decades, it has based its recommendations on its neoliberal ideology. It is high time for a new Bretton Woods conference to consider a major overhaul of the IMF and the Bank.

We call for radical change. All governments must establish free public education from early childhood through higher education that will enable a critical, participatory, democratic re-evaluation of how we think and act together in the world. To deliver education as a human right requires fully funded public systems, sustainably financed through national and global progressive, redistributive tax systems, with unconditional assistance from the international community. The curriculum should actively reject the docile consumer complicity that feeds global warming and climate catastrophe. Rooted in the community, education must be culturally relevant and promote humanistic values of anti-racism, anti-sexism, solidarity, social cohesion, empathy, imagination, creativity, personal fulfilment, peace, eco-minded stewardship, and strengthening of democracy. Teachers need professional autonomy, quality working conditions, and, through unions and other organizations, a major voice in policymaking. Likewise, students and their representative organizations must also have a voice in political and pedagogical decision making, having their right to participation fully acknowledged.

The world needs a radical revisioning of education that will help transform and create regenerative societies. This will require a new social contract that values social spending above military and security spending and goes beyond the narrow interests of the business sector, edtech firms, private school chains, and other edu-business actors. We call for reversing the movement towards the privatization of education and other social services and keeping business logic out of education and social policymaking.

We instead draw on struggles and lessons from organised students and teachers, the trade union movement, democratic community-based organisations, including associations of minorities, migrants, and refugees—as well as independent media, organisations, and professionals that share our commitment to advancing justice in the flawed, real societies in which we live. These groups have already developed alternatives for educational justice, including schools and non-formal education programs that support twenty-first-century socialist, indigenous, and black sovereignty, decolonialism, Black Lives Matter, abolitionist, and critical pedagogies.

Justice in education depends on advancing justice-related goals in four areas:

1. Social justice—Building education for equity, transformation, and regenerative living
   Education systems need to reorient towards addressing the inequalities and injustices in their societies, fostering racial, gender, and disability justice, and models of inclusion that will teach how to work collectively and drive the transformation of education and society.

2. Climate justice—Learning how we can live regeneratively on the planet
   We need public education systems that teach human ecology and stewardship values that will facilitate this transformation both now and in the future.

3. Economic justice—Financing education and other public services in a transformed economy
   The economic system must satisfy the real needs of all people by focusing on equity and opportunity, not profit. This polycrisis must mark a fundamental shift away from capitalism and towards workplace democracy and a radically redistributive economy that prioritizes progressive tax and progressive spending on public services for all, both nationally and globally.

4. Political justice—Reframing political engagement at all levels
   We need to move away from authoritarianism and xenophobic nationalism. We must energize global solidarity, cultivate international cooperation, and strengthen global intersectional grassroots movements. We need to develop more inclusive and participatory democracies at local, national, and global levels.

These initial ideas do not point to a distant, utopian mirage; rather they build upon the thoughts and actions of many progressive groups and organizations around the world. We, the undersigned, see these ideas for a radical re-envisioning of education and society as necessary directions to counter and overcome the severe crises our planet is facing.

What We Mean by Alternatives

Our statement and the name we have chosen for our organization make clear the urgent need for alternatives. Margaret Thatcher's TINA—There is No Alternative to (neoliberal) capitalism—was wrong from the beginning. David Bollier's TAPAS—There are Plenty of Alternatives—is clearly more accurate.

However, what really constitutes education and societal "alternatives?" Andre Gorz (1967) coined the term "nonreformist reforms" to refer to reforms that go beyond palliative "reformist" measures that do not challenge oppressive structures. This stance immediately leads to asking, "What alternatives really challenge fundamental structures and ideologies?"

This question has no easy answer. When operating within the dominant political and economic paradigms, reforms are easy, yet they almost always reproduce dominant Global North perspectives. The reforms are framed within the dominant ideologies and constrained by existing power relations. One can simply define objectives, generate options, do an impact assessment or cost-benefit analysis, and select the best choice. However, challenging capitalism, patriarchy, racism—or their educational manifestations—has no simple impact assessment, no single answer without participatory dialogue. Entrenched interests can and will co-opt reforms. Furthermore, current structures and institutions often resist change.

Our call for contributions to this special issue explained and signalled that stance. Therefore, we declined to include paper proposals that appeared reformist without challenging existing structures of power and injustice. However, what is reformist is a judgment call. The progressive left, of which we consider ourselves to be a part, often agrees on the nature of the problems faced but often disagrees about the tactics and strategies for addressing these problems. Thus, we can and should debate what constitutes truly transformative alternatives. We acknowledge that some even believe that education alternatives cannot be transformative (see the paper by Le Goliard, this volume). However, we disagree. In our view, the papers that follow get at education and other alternatives that can contribute to societal transformation. Below, we offer our perspectives on some of the fundamental values and characteristics of such alternatives.

Characteristics of Alternatives

This special issue is about reimagining our world—and these alternatives provide powerful prospects for our imagination. In a world governed by neoliberal hegemony, examples showing different visions of society can inspire change both for individuals and communities. When related to education and, more broadly, to learning, these prospects grow exponentially. We cannot change a system without imagining alternatives, and even the more practical ones can contribute to radical shifts in paradigms and to broader transformations, putting the existing world order under scrutiny. What we clearly see in each of these alternatives is the power of new approaches in action, challenging injustice in its many forms.

Although creating a complete list of characteristics is not feasible, we present some that the coeditors and authors recognize as important.

Participation
An essential element of alternatives is a participatory approach along with a conscious critique of hierarchical "expert"-driven approaches.

Cooperation
Cooperation, not competition, is the hallmark of most alternatives.

Solidarity
Beyond cooperation, the idea of community solidarity underpins human relationships.

Ecologically Minded
Justice necessitates respect for the environment and for life in all its forms. A concern for nature and the ongoing climate crisis is an integral part of alternatives.

Arts Integrated
A full integration of the arts, which is fundamental to the act of imagination, is essential to all forms of progressive activism.

Well-Being
This means full commitment to community well-being (or buen vivir), with the idea that true individual happiness cannot be attainable without the well-being of everyone else in the community.

Not all these characteristics may be present in all alternatives, and other characteristics and values are important as well. We live in a pluriverse where alternatives may take different forms. The world we want is described in the Zapatista saying about the need for "a world within which many worlds fit."

Education and Individual Transformation

We are innately spiritual beings, and our spirituality plays a critical role in our connection to the interdependence of life. Yet we have created economic, political, and, at times, even religious systems that ignore or counter our interconnectedness, thus threatening the very existence of life on earth. We recognize that transformative education and societal alternatives inextricably link to our transformation

as individuals and that societal transformation necessitates both inner and outer change (Nolan & Posner, 2024).

For millennia, spirituality, here not necessarily as a religious adherence, has served as part of the foundation for a holistic way of life that cultivates mental exercise, emotional regulation, and inner peace and emphasizes our internal journey reflected in everyday conduct. Eastern traditions and Indigenous Knowledges, among others, have long woven a rich tapestry of spirituality that transcends the individual. They showcase a deep connection between humans and the natural world, fostering a sense of interdependence.

Spiritual practices should not diminish the pressing realities of structural inequality, systemic racism, patriarchy, and other injustices. Instead, they can offer a path towards personal transformation, leading individuals to adapt and use sustainable practices and ensure resources are shared equitably and utilized responsibly for the collective good. Within each of us is a seed of transformation, waiting to connect us to the greater tapestry. This transformation can empower individuals and reduce barriers and conflicts between people to further strengthen the fabric of society and ultimately safeguard our planet. The threat of a dystopian future demands societal alternatives with individual transformation.

What Is in the Special Issue

The special issue is divided into nine parts. Part 1 does not address education per se but offers five essays that consider a plethora of alternatives to political, economic, and social arrangements that have heretofore governed our world and organized our thoughts. We invited four papers by leaders in the field of alternatives in addition to one by a coeditor. This first section is quite pivotal because thinking about alternative educational futures necessitates that we also think about the changed context within which such futures would exist and operate.

Parts 2–9 consist of 33 essays by 66 authors from around the world focusing on education alternatives that expand our epistemic horizons and potentially contribute to a just, equitable, and regenerative future. In organizing these sections, we faced the challenge of how to best situate and categorize familiar topics (TK-12 education) while keeping a critical perspective on the very institutional frames we seek to challenge, deconstruct, and ultimately change. Part 2, Reimagining Schooling, includes papers focusing primarily on a critical approach to schooling, including revolutionary reforms and initiatives seeking a just future. The papers in Part 3, Rethinking Postsecondary Education, focus on new ways of approaching education throughout the life course. Part 4, Centering Nonformal Education, offers papers that expand well beyond traditional conceptions and sites of "schooling."

The next four parts include papers focused on specific areas. (Un)learning from Decolonial and Indigenous Knowledges (Part 5) turns our attention to ways of living, being, and learning that we might already know but often overlook in Western/northern-based education systems. The papers in Part 6, Responding to the Climate Crisis, offer directions and examples for education to help us navigate and mitigate this pressing existential crisis. In Highlighting Education in Conflict and Emergencies (Part 7), the authors detail different modalities of education in particularly challenging situations. Part 8, Amplifying Education for Liberation, discusses the myriad ways in which social movements inform education systems and engage in educational processes.

Our Conclusions

We conclude this Special Issue with Part 9, Advancing a Way Forward, which features Michael Apple's paper on the "tasks for the critical scholar/activist," updated from his 2013 book, Can Education Change Society? Among other things, Apple argues for the need to do the following:

- Document exploitation, marginalization, reproduction;

- Document progressive struggles;

- Help identify spaces and possibilities for counter-hegemonic action;

- Speak to nonacademic audiences;

- Work in concert with critical activists and social movements in education and across sectors; and

- Confront the intersection of oppressive structures.

Like Apple, we also believe that education can change society. Clearly, this task falls not just on critical scholars/activists but on all progressive educators. Although the alternatives in this special issue help point the way, they represent merely a fraction of all the attempts at transformative education alternatives found in so many communities around the world. Yet education transformation must be accompanied by many other efforts to change society, as emphasized in Part 1 of this volume. We strongly believe that the need for societal transformation is urgent and immediate, especially given the impending climate catastrophe. We cannot postpone this transformation to the next generation!

We have a theory of change for this urgent transformation. We see education change as part of a cross-sector, cross-issue, and cross-national mobilization. The title of the article by Ashish Kothari (2020), one of our contributors, highlights this point: "Lives Matter: Can Black, Indigenous, Worker, Farmer, Ecological, Women, Queer Uprisings, Come Together?" Add

to this list education uprisings! They can and they must come together! This special issue is but a prelude to what we envisage as a series of engaged, generative, and empowering dialogues and actions leading to new epistemic and social systems that offer alternative ways of being and engaging with the world. It is a hopeful and pressing call for action.

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Part 1

Envisioning Societal Alternatives

Eco-nomics: Life-Centric Alternative to the Money-Centric Ego-nomics that is Killing Us

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Summary
Conventional economics education prepares students to serve an economic system that grows the financial assets of the already rich while destroying the Earth's capacity to sustain life. A viable human future depends on replacing it with a life-centric alternative to guide us to an ecological civilization of peace, equality, and a healthy regenerative living Earth.

Keywords
Economics
Ecological civilization
Environment
Living Earth
Inequality

The early economists characterized themselves as moral philosophers. They were deeply concerned with values and the sharing of power. Contemporary economists, however, characterize economics as an objective, value-free science and reduce our management choices to financial calculations. The result is best characterized as a misguided religion devoted to the worship of money.

Ignoring our nature and needs as living beings, contemporary economics plays a major role in driving four emergencies that put humans on a path to self-extinction in denial of four self-evident truths. And doing so neglects three defining imperatives of a viable human future. Let us begin with the four emergencies.

First is the environmental emergency that results from wasteful consumption far beyond what a finite living Earth can sustain.

Second is the political emergency of warfare and other forms of violent competition on local and global scales that add to Earth's burden and deplete its ability to recover.

Third is the health emergency of deadly viral pandemics born of our human disruption of Earth's natural commons.

Fourth is the social emergency born of extreme and growing financial inequality that empowers those who exploit the previous three crises for personal financial gain by reducing their fellow humans to lives of desperate servitude.

Our time has come to update our understanding and application of both religion and science; bridge the gap between them; and find our way to a true eco-nomics aligned with the needs of a truly civil civilization—an ecological civilization—and a viable human future.

Eco-nomics—eco as in ecology—will be grounded in our deepest understanding of creation, life, and our potential human role in life's continued evolutionary unfolding. This "eco-nomics" will be grounded in these four foundational truths:

- First, life, the sacred product of living Earth's commons, is the source of our being. We had no role in creating it, and none among us has a right to more of its surplus than is required to meet their basic needs.

- Second, money is only a number with no utility or meaning beyond the human mind that may sometimes be a useful tool. Growing money must never be embraced as a human purpose.

- Third, humans will prosper by collaborating to share and care for the living Earth commons—the community of life to which we all belong. If not, we will perish in our competitive quest to convert the real wealth of the commons into the phantom wealth we call money.

- Fourth, the choice is ours.

We currently confront three transformational priorities:

Priority Number 1: Earth First

We must learn to share and care for the living Earth commons. That commons is the collective creation of the living beings that preceded and ultimately birthed the human species. We can destroy it. We cannot control it. No one has a right to own and exploit it. We all have an inherent right to use it to meet our essential needs and a responsibility to care for it.

Priority Number 2: Humans Follow Earth

We must facilitate Earth's healing and assure that its gifts are equitably shared in support of life's continued evolutionary unfolding. To this end, human societies must support every person in meeting their essential material needs in ways that are satisfying to themselves while contributing to the well-being of the whole.

Priority Number 3: Institutions Follow Humans

Human institutions are human creations that guide us in our relationships with one another and Earth. Institutions that lead us to self-extinction do not serve. We have the right and means to change them, beginning with the institutions of military and financial domination—including the profit maximizing limited liability corporation. They must be eliminated and replaced by alternatives that serve us in our needs and responsibilities as living beings.

These are the priorities that the moral philosophy of a valid eco-nomics will serve. The barriers are daunting but reside mostly in the human mind, which can—and must—quickly change.

Success requires drawing from all the many sources of human understanding to actualize our full potential as caring, creative, and responsible members of the ultimate commons: Earth's community of life. Spiritual understanding of the profound mystery and interdependence of life grounded in a melding of the insights of religion and science is essential.

The needed eco-nomics rests on our rapidly deepening understanding of the complexity of life's extraordinary ability to self-organize from the bottom up. We might start with the example of an individual human body—the vessel of our individual consciousness, the instrument of our agency, and an extraordinary example of a self-organizing commons.

Each human body is comprised of some 37 trillion living cells that in turn depend on the support of comparable trillions of microbial cells, including wondrously varied forms of bacteria, viruses, and fungi. Each of these trillions of cells is making constant decisions essential to our body's ability to serve our consciousness with little or no central direction.

Through similar processes, life has turned the Earth—once a dead rock—into a far more extraordinary living organism—the ultimate example of an interdependent, self-organizing commons that survives for so long as its countless individual living beings self-organize as a living community to create and maintain the conditions of climate, pure air and water, fertile soil, and much else on which all Earth life depends.

As science now documents, the living Earth commons did not just magically come to be, nor was it the product of the hand of a mythical, all-powerful imperial God who reportedly created humans in his own image. To the contrary, it was the product of a difficult journey of mutual learning by living beings over some 3.7 billion years.

During this time, life evolved from rudimentary microbes to living organisms of ever greater physical and cognitive abilities. An unbelievable and incomprehensible miracle that created the living commons we know as Earth.

Early human experience brought an intuitive understanding of life's interdependence that is beautifully captured by the indigenous South African concept of ubuntu, which translates, "I am because you are."

Guided by this simple and essential truth, early humans self-organized as small, relatively isolated communities of people who knew, cared for, and depended on one another. Together, they created their means of living through their labor from what nature provided in their place.

As the human population grew, human communities found themselves competing for control of the territory on which their means of living depended and the tools and supplies it offered. This led to organizing as competing nation-states—and eventually as competing transnational corporations.

Using a combination of military, police, and financial powers, ruling elites consolidated their control of the means of living of the many to feed their dehumanizing dreams of limitless excess for a privileged few.

Life self-organizes as locally self-reliant communities of place.

Our institutions are failing us because they centralize power and block the local self-organization on which the well-being of the commons depends. Most devastating in this regard is the legal charter of the profit maximizing limited liability transnational corporation that supports the centralization and monopolization of power delinked from community accountability for harms to people and Earth.

Massive resources are consumed to maintain the structures of domination by which the winners reward themselves with lives of extravagant—dehumanizing—consumption. The competition drives conflict. The overwhelming evidence of system failure destroys institutional credibility.

Contemporary social science finds that the [most equal human societies are the healthiest] and that humans get their greatest satisfaction from [caring for other living beings]. It seems deeply significant that these are the lessons that we must now apply in our relations to one another, and Earth confirms the teachings regarding love and mutual caring of the religious prophets from thousands of years ago. We must reclaim their insights as we update them and their application.

Contemporary interfaith dialogue, which holds potential to join the world in a profound re-examination and updating of our foundational religious values and responsibilities, may have an essential role in the long overdue updating of our institutions of religion and science.

Take, for example, Christianity, the faith that now claims more than two billion adherents. One of the most recent of major religions, Christianity looks to the authority of the words of a teacher named Jesus who lived some 2,000 years ago and had no knowledge of the world to which we must now apply his call to love and peace.

Earth's total human population was then an estimated 300 million, mostly illiterate people who could communicate only by speaking directly to one another while standing side by side. Neither Jesus, nor any other human of that time, had any means to examine creation's distant suns and planets or the complex and ever active invisible inner workings of seemingly solid matter and living organisms.

We are now a world of nearly 8 billion mostly literate people with the capacity for instant communication with one another from opposite sides of Earth. And we possess instruments that allow us to view previously invisible worlds.

We look to outer space to observe the beginning of time. We observe the complex and dynamic worlds of subatomic particles and microorganisms. Together, these observations give us ever-deeper understanding of creation and the human place within it.

It seems that, to the extent the world's authentic religions have been concerned with the well-being of living people and Earth, they have spoken too softly. Or been ignored. Or have abdicated their essential role in providing humanity with an ethical compass true to our nature as living beings.

We are in desperate need of a coming together of the world's religions—not around a new spiritual leader or religious text. But around a process of bonding around an ethical frame consistent with traditional indigenous understanding, the best of established religious teaching, and findings on the frontiers of science.

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to address the evidence that exposure to contemporary education in economics is associated with an [increase in a range of morally debased behaviors and attitudes]. For example, concern for equity declines with increased exposure to economics education. The moral lapse driving the current human crisis is in part a consequence of contemporary economics education and its focus on the pursuit of personal financial gain.

We will learn to work together for the well-being of the whole, drawing from all our many sources of understanding, or we will join the ranks of the many failed species that once thrived but are now extinct.

Thus, let us embrace our potentially terminal crises as an epic opportunity to actualize our human desire and potential to love and to care for one another and Earth.

Far from calling us to sacrifice for the well-being of Earth, the emerging vision of an ecological civilization requires only that we relieve ourselves of forms of consumption that are ultimately self-destructive.

We can cheerfully shed the massive consumption entailed in war; frivolous consumption driven by advertising rather than need; planned obsolescence; financial speculation and cryptocurrencies; global supply chains; and cities designed to make us dependent on cars for transportation and to provide office space for activities best eliminated. All of these are sources of our dehumanization.

Our distinctive ability to reshape our relationships with one another and Earth resides in our ability to choose with

conscious collective intention our culture, institutions, technology, and infrastructure. Making the urgently needed changes in these choices is an ambitious goal. And far from having all the right answers, we have barely begun even to ask the right questions.

Can we transform with the required speed? We will know only if we try. I find hope in the fact that the conversation has begun.

In the year 2000, the Earth Charter launched with its call to "join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace."

In 2015, the Parliament of the World's Religions issued a Declaration on Climate Change that closed with these words:

> The future we embrace will be a new ecological civilization and a world of peace, justice, and sustainability, with the flourishing of the diversity of life. We will build this future as one human family within the greater Earth community.

In that same year, 2015, Pope Francis issued his Laudato si' encyclical. A product of deep study and long debate by a diverse body of Catholic thought leaders, it calls the world's people to care for one another and Earth. On May 25, 2021, the Vatican launched the "Laudato si' Implementation Action Plan applying the encyclical's principles of care for Earth's community of life to every aspect of Church activity.

Let our joyful celebration of the gift of life reawaken us to our true nature as caring living beings and to the potential that resides with us to create a future in service to the well-being of life.

The time is now. The choice is ours. We are the ones we have been waiting for.

Recentring the Majority and Displacing the Minority: A Decolonial Critique of 'Growth'

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Summary

Global currents of economic distributional imperialism and global minority rule are evidenced by the overarching authority of the minority world (a numeric minority with almost imperial intellectual authority). This paper offers Afrikan decolonial feminist resistance to this from the majority world, reminding that the north is not unassailable.

Keywords

Growth
Well-being economics
Decolonial feminist economics
Afrikan feminism
New internationalism

Although the idea of new economics—or what some call a well-being economy—as a result of global economic failures has been doing the rounds for many decades, the current interest shown by several states in actively pursuing this approach is on the rise. New economics refers to a redistributive, integrative, human-centred approach that calls for different measures of prosperity. Well-being governments and well-being economies have been gaining traction around the world. Well-being economics is a heterodox, redistributive policy approach that critiques GDP as the primary measure of economic growth. It has many streams that converge around the principles of human thriving, people-centred economic planning, respect for all life forms, recognition of all forms of labour and work, including unpaid, unseen social reproduction and a commitment to collective flourishing. This is contrary to the valorising of individual hyperwealth and the corporate hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. In the minority world (often called the Global North), some governments have begun to recognise that the status quo is failing and are actively recalibrating their ideas of what a good life is. While laudable, a central flaw in the well-being economic plan is that it does not necessarily address the minority world's consciousness about doing better beyond its immediate borders. This is reflected in many northern countries' reluctance to tangibly reframe the systems, structures and institutions that maintain racialised, power disparities between the global North and the global South. This paper draws some of its thinking from two pieces of research on well-being economics (WBE) and decolonial feminist economics (DFE) that I coled, which are expounded on below. Both pieces of work carry critiques on global financial governance instruments, including the Bretton Woods, and argue that these maintain Northern hegemony by embodying colonial power imprints.

This requires the decentring of current growth and development paradigms that centre a small proportion of humanity. The world is no longer bipolar and internationalism in the tradition of the Bandung Project, recognises global multipolarity rather than centring Northern minority power. This is put forward by this paper as the only basis of future global relations in a decolonised world. The solidarity of nations places greater obligations on the minority world to account for and make restitution for the historical and contemporary practises of labour and resource

extraction, corporate imperialism, land occupation, climate degradation and genocide, among many other traumas resulting from Western imperialism. Increasingly, the notion of discussing alternatives, cleaner planets, electric cars, walkable cities and more community-centred living, without considering the ongoing damage that these same nations have wrought across the majority world, seems disingenuous and unneighbourly in the broadest sense of authentic geopolitical coexistence.

The rigid militarisation of neoclassical, capitalist, growth approaches carries the hallmarks of incorporating military elements into what should be egalitarian development activity. There are notable instances when 'Northern Knowing' has proven to be ineffective, including the numerous recent examples where it has caused far more harm than good, including the models of perverse debt-induced economic austerity, the depletion of the extractive sector and the COVID-19 vaccine racism.

The afterlife of the COVID-19 pandemic still demonstrates how the health, income and housing precarity wrought by decades of neoliberal capitalism was brutal. It was particularly vicious to those already dispossessed, including Black and Brown women, and the majority world at large. The result of years of global austerity were again exposed as countless people fell through slippery safety nets, with Black and Brown people thudding with greater velocity. This was more acute where vaccine colonialism brazenly reproduced the inequities of neoliberal capitalism and designated a hierarchy of racialised human value. This cannot be the sort of growth that humanity celebrates. Worryingly this global pandemic provided a cursory—if any—acknowledgment of the historical and colonial damage that is still manifesting and the commensurate culpability. Decolonising and critiquing these processes is making way for the amplification of multiple poles of knowing, coined by the Global Tapestry of Alternatives as the pluriverse.

Stuart Hall's theory in is especially useful for examining the concept of the West (or the minority world) as a historical rather than a geographical construct. It characterises the community that perceives itself as advanced, developed, capitalist, relatively secularised, industrialised, urbanised and 'modern.' This region refers to Western Europe, the United States and, more lately, Japan. Applying the same reasoning, the southern region, in terms of politics and economics, is typically located north of the Equator. This region encompasses a majority of the Caribbean islands, which share historical and racial connections with the Afrikan continent as well as certain areas in Eastern Europe. Complicating matters is the fact that many regions in the United States, notably those inhabited by Black and Brown individuals, are entirely disconnected from the affluent and technologically advantaged, predominantly white communities. To comprehend the intricate network of power, one must also acknowledge that the universe does not consist of simple opposing categories but rather a multitude of coexisting ideas: the pluriverse.

The current economic and political bias towards disproportionate minority world power, including the toxic, ahistorical understanding of growth, centres on the erroneous idea that certain individuals possess unassailable knowledge and authority by virtue of their race, gender, class, and positionality. This white supremacy supports the fallacy that knowledge from the North is central and indisputable, while peripheralising majority world perspectives. In recent years, the majority world, that is, the Global South, have led efforts to embrace decolonialised growth approaches. These have explicitly included Afrikan feminist and Afri-feminist ecological perspectives, which are discussed further below.

Ideas like degrowth, well-being economics, and post-growth are drawn from thinking in the Global North/Minority World by Western scholars in the academy, most of whom are men. Decolonial Afrikan Feminism and Afro-Eco Feminism have constructed the language to critique neo-liberal capitalism, Western economic hegemony, climate colonialism, distributional imperialism, and biopolitical violence from majority world perspectives. The intersection of decolonial feminist economics with social, solidarity and popular economics illustrates the significance of nonmarket context and the recognition of the distinct contributions of Black women within this framework. These recalibrate the centring and valorising of social reproduction, and the large spectrum of economic practices rooted in knowledge derived by race, gender, and territory. Hence, their contributions broaden the range of possibilities and options for public policies that enhance the value of current practices.

The intersectional approach is of foremost importance because it serves as an act of resistance against highly racialised assumptions that shape the economy. It specifically addresses the experiences and challenges faced by Black and Brown women, recognising the diverse ways in which people exist in and navigate the world. One of the strongest frames to characterise the intersection between race, capital and dispossession is race capitalism.

This frame was originally conceptualised in South Africa, and Peter Hudson (2019), Ruth Gilmore (2022) and Robin DG Kelley (2023) have recognised the work of South African scholars like Motsoko Pheko (1984), Neville Alexander (1979) and now Madalitso Phiri (2021) and Khwezi Mabasa (2021). Although the concept was popularised by Cedric Robinson, he drew his analysis from South Africa's settler colonialism as early as the 1960s during his sabbatical year in the United Kingdom (Al-Bulushi, 2022). These scholars have all situated the skewed power and consumption patterns of race, gender, region distribution of assets, wealth, and socioeconomics.

Sam Ashman (2023) has provided an excellent precis of South Africa's contribution to global analyses of racial capitalism.

Furthermore, growing research and writing in well-being economics and feminist well-being economics are emerging from the majority world, notably the recent Oxfam Report, which was largely drawn from Pheko and Verna's commissioned six country study on Alternatives to GDP and the Action Aid Report on Feminist Well-Being Economy Research that draws from Malawi and the immense work of young feminists there. These have been actively developed within movements like the Trade Collective offering a different understanding of societal well-being and racialised economic systems. The Trade Collective is a feminist think tank that, for 15 years, has been exploring the intersections of international trade, international relations and coloniality, centring the majority world. The work of the Trade Collective is anchored in decolonial and feminist well-being approaches and has raised the need to integrate women's economic activities concerns and expectations in the analysis of how the current economic system works or does not work and to problematise its stubborn narrowness. The work has examined how racialised global capital and the current growth modalities work as a means of capital accumulation through their critique on ratings agencies and contribution on land reparations as part of reparational economics. This suggests reparational economics and intersectional economics as modalities of expressing the political economy of debt and is part of work that the Trade Collective is developing.

Various theories of feminist well-being economics from the majority world can be viewed as related, but they are also distinct iterations from the well-being and degrowth movements that have predominantly been ideated in Europe, the US and New Zealand. The work of the Trade Collective has begun to open opportunities to discuss the interface between feminist economics, feminist well-being economics (FWE), and well-being/degrowth economics. It also provides an important opening into the dilemmas of knowledge production of alternatives, particularly when these are framed primarily from the Global North or minority world.

Decolonial feminist economics (DFE) has also evolved as a response to the necessity of incorporating the economic actions, concerns and expectations of dispossessed groups into an analysis of the existing economic system, with the aim of highlighting its limited scope. This novel viewpoint explores the feasibility of an economic system that prioritises the welfare of its citizens as its primary concern. It further examines the impact of social reproduction on market production by challenging traditional models that state these are distinct when in fact they are symbiotic. Formations like South Feminist Futures (Chakma, 2024) are addressing the colonial legacy by analysing the 'decolonial, anti-racist, intersectional framework'. Others like NAWI Afrifem Collective (Torvikey, 2023) are

challenging the neoliberal macroeconomics from an Afrikan feminist lens, and the Trade Collective offers intersectional decolonial feminist perspectives on the political economy. These Trade Collective initiatives are making significant contributions to decolonial feminist economic theory and research. CodeRed is another group actively critiquing regressive, austerity fiscal policy and scrutinising the national budget while also engaging in direct action. In addition, African Ecofeminist Collective is a self-organised formation that works at the intersection of ecological feminism, food sovereignty and anticapitalism. All these movements are rooted in and engaged in popular feminist and anticapitalist movements building across the Afrikan continent and are engaged in global feminist solidarity and anti-imperial resistance.

These formations take inspiration from feminist political resistance, feminist political ecology, intersectional analysis of wealth, power, race, hunger, and other markers of well-being to create rigorous and compelling rejoinders. DFE and FWE are consistently giving careful thought to the access and control over natural resources and the role natural and human resources have in symbiotically creating diverse ways of being and living. This approach is embedded in an intersectional analysis but also explores how different systems of power and access to power interact and impact on distinct groups in society, such as those based on race, class, gender identity, migrant status, and geographical location. They also examine access to and distribution of economic resources; indicators of human well-being; gendered patterns in wages; the dignity of both waged and unwaged labour and the distribution of assets, income and current and intergenerational wealth (Pheko, 2023). Crucially, this work is making connections between the extraction of Black women's labour in previous generations. It argues that there is a herstorical and historical debt owed to Black women and the Afrikan continent that requires a fundamental reorientation of debt and trade architecture, liability that understands that the minority world owes the Afrikan continent an immeasurable debt.

The ongoing shifts towards multipolarity also influence the notions of alternatives and who determines which alternatives work for all of 'us'. It calls into question who can define or propose what a good or meaningful life is. In fact, it begs the question of who is 'us' and where they derive the mandate or legitimacy to determine that 'we' should all be more 'mindful.'

DFE and FWE are a repudiation of the neoliberal dogma that our individual positions are mediated, not by individual rugged hard work, bad choices or some life lotto draw, but by historical contexts of power, politics, and extractivism that have been largely shaped by a minority discourse and continue to pervade over the majority world. Alternatives to GDP recognise that meritocracy is as real as the Easter Bunny. One would think this was obvious, yet a lot of the literature assumes false universality and unearned authority to speak loudly on behalf of the majority.

DFE and FWE both serve as a reminder that geographic context is extremely important. Through the research conducted by the Trade Collective, it is clear that alternative matrix cannot be universalised between countries or even within countries. Regional differences can create entirely different climatic, linguistic, topological, historical and other variances.

There is an urgent imperative to centre Afrikan feminist politics and a willingness to reimagine the implications of this. This includes the centrality of cross sectoral cohesion within anticolonialist movements, Afrikan/Asian country sovereignty and South-to-South solidarity.

Therefore, the South feminist component is extremely central to the construction of this conversation and the responses to neocolonial challenges as they are now manifest in global power relations, international trade, pharma colonialism, labour and migration patterns and patriarchal states. What would it mean to place a requirement that companies provide jobs that are enjoyable and dignified? This essentially means redesigning capital and redesigning production processes. GDP also lends itself to a 'league tables' approach of economic growth by comparing countries that, as mentioned, often have deeply variant contexts and economic processes. Not only does this approach Ignore hugely differing contexts of different countries—including within countries, e.g., rural/urban—but it also highlights that different measures must resonate with their particular contexts. However, ultimately, it is a question of power, the power to determine and to name inequity, hegemony, and multiple forms of imperialism, as contained in the growth indexes. Fortunately, pressure from the majority world and women of the majority world is mounting, and the work of myself and many colleagues and contemporaries can perhaps begin to create crevices in the imperviousness of the neoliberal 'growth and international development' logic.

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Multidimensional and Multiscalar Alternatives in the Pluriverse

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Summary
Seeking systemic alternatives must move beyond the modern colonial, capitalist civilization that finds itself in a profound crisis today. If the crisis we are facing is systemic, multidimensional, and civilizational, the strategies we build must go to the roots, be multidimensional, and reconnect realms that have been torn apart from each other to shape spaces where something like an interepistemic or even interontological dialogue is possible.

Keywords
Systemic alternatives
Multidimensional transformation
Pluriverse
Interdependencies
Eco-dependencies

Our world is facing challenges so deep that many Latin American thinkers do not only speak of a multidimensional or polycrisis but of a civilizational crisis. This has two layers of meaning: one, that the survival of the western, colonial/modern, and capitalist civilization as we know it is threatened because it undermines its own conditions of reproduction, for example, through global warming or biodiversity loss, driven by the aspiration of illimited economic growth. However, it also means that the very foundations of this civilization, its truth regime, its blind belief that any kind of problem will be solved by the progress of science and technology, and the liberal institutions it has given itself for collective decision-making, are called into question by this crisis (Lang et al., forthcoming).

Therefore, seeking systemic alternatives must move beyond this very civilization that capitalist modernity has shaped, beyond this civilization so keenly focused on economic growth, on instrumental and destructive societal relations with Nature, and on a rational, profit-maximizing, and individualistic understanding of humanity that has led us into this crisis. It also means giving space to other forms of understanding dignity beyond the language of human rights, which was shaped in a very specific context after World War II and represents only one of the possible languages of dignity, from which the majority of the world's population is excluded in practice. Still, without doubt, the framework of human rights needs to be defended against the rise of right-wing populists and their aspirations to rule by means of informal power (Lang & Hoetmer, 2019).

Latin American movements and intellectuals have shaped the notion of *pluriverse* to denominate what the Mexican Zapatistas called "a world where many worlds fit"—a notion that embraces not only cultural diversity, but also epistemic and ontological diversity—acknowledging there are different ways not only of understanding and interpreting the world but also of being in it. Along with the pluriverse, the rights of nature have emerged to challenge the legal frameworks of western anthropocentrism. Many grassroots movements and organizations, among which include indigenous peoples and (eco-)feminist movements, are challenging the illusion of a self-reliant, independent, and individual subject, as hegemonic masculinity claims. They stress interdependencies and eco-dependencies, underlining

that human life is just a part of a complex planetary web of life or ecosystem. Consequently, pluriversal thinking must overcome the specialization and segmentation in "disciplines" that have driven modern knowledge production as well as the sectorization that has driven policy in the liberal model of state. If the crisis we are facing is systemic, multidimensional, and civilizational, the strategies we build must go to the roots, be multidimensional, and reconnect realms that have been torn apart from each other to shape spaces where something like an interepistemic or even interontological dialogue is possible. At the same time, in today's globalized world, transformative strategies must be multiscale, considering the manifold effects, interdependencies, and interactions that take place between specific local territories, national/regional policies, and global geopolitical dynamics (Lang et al., forthcoming).

A Multidimensional Perspective on Transformation

In the book Alternatives in a World of Crises (Lang et al., 2019), the Global Working Group Beyond Development proposes a multidimensional analytic framework that allows to recognize, make visible, and strengthen processes of ecosocial transformation in the sense of their achievements and challenges. This framework is not designed as a checklist to assess the "quality" of such processes from an outside position but rather as an invitation to self-reflection for those involved and those who walk with them. It includes, for a start, eight dimensions of transformation—which can and should be complemented according to each specific context where the framework comes into use. Each of these dimensions is founded on an extensive thread of debates and experiences that I do not have the space to retrace in detail here. Both the previous work of the Latin American Permanent Working Group on Alternatives to Development, which was founded in 2011 by the Quito office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and of the Vikalp Sangam (alternatives confluence) network in India, which seeks to combine environmental sustainability with radical democracy and economic democracy, have served as a basis for establishing this framework.

The first dimension involves the decommodification, or commonization, of some aspects of life, which means liberating them from the predominance of marketized profit logics in order to re-center them on the capacity to control and reproduce life in both its material and symbolic dimensions.

The second dimension looks at the transformation of instrumental and predatory societal relations with Nature, which have been constitutive of capitalist modernity and have intensified during neoliberal globalization.

The third dimension refers to overcoming patriarchal gender relations, that is, the sexual division of all forms of labor, including care work, subsistence work, informal work,

community work, as well as in terms of the dimensions of representation and decision-making in relation to the specific forms of patriarchy at work within the context in question.

The fourth dimension gauges the introduction of more equitable social relations, including the capacity to (re) distribute, to culturally sanction accumulation and inequalities, to destabilize capital accumulation and related strategies of regulation and governance, and to delegitimize former hegemonic forces.

The fifth dimension looks at overcoming discriminatory/racist interethnic relations. It builds on the recognition that racial segregation, for example, in the differentiated appropriation of work during slavery and colonialism, has been and still is a founding pillar of the modern/colonial capitalist world system since the invasion of America (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992).

The sixth dimension, the generation of a specific basis of knowledge and experience—not restricted to Western, science-based, "objective" expert knowledge—acknowledges that the specific way of knowing the world that is at the origin of modern colonial capitalism is coresponsible for the environmental and civilizational crisis that human societies are facing. Moreover, the geopolitics of knowledge and ongoing epistemicide toward other ways of knowing that are present in the world, like ancestral or experience-based knowledges, have shaped the boundaries of what is imaginable and thinkable as a solution.

The capacity to build political communities of change, where existing internal power relations are collectively analyzed and addressed—the seventh dimension—is manifest in many transformative processes. Here, it is important to point out that we understand community in a nonessentialist, dynamic, and plural way, thus considering the term to include diverse kinds of community, be they rural or urban, territorially bound, or virtual. However, we exclude those who vertically regroup around an authoritarian leader or those who are based on shared habits of consumption or a specific product brand, in the capitalist world.

The eighth dimension refers to the enhancement of democracy in terms of the decision-making and steering processes that guide transformation, which can include both traditional and well-known as well as new, experimental forms of democracy. We do not understand democracy here as a given set of institutions and practices but as an ongoing, open-ended collective process of democratization, which could be understood as a process of sharing, (re)distributing, and disseminating power.

These fundamental dimensions of social transformation can be complemented by a set of further questions, for example,

regarding the possibility of learning from a certain process, which will then inspire other processes of change elsewhere. Therefore, one of these questions is aimed at identifying the specific sources of strength in a given experience, that is, the cultural, spiritual, political, epistemic, or other elements that have emerged as milestones, as well as a movement's ability and mechanisms to learn from its own failures or mistakes, which we consider a quality fundamental to advancing social transformation. Inquiring into the determinant factors that help achieve a certain durability of change takes us in the same direction, as does learning about the role that alternative paradigms or worldviews such as *Ubuntu, Swaraj*, or *Buen Vivir* have played for the various movements.

This is closely linked to the relations between transformative experiences and existing institutions, on the one hand, and their own instituent practices, on the other hand. The notion of "instituent practices" has been shaped recently in the context of the various "Occupy" movements around the world between 2010 and 2013 but also in the context of the debates on anticapitalist commons. How do institutions and movements relate to one another, and how can this relationship be made productive in the sense of an emancipatory politics without setting up too rigorous boundaries between these two poles? This is a central question closely related to the challenge of making transformation durable (Lang & Brand 2015; Nowotny & Raunig, 2016).

It can be very fruitful to examine the technological patterns underlying these emblematic processes of transformation and consider that the technologies available can, for example, make social processes more or less democratic, more or less sustainable, and more or less dependent on corporations (Illich, 1973; Vetter, 2017).

Finally, there is the issue of the values and notions attached to the concept of a good and successful life that can hardly be avoided when (self-)analyzing transformative experiences. There is a wide range of views on what a good life means, which differ from the dominant poverty indicators, but those are often made invisible by the mainstream discourses around economic growth and poverty eradication; some are related to achieving autonomy and self-reliance, for example.

As mentioned before, this is not a catalogue of requirements that have to be fulfilled by alternative-building processes evenly and simultaneously. It is instead a toolbox for critical collective self-reflection that also allows us to ask about interdependencies between the distinct aspects and dimensions.

All Processes of Systemic Transformation End Up Being Multiscalar

There are many misleading debates around scale and its importance for transformative strategies. Some insist on bottom-up processes only while others state that the "relevance" of a transformative process should be measured by its capacity to be "scaled up." Others, again, propose to bypass this "upscaling imperative" by "scaling out," that is, multiplying horizontally instead of enlarging vertically, as the latter often leads to a loss of the transformative potential itself. In our experience, all processes of systemic transformation end up being multiscalar. Once we adopt this lens, we will see multiple interdependencies and intereffects between scales. For example, in India, a small village like Mendha-Lekha ended up being crucial for legal changes at the national level, which then changed the floor for future struggles around forest protection across the whole subcontinent (Pathak Broome, 2019). The same applies to the Amazonian ancestral *kichwa* community of Sarayaku in Ecuador, who have defended their territory through local action against oil firms but also won legal demands at the Interamerican Human Rights Court; they have drafted a proposal, *kawsak sacha*, for a different relationship with the tropical forest to share with other indigenous peoples worldwide and, at the same time, defend this proposal at the COPs.

For a better understanding, Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller define multiscalarity as follows:

The term multiscalar serves as a 'shorthand to speak of socio-spatial spheres of practice that are constituted in relationship to each other and within various hierarchies of networks of power' (…). As deployed within our multiscalar approach, the term hierarchy does not connote fixed institutionalized structures of power, but highlights networked institutional relations of unequal power. Scales are approached as mutually constituted, relational, and interpenetrating territorially referenced entry points for an analysis of globe-spanning interconnected processes (Brenner 1999, 2011; Swyngedouw 2004; Hart 2016). This understanding of scale discards notions of levels of analysis—macro, meso, and micro—as well as nested concepts of scale that denote a fixed hierarchy of bounded territorial units, such as household, neighborhood, city, province, nation-state, and the globe. (…) Multiscalar processes can neither be reduced to, nor can they be understood without examining the dynamics of various modes of capital accumulation that occur within interconnected scales, including the global (2021, p. 210).

Only if we learn to reconnect the dimensions of life that the modern colonial episteme insisted on separating and if we learn to recognize interdependencies and multiscalar interactions we will be able to see, walk with, and strengthen the myriad of transformative processes that are ongoing in our pluriverse. A deep redesign of educational processes is absolutely key to these goals.

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The Flower of Transformation. Alternatives for Justice, Sustainability and Equity[1]

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Summary

In the face of growing ecological collapse, social strife and economic distress across the world, there is an urgent need for radical, alternative ways of meeting human needs and aspirations without trashing the earth and leaving half of humanity behind. Many of these already exist, as grounded initiatives for meeting basic needs, direct democracy, gender justice, cultural diversity, knowledge commons and much more. These intersect five spheres of life—political, economic, social, cultural and ecological—while being based on ethics of solidarity, diversity, care, rights and responsibilities, interconnectedness and others. What frameworks of transformation emerge from these, and what more needs to be done to take the planet towards justice and sustainability?

Keywords

Transformation
Alternatives
Environment and climate
Justice and equity
Crises resilience

With growing news of war and conflict, ecological and climate catastrophe, stark inequalities, health crises related to both poverty and affluence, the authoritarianism of governments and the increasing stranglehold of mega-corporations in all aspects of our lives, it is understandable that there is deep anxiety about the present and future of humanity. On the brighter side, there are two kinds of responses that provide hope: mass resistance to the structures creating and pushing these local-to-global crises and grounded radical alternatives that demonstrate more just and sustainable alternatives to these structures.

Based on learnings from various such initiatives in India and other parts of the world, there is a sense of what holistic transformations are beginning to take place and what more needs to be done. This framework on radical alternatives proposes that alternatives are built on the following key elements or spheres, interconnected and overlapping in a 'Flower of Transformation' (see Figure below):

1. Ecological integrity and resilience, including the conservation of nature and natural diversity, maintenance of ecological functions, respect for ecological limits (local to global) and ecological ethics in all human actions.

2. Social well-being and justice, including fulfilling lives (physically, socially, culturally and spiritually), equity between communities and individuals, communal and ethnic harmony and the erasure of hierarchies and divisions based on faith, gender, caste, class, ethnicity, ability and other such attributes.

3. Direct and delegated democracy, with decision-making starting in spaces enabling every person to participate meaningfully, building from this to larger levels of governance by downwardly accountable institutions all while being respectful of the needs and rights of those currently marginalised.

4. Economic democracy, in which local communities and individuals have control over the means of production,

distribution, exchange and markets, based on the principle of localisation for basic needs and trade built on this; central to this would be the replacement of private property by the commons.

5. Cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, with multiple coexisting knowledge systems in the commons, respect for a diversity of ways of living, ideas and ideologies and encouragement for creativity and innovation.

Figure 1. Flower of Transformation
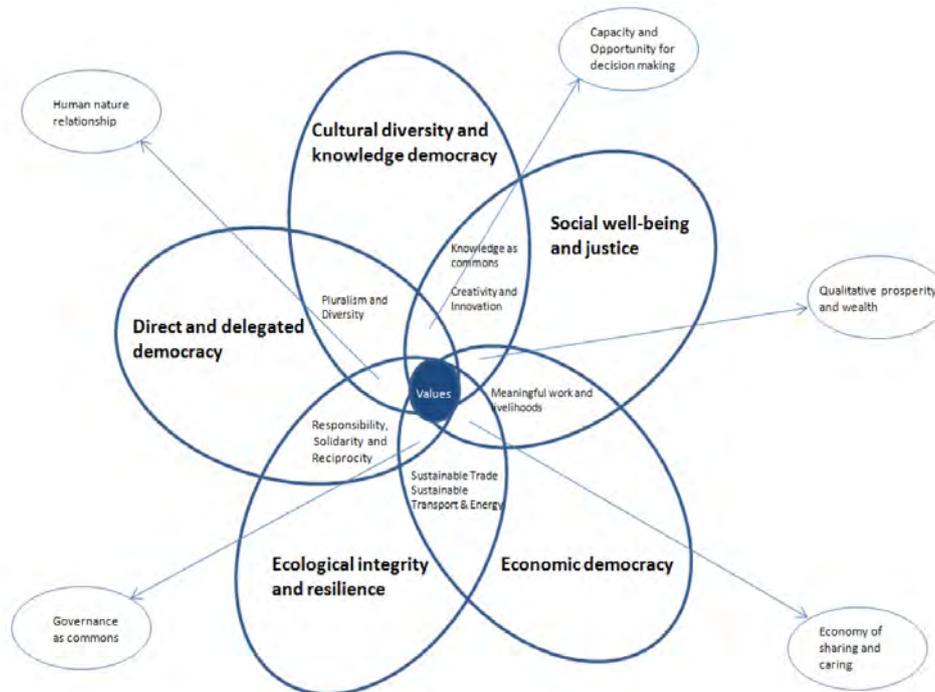
Source: Vikalp Sangam. "The Search for Alternatives: Key Aspects and Principles." *Vikalp Sangam*, https://vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles.

Grounded Manifestations

Each of the above spheres can be illustrated by grounded initiatives in various parts of the world. For instance:

Radical Democracy

The Kurdish Rojava and Zapatista autonomous regions in western Asia and Mexico, respectively, have asserted complete regional autonomy from the nation-states they are contained in and direct, radical democracy or democratic confederalism for the communes and settlements that are encompassed in these regions. Indigenous peoples in many parts of Latin America, North America and Australia have similarly struggled for and achieved self-determination, not necessarily as autonomous as the first two mentioned but with most or all key decision-making vesting in them rather than in the governments of the countries they are located in. In central India, beginning with the village Mendha-Lekha and expanding to a federation of nearly 90 nearby villages—the Korchi Maha Gramsabha—there is an assertion of 'swaraj' or self-rule with slogans like 'we elect the government in Mumbai and Delhi, but in our village we are the government'. The 'freetown' commune of Christiania 'freetown' commune of Christiania in Copenhagen also claims self-governance, and many neighbourhood assemblies in many other cities in Europe stress that they should be at the core of any urban decision-making.

Although some of these (famously, the Kurdish Rojava and Zapatista) do not engage with the nation-state, most others do to demand recognition, claim what is because of them from the state's schemes, safeguard against corporate or other abuses and/or other such support which they feel is the duty of any government to provide (not as charity). In one way or the other they illustrate a radical ecological democracy or eco-*swaraj*, asserting local decision-making while also embodying responsibility for other people and for the rest of nature.

Economic Democracy

Encompassed in all the above initiatives is also the ability to claim governance and management rights over resources important for economic survival and security. This could be collective rights to land, forests, water, seeds and biodiversity, as, for instance, in the food sovereignty movements of several million small-holders who are members of the global platform La Via Campesina. It could also be democratic control over industrial or craft-based means of production, such as worker-led production in Greece, Argentina and elsewhere. Then, there is a social and solidarity economy in Europe and North America or community economies across the world, showing how noncapitalist businesses can thrive as economic units while ensuring that marginalised

sections like refugees or people with disabilities receive dignified livelihoods in them. And there are movements to re-establishing the commons where spaces and knowledge have been privatised.

However, economic democracy is also about trying to get relative independence from centralised monetary systems, for example, through alternative or community currencies and time-banking. More than 6 million hours have been exchanged, without money, in Timebanking UK, which runs across the United Kingdom. It is about bringing back recognition to the enormous economic contribution of women and the elderly, which are invisible in conventional calculations of GDP but are critical as the 'caring and sharing' basis of any society. As argued in a recent book by Anitra Nelson, it is eminently possible to move beyond money in these and other post-capitalist ways.

Movements for alternative economies are also challenging GDP and economic growth rates as indicators of development while proposing a series of well-being models and indicators that could provide a much more robust and locally relevant, idea of whether people are satisfied, happy, secure and contented. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness model is well-known (with all its flaws, still a bold experiment at moving away from GDP), and more recently, New Zealand, Finland, Iceland, Wales and Scotland have formed a Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGO) partnership to build in more well-being indicators in their planning.

Social Justice and Equality
Arguments for political and economic self-determination can also go horribly wrong if they are driven by narrow, xenophobic considerations, such as those pushed by extreme right-wing movements in Europe, or if local relations continue inequality based on gender, class, caste, race, ability and other marginalisations. As important as the above two spheres of transformation are, so too are the struggles for more equality and equity, moving away from traditional or modern discriminations of various kinds, such as the movements for respecting the human rights of Dalits in India, feminist and LGBTQ+ struggles across the world and the Black Lives Matter antiracism movement in the USA.

Cultural and Knowledge Diversity
As threatened as the Earth's biological diversity is its diversity of languages, with several hundred already lost or on the verge of extinction. Several indigenous peoples or other local communities are now trying to sustain their mother tongue or revive it where it has all but disappeared. The group Terralingua helps document and support such initiatives across the world through its Voices of the Earth project. In India, the organisation Bhasha (which means language in Hindi), started by linguist Ganesh Devy, has helped document

language diversity across India in the People's Linguistic Survey of India which described 780 languages.

Decolonisation—the attempt to shake off the domination of colonial languages, cultures, cuisines, knowledge, cartography and much more—is part of these initiatives. For instance, there are several initiatives at remapping or decolonial mapmaking to bring back depictions of the landscapes and of nations from the point of view of Indigenous peoples or other local communities whose mental and physical maps have been erased or drastically changed by colonial powers and nation-states. Similar movements for asserting the importance and validity of traditional knowledge systems, in themselves or in partnership with modern ones, are making headway in many movements as also in some official governmental or UN institutions. In the case of the climate crisis, the Indigenous People's Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative produced valuable analysis based on Indigenous knowledge. It is also increasingly recognised that the complementary use of multiple knowledges is necessary to understand what is taking place and to deal with it, such as the collaboration between Indigenous peoples of the Arctic Circle and modern scientific institutions in the project Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna.

Ecological Wisdom and Resilience
Several movements for territorial self-determination or collective rights are also focused on or, leading to, the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, wildlife populations and biodiversity. The global network—ICCA Consortium, has brought attention to the fact that such local stewardship of Territories of Life may be as or more powerful a mechanism for conservation than official protected areas, the westernised model of which has been very top-down, undemocratic and alienating for local communities. In a broader sense, what such communities have enshrined for millennia—living life within nature rather than apart from it and thinking of nature as a circle of life rather than as a pyramid with humans on top—is also sinking in to people in the highly industrialised parts of the world. As a result, there are movements for Rights of Nature or of its components such as rivers, mountains and species. It is important, however, that this is seen only as a first step towards a more general respectful reintegration within nature, akin to ways of life many Indigenous peoples have lived for millennia and not remain limited to formal statutory law.

Intersectionality
Discrimination and marginalisation can be intersectional, for example, environmentally poor working and living conditions are most pronounced for those who are marginalised in race, caste or class terms or inadequate access to nutritious food can build on other discriminations against women. So the responses to

these, in many of the above initiatives, are also intersectional or cutting across the five spheres. This may be explicitly a part of the initiative or happen as an unintended consequence.

At the Parque de la Papa in Peru, for instance, the Quechua Indigenous peoples have established political self-determination, control over crucial economic resources and the continued celebration and use of cultural and spiritual traditions while also learning elements of modernity and custodianship of natural ecosystems and biodiversity. In the Korchi Maha Gramsabha in central India, some of these elements also intersect with the assertion by women of their equal right to decision-making, and an attempt to help local youth retain some roots in their own indigenous culture while learning from outside. At Christiania, local self-governance goes hand in hand with holding most economic resources in the commons (no private property), the operation of many services by worker cooperatives and constant collective cultural activity. The Dalit women farmers of Deccan Development Society in southern India have challenged gender and caste discrimination while moving towards food sovereignty and sustaining a respectful, spiritual relationship with the Earth and with seeds. Also, in southern India, the Dharani Farming and Marketing Cooperative, set up by Timbaktu Collective, ensures fair remuneration to farmers who commit to organic production, combining the economic and ecological spheres.

One of the most interesting, though very underdeveloped, movements of intersectionality is bioregionalism (or biocultural regionalism). In many parts of the world, political boundaries intersect and interrupt the flows of nature (e.g., a national boundary cutting a river basin) or cultural connections (e.g., fences and armies blocking traditional routes of nomadic pastoralists). This is especially (but not only) the case with colonised areas of the world, such as South Asia, large parts of Africa and many regions of Latin America and Indigenous territories of the so-called 'developed' world. This kind of interruption or blockage has many negative ecological, economic and socio-cultural consequences. The bioregionalism movement attempts to interrogate such political boundaries and imagine how to plan and implement policies and practices that can re-establish flows and connectivity across these boundaries. For instance, the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative involves Indigenous nations and civil society groups in an attempt to envision and plan for a large part of the Amazon that straddles the Ecuador-Peru border. John Lennon's vision—'imagine, there's no country'—may seem very far off, but let's keep in mind that nation-state borders are also pretty recent in human history, and there is nothing sacrosanct about them.

One thing is very clear: Life is not lived in silos, the kind of silos that governments are made of or which corporations divide the economy up into. It is lived in complex intersectionality, which plays itself out in everyday life, at the level of whatever interactions each of us has in various collectives and with the rest of nature. Therefore, it is crucial to realise what strongly emerges from these alternative initiatives, as expressed in the Vikalp Sangam framework cited above, 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. The community could be of various forms, from the ancient village to the urban neighbourhood to the student body of an institution to even the more "virtual" networks of common interest'. The community also extends to the rest of life, the species of plants and animals around us, for long a central tenet of worldviews like *buen vivir*, *sumac kawsay*, *ubuntu* and 'country'. Although no means perfect and with their own internal challenges, it is such collectives that form the fulcrum of holistic transformation.

Changes envisaged in the flower of transformation are going to involve difficult, long-term struggles. However, many are already here in what some have called 'nowtopias', and many more are visible on the horizon, a veritable of practices and worldviews. Although not in any way belittling the enormous challenges posed by a world that is dominated by the military-industrial-capitalist-statist system and continuing forms of patriarchy, racism and anthropocentrism, these inspirational pinpricks in the darkness provide hope for a saner, more just world.

Endnote

1. This article was first published in the Wall Street International Magazine, March 13, 2022.

Not TINA but TAPAS!

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Summary

Margaret Thatcher's TINA says "There is No Alternative to (neoliberal) capitalism". To the contrary, this paper is about David Bollier's response—TAPAS "There are Plenty of Alternatives!". In it, I discuss a wide range of efforts that involve the system changes necessary to transform our world into something more liveable, equitable and sane.

Keywords

Capitalism
Transformation
TINA

Introduction

This volume is about education for societal transformation. For the educational alternatives discussed in this volume to flourish, for our world to get out of the multiple global crises we face, we desperately need system change. I do understand that some readers of this article believe that the idea of system change is both vague and farfetched. While system change is difficult to define and very difficult to enact, there are so many individuals, groups, organizations, and movements around the world working on exactly that. In this essay, I will talk briefly about some of the writing, efforts, and practices I have found most compelling. Contrary to Margaret Thatcher's TINA—"There is No Alternative to (neoliberal) capitalism," I'm a firm believer in David Bollier's TAPAS—"There are Plenty of Alternatives!"

Alternatives to Capitalism and Other Systems

Let me start with two wonderful recent books, one edited by Gus Speth and Kathleen Courrier (2021), *The New Systems Reader: Alternatives to a Failed Economy*. Its 28 essays explore a plethora of alternatives ranging from the Nordic experience to economic democracy to eco-socialism. *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, edited by Ashish Kothari et al. (2019), discusses a dozen or so "reformist solutions"—that is, ones that do not present a challenge to oppressive structures—like a green economy and smart cities—but spends the most time on literally dozens of "transformative initiatives" like the alter-globalization movement, alternative currencies, *buen vivir*, the commons, degrowth, decolonization, ecofeminism, solidarity economies, and *ubuntu*.

Most of the writing about alternatives to capitalism still see the need to rely on a market system. One interesting and different approach is embodied in the many decades of work by two political economists, Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, on participatory economics or parecon. They (among others) point out that markets corrode human values and solidarity and instead propose a series of worker and consumer councils to make production decisions and allocations of goods and services. While this may be difficult in practice, it is important food for thought.

These are more than academic exercises, and all connect with concrete alternative practices happening on the ground. WEAll, the Well-Being Economy Alliance, works to develop economies "designed to serve people and planet….In a Wellbeing Economy, the rules, norms and incentives are set up to deliver quality of life and flourishing for all people, in harmony with our environment. …" WEALL is very active, having a dozen or so "hubs" in countries (e.g., Brazil, New Zealand, and Scotland) and communities around the world, and it has had an impact on helping governments move far beyond attention to economic growth. In a similar vein, the work of Kate Raworth has led to DEAL, the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (so named because the summary diagram looks like a donut). Doughnut economics offers "a way of thinking to bring about the regenerative and distributive dynamics that this century calls for…[changing] the goal from endless GDP growth to thriving." DEAL, like WEAll, is working globally to collaborate with cities, states, and nations "to promote paradigm change." In addition, the Green Economy Coalition (GEC) argues the following: "Our economies are fundamentally flawed. They create wealth for the few, at the expense of the many. They drive climate change and mass extinctions. And they prioritise consumption over sustainability." GEC seeks to accelerate building a "fairer, greener and more resilient economy." More than the others, GEC works in the Global South with hubs in Brazil, India, Mongolia, Peru, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and the Caribbean region.

While more oriented to the U.S., the Next System Project (NSP) "promotes visions, models, and pathways that point to a 'next system' radically different in fundamental ways from the failed systems of the past and capable of delivering superior social, economic, and ecological outcomes." Especially interesting is the work of one of NSP's founders, Gar Alperovitz (2013), who argues that, in the U.S., capitalism is already being transformed by democratized ownership through millions of employee owners and thousands of community development corporations and cooperatives. The Democracy Collaborative, of which the NSP is an offshoot, is collaboratively working to transform local communities and has been very successful in Cleveland, Ohio, and Preston, England. It is also working on promoting "next system studies" at universities.

While not itself trying to transform communities on the ground, the Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA) "seeks to build bridges between networks of Alternatives around the globe and promote the creation of new processes of confluence." GTA is especially, but not exclusively, oriented towards alternatives in rural and indigenous communities. It has offered over 20 fascinating webinars documenting and sharing alternative system practices, including African ecofeminism, commoning, the Kurdish women's movement

in Rojava, the Zapatistas in Mexico, and eco-socialism in Jackson, Mississippi. I really like GTA's work on the meaning of "alternatives"—What should really transformative alternatives look like (see Annex)?

Another major and influential organization was started by Bernie and Jane Sanders and Yanis Varoufakis. Progressive International intends to bring us all together "to unite, organize and mobilize progressive forces behind a shared vision of a world transformed." GTA has been a principal mover in establishing a coalition called Adelante (meaning Forward in English), which includes Progressive International and six other organizations (read its excellent short manifesto).

A major task of Adelante has been to try to reform the World Social Forum (WSF), which was set up in opposition to the World Economic Forum held in Davos each year. I was fortunate enough to attend the WSF twice and march with 100,000 activists from all over the world and meet some of them who were struggling to engage in alternative practices to change the world in areas like education, health, food, water, environment, or development generally. These activists go home from the Forum and interact and network with millions, building a global network. The energy and optimism there was contagious. The WSF has been active for over 20 years now and has been critiqued by progressives for only being a meeting place and not taking positions or making statements, removing itself from an engaged role in the political struggle. Adelante and others are working to change this. Groups within the WSF have recently formed the World Assembly of Struggles and Resistances of the WSF to make the WSF more active politically.

Reforms within Capitalism as a Precursor to Next Systems

There are so many other transformative alternatives that are discussed and practiced that I have not mentioned, for example, solidarity economies, participatory budgeting, the example of Kerala in India, the rise of progressive governments in Latin America, and much more. Many, but not all, of the alternatives I have discussed so far offer an explicit critique of and propose an alternative to capitalism in one way or another (also see the wonderful 20 Theses for Liberation). However, I feel that even some reforms within capitalism can be a precursor to next systems, and I'd like to close this essay by talking about a few.

A movement started by French female scholars, called Democratizing Work, has gone global with an op ed published in dozens of newspapers around the world and signed by over 5,000 researchers calling for "democratizing firms, decommodifying work, and remediating the environment." Noted economists like Thomas Piketty and Dani Rodrik are supporting this. Rodrik has even made

the interesting argument that creating good jobs creates massive externalities. Within mainstream economics, this has devastating implications for a capitalist system that fundamentally relies on markets to create jobs. If Rodrik is correct, neoclassical economics would imply that governments have a significant responsibility to see to good job creation.

I think even within-system alternatives like universal basic income (UBI) and a four-day work week can have transformative implications. UBI changes many things: It reduces poverty and inequality; lessens workers' willingness to do poorly paid work; allows for more part-time creative and craft work; enables people to return to school or do care work; and minimizes assistance bureaucracy. Norway has a form of UBI, and other countries are experimenting with it. A four-day work week also changes many things: It increases productivity; makes for a happier and more committed worker; improves work-life balance; and reduces our carbon footprint. The UK just had a major experiment with a four-day work week with very positive results. Combining UBI and a four-day work week may have significant synergies, allowing for a much better quality of life. Scotland is experimenting with both. Add to both a government guarantee of a job, and the face of capitalism is changed. I think the slogan, "share the wealth, share the work," could be popular politics.

Even what at first may be seen as more limited changes can be transformative. There is a growing effort to fight the privatization of public services that has been brought about by the attack on government from over 40 years of neoliberalism. In 2019, there was a conference in Amsterdam that brought together public service advocates, and in December 2022, there was an even bigger one in Santiago, Chile, attended by a thousand representatives from over one hundred countries fighting for public services in education, health, water, energy, housing, food, transportation, social protection, and care sectors. The Global Manifesto produced prior to the meeting and the Santiago Declaration produced after are marvellous documents with excellent analyses of the problem and with principles for universal quality public services; these will hopefully serve as a rallying cry for cross-sector mobilization by civil society and social movements around the world. The argument that there is not enough money to fund needed public services is simply a refusal to change priorities and tax those who are well-off. The organizers of this "Our Future is Public" campaign recognize that perhaps the only way to get there is through system change. The Santiago Declaration explicitly recognizes that the battle for public services means we need to "move away from the racial, patriarchal, and colonial patterns of capitalism and towards socio-economic justice, ecological sustainability, human rights, and public services."

Conclusion

The multiple challenges our world faces are daunting, but I am an optimist (Klees, 2020). I have been fortunate to work in dozens of countries, and everywhere, I found people who believed what is the slogan of the WSF—another world is possible—and who were struggling for it. A focus on alternative economic and social practices opens up a world of possibilities. Let me close with a quote from Arundhati Roy: "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

Annex: Values and Principles of Transformative Alternatives

Diversity and pluralism (of ideas, knowledge, ecologies, economies, ideologies, polities, cultures …)

- Self-reliance for basic needs (*swavalamban*)
- Self-governance / autonomy (*swashasan / swaraj*)
- Cooperation, collectivity, solidarity, commons, conviviality
- Rights with responsibilities of meaningful participation
- Dignity & creativity of labour (*shram*)
- Qualitative pursuit of happiness
- Equity / justice / inclusion (*sarvodaya*)
- Simplicity / sufficiency / enoughness (*aparigraha*)
- Rights of nature / respect for all life forms
- Non-violence, peace, harmony *(ahimsa)*
- Reciprocity and interconnectedness
- Fun!

Worldviews that Celebrate Life!

Source: Global Tapestry of Alternatives

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Part 2
Reimagining Schooling

Advancing Revolutionary Reforms of Education and Society Through the Reformist SDG and ESD Agendas

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Summary

Although formal education is part of the 'background conditions' of the operation and legitimation of capitalist society, the current conjuncture gives reforms like the Sustainable Development Goals and Education for Sustainable Development (SDGs and ESD) a more radical character. These reforms provide resources to re-purpose mass schooling in ways that can educate populations about the need for radical, global and systemic change.

Keywords

System change
Climate emergency
Revolutionary reforms
Degrowth
Eco-socialism

As with the often-cited quote from Fredric Jameson (2003) about it being easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of (global) capitalism, it can seem impossible to imagine formal education systems under the current conditions of multiple crises (including a global crisis in the provision of universal quality education), contributing to an anti- or post-capitalist transformation of our world. Yet the need for such a transformation and creation of more just, equal, peaceful, and sustainable futures surrounds us. The United Nations presents its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or '17 Goals to transform our world' with the accompanying Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project as the framework seeking to re-purpose mass education toward the realisation of this transformation. The formal goals are ambitious and broad, including an end to hunger and poverty, reduced inequalities, improved health and well-being, equity, peace and justice, which can be seen as a series of sustainability goals. With respect to education, the relatively modest aspirations of universal primary schooling and gender equity inherited from the unfulfilled Millennium Development Goals is expanded to primary and secondary schooling in the SDGs. Beyond expanded access and participation, the ESD initiative promotes a universalised quality education that develops students' 'knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality' (UNESCO, 2023, para 1).

How should we understand these official reforms that call on populations, in part through education, to transform the world and, hence, are inherently linked to understandings of the core causes of contemporary social and environmental crises to which the reforms respond? Drawing on macro-analyses of the 'institutionalised societal order' of capitalism (Fraser, 2022, p. 19) or the inherent crisis of the capitalist world system in transition (Wallerstein, 2011), the SDG and ESD agendas can be understood both as a result of these contradictions and, hence, as potential revolutionary reforms to advance a radical transformation to a post-capitalist future. Their work, among others, provides a frame for

understanding and educating about the inability of our current political and economic systems to deliver basic goals like universal education, let alone the more expansive SDG agenda. The SDG / ESD reforms themselves point to the limitations of our current model of endless economic growth and its incompatibility with the de-carbonisation required to reverse global warming. The reforms, by definition, suggest the need for a deeper systemic change.

Fraser's (2022) work in particular describes the 'background conditions' for institutionalised capitalist society (p. 17), which includes formal institutions like mass education. On the one hand, this reality makes efforts to shift the character, purpose and effects of these institutional background conditions towards the transformation of these conditions seemingly unimaginable, if not impossible. At best, we might hope for and support reforms that incrementally improve access and equity outcomes and that produce more resilient citizens able to adapt to climate change, for example. However, Fraser's (2022) work invokes a deeper hope that is present in some strands of critical pedagogy (see below), referring to the 'critical-political possibility' (p. 22) for the noneconomic background conditions of institutionalised capitalist society to 'under certain circumstances provide resources for anti-capitalist struggle' (p. 23). The global ESD project, under existing circumstances, can provide such resources and legitimate space within schools for this struggle.

This sort of critical-political possibility is evident in the broad current conjuncture of multiple global crises that repeatedly amplify how the dynamics of capitalist growth and capital accumulation simply cannot deliver the required transformations, redistributions and universalisation of well-being that projects like the SDGs and ESD seek to advance. As such, this reality paradoxically provides the reformist SDG and ESD agendas with a potential revolutionary character, in the sense that they can help clarify the need for systemic change and transformations towards post-capitalist alternatives. ESD, seeking to prepare students with knowledge and skills to realise SDG goals, must begin with an engagement with the systemic nature of current crises. UNESCO's (2020) roadmap for the ESD references a need for 'structural changes', adding that 'ESD must pay attention to the deep structural causes of unsustainable development' (p. 18). References like these provide good grounds for a form of education that considers the actions and pathways for system change that can resolve interconnecting crises of global poverty, inequality, conflict and the unabated climate emergency.

Understood in these terms, the formal, reformist and educational ambitions of the SDGs and ESD connect with long-standing critiques of international organisations and structures, like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group, that have exacerbated poverty and inequality within and between countries. These organisations and their policy prescriptions must be transformed and/or replaced with alternatives. Similarly, the educational ambitions of the SDGs and ESD connect with long-standing critical pedagogy scholarship calling for curricular and pedagogical practices that can engage students in this sort of critical understanding of our current crises (e.g., Cho, 2013). ESD requires an education that develops students' critical understandings and consciousness of the nature and causes of an array of injustices, oppressions and inequalities in the world as a basis for taking action in the world to transform the world. Although differing theoretical orientations underpin the critical education scholarship, a common theme is for teachers and their practice in educational sites to prepare students with the knowledge and dispositions needed to identify and challenge existing inequalities and injustices so as to, at a minimum, see and imagine the possibility of building better worlds (see, e.g., Gahman & Mohamed, 2022). The distinctive factor is the implicit and explicit recognition of the need for global transformation of the 'deep structural causes' of existing crises within global policy initiatives.

The critical possibilities of these approaches, under conditions of multiple crises that our current social and economic systems have generated and cannot resolve, include a challenge to a dominant purpose of mass education that remains firmly tied to the production of skilled human capital for ongoing national economic growth. The human capital formation approach is coupled with ideas of meritocratic social mobility, of social and economic success or failure, of individuals and of entire nations, here constructed as somehow disconnected from the operation of capitalism (Griffiths, 2020). As with the climate crisis, the contradictions between meritocratic promises and capitalist realities contain irresolvable contradictions, adding more to the critical-political possibilities within the ESD reform.

For example, the long and still unrealised efforts of UNESCO to achieve universal quality education continues with the SDGs, now expanded to the wider purposes previously discussed. This succinctly demonstrates how global initiatives like Goal 4 of the SDGs are, as Klees (2024) highlights, doomed to fail in one sense because of structurally inadequate funding. In the context of multiple social crises, the SDG and ESD reforms provide what he describes as 'compensatory legitimation' for states and state institutions 'while the actual state of the people continues to deteriorate' (Klees, 2024, p. 2). However, the current crises extend to a crisis of legitimation, which critical ESD can identify and elaborate upon. Similarly, the expanded aspirations of ESD, which prepare populations to achieve the sustainable transformation of social realities, almost inevitably require students' examination of the context and contradictions of capitalist society. Although no doubt another example of

compensatory legitimation, the contents of the ESD initiative provide resources including this sort of analysis that identifies the systemic nature of seemingly irresolvable crises and can contribute to revolutionary transformations of the world.

To be clear, UNESCO does not articulate an overtly revolutionary ESD project that helps 'invent a new societal order that overcomes not "only" class domination but also asymmetries of gender and sex, racial/ethnic/imperial oppression, and political domination across the board'—a 'socialism for the twenty-first century' (Fraser, 2022, p. 151). However, it does insist that education and schools are a key part of developing solutions to multiple social crises, which, by default, creates legitimate space for more radical, liberatory and transformational solutions, including those advanced by critical educators and scholars. The most obvious entry point is the global environmental emergency, fast approaching catastrophic tipping points, which adds to and extends this sort of potential as students learn about systemic causes of growing carbon emissions—models of endless capital accumulation and growth—that analyses of climate mitigation approaches and strategies must reckon with.

Thus, the reformist ESD agenda arguably provides mainstream space for the identification of capitalism as a primary 'structural cause' of current social, economic and environmental crises, hence requiring systemic transformation. This general conclusion is increasingly present within growing eco-socialist projects and in the degrowth movement. Work in this field similarly elaborates the case for a transition to a planned, post-growth future as an essential component of addressing climate change (e.g., Hickel, 2021). Hickel (2023), for example, highlights the eco-socialist nature of such a transition, requiring an end to endless capitalist growth and capital accumulation as the systemic cause of both the global climate crisis and a wide range of other well documented social ills. The inclusion of such perspectives can be a viable part of educational curricular and activities within ESD. Their ambitions are entirely consistent with UNESCO's (2020) call for ESD that contributes to 'the collective survival and prosperity of the global community' (p. 14), with a focus on a 'big transformation' that includes but looks beyond individual actions toward the 'reorganization of societal structures' (p. 8).

The reformist UNESCO and UN Agendas can be easily seen and dismissed as inadequately funded initiatives providing compensatory legitimation on multiple grounds. However, this argument fails to engage with the critical possibility that these reforms present and articulate. This is not an argument to uncritically embrace such reforms as the solution to the crises confronting us. However, we also should not ignore them. Rather, we should explore the significant and substantive resources they can offer for radical, transformative education. Writing about 'transformational time-space', Wallerstein (1988) argues that 'Unlike those who huff and puff about agency, I do not believe that we can transform the world at every instant. We – singly, or even collectively – do not have this power. However, we can transform the world sometimes, at the 'right' moment.' (p. 81). The extended period of crises, exacerbated by the climate emergency and multiple contradictions it brings, can push reformist and legitimatory reforms into more radical territory. Although a range of reforms for 'green growth' and 'green capitalism' tied to technological solutions continue to be promoted, existing and exacerbating climate tipping points highlight the irresolvable tensions between them, the logic of endless capitalist accumulation and growth that underpins them, and the climate emergency. We are well within the field of the 'right moment' to identify the need for systemic change, so for ESD to act as a non-reformist or revolutionary reform that does this sort of work, we must link it to the work of social movements imagining and taking action for systemic change.

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Democratic Education Brazilian Style: The Citizen School Project's Legacy

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Summary

The *Citizen School Project* (Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1993–2004) was a radical reform designed to encourage democratic participation at all levels. Even after its formal termination, the Citizen School Project remains a model of the potency of an equity-oriented, democratic, and community-centered alternative to standardized, test-driven education reforms. Its legacy inspires worldwide democratic experiments to fulfil education's moral imperative.

Keywords
Citizenship
Participatory budgeting
Education for democracy

The Citizen School Project (CSP), or *Escola Cidada* in Portuguese, was an ambitious, comprehensive education reform implemented from 1993 to 2004 in Porto Alegre, Brazil.[1] Since its inception, the CSP appeared as a beacon of hope for radical pedagogical reform, stimulating the imagination of many communities and educators, and some of its components, especially the use of participatory budgeting, continue to be a source of inspiration for many educators and activists worldwide.[2]

CSP was structured using four powerful principles: (1) invoking and echoing the wisdom of Paulo Freire, the conviction that education reaches its full potential and gains true meaning when it equips both educators and learners to understand and acquire socially relevant pedagogical content and through reflection and action as a way to change the inequities in the world around them; (2) the realization that significant achievements in both realms require accepting the relationship between the political dynamics of schooling and the pedagogical nuances of political engagement, including acknowledging dissenting perspectives; (3) the bold assertion that democratizing education demands the redistribution of resources and structural changes but also bold, inclusive initiatives that transcend rigid structures while steadfastly championing the transformation of school practices; and (4) all citizens, including children, must have the right to actively participate in establishing the goals of public schooling and controlling the mechanisms, including budgetary decisions, to implement these goals.

A group of activists, educators, university professors, and intellectuals working together at the Porto Alegre's Municipal Secretariat of Education (SMED) were tasked with proposing a reform to answer an ethical and political priority: ensuring access to quality education for the children who were historically excluded from access to schools (Azevedo et al., 2010; Genro, 1999). In 1990, the municipality of Porto Alegre was responsible for 19 fundamental education schools (kindergarten to grade 8) serving mostly urban middle-class families. Those schools were staffed by 1,698 educators, catering to 14,838 students (SMED, 2000). Over the subsequent decade, enrollment surged by a staggering 232%, prompting the establishment of 126 new fundamental education schools (SMED, 2000). Notably, these

schools were built up in the most impoverished areas of the city, often nestled within shantytowns or favelas, thus becoming centers for hope and educational opportunities for children and their families who had previously been ignored by the formal educational system.

The expansion of schools required a massive campaign to hire new teachers and administrators, which was accompanied by salary increases and a systematic in-service teacher training program. At the new schools, the school community elected their own leadership team for a three-year period. Each school had considerable autonomy in pedagogical matters and established priorities using the process of participatory budgeting to allocate resources. Goals and priorities were reflected on a school political pedagogical project approved by a school council constituted with representatives of the students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

However, the SMED recognized that mere access to schools did not ensure equitable educational opportunities and, in 1995, introduced the Cycles of Formation model (Krug, 2001), a pioneering and quite radical administrative and pedagogical initiative. Departing from the traditional grade-based structure, the Cycles of Formation approach redefined the learning–time equation, eliminating the pressure of arbitrary deadlines and the stigma of failure (Barreto & Sousa, 2004). Under the new system, students progressed through cycles rather than grades, removing the notion of failing a grade (one of the most significant factors in students' dropout in Brazil) and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

To minimize exclusionary mechanisms and move in the direction of democratizing the curricular structures, the SMED, along with most of the schools participating in the CSP, introduced additional measures to ensure every student's inclusion and success. One significant modification was the development of progression groups, which were designed to support students who had faced multiple setbacks by providing tailored, stimulating learning environments. These groups served as havens where students could learn at their own pace, bridging the gaps in their educational journey. Moreover, the progression groups offered personalized attention for students transitioning from other educational systems, facilitating their integration into the cycles. Another bold move to meet students' diverse needs, was the establishment of learning laboratories—a safe space where students grappling with serious learning challenges received individualized support (Fetzner, 2009). Simultaneously, it served as a hub for teachers to conduct research, enhancing the quality of their teaching practices. For students with special needs, integration and resources rooms were meticulously designed spaces aimed at investigating and addressing their unique requirements, ensuring their seamless integration into the educational fabric (Souza de Freitas, 2020).

Through these innovative pedagogical interventions, the CSP started to repay educational debts and ensured that every child, regardless of their background or abilities, was treated with dignity, respect, and the quality education needed to thrive as citizens in Brazil's burgeoning democracy. In essence, it was not just about granting access; rather, it was about empowering every participant in the school process, children, families, community members, educators, administrators and policymakers to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society's collective journey toward progress and inclusivity.

These guiding principles did not just exist on paper; they became the reality of schools across the city, enduring in many, even after the formal conclusion of the CSP in 2004. Resistance initially greeted these changes. Tradition clashed with innovation, but change persisted (Fischman & Gandin, 2016). Fast forward to 2023, and the extensive network of over 7,000 schools and communities worldwide engage in participatory budgeting, one of the distinguishing processes of the Citizen School Project, stands as a testament to the power of civic and equity-minded community-driven education.[3] In many Brazilian schools, it is no longer a utopian dream for educators to dialogue with communities and venture into neighborhoods, cocreating curricula that resonate with local realities (Mainardes, 2006).

What began as a bold experiment in one single municipality, led by a group of committed educators and policymakers who envisioned that another education was possible, now stands as a living testament to the enduring impact of the CSP. The project started as a tangible educational alternative, challenging the status quo and redefining the essence of public education in Brazil. The CSP became a civic "public" education laboratory by embracing inclusivity and shared decision-making. Parents, students, teachers, and administrators became partners in a collective endeavor to craft a brighter future through quality education. It was a radical departure from the commodification of learning—a bold step towards genuine empowerment. In the grand tapestry of global educational reforms, the Citizen School Project is a successful "interrupted" reform—a stubbornly persistent link between equity-driven education and societal transformation. It is more than an initiative: it is a movement—a call for pedagogical changes that refuses to be silenced.

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Endnotes

1. It is beyond the scope of this short contribution to provide a detailed analysis of the history and legacy of the CSP which has very significant manifestations in Brazil and many other countries. For more analysis and discussion, see Fischman & Gandin, 2016; Gandin, 2009, 2010, 2013.

2. Participatory budgeting (PB) is a process in which members of a given community decide how to spend part of a public budget. It gives people real power over real money. PB started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, as an antipoverty measure that helped reduce child mortality by nearly 20% and was quickly extended to allocate school resources. PB has been extensively researched (Schugurensky, 2006; Schugurensky & Myers, 2008), and there is robust evidence that PB encouraged more transparency and efficiency in the allocation of public resources and most significantly improved the living conditions of poor communities by redirecting tax revenues to previously neglected areas.

3. Kees Koonings (2004) estimated that perhaps "at least 100,000 individuals took part in one way or another in budget meetings; in other words, up to one third of the total 'poor' population of the city" (p. 92). Since then, PB has spread to over 7,000 cities worldwide and has been used to decide budgets from states, counties, cities, housing authorities, schools, and other institutions. Rio Grande do Sul is "a state of 11 million inhabitants, over a million riograndenses participated annually in the Sistema's PB from 2011 to 2014, helping to decide the allocation of hundreds of millions of reais in investment spending" (Legard, & Goldfrank, 2021, p. 164).

Developing Youth for a Socialist Society: The Role of the José Martí Pioneer Organization in Cuba

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Summary

This chapter explores the organization and functioning of Cuba's Pioneer youth organization to develop the consciousness and commitment of the next generation so that they can effectively participate in the ongoing construction of a socialist society. The Pioneers' activities include supporting learning, celebrating national historical events, debating international political issues, and promoting concern about and care for the environment.

Keywords

Cuba
Socialist society
Youth organization
Political socialization

Cuba as a Socialist Society

According to Article 1 of Cuba's 2019 Constitution: "Cuba is a democratic, independent, and sovereign *socialist state* of law and social justice, organized by all and for the good of all" (Constitute Project, 2019; emphasis added). Importantly, in 1961, Fidel Castro Ruz announced that Cuba was socialist and indicated the revolution's orientation toward socialist ideas in his statement to the court prior to his sentencing for participation in the attack on Moncada Barracks in 1953 (Castro Ruz, 1953).

Indeed, although its revolution occurred in 1959, Cuban society can be characterized today as reflecting what is labelled twenty-first-century socialism (Ginsburg, 2021), which includes the following features: a) social ownership of the most important means of production; b) an economy organized to satisfy human needs; c) a decentralized (but aggregating) and worker-influenced, planned economy; d) incorporating moral and material incentives; and e) respect for nature as a component of efficiency (Harnecker, 2010).

This article examines the emergence and growth of Cuba's Pioneer organization devoted to the larger goal of preparing youth to continue socialist society construction.

Need for Conscientization

Following the "Triumph of the Revolution" in 1959, Cuban leaders "took cultural change to be their transcendent goal. … [seeking] a new 'consciencia,' … a proper set of revolutionary values, beliefs, and attitudes" (Bunck, 1994, pp. 3–44). As explained by Ernesto Che Guevara, "We need to form the New Man—one who is motivated not by greed or self-interest but by the good of all," that is, by moral incentives (Blum, 2011, p. 6).

Cubans have organized various political socialization experiences, especially for young people. Some of these were built into the curriculum and pedagogy of formal education—in the free preschools, primary schools, lower and

upper secondary schools, universities, and other specialized/ technical postsecondary institutions (Blum, 2011; Bunck, 1994). As Fidel proclaimed, "All revolution is an extraordinary process of education. … Revolution and education are the same thing" (Castro Ruz, 1961b, p. 271; quoted in Blum, 2011, pp. 6–7). Ginsburg and Garcia Batista (2019) discuss that the four educational revolutions, or *perfeccionamientos,* (starting in 1961, 1975, 2001, and 2008) as well as the reforms in the "special period" (1990s) were undertaken to address concerns about the effectiveness of political socialization as well as workforce skill development.

In addition, via radio, television, and print media, Cubans encountered messages favorable to the revolution and socialism. Furthermore, Cubans learned such through their participation in a range of mass organizations. These included those linked to formal education (the Federation of Secondary Students, the Federation of University Students, and the José Martí Pioneer Organization) and those outside of the formal education system (the Union of Young Communists, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Confederation of Cuban Workers, the Revolutionary Armed Forces, and the Youth Labor Army) (Andresen, 2021). Revolutionary leaders promoted such political socialization because they recognized "that revolutionary consciousness could not be developed merely by means of propaganda … but must arise fundamentally from revolutionary praxis, such as armed struggle or participation in militant or mass action and mobilizations" (Blum, 2008, p. 142).

History and Development of the José Martí Pioneer Organization

The José Martí Pioneer Organization (*Organización de Pioneros José Martí*—OPJM) is an organization of children and youth named in honor of the nineteenth-century Cuban poet, journalist, and revolutionary leader. Founded on April 4, 1961, under the name of the Union of Rebel Pioneers, a component of the Association of Rebel Youth, it replaced the banned Scouts Association of Cuba and, in effect, represented the rebirth of the Pioneers League, which existed for a few years as a component of the Cuban Socialist Party during the 1930s struggle against the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado (Casavantes Bradford, 2014). According to Wald, participants in the Pioneers League "ranged in age from ten to fourteen [and] took part in after-school games, excursions and other children's activities … [as well as] presenting basic demands— such as for school materials, breakfast for the children, etc." (1978. p. 185).

In 1962, the OPJM was renamed the Union of Pioneers of Cuba, when the Association of Rebel Youth was renamed the Union of Young Communists. As Wald explains, "In keeping with the nationwide trend for revolutionary Cubans to define

themselves as socialist and communists, the new slogan of the Pioneers was 'Pioneers for Socialism. Always Prepared!'" (1978, p. 185; see also Casavantes Bradford, 2014).

Although initially membership in the OPJM was fairly selective, in 1966, OPJM membership was opened to all Cuban children (Andresen, 2021). Moreover, in 1968, the motto of the OPJM was changed to "Pioneers for Communism. We Shall Be Like Che." At this point, Cuban government leaders "also established summer camps at which Pioneers participated in revolutionary activities and took classes on ideology" (Bunck, 1994, pp. 38–39).

The ages of those involved also underwent change over time. Initially, primary-aged children in grades 1–6 could be members. In the 1970s, however, youth in lower secondary grades 7–9 were incorporated. The OPJM then included two age-based divisions: "First through fourth graders were the Moncadistas [wearing blue bandanas) and fifth through ninth graders were the Martistas [wearing red bandanas]" (Blum, 2011, p. 60). Furthermore, around 1980, "the Pioneer organization created a new branch called the Explorers" (Blum, 2011, p. 89).

Purposes of the OPJM

From the beginning, the OPJM's purposes were to "mold youth attitudes" (Bunck, 1994, p. 39), to prepare them to engage "in the ideological struggle that was going on inside the country," thus requiring them to be "independent, creative, capable of leading themselves and giving direction, [as well as having] … a sense of collectivity" (Wald, 1978, p. 193). The focus was on building individual capacities to contribute to strengthening and developing the socialist society. Similarly, Andresen identifies core purposes of the OPJM to develop a feeling of "love for [their] country and to take care of it" as well as to "contribute to the education of the youngest generations in the revolutionary and ethical principles of our society and promotes their participation in the building of socialism" (2021, pp. 47–48).

In addition to ideological struggles, OPJM sought to prepare children and youth mentally and physically to participate in the defense of the country. In one of the speeches quoted in the book *Fidel and the Pioneers* (Castro Ruz, 1996; quoted in Echarry, 2011), Fidel articulates, "I'm … totally sure, that if the enemy attacked our country, if the enemy assaulted our land, they would have to face even our children, sooner or later." As noted by Ecured (2013, my translation), the OPJM engaged members' participation in "civil defense exercises, such as a warning system."

In the 1990s, in the crisis created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the OPJM began to also stress economic purposes. For example, a teacher, whom Andresen

interviewed, explained that the objective of the OPJM "is to organize people to defend our country … to defend the interests of the revolution" (2020, p. 81). At the Fifth Congress of Pioneers in 1996, "the president of the Pioneer's organization insisted that the students 'ratify their commitment to assume the tasks assigned by the homeland, especially in the economic battle, through attaining a consciousness of producers'" (Echarry, 2011).

The OPJM directed its general political and ideological socialization efforts in part to "mitigate the pernicious influence of nonrevolutionary parents on the next generation of the nation's citizens" (Casavantes Bradford, 2014, p. 185). Moreover, the children's participation in OPJM has had an indirect socialization impact on their parents. According to Wald, "the children often exerted pressure on their parents" (1978, p. 187), for example, a boy convincing his father not to leave Cuba.

Activities of the OPJM

The OPJM's accomplished its socialization purposes through involving children and youth in a range of activities. Initially, after being established in 1961, the OPJM's "limited activities included campaigns to collect bottles and newspapers, productive work, and acts of solidarity with children of other countries … [i.e.,] not in any way focus[ed] on scholastic activities" (Wald, 1978, p. 185).

By 1968, however, the OPJM's members "became totally intertwined with the schools, from the classroom to the school council … [T]he Pioneers … planned academic and extracurricular activities" (Blum, 2011, p. 58). According to Wald, during the 1970s, "the Pioneers … [did not] decide on curriculum [or] appoint teachers … But … the Pioneers … analyze[d] their schoolwork and activities, set goals and standards they wanted to reach, and organize[d] and direct[ed] themselves in reaching them" (1978, pp. 184–85). A student member of OPJM interviewed by Echarry (2011) reported that s/he was selected by a teacher "to keep up the list of those who talked during class or didn't do their homework" and s/he also had "the responsibility of taking away the neckerchiefs of the most unruly students."

In addition to helping to plan and participating in political celebrations (Wald, 1978, p. 191), OPJM members:

carried out school competitions for 'exemplary student' status, [e.g., for] … participating in productive activities and revolutionary events and maintaining respectful relations with teachers and other students. … In the late 1960s Pioneers also began to stage public political debates on such issues as American imperialism, material incentives, and productivity. (Bunck, 1994, pp. 38–39)

Outside the school the OPJM involved members in activities to better understand, appreciate, and protect nature. "The activities of the [OPJM] were … connected with nature, camping, and training for difficult times" (Blum, 2011, p. 89). Ecured (2013) informs us that OPJM members "carried out simple observations of nature with the aim of … connecting with nature, taking care of it."

Impact of the OPJM

From the perspective of Cuban government and party leaders, the OPJM has contributed to fulfilling many of its purposes, though not always to the extent that was hoped for. For instance, in 2023, "a huge hug was sent by Roberto Morales Ojeda, Secretary of Organization of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, to the members of … the OPJM whom he described as the essence and inspiration to continue building together a more just and prosperous society" (Cuba News, 2023).

Importantly, in terms of international recognition, the United Nations Environmental Programme named the OPJM in 2006 as one of 18 individuals and organizations to receive an award for its activities and accomplishments (UNEP, 2006).

We suggest that the OPJM is a useful example of a nonformal education program that Cubans have undertaken to solidify and further develop their socialist society in the context of the world capitalist system.

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Conceptions of Environmental Justice and Imagining a More Just Future

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Summary

How might an alternative curriculum that centres on environmental justice help young people transform their communities toward a more just future? We explore student conceptions of justice and imaginings of a more just future when using the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals Environmental Justice! community research guide in two middle school classrooms.

Keywords

Environmental justice
Futures thinking
Sustainability
Environmental education
Place-based education

Conceptions of Environmental Justice and Imagining a More Just Future

Using education to transform individuals and societies, eloquently articulated by Paulo Freire (1970), has been a goal for many. Yet the content of this type of educational experience continues to be an area for investigation. Conceptualizing exactly what transformative education consists of has been explored through many lenses, including varied approaches linked within and between specific disciplines, such as civics (Cavieres-Fernandez, 2014) and science (Roth & Lee, 2004). In addition, there are important transdisciplinary approaches, including an education based on community-focused research and agency, such as participatory action research (Ozer, 2017); an asset-based education that deliberately creates space for identity and cultural exploration, such as culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2013); education linking individuals to their local sites, such as place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003); and education helping individuals use a pluralistic lens to interrogate local and global systems and their relationship to these systems, such as critical global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2014). The Smithsonian Science for Global Goals project is guided by the premise that integrating these approaches will best allow students to explore complex topics related to their futures, such as the ones highlighted through the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (Gibson, 2021).

Of particular interest is whether this holistic, transdisciplinary approach grounded in community relevance might engage young people in developing their own ideas to work toward a more just future. There is an increasing interest in better understanding how a social justice-oriented curriculum can be designed to motivate students to examine and

act on environmental issues in their communities. For example, recent research by Bradford et al. (2023) has found that student motivation improved during a chemical reactions unit when it was framed within the context of local environmental issues, such as air quality and asthma. Similarly, Morales-Doyle (2017) studied the impact of a justice-cantered chemistry class on academic achievement; their findings showed significant academic gains throughout the course along with evidence that, following the course, students developed a "critical consciousness" that they were then able to apply to local environmental issues (p. 1050). Here, we build on these earlier works by seeking to understand how learning resources can support students in critically investigating local environmental issues through the lens of social justice.

Justice-Oriented Community Research

The [Smithsonian Science for Global Goals *Environmental Justice!* community research guide](#) focuses on the question "How can we create environments that are healthy for everyone?" The guide begins by supporting students to discover their own and their community's existing knowledge and ideas about environmental justice. Students are guided to develop their thinking about what the environment is, what justice is, and how those two concepts merge. They then build understanding by investigating environmental justice issues through localized natural and social science data collection and interacting with experts and activists of color. These experts and activists represent diverse fields, genders, races, and global locations. Grounded within the context of their own identity and community, youth investigate the multifaceted relationship between environmental issues they identify in their own local spaces, the human health impacts of these issues, and equity. Finally, they are encouraged to take self-determined actions and contribute to community solutions to the problems they identify. The guide is designed to promote skills related to youth agency and action-taking; reflection and open-mindedness; relationships and interconnection; and equity and justice.

Research Design

This research employed a mixed methods case study with two classrooms exploring issues of environmental justice using the approach and activities from the *Environmental Justice!* community research guide and that were participating in three interactive webinars about environmental justice with women scientists from diverse disciplines. The research participants were BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) students in two Mid-Atlantic urban middle school science classrooms in the United States. Collected student work and pre/postsurvey results were analyzed to explore ideas about students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The participants created multiple student work products, including justice concept maps and definitions

of environmental justice, advocacy posters, and poems on justice, which are examined and discussed within this paper. In addition, student survey results from the Environmental Cognitive Alternatives Scale (Wright, 2020) were analyzed.

Findings

Student Conceptions of Environmental Justice

One early guide activity students participated in was articulating their definition of environmental justice. After exploring their embedded relationship with the environment, the youth were encouraged to think about justice. They first examined several scenarios to develop their ideas before creating a definition. They began by adding words to represent their ideas about what justice means and refined their ideas through written explanation. Examining the representative samples of student work shown in Figures 1 and 2, Student 1 shared the initial words "perseverance," "rights," "freedom," "equality," "respect," "Black community." Student 2 shared "community," "people," "protests," "law," "fairness," "peace," "wholesome," and "righteousness." In general, these words paint a hopeful, positive idea about the possibility of justice, despite references to experience of injustices found in the further explanations written by students, for example, "Black Community: you need a community for justice and mainly the black community needs justice" (Student 1) and "Wholesome: coming together to fight against police brutality" (Student 2). Indeed, Student 1 identified the problem and the solution within their definition of environmental justice, "Black communities experience environmental [in]justice [sic]. One reason we experience environmental [in]justice [sic] is by police brutality and segregation. Justice is equality because [right now] not everyone or everything is treated the same." Student 2's definition focused on the collective, "Environmental justice is when people come together as a community and help out in all fairness."

Figure 1. Student 1's Work Showing Ideas About Justice and Environmental Justice

Source: Smithsonian Institution, 2023

Figure 2. Student 2's Work Showing Ideas About Justice and Environmental Justice

Source: Smithsonian Institution, 2023

In addition to their definitions, the students also shared their ideas about local environmental issues impacting them and their community and the relationship between those impacts and systems of power through the poems they created. A particularly salient example is Student 3's poem focusing on the local air quality and source of air pollution:

> In the world there are many things
> and to me it really stings.
> Breathing in all these toxins,
> I feel like I'm being boxed in.
> And it's not getting any better.
> Having asthma and being on the inhaler.
> Seeing these factories in their smokestacks.
> I feel like they should not be getting fat racks.[1]
> Why are we treating the earth with all this disrespect?
> We are making the world into a terrible rat.
> You can all help and make a cleaner route
> and please do not pollute.

The student navigated between the local and the global, drawing a connection between global manufacturing and profit to local air quality and impacts their own health. In lines 3 and 4, when they stated, "breathing in all these toxins, I feel like I'm being boxed in", and later line 6, "having asthma and being on the inhaler," grounding the problem personally. Then, in lines 7 and 8, they zoomed back out to implicate profits for industry and manufacturing as a driver. They wrote, "seeing these factories in their smokestacks. I feel like they should not be getting fat racks." This line also has a clear call for equity, suggesting that industry should not be allowed to profit (fat racks) from practices that damage community health. This echoes the earlier findings from the definitions and the theme of equity.

Imagining an Environmentally Just World
The student artifacts also support findings suggesting that they developed their ability to imagine a more environmentally just world. Through guide activities, the students envisioned a healthy environment and shared their ideas imagining such a future. Some of the changes students imagined included, "No cars/electric cars can be great since there is no pollution that could make it harder to breathe." Considered alongside student poetry interrogating air pollution problems, "Smoke in the air, nowhere to breathe," together they showed both the problem and a possible actionable solution. Thus, the students imagined a future in which the air is more breathable because of a reduction in the amount of exhaust fumes.

The student-created posters also offered a lens through which to recognize how they both perceived the present and imagined a more sustainable future. For example, the poster in Figure 3 illustrates environmental risks and problems

through barren trees, an orange sun, and the symbol for fire covering a large swath of the planet. On the right, however, a more sustainable future is illustrated with abundant plant-life in green, large trees, and a bright blue ocean. This is consistent with a theme across student conversations about what a sustainable future looks like. Their responses consistently included a clean, trash-free ocean, and plants and trees to produce oxygen to breathe.

Figure 3. Student Advocacy Poster
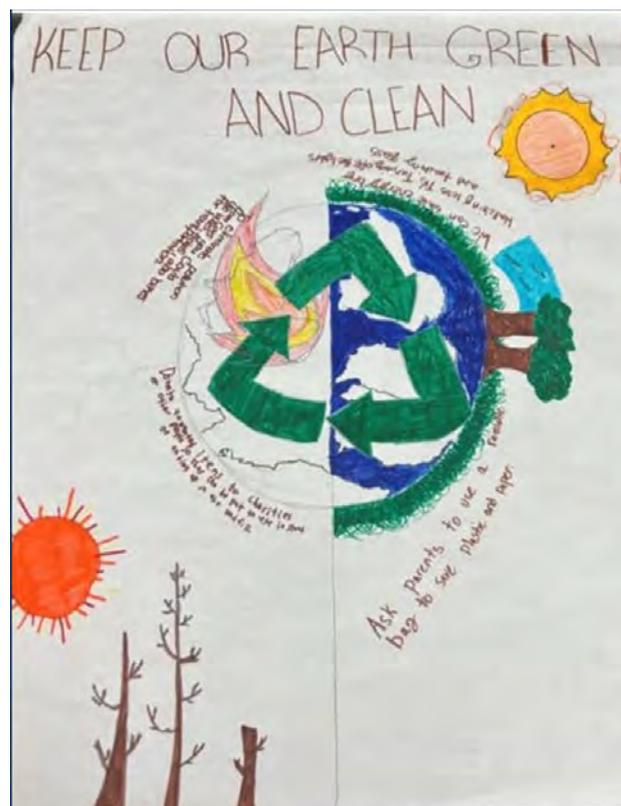
Source: Smithsonian Institution, 2023

Looking at these artifacts alongside pretest and post-test survey data from the Environmental Cognitive Alternatives Scale (Wright, 2020) suggests that, through participation in the project, students developed their ability to imagine a more sustainable future. For example, increases in positive student answers to questions such as "I can think of numerous methods of achieving a world where carbon emissions are reduced below current levels" and "I have a clear understanding of all the ways that a sustainable human existence would differ from our current state of affairs" both point to student's coalescing specific ideas about making progress toward a more sustainable future.

Discussion: Creating the Opportunity to Imagine a More Just Future

Research has suggested that students often feel overwhelmed about and powerless to address planetary environmental issues and, as a result, perceive their future and the future of their planet to be uncertain (Kelsey, 2019). Recently, Hickman

et al. (2021) found that 59% of more than 10,000 children polled worldwide said they were "extremely concerned" about the future of the planet. Helping young people find a way to navigate these complex issues is urgent. Our findings suggest that, throughout their experience engaging with the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals *Environmental Justice!* guide and related webinars, the students personally connected to local and global environmental issues, linked these issues to their knowledge of existing injustices, and were motivated to dream of a better future and advocate for actions to achieve it.

When examined in aggregate, the student work and survey results suggest that, given the opportunity, middle school students are more than capable of thoughtful engagement with environmental justice issues and of imagining an alternative future. Student work conceptualizing environmental justice suggests that students can both hope for a respectful, fair, and peaceful future for their community while recognizing the current challenges that stand in the way. This sense of hope, tempered by their own experiences with environmental inequalities, continues throughout the student work. For example, Student 3's poem focused on the personal impact of breathing in "toxins" while linking this injustice to an analysis of power and inequality. Yet despite clear frustration with the current situation, the student still believed a different future is possible, ending with the call to action: "You can all help and make a cleaner route/and please do not pollute."

Baker et al. (2021) found that, when students are engaged directly with education for sustainability, it mitigates their sense of feeling overwhelmed and hopeless, and our findings are consistent with this result. The student work suggests that these young people are very aware of the environmental challenges facing their community and the impact these environmental problems have on them and those they care about. Yet they are still willing to dream of a future with "no pollution" and envision an "Earth clean and green." The survey results show that, after being given the opportunity to explore and investigate environmental issues and potential solutions, we see statistically significant shifts in students' ability to imagine the changes needed to create a sustainable future and an increase in students' general optimism towards humanity's ability to make the necessary changes. When viewed against the backdrop of students' lived experiences with environmental injustices, this ability to conceive of and call for a better future is powerful indeed.

The present research suggests the importance of educational experiences to help students recognize and make sense of environmental, health, and equity issues within their own context. The resiliency participating youth showed in imagining a positive future, despite familiarity with the barriers, indicates that the path toward a transformative future runs squarely through an honest reckoning with injustices and toward designing an actionable path forward.

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Endnote

1. The term "fat racks" is slang for large sums of money.

Recentering Alternative Educational Approaches in the Post-Pandemic Context: A Case Study in Rural Vermont

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Summary

This research shares the experiences of educators in rural Vermont since the pandemic, offering an alternative vision for schooling. The author, who inhabits both the roles of teacher and scholar-practitioner, uses the original conceptual framework of institutional border theory of education (IBTE) to understand how foundational theories of education give way to alternative approaches centering social justice and relying on community connections.

Keywords
Pandemic
Public education
Social justice
Teachers
Community schools

Introduction

Vermont is a refuge for those seeking safety from climate disasters and political persecution in other parts of USA as well as for families relocating from conflict areas around the world. A 2020 study identified Vermont as one of the most climate resilient areas of the country, resulting in a small but significant influx of migrants in recent years (McCallum, 2022). Local schools have experienced an increasing number of students identifying as LGBTQ+ who have moved from out of state to more welcoming and inclusive school districts (Hellman, 2023). Since 2020, an estimated 500 international refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, have also resettled in the state (Dolan, 2023). Multilanguage learners (MLL) now comprise almost 10% of the student population at one of the schools in this study. With this influx of domestic and international migrants and refugees, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, Vermont educators and communities are re-examining the purpose of public education.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the status quo of public school operations, closing school buildings in Vermont to students for the remainder of the school year. In accordance with state guidance, the school district launched remote learning followed by an option for hybrid schooling (partial week in-person and partial week remote) in the subsequent academic year. Since reopening for full-time in-person schooling in August 2021, educators have been experimenting with finding a new "normal." As a scholar-practitioner teaching in a local elementary school, I have conducted research to learn from the experiences of educators since the pandemic and to develop an alternative vision for schooling that can create more just societies. This article presents initial findings and recommendations using the original conceptual framework of institutional border theory of education (IBTE).

Conceptual Framework

IBTE draws on foundational theories of education to generate alternative pedagogies, curricula, and relationships between school and the community. Through IBTE, I have collected data on how the blurring of borders between home and school has yielded opportunities to rethink teaching and learning, creating conditions for educational alternatives that promote societal transformation.

Figure 1. Institutional Border Theory of Education (IBTE): a conceptual framework for understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experience of school.

Note: This infographic was created by the author.
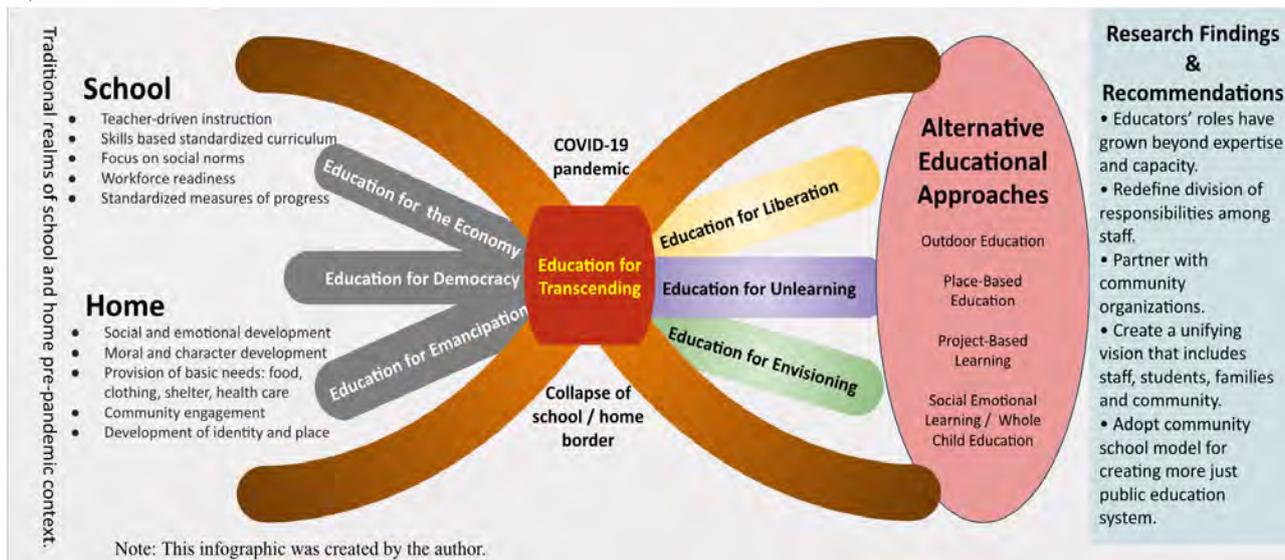
Source: Author.

In Figure 1, the foundational theories that undergird public education are positioned on the left of the graphic. These orienting perspectives include education for the economy, education for democracy, and education for emancipation. Each centers on a different focus regarding the purpose of school, sometimes harmoniously and other times in conflict with other foundational theories. Education for the economy is best typified by human capital theory (HCT), which regards the primary purpose of education as the development of a workforce, a key driver of the economy (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Education for the economy is often contrasted with education for democracy rooted in John Dewey's (1938) philosophy positioning public education as an essential tool for creating and maintaining democratic societies. Within a school setting, students learn civic responsibilities and develop skills and attitudes to become contributing members of their communities. Education for emancipation draws on the work of Paolo Freire (1972) and builds on education for democracy's ideals. From the Freirean perspective, education is a mechanism for unlearning harmful practices, liberating those who are oppressed, and offering a space for envisioning a more just future. By understanding the roots of public education as presented in IBTE, the pandemic can be understood as a time of transcending the borders between home and school, reorienting foundational ideas, and exploring alternative models of teaching and learning.

The convergence represents the historic moment when the borders between home and school collapsed at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The previously more distinct realms of home and school were transcended during this time. Educators assumed a greater role supporting students and families with issues pertaining to their health, safety, and overall well-being. Conversely, families were required to help students access and navigate their academic learning via technology and other new modalities. This changing relationship between home and school created the conditions for reimagining the role of public education within the larger community context.

The right side of the graphic includes educational paradigms that offer more expansive ideas on school's purpose. Education for unlearning and liberation refers to the process of examining harmful attitudes and practices and elevating historically silenced perspectives (Stein, 2021). Education for unlearning draws from decolonial theories which regard the role of education as fundamentally critical in its dismantling of systems of oppression (Mignolo, 2011). Education for liberation takes this concept a step further and positions learning (and unlearning) as means to create more just societies (Stein, 2021). Education for envisioning represents a holistic approach that brings together Dewey, Freire, and Stein's ideas around experiential learning and the emancipatory potential of education. Rather than regarding education as confined to school, learning and unlearning are constructed both within and outside the classroom and involve collaboration and community as part of the process. Together, these ideas on the purpose of school offer a vision for creating more just societies.

Findings

Using qualitative research methods, I conducted a series of interviews and focus groups to answer the following research question: How can the shift in educational priorities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic inform the reimagining of schools? Sixteen educators participated in the project. In this case study, the sample included participants from three public elementary schools in one rural district.

Data were collected in two phases, first focusing on educators' experiences and then exploring alternative

approaches to improve school-based teaching and learning. In the first phase, initial findings centered on the growing breadth of educators' roles since the onset of the pandemic. One participant shared, "We are all just trying to breathe and keep our heads above water" (Bess, early elementary teacher). Other themes included the fluctuation in student engagement, the availability of adequately trained staff, the increasingly complex needs of students, and the resulting impact on school culture. Another educator explained, "I think our morale at this school is at an all-time low … Given all the roles we play now, it's just exhausting" (Winnie, early elementary teacher). These experiences indicated that traditional models of school were no longer adequate for meeting the students' needs and deteriorated educators' feeling of self-efficacy.

After reflecting on their experiences, the educators were then asked to explore alternative educational approaches that had gained more salience and legitimacy and held the potential to address underlying stressors experienced by the school community. Early in the pandemic, standardized curricula and assessments and the focus on academic growth as measured through testing took a back seat to innovations that centered on student learning and teaching. These alternatives included outdoor education, project and place-based learning, and whole child education. Rather than top-down initiatives, the emergence of alternative educational approaches grew from the needs of students and teachers. The pandemic had elevated the stature of these approaches, providing an opportunity to reimagine school operations and radically rethink the role of public education.

Outdoor Education
Outdoor education is one approach that has gained traction and is widely practiced among many participants. In the words of an upper elementary classroom teacher:

> There is a ton of research about how being outside can lower your heart rate and breathing, and you feel happier because your affective filter is lower so your ability to learn is greater. The research has been around for a long time, but it has only been since the pandemic that we have pushed to get most or all our kids outside.
> (Kai, upper elementary teacher)

When analyzed through the IBTE framework, outdoor education helps promote a connection with the natural world and a sense of environmental stewardship, foundational experiences in the struggle for climate justice. Outdoor education includes unlearning of harmful practices and promotes a more balanced relationship with the natural world. Students and the larger community are more likely to live regeneratively and adopt environmentally responsible lifestyles with outdoor education as a cornerstone of the

school culture. Explicitly committing to this alternative educational approach as an integral part of the school culture would be a step towards achieving societal transformation.

Place- and Project-Based Education
Other alternative educational approaches that became more widely practiced during the pandemic include place-based and project-based education. One participant shared their experience of "learning about things that are happening locally … that matter to people … I teach about Abenaki (the local indigenous culture) … because that is this land, and I connect this with science and social studies standards. It's so powerful" (Bess, early elementary teacher). This place-based unit also incorporated elements of project-based learning, an experiential model built on cycles of inquiry and reflection. When analyzed through the lens of education for liberation, these approaches empower learners to make cross-disciplinary connections grounded in real-world and hands-on learning experiences.

Whole Child Education
The whole child approach falls within the education for envisioning band of the IBTE framework, bringing together multiple facets of student well-being in partnership with the community. To meet the needs of the whole child, students must have "access to nutritious food, health care, and social supports; secure relationships; educative and restorative disciplinary practices; and learning opportunities that are designed to challenge and engage students while supporting their motivation and self-confidence to persevere and succeed" (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018, p. xii). All these dimensions of in-person schooling became more important during pandemic times. Subsequently, educators shared the need for schools to work with other community organizations. One principal explained, "Generally, the families need all sorts of resources … that's a huge time sucker … we need a liaison where someone is based in our school." The idea of a liaison to bridge students and families with resources in the larger community lies at the heart of whole child education. Creating community connections helps mitigate obstacles to learning while relieving pressure on schools to provide for growing needs.

Recommendations
Alternative educational approaches are a means for a public education system to work toward a more just future. During earlier phases of the pandemic, experimentation was embraced, and alternative approaches became more mainstream. More recently, the priorities have shifted again, and top-down initiatives require educators to deliver instruction via scripted, standardized curricula. This focus largely ignores many of the innovations that emerged during pandemic times.

Alternative educational approaches offer high engagement teaching and learning opportunities responsive to the needs of students and educators. To preserve these gains, the following recommendations have emerged based on the experiences of educator:

- Encourage and support the use of alternative approaches such as outdoor education, project, and place-based learning.

- Clarify and redefine the roles and responsibilities of school-based staff to support whole child education.

- Partner with community organizations to fill needs that cannot be met with current school capacity.

- Create a unified vision with students, families and staff that encompasses the shared priorities and values of the school community.

To this end, the state of Vermont recently piloted a community school model to re-envision the role of public schools as resource hubs. The purpose is to "invest in children, through quality teaching; challenging, engaging, and culturally responsive curricula; wrap around supports; safe, just, and equitable school climate; strong ties to family and community; and a clear focus on student achievement and well-being" (Vermont Agency of Education, 2024). Adopting this approach would help address many of current challenges experienced by educators.

Conclusion

In this study, I have learned from the experiences of educators and centered their recommendations to create a more just vision of public education. During the pandemic, innovative educational approaches emerged alongside a growing scope of responsibilities placed on schools. One principal remembered the 2020/21 school year as "a joyous time … (students) were outside … they had really good relationships. It was fun. It was high engagement. I think they really loved school." However, as the pandemic recedes, there is a movement back to prepandemic priorities. Through the IBTE framework, I analyze the missed opportunities when reverting to pre-existing theories on education, illustrate the importance of recentering alternative educational approaches, and highlight the need to form community partnerships in working toward a more just future. The changing demographics of Vermont, the educational innovations that have taken place since the pandemic, the legislation to promote community schools, and the need to create positive school climates demand the recentering of alternative educational approaches in working toward a more just future.

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Fighting Against Education: No Alternatives Within the Educated Mind[1]

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Summary
This article seeks to recover the theoretical and practical contributions that argue that education cannot be reformed or improved. Instead, we consider that its promotion and expansion is a problem that must be addressed from a radical perspective, that is, from the root. Alternatives in education are a false solution that diverts us from the fundamental debates and truly transformative actions.

Keywords
Education
Learning
Alternatives
Radical
Fight

Trapped in the Same Old Discussion

In the middle of the last century, within the framework of the so-called "bipolar world" and with the expansion of the "development agenda" promoted by the imperial forces of the United States throughout the West, a religion called "education" was also promoted and, with it, the ritual of schooling. In 1953, when education was included in the promotion of development plans initiated by Truman in 1949, UNESCO experts concluded that the greatest obstacle to education in the Global South was the indifference or active resistance of most families to forcibly send their children to school. Eleven years later, the same experts warned that none of the "developing countries" would be able to meet the growing demand for schooling.

More than 50 years have passed, and education has spread around the globe like a plague that cannot be escaped. This has occurred not only through the expansion of forced schooling system and devices, which cover growing numbers of people from an ever-younger age. Education has also overflowed its perished "churches" to install itself as a dogma from which it is impossible to escape: The world is a great virtual classroom where everything must be taught, can be certified, and must be acquired in a logic of accumulative consumption. The assessment of Freire's forgotten colleagues, who disagreed with his vision of "education for liberation," was correct: Education has not brought more equality or freedom, but rather, the opposite is true.

The need for more education continues to be demanded and prescribed, especially among those who have had the privilege of consuming more education than the rest and who have also had the privilege of consuming more of everything else in this world on the edge of an abyss. It is time to seriously reconsider that Education is the actual problem and cannot be reformed or fixed. From our experience, we can say that we do not need to try to reform schools, invent new pedagogies, re-engineer education, or promote "alternative education."

Alternative Education: An Oxymoron

Like many of the readers, we initially approached "the problem of Education" from the credulity of reformist thinking. We believed that its main instrument, the school, could be transformed through public policy reforms. Living in contexts where all schooling, including university education, is public and free, we still faced the rigid limits of structure, bureaucracy, and idleness.

Then, we believed that we could create and promote this other type of schools, those called "alternative." Managed by groups of middle-class families, pseudo-communities, and merchants of diverse types, the experiments in "alternative education" with various types of pedagogical tools that, in some way, have aimed to induce some form of Education. A loving, neat and shiny indoctrination like a Montessori classroom! We saw hundreds of them, which multiply at the same speed as they disappear, a bubbling phenomenon that responds to the consumerist fashion of "responsible parenthood."

Later, we have found the official schools under the control of left-wing groups and social movements. Sensitized by the social inequality and shielded with famous quotes from *"Pedagogy of the Oppressed,"* they take to the streets to demand the governments of the day to provide them with funding to pay the salaries of their precarious teachers. They succeed because they fulfil their function in the school system, "helping" those who were expelled from the school system to reintegrate, trying to comply with the official school regulations, and adapting their curricula to the requirements of the legislation and bureaucracy in power. Then, their graduate can go out to compete and consume in the increasingly reduced and "uberized" informal labor market. Alternative paths, paved with good intentions, always lead to the same place.

Alternatives to Education

We have arrived at the need to review the assumptions and confront the complexity of the problem at its root. The concept of "Education" is a polyvalent, contradictory, empty signifier. A good example of what some have called "plastic" words, capable of adapting to any statement without having a precise form or meaning but with pernicious effects. For this reason, it is necessary to clarify some understandings. It is imperative for us to distinguish two key concepts, which are usually presented indistinctly: Education as myth that leads us to progress, Schooling as the ritualization of it.

As some others, we now understand Education to be "learning under the assumption of scarcity" (Illich, 1971). In addition, the dominant definition of the concept has several built-in assumptions. Here, we highlight two of them. First, it assumes that learning is an activity separate from the rest of life and that it is best done when we are doing nothing else and, even better, if we do it in a place designed for that purpose. This justifies

the existence of "educational spaces": early childhood centers, schools, colleges, universities, and other strata of Schooling. Schools and universities are to education what churches are to religion. The second assumption is that education is a designed process in which some people do "things" to other people or get other people to do "certain things" (Falbel, 1996). This is where the infinite variant pedagogical stratagems come into play, some more "alternative" than others, but all with a manipulative intent.[4] It is a technical process or some kind of treatment that someone does to another person, always under the pretext that "it is for his/her own good." The person receiving the treatment comes to believe it as well, to internalize the need for that process or that treatment, and to feel deprived if they do not get it or do not get enough of it.

Less than a century ago, the dogma was imposed by the canters of power in Western world: Only through the acquisition of education can an individual prepare for adult life in society, stating that what is not taught in some kind of educational process has little value and that what is learned outside of it has none. It matters not whether the curriculum is designed to teach the tenets of fascism, liberalism, progressivism, or any alternative way of life as long as an invisible and ubiquitous logic is deployed and reinforced, in which the educator (be it an institution, a person, or even AI) defines which activities constitute legitimate "learning" and distinguishing with accreditations the few (and, by principle, they always have to be few) enjoy that privilege from the great masses perpetually marked with "unmet educational needs." The "need for education" is a very recent invention which arose from the widespread conviction, emerging during the seventeenth century, where the notion arose that human beings are born stupid, and that this stupidity is a sort of "new original sin" whose cure is Education (Illich, 1971).

Escape From Education to Encounter Real-Life Learning

The opposition between education and learning should occupy a prominent place in our debates to transform the unjust societies in which we live, and these should never be limited to the precincts of education specialists and conscience reform professionals. It is imperative to focus on the role of Education as a promoter of the industrial economy: no matter whether it is imposed in the name of the free market, the welfare economy, green new deals, or centralized state planning. That is why education recognizes no limits and even those who claim to be aware of the socio-environmental collapse in progress promote its unlimited expansion by demanding more years of "free" schooling, more educational offers in all areas of life, and more energy for the *data centers* that sustain the virtual classroom of the cybernetic world that day by day phagocytizes the planet and all that is more than human. It is no "bizarre contradiction" that the most educated are the biggest consumers because

they are the ones who promote, demand, and dream of unlimited doses of education.

Education was—and still is—a weapon of the colonization of the modern, (post)industrial, and imperial world in the so-called "war against subsistence," a recent episode in the long and violent plot of colonial subjugation of the imperial powers of the Global North over the rest of the planet. Paying more attention to this process allows us to begin to understand where the keys to true social transformations lie, which are not those that a group of experts propitiate for the rest of the people but rather those that the people themselves carry out in their territories and living spaces. In the spheres of subsistence, "other forms of life" are recreated and that is where the "vernacular revolutions," which still resist below the surface and in the margins, are deployed (Shanin, 1982). These are experiences that do not admit replication and are not susceptible to being captured within the order of the global market, public policies, or neat government programs. They are unique, informal, handmade, imperfect, native, diverse, and irregular. Walking through those spaces, those soils, we find what is sometimes also called "radical alternatives." These grassroots processes have been there for centuries and continue to be there, resisting the "ideology of development," seeking to build autonomous possibilities of life-learning that have nothing to do with the expert, official, universal, educational, and scientific ideology. It is precisely in the name of development and in the search of a form of progress, here by means of Education and its instruments, that the aim is to clean, sanitize, order, and package these expressions of the people, eliminating their vernacular essence to replace it with industrialized products duly plasticized, labelled, and certified. They are often scorned and made invisible—labelled as archaic, conservative, village, parochial, or reactionary—by socially sensitive critical circles, where, in general, the only initiatives considered are those conceived and promoted by cosmopolitan, universal, rational, and educated agents of change.

Following the path of educational reformism in all its forms has proven to be limited, misleading, and counterproductive because it is plagued by certainties and self-indulgences. Alternative schools and alternative educations do not seek to escape the problem and are false solutions. Education is the actual problem, and we need to think and act critically to abolish it. It is not only necessary to escape from Education but also to fight against it.

For what has been said here and for all that remains to be discussed, we believe that any social transformation brought about by education will not lead us to "fairer futures." We must detach ourselves from it, reject certainties, ask more questions, look deeper, and look further back: "The struggle for liberation draws its strength not from the vision of the future, but from the understanding of the past."

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Endnotes

1. To access an extended version of this paper, please visit: https://goliard.xyz

2. Le Goliard: A collective, nomadic, deprofessionalized intellectual who wanders erratically on the fringes of dominant certainties and institutions. The author's name is a collective pseudonym. Contact us at goliard@riseup.net.

3. We inhabit the Abya Yala, the original name of the lands that today are also known under the hegemonic, imperial, and colonial denomination of "Americas." More about this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abya_Yala

4. The very word "pedagogy" contains a directive, adult-centric, oppressive sense, from its etymological root: derived from the Greek "paidagōgía", paida (child) + gōgía (to lead, guide); the act of guiding another. Here, it is worth noting the benevolent understanding that has spread around pedagogical processes, to the point of being considered as part of the diverse heritage of the so-called "pluriverse."

Part 3

Rethinking Postsecondary Education

Ecoversities Alliance: Learning Cosmopolitically for Our Mutual Flourishing

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Summary

How can we reimagine higher education to include multiple knowledge systems for many worlds to coinhabit? The Ecoversities Alliance engages this question across 47 countries using approaches from social and ecological movements and Indigenous communities, focusing on regenerating local ecologies, cultures, and economies while challenging violence, extractivism, and exploitation. This chapter outlines Ecoversities' "cosmopolitical learning"—learning how to learn in and between cultures, epistemologies, ontologies and learning to learn from, within, and beyond diversity.

Keywords
Ecoversity
Learning
Alternatives
Reimagine
Higher education

What Is an Ecoversity?

In our engagement with the debates and practices attempting to germinate new and counter-hegemonic learning places beyond the modernist university, we landed on the term "ecoversities," which describes the reorientation of learning and knowledge happening all over the planet. This movement departs from the modernist university's emphasis on its own paradigms and cosmovision as the one, the uni, the mono—the only way of learning, being, knowing, doing, relating, and inhabiting. It moves toward the learning, being, knowing, doing, relating, and inhabiting of *eco-* from the Greek *oikos-* of our ecology, our home, and our communities. Ecoversities describe these sites of innovation and reimagining as rooted in place, seeded from local struggles, and seeking to put learning at the service of communities, ecologies, and spiritualities for the mutual flourishing of all.

With multiple cosmologies, visions, contexts, histories, languages, and geographies, since its foundation in 2015, we at the Ecoversities Alliance have cotangled ourselves into a flourishing, nurturing, and sometimes challenging ecosystem. We count among us approximately 260 'member' organizations from 47 countries (and 50+ languages) and over 400 individuals with active regional networks weaving ecoversities communities in Latin America, the Pacific, India, Europe, Africa, North America, Asia, and the Arab world. To be an Ecoversities Alliance member means to participate in our dialogues and gatherings and be actively involved in building forms of learning outside of the current status quo. As well as periodic gatherings (international and regional), alliance members also participate through residency exchanges and learning journeys, publication outputs, and collaborative projects, both regional and thematic.

The deepening and broadening reach of the Ecoversities Alliance and the way it has developed into a mycelial

organism that has expanded widely, supporting individuals, and individual Ecoversities, regional collaborations, and planetary cross-fertilization in a variety of forms, means that its full reach is hard to ascertain. New and ongoing processes balance emergence and organization, with structures such as working groups and regional hubs, dozens of projects, various relational collaborations, and a complex system of resource allocation. The alliance has been characterized by the relationships that hold us together. These connections are collegial, convivial, coalitional, loving, informal, playful, and based on trust and shared passions, including the urge to make the world a better place (by challenging the status quo). Stitched into a patchwork weave of diverse cosmovisions, we share dreams of reimagining learning for our mutual flourishing, here based on social, economic, ecological, cognitive justice—a learning for our home, our *oikos,* or eco.

Who Is Involved in the Ecoversities Alliance?

Ecoversities harbor multiple communities of practice and learning, along with eco-pedagogies with experiences that respond to the critical challenges facing the planet. Some are accredited universities built from scratch, stretching and undoing the borders of disciplinarity of the old paradigm with the most innovative, creative, and critical thinking; others create cracks of enlivened learning within the cemented, rigid structures of traditional universities; some refuse to be contained within the walls of grades and degrees; others are part of an intentional sustainable community, like ecovillages, eco-neighborhoods, or transition towns. Some are seasonal and itinerant, creating intense and condensed spaces of conviviality and collective exploration; others have emerged as part of indigenous, feminist, Black, youth, social, and environmental movements as an important dimension of the struggles translated into pedagogies for training competent rebels. All of them multiply and nurture the wealth of experiences, practices, theories, ideas, and horizons of possibility in each one of their territories, both urban and rural. The projects take many forms—holistic universities, traditional villages and ecovillages, ashrams, cafes, coworking spaces, prisons, under bridges, urban slums, farms, barbershops, and the like. From temporary zones of autonomous learning to well-established campuses, ecoversities blossom in many different shapes, textures, and colors. Overall, we see ourselves as an emergent knowledge movement.

One important aspect that we highlight is the tendency to the significance and relevance of indigenous peoples in the alliance, with around 25% of the initiatives engaging directly with these cosmologies, ontologies, and epistemologies being led by local leaders, many of whom are women. This tendency needs to be consolidated and we feel are some of the richest features of the alliance.

There is no single model for being an Ecoversity, and that is one strength of this movement, maintaining the openness to emergence while weaving collaborations and encounters between the different knots of the tapestry. The starting point is a commitment to reimagining higher education in response to the critical challenges facing the planet, which convenes people interested in deepening notions of the self and consciousness, developing inventions and technologies— hacking, upcycling, designing—for environmental and social regeneration, being part of social movements, grassroots collectives, and local communities.

How Does Cosmopolitical Learning Work in Practice?[1]

An important learning for many of us at the Ecoversities Alliance, especially us writing here, is what we are calling cosmopolitical learning. This form of learning involves an openness to other ways of understanding and inhabiting the cosmos and of being in relation to it. In practice, this means that being a host or cohost of such a gathering of cosmovisions, which a gathering of ecoversities often is, involves a decentering of one's own cosmovision. Part of this decentering involves opening to other ways of learning and of being, knowing, doing, relating, and inhabiting through an openness to experimenting with these new ways. In concert with this, another part of this decentering involves exploring unfamiliar faculties in ourselves and our being (or rather becoming) in the world—not only with reason and intellect but also with our bodies and senses, our imagination and dreams, and our relations to the land and its many beings. These practices of opening to other worlds within and beyond ourselves entail listening, receptive attention, and emotional openness to emergence to the still unknown and unformed.

In these gatherings, our emphasis has been not just to begin to understand each other's worlds, but to allow for decentered encounters with each other's worlds, to, in a sense, allow for the possibility of worlding, of slowing down, deep listening, and cosmopoliticking together through a series of convivial practices and events that we cocreate. In our experience, cosmopoliticking has happened less through what can be framed as a politics of encounter but rather as an encounter through conviviality, or *convivência*, living or celebrating together. The feast, the root of conviviality, and the etymology of convivium in our Ecoversities gatherings have been made up of numerous ingredients harvested from worlding practices of participants from many parts of the planet who are at once cohosts and coguests but more importantly colearners.

Over these gatherings the organizers, a mixture of people who have previously participated and local hosts have been learning and improving the art of holding a light structure so that the aliveness of encounter and emergence across

cosmovisions and in place can arise. This light structure is cocreated and leaves ample room for emergence and for participants to reconfigure the process of the gathering as it unfolds. Although we do not wish to be in any way prescriptive here nor offer a recipe, we have noticed in our experiments in cosmopolitical gatherings that there are some key ingredients which help the flavors arise:

- Ceremonies, spiritual practices, visioning – ritualistic ways of connecting with each other, the Earth, and all living and nonliving creatures;

- Somatic work – based on the wisdom of the body, movement, playfulness, healing, breathing, and "embodying" our togetherness;

- Discursive moments – conversations, presentations of different projects via open spaces, facilitated activities to reflect on language, actions, gestures, dreams, and struggles in our contexts and as a way to reflect on the alliance's goals and outcomes;

- Indigenous and autonomous protocols – rituals and tools for collective self-governing (pedagogy of *aloha*, *asambleas*, cargos…);

- Hearth work – preparing food, cleaning, care for children, hands-on activities such as building, farming, and 'being in service' to support the hosts and the needs of the community;

- Conviviality – spontaneous conversations, performativity, celebrations, music, meals with the local community, visits to the neighborhood, and meeting local leaders and practitioners;

- Learning in/from the land – embracing the ecology of where we gather and its surroundings.

- Learning yatra (pilgrimage) – to visit and learn with/from local learning places of diverse types.

At the Ecoversities Alliance, we prefiguratively codesign our gathering encounters to enable a convivial and emergent sharing of space together, offering practices, stories, and skills as they emerge in a self-organizing way. We slow down to enable ourselves to be more fully present and open to what may occur and to mirror imagined worlds of how else education might be possible. We experiment with diverse pedagogies and practices, coming together in ways that deepen our relational logics and possibilities, occurring as standalone offerings or in sequence with other offerings to allow us to explore learning more slowly and purposefully, opening new spaces and worlds.

Whereas we have previously developed and practiced the ingredients above primarily within the international gatherings, they have also dispersed across the Alliance in multiple other spaces, projects, and regional hubs. The yearly International Gatherings of the Alliance still serve as a key time and place for gathering of members in an immersive week or more of cosmopolitical learning on a planetary scale, but many other spaces have also emerged over the past several years.

Regionalizing

Since 2017, Ecoversities have also hosted 19 regional gatherings, multiday encounters among ecoversity partners from a specific geographic or cultural region, initially conceived to strengthen the relationships among members, communities and contexts, and movements within these regions. The objective of these gatherings is to learn from one another as well as plan and implement common local actions.

Since they began in 2018, the regional gatherings have acted as a very important source of involvement with the Alliance, and they have contributed to several relocalizations of the work, including the emergence of shared regional/localized languages and practices, and the possibility of deepening collaborations and sharing of experiences between people of the same region, not only making travel more practical for attending but also benefiting from a mutual horizon of intelligibility and shared experience and sensibility.

The regional gatherings have allowed for a multiplicity of languages and cultures to feel more at home in their own contexts. The regions have been emerging as a place of collective learning and organization from regional members and ecoversities, deepening a sense of home, trust, and sharing while being a hospitable space for the weaving of relations, initiatives, and collaborations.

In Latin America, for example, there have been four regional gatherings: in 2019 in the Wixarika ancestral sacred land of Wirikuta, Mexico; in 2020 in the ecovillage of Chambalabamba, Ecuador; in 2022 in the mountains of Palmitas in the region of Antioquia, Colombia; and in 2023 in the Huasteca Potosina bioregion, Mexico. The multiplicity of the territories that have hosted this walking/dancing together shows the diversity of the region and has fed a mutual embrace, a weaving that supports a kind of relationality that accompanies, acts, feel-thinks, and un/learns, that is, a commoning.

The recent gathering in the Huasteca Potosina—a bioregion of enormous cultural and ecological diversity in East Central Mexico—started with an opening ceremony: the *Bixom T'iiw* (The Dance of the Hawk). The dance is an act of "weaving the cosmos," says Benigno Robles, a Téenek philosopher

and advocate and one of the cohosts of the gathering. In the dance, the spirits of the ocean, thunder, earth, and corn are conveyed and celebrated with reverence. This ritual commoning practice was an appropriate opening to the commoning practices of the gathering: play, conversations, cooking, walking, and dancing. In this meeting of earth beings, ancestors, territories, and bodies, the pluriversal Latin America is woven as well. Dreams are spun like the fabric in the spindle, creating multiple threads knitted together over time and practice in different forms: collaborations, invitations, and projects emerge in an emergent creative field of relations.

It is about commoning in the desires, yearnings, and hopes, commoning with a kind of learning that involves multiple rationalities and multiple sensibilities. Maybe this is why, poet and teacher, Devin Bokaer, one of the participants reflects in a postgathering as follows: "*I tried to share with my staff about what I learned and it was very challenging, because so much of what I learned was nonverbal; it was more about the feeling of being together in a space with people, with so much love, with so much loving energy and open heartedness*".

A cosmopolitical learning of commoning in which the encounter is an invitation to enact a relational ontology is where learning does not pre-exist the relationships that constitute it; it is not a collection of data or information but a practice of communion. Elena Pardo, director of the Center for the Promotion of Intercultural Wisdom in Cusco, Peru, sums it up well:

> *[In the gathering] we have once again caressed our hearts and we have renewed our inner energy, that reminds us in every way the respect and love for Pachamama, for raising and being raised, from feeding and being fed by life, of interweaving ourselves in community, with grace, with gratitude, and with the pleasure of giving and sharing.*

Endnote

1. Further development and the theoretical foundations of cosmopolitics can be found in the article by the same authors Butler, U. M., Lopez Amaro, G., & Teamey, K. (2021). Ecoversities Alliance - A five-year experiment in cosmopolitical learning. Educação & Realidade, 46(4). The origins of the term cosmopolitics come from the work of philosopher of science Isabel Stengers.

Higher Education for and in a Postconsumption Society

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Summary

If and how can higher education be part of addressing the current multicrisis? Here, I will develop a theoretical and philosophical argument around postconsumption citizenship as a possible counter-narrative to capitalistic ideology and neoliberal practices. Grounded in critical pedagogy, I outline how students and teachers can cocreate spaces in higher education to imagine a different kind of society and way of being.

Keywords

Higher education
Postconsumption society
Critical university pedagogy
Alternative futures
Multicrisis

Embedded in neoliberal ideology and practices, education landscapes all over the world have changed in profound ways during the past few decades. The influence of market thinking, and human capital theory has deeply changed the language and practices used in education (Giroux, 2014). Furthermore, it can be argued that universities themselves reinforce neoliberal practices and contribute to what can be described as "slow violence" (Nixon, 2011), a form of violence that slowly and gradually destroys the planet, creates social injustices, and undermines democratic participation (Sutoris, 2022). At the same time, universities also have been and remain to be a place for young people to gather, organize, and resist. This is a place that often is described as central in defending democracy and fighting social injustices. With this tension in mind, I will in the following address the question if and how higher education can be part of addressing the current multicrisis (Litfin, 2016); a conglomerate of crisis embedded in neoliberal and capitalistic ideology going far beyond climate change and including biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, pollution, war, structural inequalities, racism, patriarchy, and the undermining of social contracts. By using the idea of postconsumption citizenship as a possible counter-narrative, I will develop a theoretical and philosophical argument that takes into consideration both what role higher education can play in the processes of societal transformation towards postconsumption citizenship and how the role of higher education might change in a postconsumption society.

Oftentimes, the dominant imperative positions universities as nothing more than an instrument for economic progress and suppliers of graduates that function in the current capitalist landscape. In this context, value creation is often discussed only from a capitalistic perspective with an emphasis on economic growth, consumption, and competition. Furthermore, this foregrounds higher education as an entry ticket to high status jobs, an investment that is expected to result in financial returns on the labor market, rather than a place for meaningful learning. Ultimately, this leads to an economy-oriented view of higher education where knowledge, skills, curriculum, and academic credentials

inevitably assume a monetary value and have an economic purpose to fulfil. In today's higher education, values and practices are increasingly tied up with consumerist expectations and economic growth beliefs (Ehrhardt-Martinez et al., 2015), thus strengthening and promoting the connection between citizenship and consumption.

To counteract this entanglement between citizenship and consumption and for universities to stimulate the development of postconsumption citizenship, higher education must be acknowledged as first and foremost an important place for people to learn, interact, and imagine a different future. The concept of postconsumption citizenship understands students and teachers as playing an active part in societal transformation by being aware of their responsibilities in the current multicrisis and seeking to create and use knowledge. The aim is to contribute to a more social, climate, economic, and political just world and emphasize citizenship as values and practices grounded in sufficiency, sustainability, and well-being. With respect to higher education, postconsumption citizenship requires that learning and knowledge practices are understood as participatory processes that are valuable in and of themselves and that cannot be described only in economic terms and as part of market agendas. Higher education has to claim its intrinsic value that cannot and should not be measured in capitalistic terms. A clear goal of higher education for postconsumption citizenship is for students and teachers to imagine, explore, develop, challenge, and engage with new pathways to pursue the goal of living well within limits and promote system-wide reductions in consumption. Thus, graduates from all fields can change and transform industry over time rather than simply functioning within.

Although universities can appear to be unsavable and entrenched in capitalism and unconstrained consumption, I argue that there is hope and that students and teachers are at the university because they want to learn, explore, and change the world. As Carol A. Taylor (2017) points out: "What makes higher education spaces significant is that… they still perhaps offer greater openness for the emergence of new ethical subjectivities, and greater spontaneity for co-constructing teaching and learning relationally through joint action" (p.235). The move toward postconsumption citizenship is a struggle that needs to be understood both as a political and an educational endeavour by teachers and students. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that teaching and learning are never neutral processes but always have a political and ethical dimension.

From a pedagogical perspective, a higher education for postconsumption citizenship can seek inspiration from critical pedagogy and the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and others. Grounded in this line of thinking, teaching can create opportunities for students to learn how to ask difficult questions about the status quo and imagine a different kind of society and way of being. What this requires is a pedagogy aiming at viewing classrooms as cocreating spaces, where there is the possibility for imagination and hope. At the core of this work stands a dialogic praxis to create an opportunity space to learn with and from each other by acknowledging everyone as humans in the making. Seeing education from this perspective opens opportunities to encourage critical thought. Furthermore, teaching needs to be understood as connected, and in relation to the world around us and being human. Following this line of thinking, humanization stands at the core of education—humanization as a process of becoming more fully human through critical, dialogical praxis. At the same time, humanism should not be understood as human superiority but rather as pointing towards the responsibility that humans have in how the current multicrisis unfolds and how it can be addressed.

With this in mind, dialogue and praxis are two central ideas. Dialogue describes structured and purposeful communication between human beings to explore a topic from diverse perspectives. In contrast to discussions, dialogues do not aim at convincing someone else but rather invite others to understand a topic more fully, that is, a moment to reflect on subjective realities in the making and remaking. Dialogue should, however, not be understood as a mere technique but rather as part of the historical progress in becoming human beings. In addition, a pedagogy for postconsumption citizenship needs to consider how nonhuman entities like plants and animals can become part of these dialogues. With praxis, Paulo Freire describes the process of reflecting and acting on the world with the aim to transform it as it unfolds continuously and simultaneously. Higher education for postconsumption citizenship means to cocreate a praxis that combines ways of seeking and creating knowledge as well as acting on it. Furthermore, this requires engagement in reflective, transformative action, with others, not only at the university but as part of how to live life.

Building on these ideas, I argue that higher education as a dialogic praxis can create an opportunity space for students and teachers to learn with and from each other by acknowledging everyone as humans in the making. In this way, higher education opens opportunities to encourage critical thought and questioning or what Paulo Freire calls *conscientização,*' the process of deepening one's understanding of the social world. It is in this space that students and teachers can imagine, explore, develop, challenge, and engage with new pathways to pursue the goal of living well within the limits of the planet. The aim is not to have students fight someone else's fight but rather for them to have the opportunity to discover their own fights worth fighting for. Imposing political positions on others denies the

possibility of dialogue, but teaching students to hope is deeply needed in the multicrisis we are in. A time when neoliberal ideology and capitalism make it otherwise difficult to think radically, dream of a different society, and take action.

Moving forward, higher education needs to stimulate and develop an imperative that emphasizes the collective instead of individuals, trust instead of accountability, and shared responsibility instead of control and surveillance. An imperative that celebrates values such as humility, vulnerability, curiosity, open-mindedness, open heartedness, and caring for others. This is an imperative where who you are and how you understand yourself no longer depend on what you consume and own. As outlined, higher education plays a key role in shaping the transition toward a postconsumption society, and at the same time, it will need to change and reinvent itself constantly in the process. This transition process needs to fully embrace participation and dialogue across contexts rather than representation to cocreate new forms of higher education together. Higher education in a postconsumption society will look vastly different from today and will be a place where the focus is on learning and understanding with the aim to constantly shape paths toward a more just world. Higher education for and in a postconsumption society is a place where students and teachers can come to "the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it." (Arendt, 1968).

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Strategies Beyond Borders: Timebanks in Classroom Settings

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Summary

This article discusses a radical pedagogy employed in courses exploring solutions to mainstream dominant extractive ideologies in the United States and India. The assignments established a timebank so that learners could experience an alternative economics model. We describe the historical context, theoretical underpinnings, and practical impact. We detail how this collaboration that evolved as a cross-border exchange through virtual engagement, served as inspiration, and can easily be transferred to diverse settings.

Keywords

Timebanks
Transformative education
Experiential pedagogy
Alternative economics

In this paper, we discuss a pedagogy grounded in a theoretical framework that recognizes our historical moment—the end stage of coloniality that has shaped global and local social relations for the past 600 years. We share an initiative based on principles and practices that challenge core capitalist and colonial ways of organizing society and meeting basic needs. At its heart, this activity challenges many of the tenets of a colonial world that is oriented to separations, polarities, individualism, hierarchies, and private solutions. In practice, it is simple, doable, and practical, yet it holds unlimited potential—material as well as spiritual—forcing us to rethink our relationships with each other and the world. In these ways, we share our experiences in developing a project over the past two years that reflects the spirit of this special issue. The process of involvement in timebanking shifts one's thinking about what is possible to achieve. Building on this simple example allows us to consider and expand on more ways to challenge underlying structures, ideologies, practices, and belief systems.

Timebanks as a Pedagogy, Methodology, and Transformative Experience

Timebanks are a fun, community-cantered form of solidarity economy where the currency is time rather than money. An hour of one's time is equivalent to an hour of another is, whatever the task may be. This equalizes diverse kinds of work and renders the same value to each of them. It affirms the worth of each contribution and recognizes that we need each other. Unlike a barter system, timebanks are based on the principle of collective needs and offerings. The group agrees on the terms of the offerings, whether in units of time or something else.

Each person shares what they might offer, for example, an hour of gardening, cooking, cleaning, a ride by car, or even a listening ear. They also note something they could use help with such as tutoring, language lessons, moving assistance, or companionship. The possibilities are constrained only by the limits placed by the group. Somenone can facilitate matches, or individuals can reach out to each other to match offers and needs. A record is kept so that there is fairness in

exchange. Periodically, the group can come together to share experiences and hone the process.

This work fosters mutuality and reciprocity and is collectivized and understood at the level of the community rather than solely between individuals. Resources, skills, and needs are also collectivized. Timebanks operate on the principle that I get as much from giving as I gain from my receiving. They connect with the spirit of *Ubuntu, Buen vivir*, the Gandhian spirit of *anubandh* (a web of connection), Zapatista caracoles, and many Indigenous ways of living. "Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary" provides brief descriptions of many of these decolonial ways of thinking.

This arrangement is extremely adaptable to different settings because the participants themselves define the parameters. In our cases, the activity was structured through course assignments—one being a first-year seminar course at Adelphi University (Garden City, New York) entitled, "Community, Love, and Justice" and the other at the second-year postgraduate semester course called, "Living Utopias," offered at Azim Premji University (Bangalore, India) in 2021. "Living Utopias" is now being offered outside of the university space as a short course anchored by different community organizations with timebanks as a key pedagogy.

The Process, Learnings, and Lessons

The **"**Living Utopias" course discusses several historical and contemporary frameworks of a "good society." The course is oriented for anyone who believes that the current industry-driven endless economic growth model that we term as "Industrialism" has collapsed or is in severe crisis, showing an urgent need for creating an alternative world in every sphere, be it of ecology, economy, politics, culture, education, or technology. Through short and semester-long courses, we intend to help the participant gain a perspective around the urgency in combating the crisis of industrialism in the world today and introduce the participant to various alternatives. These include degrowth, anarchism, Gandhi, and Tagore's swaraj, ecofeminism, Indigenous visions, the Happy Planet Index, and radical ecological democracy. A key sub-unit is "rethinking economics," where the instructor for the course (Pallavi) explored ways to bring in fresh thinking of alternative economic ideas that students do not ordinarily encounter in their daily lives.

Through the GTA PeDAGoG: Post-Development Academic-Activist Global Group, I knew that Melanie (Bush) was teaching a similar course and that she had run a timebank in her classroom. I reached out to her, and she generously shared her instruction sheets and syllabus which I then modified for my own class context. We both had the sense that, post-COVID-19, building connections between students was a critical component of their learning process.

My students (class size 40) listed three things they could offer and three things they would like to receive as one-hour transactions. I set up a simple google sheet with their names and a column each for their offers and needs. They had to fill it in during class time after we discussed the reading assigned to them about Mondragon Cooperatives. This took about 15–20 minutes, and everyone was able to see each other's entries. These included offers of or requests for writing help, hair styling, company for birding, a cycle ride, an art session, conversation about fantasy books, movies, songs, teaching language, cooking lessons, and reviewing assignments. Students expressed an overwhelming need for companionship, for example, for watching a movie together, for talking one's heart out, going downtown and exploring city foods, and a teammate for playing indoor board games.

At the end of this exercise the students matched themselves based on their offers and needs. They had two weeks to complete their exchanges. Upon completion, the students had to write individual reflections incorporating the unit readings and their experiences. Some ended up taking the one hour literally and others spent an entire day or evening together organically. Two students felt that the initial matchmaking was a lot like online dating—everyone was trying to put their best foot forward because they knew the whole class had access to the Google Sheet.

As the instructor, I was privy to the world of social interactions that this exercise opened for the students. Youth seem so hyperconnected through social media or otherwise that their loneliness and vulnerability in seeking real connections took me by surprise. The pandemic was one reason. However, on another level, it is the global upward trend of individualistic living. I took it for granted that university graduates, especially in an Indian university context of shared living and learning, would not find it difficult to make friends or seek or offer help. However, reading their reflections on how the timebank made them come face to face with their loneliness was deeply disturbing. The simplest though most sought after interactions were as friends. These required them to seek help in what they were lacking and offer help in what they were good at. The exchanges made them feel good about themselves. At the end of the 15 days, there was a visible change in the classroom. Attendance shot up, and there was increased engagement in terms of comments and interjections with the course content. A comradeship among students was palpably visible. Many students said how difficult it was for them to admit that they were lonely and lacked friends when they first started out.

Some excerpts of their reflections are as follows:

The most important takeaway of this activity was that it helped us experience the work that goes into strengthening

community bonds and social ties. The creation and longevity of many of the "living utopias" we discussed over the past few weeks involve doing this work, and this activity lets us experience it on a smaller scale. (Participant A)

Reflecting upon some of the key learnings from our activity, I could learn and connect to many things that we are discussing in the class but also outside of the class. One needs to be free and live a life that is connected and meaningful within the given boundaries. We need to break it down and find the small connections, simple mechanisms, and life that are surrounded by the community around us. (Participant B)

The timebank activity showed that little contribution of individual time and care for each other gives happiness to others that money cannot buy. (Participant C).

The Timebank Experience at Adelphi

In the "Community, Love, and Justice" seminar, in addition to participating in a class timebank, the students received training to develop their "dialogue" skills. This aimed to build communication across experiences and perspectives. These activities allowed students to apply theoretical and intellectual understanding in real time through experience. They engaged social relations in new ways that are sometimes unfamiliar and initially seem suspect and undoable. The very act of "trying" opens reflection about what is and is not possible. The core premises of their way of thinking about the social world, themselves, and the power of learning are challenged. Students are sometimes overwhelmed by how a simple activity could radically transform things that they thought they knew, such as about the commodification of everything or the idea that everyone has something to give and can benefit from other people's contributions.

In 2022, the students from our classes came together to speak with each other and offer their reflections directly in a "Strategies Beyond Borders: Tales of Time Banks" webinar organized by Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA). Participating students confirmed the transformative and experiential potential of this activity. It cost us nothing—a few online meetings—and a lot of mutual generosity. We as instructors and as people gained a lot in terms of support and cross-pollination of ideas around the globe. The GTA newsletter documented this India/United States "collaboration across borders."

Starting where the students are, requiring only simple responses to what they can offer and what they need, moves them to rethink their assumptions. By doing so there is a transformational potential in this simple activity. The reflective discussion after exchanges is critically important so that there can be theorization about the power of this activity and its greater significance in relation to systemic and structural contexts. One might argue that the very experience imprints on them. They may come back years later and say, "You changed my life." Seeding a new way of thinking about how we relate to each other builds the kind of power we need at this moment, albeit through a longer-term process.

One of the most powerful aspects of this project—in each setting individually and in our collaboration—is that this model of exchange is easily transferable and adaptable. It can be more structured and formalized or kept remarkably simple. It can have an administrator or be facilitated by participants. It can be short term or long-standing. It can be local, regional, or even global. Several examples are noted below for reference purposes. Although for us the timebanks were part of a formal educational setting, many or most are embedded in other solidarity economies and alternative practices within communities.

We are in a very particular historical moment when the premises of social relations and societal arrangements are increasingly being interrogated because basic human needs are not being met and violence is globally ubiquitous. We need to build power and solidarity. Engaging in projects such as timebanks has the potential to allow people to realize that we can have shared goals, we can find simple and joyous ways to build communities and take care of ourselves, and there is work we can do right now toward that end together.

Some other models: TimeBanks.Org   hOurworld®   The Offers and Needs Market

The Time Bank Solution   7 steps to help you start time-banking today - Shareable Time Banking: An Idea Whose Time Has Come? - YES! Magazine Solutions Journalism

SAMPLE MATERIALS

1. Excerpted timebank spreadsheet that students from "Living Utopias, India" filled in

	Your name	Offering	Offering	Offering	Needing	Needing	Needing
		No Cash Transactions . Just offer and give your skills worth one hour of your time					
1	S.	Can Teach Dance	Go out shopping together	Teach Telegu	Learn Hindi and Kannada	Cooking	Travel to places within Bangalore
2	R.	Head Massage	Table Tennis	Discussion on any topic	Cooking	Painting	Wanting to learn Kannada language
3	J.	Can give a massage	Can teach table tennis	Can do a nature walk together	Cook and dine together	Learn how to take care of a dog	Academic reading
4	S.	Can do photoshoots	Can play sports together	Offer editing help			
5	R.	Morale boosting and listening skills	Quick and healthy recipes	Cute sketches	Pet care	Table tennis partner	company for birdwatching(have binoculars, need a partner)
6	A	Can pet-sit/human-sit/ offer company	can help with cleaning up your CV	Academic writing help with assignments	Want to learn basic Kannada to get by	Need comoany during university lunch hour	Company to accompany for a music lesson

2. Instructions that students in "Community, Love, and Justice" (Adelphi U, New York) received

SOLIDARITY ECONOMY INITIATIVE – Time Bank

Learning Goals: This project develops participant's ability to articulate and practice:

- *What do community, love, and justice mean?* Demonstrate heightened awareness of the meaning and significance of these principles in the social context as ideas and as practices, by themselves and in relationship to each other.

- *What do they look like in practice?* Identify and describe systemic, structural, and individual examples of these principles.

- *What do they have to do with me/us?* Reflect self-analytically about factors that shape your core values, beliefs and attitudes, the principles that you look to as a guide to being a socially responsible actor with agency, and the relevancy for different communities.

- *How might we use these values as a guide for praxis?* Articulate how these principles can be embedded in formal and informal ways in your everyday practice now, and in the future.

By this date, complete this part of the assignment.

Tuesday, November 7	Complete the survey (google form or some other way to gather information such as name, 3 things you can offer, 3 things you need and contact info 		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1		OFFER	OFFER	OFFER	NEED	NEED	NEED
2	Katherine	getting them a snack	tips for buying concert tickets	giving a hug?	Studying tips	food recommendations	
3	AmandaB	friendship	advice	organization	lashes	advice	friendship
4	Abdullah	Advice	Emotional support	Self care	Advice	Creating friendships	Be more social
5	Natalya	Give someone tips on what exercises to do	Tell someone what to eat for a well balanced diet	Talk to them about any problems they are facing with college	Help with getting organized	Help with ways to wake up easily in the morning	Help with ways to study	
Monday, November 14	Consult the spreadsheet to see who you are matched with and make arrangements for your giving and receiving time bank roles. Record the dates on the Progress Tracker spreadsheet. The "receiver" is responsible for making the arrangements. It's fine to change the contribution once the team meets. 		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1		NOTES: Receiver sets up appointment							
2		Everyone updates the spreadsheets							
3		You can change what you give or receive once you speak with your team mate							
4		Look at the draft for more ideas							
5		Contact info		Receiving from	Receiving			Giving to	Giving
6	1		Katherine	Natalya	friendship		Katherine	Pawel	organizational help
7	2		AmandaB	Amiah			AmandaB	Oliver	Listening, advice
8	3		Abdullah	Vanessa	Pet advice		Abdullah	Amiah	connections
9	4		Natalya	Pawel	Nutritional advice		Natalya	Katherine A	friendship
10	5		Adriana	Dia	friendship and advice		Adriana	Alina	| Track your progress: |	A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1			Received	Gave	Posted in	Submitted
2	1	Katherine				
3	2	AmandaB				
4	3	Abdullah				
5	4	Natalya				
6	5	Adriana					
Monday, November 21	Complete BOTH your giving and receiving for the class time bank. At least one hour for each component. Post your reflections on the experiences and how it relates to our course topic, in Moodle.
Monday, November 28	Complete the Project Summary and upload to Moodle. This summary should be descriptive (what did you do both in giving and receiving), reflective (how did you experience thinking of what you can give and would like to receive and the actual exchange) and analytic (what does it signify to you in relation to our course topic, readings and discussions. This two-page essay should reference at least 3 readings about the solidarity economy, the commons and time banks or other topics we've explored. How was this experience a reflection of social change in practice? See the syllabus for general writing assignment instructions.

Creating Valuable Postschool Pathways for Vulnerable Youth in Malawi[1]

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Summary

Malawian universities struggle to accommodate most youth who qualify and aspire to pursue higher education. This research explored alternative higher education programmes to which vulnerable Malawian youth had access through an NGO. The study reveals how institutions such as NGOs play a valuable role in supporting youth well-being and capability achievement, especially in developing countries such as Malawi.

Keywords

Aspirations
Capabilities
Malawi
Well-being
Youth

Contextual Background

Equitable access to higher education remains a global challenge. In Malawi, universities struggle to accommodate most youth who qualify and aspire to pursue higher education studies. Despite the increase in university institutions, Malawi's higher education sector still fails to enrol all the students who qualify for tertiary education. The country's six public universities and over 20 private universities only enrol a few students. The World Bank (2010) notes that access to regular Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) programmes in Malawi excludes most of the country's youth. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) have often contributed to enabling youth development through educational and training interventions. NGOs offer diverse and alternative pathways to postschool access for vulnerable youth who lack access to universities and mainstream colleges.

Although diverse pathways into higher education exist, there are limited critical explorations of the postschool pathways offered by NGOs active in Malawi's youth development space. The scarcity of relevant studies necessitated empirical research on this topic. The current research takes the form of a qualitative case study, drawing on the views of 24 youth (expressed in group interviews and individual in-depth interviews) and nine staff members (through semistructured interviews) from a faith-based NGO that offered skills and vocational training to marginalised youth.

This research, therefore, explored the higher education programmes to which Malawian youth had access through an NGO, shedding light on their experiences in the programmes. The study also examined whether the programmes align with the aspirations of youth and if the programmes helped mitigate their vulnerability in Malawi. Thus, this research revealed the unique experiences in an NGO-provided higher education programme for youth and the programme's potential to prepare young people to live meaningful lives that they would deem valuable as well as a reason to enhance their well-being. Skills training programmes offer meaningful alternatives for postschool studies to youth who lack access to universities and mainstream colleges.

An NGO, St. John of God Hospitaller Services, an international donor-funded organisation which operates in Malawi, was the focus of analysis. It has operated an institute of vocational training considered an alternative form of higher education because it was attended by youth who lacked access to mainstream colleges and universities. The institute of vocational training also offered rehabilitation services for at-risk youth.

Framing the Study: The Capability Approach

In Malawi, education at large and higher education are underpinned by human capital approaches that seek to cultivate employable young people to participate in the nation's development. However, the present study used the capability approach—a normative framework for studying different forms of dis/advantage (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). The capability approach provided lenses for exploring youth aspirations and their experience in skills training and education programmes provided by an NGO. Also crucial for the present study was the capability approach's emphasis on what individual youth have reason to value for their lives (Robeyns, 2005). The approach was helpful because it allowed for the examination of individuals' lives and revealed their opportunities to attain valuable states of being to which they aspired. It allowed for a detailed analysis of how youth participated in alternative education programmes that enhanced a range of capabilities for them. The approach offered a broad framework to conceptualise, measure, evaluate and understand youths' aspirations and experiences in alternative higher education programmes. The capability approach offered a social justice perspective in contrast to the dominant neo-/liberal human capital perspectives. The approach provided unique language to discuss youth aspiration and the alternative pathways to higher education to which vulnerable youth had access to.

Two constructs of the capability approach are of particular importance in this regard: capabilities and functionings. A capability is 'a person's ability to do valuable acts or to reach valuable states of being … it represents the alternative combinations of things a person can do or be' (Sen, 1993, p. 28). Wilson-Strydom (2011) indicates that '[f]unctionings are achieved outcomes, the things that a person can be or do' (p. 409).

The Benefits of NGO Training and Skills Programmes

The results of the study showed that, although vulnerable youth aspired to attend universities and mainstream colleges, they found an alternative in programmes offered by NGOs and were able to attain valuable capabilities and functionings. The findings demonstrate that education and skills training programmes offered by NGOs can foster capabilities and support youth aspirations and well-being. The study highlights the importance of higher education beyond its role in increasing employability chances by revealing how

programmes offered by NGOs form a valuable alternative for vulnerable youth who are lacking university access.

The NGO supported capability achievement by removing barriers that inhibit youth access to higher education. The institutions provided tailor-made, flexible, and free postschool training and removed the requirement for good grades to enrol in postschool studies, helping vulnerable youth access postschool training and gain skills to enhance their well-being. Thus, the NGOs supported youth pathways to postschool education by being a conversion factor and a capability that youth could turn into a valuable functioning of accessing higher education through nonconventional means.

The following capabilities were enabled and valued by the youth as they attended a programme by the NGO:

1. The capability to access postschool training. This entailed accessing and participating in postschool training to gain relevant and valuable skills. The youth who had no hope of accessing postschool training, although they aspired to it, had the opportunity through the programmes offered by an NGO. Mambo et al. (2016) document that students from the poorest quantile in Malawi only have a 0.7% chance of accessing university education. Therefore, it was valuable that most of those youths in the study who aspired to higher education but lacked the requirements such as funds and academic achievement for access were enrolled for training.

2. The capability for employability which meant that the youth were getting a skilled job and being self-reliant; to be an entrepreneur and generate income for self-reliance. Nussbaum (2000) and Walker (2008) discuss how essential it is to have the right to employment and fair and meaningful economic opportunities. The specific courses offered by the institution were linked to employability. The youth reported that the studies were relevant as they responded to job market needs.

3. The capability to gain practical skills and occupational knowledge. Youth had access to practical training, accessed internship placements and were able to put the acquired skills into practice. Youth expressed that, as individuals, they were adequately equipped with skills and qualifications that were marketable and required in the world of work. Although they had hoped to attend universities and institutions of higher learning, they could now have the choice of attending vocational programmes offered by an NGO. Vocational courses have been praised for their occupation-oriented training, leading to graduates getting rapidly employed as they obtain valuable practical skills needed in the job market (Forster & Bol, 2018; International Labour Organisation

(ILO), 2014). Practical skills in horticulture, tailoring, home management and other fields prepared students to enter the job market, engage in entrepreneurship and develop the experience to do a commendable job. These were valuable achievements. Moreover, the participants demonstrated confidence in being able to do what was required of them.

4. The capability for care. The youth in the study indicated that, because of their experience at the institution, they were able to care for others and develop human values. The NGO ran an institution that had an inclusive setup that saw people from diverse backgrounds characterised by poverty, disabilities, mental health, and other forms of vulnerability. The setup, they stated, helped cultivate human values and affiliation in the students. Moreover, as a faith-based organisation, it had unique values (incorporated religious teachings in the TVET) that the students indicated made them develop care for others. The capability for care is closely related to what Nussbaum (1997) calls the capability of affiliation, which entails being able to show concern towards others, having compassion and empathy and treating others with dignity.

5. The capability to aspire. From their experience at the institution, the youth developed the ability to have hope for a better life in future and work towards achieving it. The institution enhanced their imaginative possibilities. Awareness of the institution's existence propelled agency in the youth because they hoped for an opportunity to access and participate in some form of post-school training amid challenges of access and participation in Malawi.

6. The youth also reported having the capability for bodily integrity. The capability of bodily integrity, which appears in other studies such as Walker (2006) and Wilson-Strydom (2014), is about safety at school, no corporal punishment, freedom from sexual harassment and violence, choice in sexual relationships and protection against HIV/AIDS. In the present study, women valued this capability more; they were respected and had power over their bodies. This capability was primarily developed because of the institution's faith-based culture and values. The women indicated that, in other institutions, which are secular, the capability for bodily integrity was likely to be constrained. They indicated that sexual harassment of female students is common in such institutions.

Understanding the Limits of Alternative Pathways

Although these capabilities emerged, the critical outcome from the data is that the main achievement for youth is access to postschool training, which enhances their ability to aspire and imagine what kind of skills and training can enable them to achieve their aspirations in the future. However, their existing aspirations were rarely achieved. Therefore, the critical contention reflected in the study is whether access to postschool training and the capability to aspire is enough for vulnerable youth's well-being, especially in the context of countries like Malawi that face many human development challenges related to persistent poverty.

Further, although the skills and education programmes offered by NGOs enhance some valuable capabilities and functionings, the study revealed that different personal, social, and environmental conversion factors influenced the capability achievements of individual participants in and through these programmes. The study reveals the complexities and limitations of the educational interventions offered by faith-based NGOs, thus demonstrating the successes and failures of providing diverse pathways to skills development and capability formation in the higher education space, particularly in contexts where access to mainstream institutions such as universities is limited.

Conclusion

Even though grounded in human capital approaches, higher education skills and training programmes can foster capabilities beyond employment. The study demonstrates that educational programmes offered by NGOs can help address the higher education access gap in Malawi for vulnerable youth. NGOs offer alternatives for vulnerable youth regarding higher education access. Although challenges are discussed, the skills and training programmes offer alternatives for youngsters aspiring to postschool studies in contexts where universities fail to accommodate everyone.

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Anticaste Activism in US Higher Education: Beyond a Politics of Recognition

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Summary

The movement to recognize caste as a protected category in universities, corporations, and nondiscrimination state policies in the US has grown over the past five years. This article discusses the contours, tensions, and debates that constitute notions about caste within a settler colonial North American academy. The article ends with a call to reimagine anticaste infrastructures in U.S. higher education institutions by centering the experiences, realities, dreams, and desires of Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi communities.

Keywords

Caste discrimination
Anti-caste activism
Dalit
Settler academy
US higher education

Introduction

Caste and caste discrimination across differences of skin colour, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and class have been practiced throughout South Asia for over three thousand years (IDSN, 2022). Crucially, one's caste location—and, in turn, access to resources and political power—is determined by birth and fiercely maintained by caste endogamy. The pyramid in Figure 1 shows where groups are located in the caste hierarchy.

Contemporary anticaste activism draws inspiration and knowledge from thousands of years of resistance to caste apartheid. Broadly speaking, the following caste-oppressed communities (from a variety of local, regional, national, and international contexts) have led the fight: *Dalits* (formerly referred to as untouchables), *Bahujans* (formerly called *Shudras*), *Adivasi* (indigenous peoples), and *Vimukta* (denotified tribes). In this essay, the acronym DBAV is used when talking about collective struggles that include all four identities.

Resisting Brahminical Supremacy in India

Legal protections against caste discrimination and policies for affirmative-action type reservations for scheduled castes (i.e., Dalits and Bahujans) and scheduled tribes (i.e., Adivasis and Vimuktas) in higher education and employment were first introduced in the 1950 Constitution in India and expanded in 1990 through the Mandal Commission. However, implementation of these protections has been slow and vulnerable to derailment by a political and bureaucratic system dominated by oppressor caste groups. Indian universities, particularly elite public and private universities, remain one of the most visible sites of dominant Hindu caste privilege and prejudice against caste-oppressed and Adivasi communities (Teltumbde, 2018).

In the 1970s, DBAV university students in India began to mobilise for their rights to education. Dalit and Adivasi student activism was often intertwined with broader social movements,

Figure 1. Caste Hierarchy Pyramid
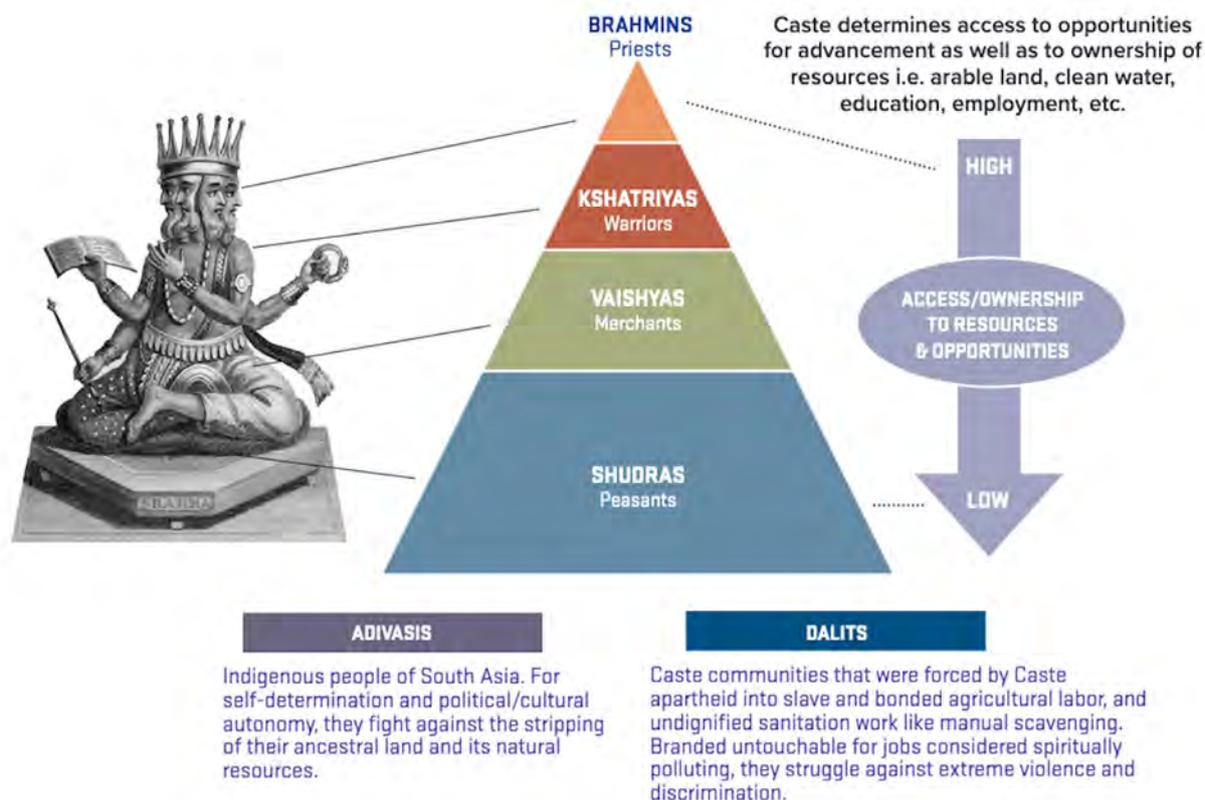
Source: Zwick-Maithreyi et al., 2018

for example, against caste atrocities, for Indigenous rights to the land, and so forth. Key organisations included the Adivasi Students' Association (ASA, Jharkhand), the All-Assam Tribal Students' Union (AATSU), Adivasi *Hakkula Porata Samiti* (AHPS, in the United Andhra Pradesh), United Dalit Students Forum (UDSF), and Ambedkar Students Association (ASA). Then, as today, DBAV student activists worked in solidarity with each other as well as with Muslim students, who also continue to face significant barriers to higher education, including caste, class, and regional marginalities.

Decades of campus-based activism has played a key role in exposing the exclusion and injustice built into all spheres of Indian education. This includes inadequate and unreliable financial support that compels economically marginalized Adivasi and Dalit students to find alternate ways to support their studies and sustain their families and communities. Adivasi students have been disproportionately affected by improper implementation of government policies, including mother tongue language/multilingual education and the national overseas scholarships: the National Fellowship for Scheduled Tribe students (Danavath, 2023a). Relatedly, DBAV students are disproportionately affected by the privatization of public higher education through policies to reduce or eliminate existing sources of student support, such as subsidised tuition fees (AICSS-AIFRTE, 2017). Access to private universities remains a distant reality for most because of high admission expenses, tuition, and living costs.

Deep-rooted prejudice against Dalits and Adivasis (often conflated) among dominant caste faculty and students persists and manifests in overt (abuse, harassment) and covert (academic neglect, pushout) practices as well as sustained political campaigns to undermine, weaken, and do away with reservations on the grounds that the Indian education system functions on meritocracy. Increasingly, Hindu nationalist–linked student groups worked to manipulate and polarize Adivasi groups for assimilation into Brahminical ideology. Thus, Adivasi student activists must additionally fight for justice and empowerment within their communities, challenging dominant (i.e., Brahmanical) narratives and asserting their agency. As the poem by Abhay Xaxa (2011) titled 'I am not your data' reveals, Indian universities continue to perpetuate the hegemony of Brahminical and capitalist epistemologies, which enable dominant caste academics to build successful careers through extractive damage-centered research that perpetually frame DBAV communities as "deficient" (Tuck, 2009). Even in well-intentioned spaces, very few students and faculty from DBAV backgrounds are admitted to high-profile and well-funded programs and research centers (Nagaraj, 2011).

Much of the work of reclaiming Adivasi identities and cultural representation in research and curriculum has occurred in marginalised spaces within the academy or entirely independent of the structure (Xaxa, 2021). DBAV students have led resistance to the "saffronisation" of curriculum and university governance structures. Since the 2014 election

victory of Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), public university chancellors appointed by the regime have been part of a relentless campaign to intimidate, silence, and push out dissenting academics and students led by *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (ABVP), the student wing of the BJP (Thapliyal, 2021). Anticaste activists have responded with creative protests to counter the dominant narratives about what it means to be Indian, for example, campus festivals that counter vegetarian nationalism with celebrations of the consumption of beef ("Beef Festival", 2012).

Dalit and Bahujan student activists have laboured (emotionally, physically, spiritually, and otherwise) to carve out spaces to be seen on their own terms within elite university culture and community (Garalyte, 2020). To express their cultural distinctiveness and autonomy, they have established study groups and cultural organizations that foreground the social critique put forth by anticaste icons such as the Phule, Ambedkar, and Periyar as well as contemporary protest registered by DBAV communities across the country. Deeply attentive to registers of disability, queerness, and regional (as well as urban) hierarchies within this umbrella community, moments such as the passing of Section 377, (which decriminalized homosexuality in India) witnessed queer DBAV activists reminding communities that legal change alone cannot result in systemic change, as has been seen with the legal banning of untouchability (Ponniah & Tamalapakula, 2020). Cumulatively, these spaces not only visibilize the discriminatory and exclusionary realities produced by caste but also dream, build, and foreground anticaste futurities, even in the face of the bleakest forms of Brahmanical violence (Pathania, 2020).

At the same time, pervasive casteism within faculty and students combined with institutional neglect has taken its toll, as evidenced by increasing numbers of suicides by DBAV students and academics. These deaths are now being referred to as "institutional murders" and have claimed the lives of many, including Ayush Ashna, Dr. Payal Tadvi, Fathima, Darshan Solanki, and Rajini Krish (Rawat, 2019; Vemula, 2016).

Recognition of Caste in the Northern Settler Academy

Since an end to the immigration restriction in the 1960s, the immigration policies of the United States and Canada have favoured so-called high-skilled South Asian migrants who consist primarily of oppressor caste students and professionals. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1917) predicted, caste discrimination has travelled with these South Asian migrants to Turtle Island and around the world.

Student activists across U.S. university campuses are currently demanding a reckoning with the historical role played by their universities in the reproduction of racial and caste violence. As demonstrated by Indigenous and Black scholars, the American university system is intrinsically linked to the epistemic and material violence enacted by settler colonialism, slavery, liberalism, and the demands of transnational capital today (Tuck, 2018). Using the capitalist language of progress (e.g., development, international cooperation, and aid), they continue to benefit from a disposition of accumulation and extraction (of knowledge, land, etc.). In the context of South Asia, Orientalist, racial, settler, and Brahminical logics have almost exclusively shaped how the region and its people have been imagined and studied.

Although the history of anticaste resistance in Turtle Island can be traced back to over a century ago (Mehta 2013), the current movement to institutionalize caste protections in U.S. public universities began to simmer over the last decade, with DBAV students coalescing to organize against the discriminations they were battling. The movement spread like wildfire after people like Prem Pariyar, an anticaste organizer from Nepal, caught the media's attention. Pariyar spoke out against the ignorance and complicity of his peers in the Department of Social Work at California State University (CSU) (Pariyar et al., 2022; Aashad et al., under review). His courage demanded a fierce reckoning with caste apartheid across the largest public university system in the country, spanning 23 campuses and over 400,000 students.

Pariyar's transnational experiences with caste discrimination brought him into coalitions with other student leaders and with U.S. Dalit-led groups and organizations with significant experience in raising issues of caste discrimination in the corporate sector and labour movement, including Equality Labs, Ambedkar International Center, Ambedkar King Study Circle, and the Ambedkar Association of North American (AANA). These organizations shared a wealth of knowledge and strategies with student activists, beginning with critical histories of Dalit resistance spanning 2,000 years, as well as contemporary Dalit feminisms and antiracist Black-South Asian solidarities (see, e.g., Soundararajan, 2022).

Learning anticaste histories and unlearning caste supremacy for student organizing constituted a key area of work in the anticaste movement. Equality Labs provided a groundbreaking training series that inspired a generation of anticaste mobilizers in and outside the academy. This education empowered student leaders—across caste positionalities and campuses—to educate and mobilize in their communities—departments, student, and other campus partner organizations as well as among friends and family. They gained a complex understanding of how caste apartheid operates in the United States within the South Asian community and in the highly racially charged political landscape of the United States, (particularly in a moment where the

COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated existing inequities and fissures). Relationships with non-South Asian student organizers such as in M.E.Ch.A (or Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán) and Students for Justice in Palestine were particularly vibrant spaces of learning about the connectedness of the movement against caste apartheid with these spaces of anticapitalist and anti-imperialist struggle.

Student organizers also spent countless hours critically analysing existing equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEI) policies to effectively negotiate with university administrators. Key partners included Campus Community and Cultural Centers, Educational Opportunity Programs for First-Generation Students, and other Campus Climate resources. They worked to combat mis-and disinformation around claims that dismissed the invention of caste as a British colonial invention and the unsubstantiated claim that it contributed to "hinduphobia." Despite pushback and censorship from oppressor caste groups within and outside the academy, DBAV communities have demanded attention on how caste is central to the US academy as a whole, not just its South Asian employees. These efforts can be seen in statements published by UCSD Ethnic Studies (2021), the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA, 2021), and the 2022 decision by the University of Minnesota School of Public Affairs to declare caste a diversity, equity, and inclusion criteria.

This kind of learning and counter-knowledge production played a vital role in preparing DBAV students to deliver hour-long testimonies in front of their student governments and university administrators. They spoke about the lived experiences of casteism and the discrimination they experienced—in housing, dining, finding community, academic success, health and well-being, and so forth. It also sustained them through countless hours of dehumanizing dialogue with deans and DEI practitioners, who, as has been previously highlighted by Black and Indigenous communities, tend to prioritize donors and campus reputation over grappling with the issues of historic harm and systemic educational injustice.

This work of giving testimony within settler institutions comes at a high cost and should not be romanticized. Student organizers experienced multiple violences, including being reduced to nameless statistics; risks to international student visas and scholarships; and co-optation of DBA knowledge and voices by dominant caste peers and academics as yet another opportunity to accrue capital through anticaste research through their already privileged positions within the academy.

The influence of Dalit feminist politics meant that both education and organising work was carried out through careful and ethical relationships and trust building. Workshops, such as the above mentioned "Unlearning Caste Supremacy" series led by Equality Labs, offered embodied (and not just intellectual) practices to unlearn

caste supremacy and enact a politics of care oriented toward visions of an anticaste future. However, it must be noted that this heavily politicized work of care and healing must happen mostly within DBA communities and networks of trust while oppressor caste communities must similarly engage in reparative justice work.

Beyond Recognition

Historically, the North American neoliberal settler university system has made minimal commitments to antiracism and diversity work beyond those that facilitate controlled access, ordered assimilation, and the accumulation of representation (Stokas, 2023). DBA student activists are similarly grappling with how U.S. universities tokenize students from historically excluded groups through simplification and even misrecognition. For example, international student admissions policies that continue to use nationality or passport identity as a proxy for diversity continue to invisibilize Dalit and Adivasi student applicants, who must navigate overwhelming cultural and economic barriers to even be in a position to apply (Danavath, 2023b). A few universities in the Global North have begun to respond to these challenges through scholarships specifically for first-generation DBA students, but these remain grossly inadequate in the face of the kind of dominant caste power building that the academy has historically facilitated. We are yet to see measures that we know cannot just recruit but also promote DBAV student retention through policies for intentional hiring and nurturing of DBAV academics; capacity-building in DEI personnel and infrastructures; stronger research ethics guidelines to identify and prevent extractive research, and so forth.

To conclude, to move beyond the recognition of caste requires redistributive as well as epistemic justice, U.S. higher education continues to be enmeshed in habits of accumulation and assimilation. Racial capitalist hierarchies of knowledge, power, and labor remain intact, and at best, EDI initiatives exist in tenuous spaces. Recent student movements like #FeesMustFall and #ConcernedStudent1950 have demanded that universities take responsibility for undoing ways of knowing and valuing that reproduce oppression (Stokas, 2023). This demand must remain central to anticaste student activism in the United States as well.

Endnotes

1. As recently as 2018, a national Dalit feminist organization, Equality Labs, reported that "1 in 4 Dalit people surveyed in the US have experienced physical assault, 1 in 3 discrimination in education, and 2 out of 3 discrimination in the workplace" (Zwick-Maitreyi et al., 2018).

2. CSU would be followed by a number of public and private institutions, including University of California, Davis, Brown University, Colby College, Colorado College, the Claremont colleges, Carleton University, and Harvard. Brandeis was the first to do so in 2019 through faculty activism.

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Transcending Barriers: Building Holistic Learning Spaces in India

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Summary

The AISHE Report 2020-21 highlights a concerning 14% decline in disability enrollment in Indian higher education, revealing exclusionary trends. Numerous complaints, including inappropriate comments and the failure to meet disability quotas, emphasize gaps in implementing accessibility guidelines. Employing an Imperative Phenomenological Approach, our study explores the lived experiences of disabled students in four Hyderabad public colleges, uncovering structural hurdles. Our findings challenge current disability studies norms, advocating for concrete recommendations to reshape institutional norms for inclusive and accessible education.

Keywords

Exclusionary
Disability
Higher education
Institutional norms

Introduction

Achieving universally accessible education in India remains a formidable challenge, one that is hindered by deeply entrenched systems of patriarchy, ableism, casteism, and anti-LGBTQIA+ biases. Despite strides in expanding access to educational institutes, oppressive structures persist. An accessibility audit report in 2016 revealed a nationwide lack of disabled-friendly buildings (Sharma, 2016). Legislative changes and educational program development have not eradicated issues such as low enrollment and high first-year dropout rates among students with disabilities (Dutta et al., 2009; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) of 2016 mandates that government higher educational institutions reserve 5% of seats for "persons with benchmark disabilities" (Section 32) and provide inclusive education (Section 16). Challenges persist, with only 50% of students with disabilities feeling faculty members understand their needs and, of these, only 25% willing to adapt course materials (Barazandeh, 2005; Kraska, 2003). Alarmingly, 82% of students emphasize the need for faculty members to enhance their understanding of disabilities.

Hyderabad's four public universities must adopt alternative approaches to organizing students. Although the UGC recognizes disability as a barrier, a comprehensive and proactive approach is needed. This involves not only physical accessibility but also fostering an understanding of the academic environment through faculty training and awareness programs. The present study examined the experiences of disabled students and faculty responses in four public universities in Hyderabad, India. Utilizing purposive random sampling, 20 participants were selected from diverse disciplines in the University of Hyderabad, TISS Hyderabad (off-campus), NALSAR, and Osmania University. An imperative phenomenological approach with semistructured questionnaires assessed each university's accessibility standards.

Challenges and Disparities Among Public Universities in Hyderabad

The study aligns with the national trend of limited enrollment of disabled students in higher education. Despite its prominence, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) accommodates only one disabled student due to a lack of a disabled-friendly campus. Limited efforts for improvement contribute to the challenge, as highlighted by a faculty respondent stating,

"There will be students who select themselves out from joining the institute due to its inaccessibility."

The respondent spectrum, skewed toward high and middle-income groups, underscores further alienation of disabled students grappling with poor economic circumstances. Accessibility needs and satisfaction with facilities reveal substantial barriers, classified into urban, transport, building, environmental, and communication categories.

Morgado et al., (2016) also identifies several barriers at institutional level including architectural and infrastructural hurdles. Shared spaces in the campuses prove elusive due to dimensions, slippery floors, poor acoustics, and lighting. The inadequate use of technology exacerbates the learning and communication gap, suggesting the need for an 'Accessibility Lab' akin to NALSAR's model.

The emerging discipline of Disability Studies in Hyderabad, India, necessitates focusing on accessibility for disabled students, which is crucial for fostering inclusivity in higher education and employment. Among the studied universities—Osmania University, NALSAR, University of Hyderabad, and TISS—better accessibility is observed in the first three, attributed to the implementation of UGC guidelines and the RPWD Act, 2016. TISS, located on the outskirts and utilising a temporary/rental campus, faces challenges in accommodating accessibility needs during construction, leading to disabled student opt-outs. The invisibility of students from the higher spectrum of disabilities in the universities as regular students and significantly less sensitisation and forums to help students with invisible disabilities are also evident in this study.

Proposing Transformative Measures and Collaborative Advocacy

To address the significant challenges disabled students encounter in Hyderabad's universities, a series of nonreformist reforms are proposed. These transformative measures aim to tackle systemic issues without perpetuating existing structures, fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

In disability rights and accessibility, student collectives and organizations play a pivotal role. NALSAR stands out with a collective of disabled students, facilitating accessibility through dedicated labs. Recognizing the limitations of the buddy system, the proposed approach emphasizes organizing through a mutual aid and justice framework. This envisions the community identifying needs, mobilizing, and collectively bargaining with educational institutions, ultimately creating just and inclusive learning environments.

Figure 1. A Framework for Student Organising
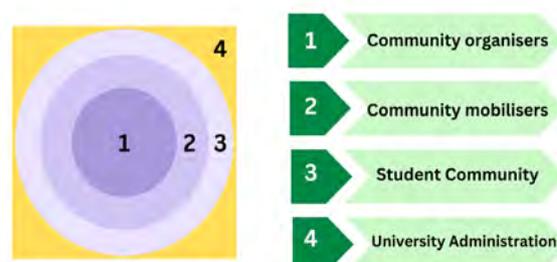
In this framework, the community first realises its needs within a justice framework, mobilizes the people and community, and then collectively bargains with the educational institutions. Although universities in Hyderabad have used the buddy system, it often leads to a violation of bodily autonomy, as will be discussed in the subsequent section. The first concentric circle within the framework mainly consists of disabled persons and able-bodied persons who take up leadership within the democratically set values. Community mobilizers mobilize the student community to meet immediate needs and bargain collectively. Once such a mechanism is built within various universities, a network works together to disseminate the resources and create safer spaces for disabled students while marching toward a just and inclusive learning environment.

I think things need to start by providing a voice to the voiceless and then implementing what they need rather than being paternalistic and addressing whatever suits the administration per se. (Respondent 3, NALSAR)

Despite UGC guidelines and court directives for a 5% disability quota, comprehensive consultation at the application stage introduces universities to a broader range of needs, including those of students with invisible disabilities. This proactive approach mitigates the risk of unfilled quotas, reduces dropout rates, and aligns to foster inclusivity in higher education institutions. Enhancing the admission process by including a section where applicants can voluntarily disclose their accessibility needs is a proactive measure. This allows universities to plan and allocate resources accordingly, ensuring a smooth transition for admitted students. By integrating accessibility information at the admission stage, institutions can address individual needs from the outset.

The existing intervention for inclusivity is mainly on the lines of affirming the dependence of the PWD students on the scribe, buddy system, and so forth. However, interactions with disabled students have revealed that they prefer to be independent and utilize their capability to carry on day-to-day activities as students with the assistance of others and primarily technology. Therefore, assistance which respects the autonomy of the disabled needs to be reinforced on the campuses.

One of the respondents from NALSAR stated the following:

> We have open book exams; the scribe takes a lot of time because of lack of familiarity. So I prefer to write the exam without depending on a scribe. By having a laptop, not connected to the internet, instead of books in the open book exam, I can attend the exam by myself.

Another respondent from the University of Hyderabad added, "First, we have to try sensitizing everyone. People try to help and sympathize. But everyone should respect the capability and independence of the disabled".

As Juncà (2003) explained, facilitating an accessible environment translates into greater personal autonomy, allowing students with disabilities to live independently and enjoy full citizenship. For these students, decreasing barriers automatically increases their level of well-being. The present study also underlines the necessary focus on training and sensitization of each university's student and teacher community to make the spaces and opportunities more inclusive. The below statement from one of the respondents from the University of Hyderabad emphasizes the same:

> Sometimes, I struggle to communicate with my classmates and faculties. I use the notes app on my smartphone to partially fix the communication problem. They will type anything they want to tell me in that app, and I reply the same way. This made it difficult to socialize and adversely affected my academic performance. I never use hearing aids as my degree of impairment is 100%.

Training on the use and interpretation of sign languages, assisting visually impaired and students with locomotor disability for navigation, and so forth must be included as a part of the curricula for teachers and students. The New Education Policy also aims to standardize the Indian sign language system (PIB, 2023).

Establishing inclusive committees comprising representatives from students, faculty, and administration is imperative for collaboratively identifying and addressing accessibility barriers. These committees must have decision-making authority and independence to effectively implement transformative changes. Establishing these committees is pivotal in ensuring a broad spectrum of viewpoints is considered during decision-making. This approach is instrumental in forging more inclusive

and equitable policies and practices. Forming alliances with organizations dedicated to disability advocacy is vital in harnessing their specialised knowledge and perspectives for fostering an inclusive atmosphere. When universities collaborate closely with these advocacy groups, it significantly amplifies the impact of reform initiatives and guarantees a comprehensive strategy toward achieving accessibility and inclusivity.

Finally, conducting regular accessibility audits of campus facilities and services and publicly sharing the results promote accountability and will encourage further improvements. Transparent reporting of audit findings helps raise awareness and response to accessibility on the campus, leading to a continuous commitment to inclusivity. These initiatives developed collaboratively with disabled students and advocacy groups, create a culture of understanding and acceptance within the university community. Centred on mutual support and justice, this will create a positive and supportive environment at the university, fostering solidarity and a sense of community among disabled and non-disabled students, working towards shared goals of inclusivity.

Conclusion

The current research provides an insightful examination of the experiences of disabled students in Hyderabad's academic institutions, uncovering the enduring obstacles to accessibility that impede their educational success and overall well-being. Utilizing an imperative phenomenological approach, the present study transcends basic description to advocate for transformative changes, calling for a systemic overhaul within university structures. Pursuing inclusivity goes beyond physical access, embracing a comprehensive strategy that targets and changes prejudicial attitudes, promotes understanding, and empowers disabled students. Our recommendations, which include forming inclusive committees and embedding disability studies into academic programs, are designed to dismantle long-standing oppressive systems, clearing a path toward a truly equitable and participatory educational setting.

However, realizing this ambitious vision demands a unified effort and dedicated action. Higher education institutions must actively collaborate with disabled students, advocacy groups, and faculty to develop solutions deeply rooted in real-life experiences and that can cater to various needs. Consistent audits, transparent communication, and continuous dialogue are essential to maintain the momentum toward achieving greater accessibility and inclusivity.

In essence, overcoming these barriers involves more than just adhering to existing policies. It requires a fundamental shift in how we perceive and value disabled individuals, here coupled with a concerted effort to eliminate all forms of discrimination. By working together, Hyderabad's universities have the potential to become exemplars of inclusivity, setting a powerful precedent for a future where educational access is a universal right and every individual is allowed to flourish.

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Part 4

Centering Nonformal Education

Born out of Struggle in Argentina: Bachilleratos Populares with/in/against the State

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Summary

The economic implosion in the late 1990s in Argentina created the conditions for the emergence of a series of alternative social organizations that were autogestionados, or created from the ground up by unemployed workers, social activists, artists, and educators. Here, we describe one of these social organizations, Bachillerato Popular IMPA, which is located within an abandoned factory that was recuperated to form a workers' cooperative.

Keywords

Popular education
Prefiguration
Third space
Horizontalism
Postcapitalism

The 2023 election of right-wing president Javier Melei continues a cycle of over 50 years of extraordinary political struggle in Argentina because of a U.S.-backed, brutal military dictatorship (from 1976–1983) and an economic implosion leading to a major depression in 2001 caused by decades of extreme neoliberal policies. Argentina's economic crisis, which began in the mid-1990s, drove unemployment and poverty to levels the country had never experienced and led many workers to occupy abandoned enterprises to create jobs in a situation where it was utterly impossible to find employment.

In this chapter, we describe how *bachilleratos populares,* or people's high schools, were created within worker-managed, cooperative enterprises and how they were inspired by popular education. Since the creation of the first *bachi*, as they are referred to colloquially, over one hundred similar ones have been created throughout Argentina, making these "schools" an integral part of a much larger movement of affirmative resistance that seeks to prefigure a postcapitalist society based on cooperativism and solidarity.

Bachillerato Popular IMPA is a *bachi* or "people's high school" located in the first occupied factory in Buenos Aires—IMPA (*Industria Metalúrgica y Plástica*)—that was taken over by workers when it was abandoned by the owners in the late 1990s. IMPA is one of over two hundred worker cooperatives in Argentina. The *bachis* emerged along with the movement to take over or "recuperate" factories to be owned and managed as cooperatives by the workers. In 2004, the first *bachi* was opened at the IMPA factory and included a specialization in worker cooperativism.

Our discussion of Bachillerato Popular IMPA is part of a much larger study and book titled, *Creating Third Spaces of Learning for Post-Capitalism: Lessons from Educators, Artists, and Activists*, which includes data on third spaces of learning in Buenos Aires and New York City. According to third space theorists, if the *first space* represents our cultural identities and everyday lives and the *second space* represents the hegemony of the dominant (neoliberal or colonial) forces that attempt to define us, then the *third space* is a hybrid space in which to explore issues of domination, power, and emancipation (Bhabha, 1994/2002). As a generative locus, a third space of learning allows us to imagine radical new ways of learning and working together, and relating to each other and, in the process, finding new ways of learning and being.

Postcapitalist theory argues that spaces that prefigure a postcapitalist world are all around us if we know where to look. Prefiguration theory suggests that we can build the world we want to live in while also engaging in affirmative resistance to change the policies and structures that keep the current unequal form of monopoly and finance-driven capitalism in place. However, ultimately, it is the learning that takes place within these spaces that leads to counter-hegemonic knowledge, new social relations of solidarity, the recovery of indigenous and other subjugated knowledges, and an expansion of what we consider spaces that educate. It is the building of global networks of solidarity among these spaces that has the potential to make them powerful enough to challenge hegemonic power from below.

The teachers at Bachillerato Popular IMPA have produced a book about their teaching, *Political Praxis and Popular Education: Notes on an Emancipatory Pedagogy in the Classrooms of IMPA Secondary School* (CIEP-Histórica, 2016). Another book, *Popular Education and Critical Pedagogy: Stories from the Global South*, is coedited by several *bachi* directors.

Straddling the State and Civil Society

The *bachilleratos populares* have struggled regarding their relationship with the state (but are not antistate) and have coined the term *escuela pública y popular* (people's public school) to distinguish themselves as social organizations that are public, but also construct a counter-hegemonic education within marginalized communities. In redefining schools as public and popular (of the people), they create a productive tension between the popular knowledge of the community and official academic knowledge. Popular public schools seek to break with the grammar of traditional public and private schools and the official knowledge and dispositions they impose on marginalized students and communities (CEIP-Histórica, 2016). This is why they insist that they are not privatizing but rather creating what Nancy Fraser (2019) calls a "subaltern counterpublic" in which marginalized groups create counter discourses and practices to promote alternative interpretations of their identities and interests.

Bachillerato Popular IMPA is *autogestionado*, that is, self-organized from the ground up by activists and community members. As such, it has enjoyed a certain level of autonomy from the state (and its official curriculum) but has struggled to get state support for teachers' salaries and certification for its graduates. During the eight years before Bachillerato Popular IMPA finally received salaries from the Ministry of Education, it struggled with sustaining volunteer labor and overhead costs. Most teachers had regular teaching jobs in public schools and taught at IMPA as a form of social activism. This dance among external control, resources, and autonomy is ongoing for many hybrid spaces that straddle the lines between the State and civil society.

Organizationally, the *bachi* attempts to meet the needs of students who are emerging adults in low-income, marginalized communities. For instance, as a result of discussions in assemblies, Bachillerato Popular IMPA has built a nursery where students can leave their children while they are in class; the teachers contributed a percent of their salaries to build and staff it. Each classroom in the school has two teachers to provide more personal attention, and the regular curriculum is provided from Monday through Thursday, leaving Friday free for one-on-one tutoring. The latter feature is because issues of regular attendance are an ongoing struggle, and students need a day when they can review material they missed or did not understand to keep from falling behind.

Workers and activists at IMPA also created an active cultural center, a workers' museum, an independent radio and TV station, and, more recently, a university. "The Workers' University" has a teacher training program to develop teacher/activists in popular education philosophy and methods to teach in the *bachilleratos populares* around the city andcountry.

A Counter-Hegemonic Curriculum and Pedagogy

Through participatory consensus-building in their umbrella organization (CIEP), *bachis* have committed themselves to the following practices, which distinguish them from most public and private schools: 1) a commitment to cooperativism and self-management, 2) participatory student and teacher decision-making in assemblies/town halls, 3) a view of the school as a political project, 4) the construction of a new pedagogical subject, 5) a return to traditions of worker education and their relevance to other emerging social movements, and 6) a challenge to traditional education from the perspective of popular education. Much like the schools in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (Tarlau, 2019), a movement they identify with, the *bachilleratos populares* view themselves as part of a larger grassroots social movement attempting to reimagine Argentinian society.

Influenced by Paulo Freire's notion of critical consciousness and Argentinian progressive educators Olga and Leticia Cossettini, who promoted active learning, *bachis* are committed to a counter-hegemonic pedagogy, not only in the curriculum, but also in the social relations in the classroom and in the wider culture of the school. We know what learning looks like in most formal classroom spaces. When we refer to a pedagogy of third space or third spaces of learning, we are not referring to learning in its individualistic, neoliberal meaning, what Biesta (2021) calls "learnification." Biesta argues that without some idea of what learning is about and what it is for, it becomes part of the current human capital discourse that ties lifelong learning to one's utility to the economy.

Located inside recuperated enterprises, the schools reflect the culture of the worker cooperative, which is a space of learning through participatory governance and social solidarity. Most *bachis*, congruent with the occupation and cooperative management of the factories that host them, teach cooperativism as both an alternative form of social relations and organization as well as a viable career. Through active learning, students run the school store as a cooperative, sharing the joys and frustrations of running a cooperative. Just as the workers who occupied the factories are learning how to manage an enterprise collectively and constructing new forms of social solidarity, a third space curriculum should prefigure the kind of society the students will help construct.

The students who attend the *bachis* typically lacked a feeling of respect and belonging in their previous schools. In the *bachis*, they encounter a culture of acceptance, respect, and solidarity. Those working in a third space also acknowledge their students' need for structure and for opportunities to acquire the cultural capital of the dominant culture but not at the cost of a critical education and a strong sense of pride in their own identities. Rather, *bachis* provide the curricular scaffolding for students to construct dual identities and work to transform unequal social relations, not striving to fit in through jettisoning one's class, racial, and/or ethnic identity to assimilate. As numerous scholars have documented (Cabrera, et al., 2014), it is precisely a counter-hegemonic education that provides students with a milieu of solidarity and respect for their stigmatized identities that more often motivates them to excel academically.

A Commitment to Horizontalism

Bachilleratos populares are committed to a horizontal governance structure. The *asambleas,* or assemblies, in the *bachis* are intended to be participatory spaces in which students and teachers coconstruct the program and have a voice in the administration of the school. Coauthor Anderson visited Bachillerato Popular IMPA with his graduate students on an assembly day, and IMPA students raised issues from

how to better heat the factory classrooms in winter, to their need to show solidarity for *bachis* that were not being certified by the city's Department of Education. In discussing this last issue, one of the teachers announced that there would be a protest at the municipal department of education the following day in solidarity with the other *bachis*, and she invited the students to attend.

Anderson and his graduate students attended that protest, in which perhaps a hundred students and teachers from several *bachilleratos populares* were present. Besides discussing the history of the *bachilleratos populares* and issues they were protesting with the students, the teachers organized art classes to make banners and posters and organized a yoga session with some of the students. In this way, the protest was used to provide some aspects of formal education while participation in the protest itself was part of their embodied political education.

Conclusion

Although the *bachis* represent a departure from traditional public schools, they struggle with many of the same issues as public schools located in marginalized communities. Our intent here is not to romanticize the *bachis* or other third spaces of learning. For instance, some assemblies achieve democratic participation better than others, and some teachers combine relationality with rigor better than others. Not only is establishing a third space in the shadow of the State difficult, but sustaining them can be just as difficult, especially when they are led by social activists. Such programs or schools can experience a strong backlash that can come from elements within the community or the State. With the 2023 election of Javier Melei, *bachis* and their host cooperatives will more than ever have to find ways to sustain themselves in the face of attacks from the State.

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Landless Workers Constructing Educational Alternatives for Agrarian Reform, Agroecology, and Food Sovereignty

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Summary

Brazil's Landless Workers Movement's (MST) has had tremendous success occupying land, winning land rights, and developing alternative economic enterprises for over two million landless workers. This chapter provides an overview of how the movement's educational initiatives have evolved over the past forty years and the strategies used to implement these educational alternatives in public schools and universities across the country.

Keywords

Pedagogy of the Oppressed
Social Movements
Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (MST)
Education of the Countryside

On September 7, 1979, 110 families participated in the occupation of the *fazenda* (large plantation) Macali, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This plantation had been lying fallow for years, despite the thousands of landless farmers in the region who dreamed of owning a piece of land to provide for their families. The more than 400 women, men, and children who entered the large private plantation that day immediately set up makeshift tents where they would live for the next months, refusing to leave until they were given the rights to farm this land—what is referred to in other geographical locations as "squatting." After a little more than a year and an outpouring of national support, the state government finally agreed to buy the plantation for the purposes of agrarian reform, turning the land into a public *agrarian reform settlement* that the families would have the right to farm on and build a new rural community.

Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST - Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) was founded in 1984 by the leaders of this and many other similar land occupations that were taking place throughout the southern part of the country in the early 1980s. Thus, unlike many social movements, the MST was not founded to simply make demands on the state, but rather, it was created as an *already existing* economic and social alternative, what Erik Olin-Wright (2010) referred to as a real utopia. This year, the MST celebrates its 40-year anniversary. During these four decades, the movement has succeeded in pressuring the government to redistribute land to more than 450,000 families, or over two million people. The MST continues to occupy land, with tens of thousands of people currently living in MST encampments awaiting land access. After winning land rights, the movement also fights for access to roads, housing, and agricultural extension programs as well as for social issues such as gender equity, LGBTQ rights, youth cultural programs,

and much more. Over time, the MST also began to promote more sustainable farming methods, embracing what has become known as agroecology (Altieri & Toledo, 2011; Meek & Tarlau, 2016) as well as more collective forms of economic production such as worker-run agricultural cooperatives.

Transforming education has been a central part of constructing these alternatives (Mariano, 2023; Tarlau, 2019). Importantly the MST has always prioritized eradicating illiteracy by pressuring the government to fund literacy programs that MST activists themselves have coordinated, helping more than 100,000 adults learn to read and write. Currently, the MST also has 1,500 public schools in its agrarian reform settlements and camps, which are all part of either the municipal or state school systems. Of these schools, 120 offer elementary, middle school, and high school education, 200 offer elementary and middle school education, and the rest are elementary schools. Approximately 200,000 children, adolescents, and adults study in these schools, with 10,000 teachers working in the schools.

The public schools in MST-occupied encampments and on MST agrarian reform settlements teach students to engage in participatory democracy, collective work, critical thinking, agroecological farming, and other practices supporting the movement's social and economic vision. As MST activists often describe, these educational alternatives are always "in movement with the movement of the movement"; in other words, the MST's education initiatives have evolved with the MST itself. The origins of the movement's educational alternatives in the 1980s were rooted in a concrete necessity—the hundreds of children who were running around in occupied encampments without access to schools. It was in this context that the women in the camps who had previously worked as teachers began to set up makeshift schoolhouses and organize educational activities with the children. Through their previous experiences with liberation theology in the Catholic Church, some of these women were also familiar with Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. These women began to teach illiterate adults in their occupied encampments how to read and write, using words that were common in the encampments, for example, *barraca* (tent) or *fação* (machete). These educators also used their daily classes with adults and children to teach about the issues that were important to the families—for example, the number of acres of land the families were occupying or the profits that large farmers were making versus the wages of the farmworkers. Based on their previous experiences and intuition, these women were experimenting with educational practices that would support the struggle for agrarian reform.

In 1987, the movement created the MST Education Sector, which was tasked with more intentionally developing pedagogical approaches aligned with the movement's goals, including the formation of dedicated movement activists.

The MST Education Sector held a series of meetings, bringing together the MST members already involved in educational activities in their settlements and camps to share about their experiences. The MST Education Sector also led intensive study groups of texts that could help these MST activists make sense of the educational practices that they were developing. The primary inspirations for the movement's pedagogical proposal came from three sources: Freirean pedagogy, socialist pedagogy, and the pedagogy of the movement itself. From Freire, the activists took the idea of building knowledge through generative themes; grounding education in the language of the community; using pedagogical activities based in students' daily realities; and offering a critique of the banking method of education. For activists in the movement, the banking method of education, whereby teachers come into the classroom with the knowledge that they are going to deliver to the students, often by forcing students to copy line by line information from textbooks, was the only form of education they had experienced in schools. By reading Freire, MST activists began to think about how to democratize knowledge and the relationship between teachers and students, by acknowledging the knowledge that students already bring into the classroom and educating through dialogue and posing questions to the students rather than through top-down lectures. Also from Freire, movement activists took the idea that they had to lead their own struggle and create a pedagogy of the oppressed not for or on behalf of the oppressed.

The movement also drew on socialist pedagogies developed by Soviet educators in the early years after the Bolshevik revolution, including Anton Makarenko, Moisey Pistrak, and Nadezhda Krupskaya (for more details on these theorists, see Tarlau, 2019). From these revolutionaries, the MST took the ideas of student self-governance or turning schools into spaces of collective decision-making; incorporating both manual labor and intellectual study into daily school routines; and the educational value of collective work processes. Finally, the movement also drew on their own organic practices, such as their focus on agrarian reform and the incorporation of *mística*—daily cultural performances of dance, song, and theater about working-class struggles, helping students feel this "struggle" within their bodies rather than simply studying about it with their minds.

Over the course of the 1990s, the MST solidified its fight for agrarian reform throughout the country, winning hundreds of settlements and expanding to 24 of the 26 Brazilian states. In this context, the MST also solidified its educational model, implementing the model in the hundreds of schools that municipal and state governments were building on these new settlements. This often required a relationship of contentious cogovernance (Tarlau, 2019) with the state and municipal governments who administered these schools, that is, both

collaboration with government officials and a constant engagement in contentious political actions to achieve the movement's educational goals. In 1996, the MST published an important text, "MST Education Principles," which synthesized the philosophical and pedagogical components of the movement's educational model. This text became a study guide for educators in MST communities throughout the country who were attempting to transform their own schools and adult and higher education programs into spaces that supported the economic and social alternatives in their communities.

In the 2000s, the MST faced a new enemy: the tremendous rise of the agribusiness industry throughout the Brazilian countryside, which took over the unproductive *latifundio* (large land estate) as the primary force displacing rural families from their land. In this context, the movement expanded its educational focus to fight for *Educação do Campo* (Education of the Countryside)—an educational proposal that promoted a new vision of rural development through family-led agriculture, agrarian cooperatives, and the sustainable commercialization of small-scale agricultural produce. In 2001, in coalition with other rural social movements, including farmworker movements, *quilombolo* (maroon) communities, fisherfolk, and other small-scale and family farming movements as well as supportive university professors and church clergy, the MST succeeded in helping to pass a national law in defense of *Educação do Campo.* In 2010, President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva signed a presidential decree giving *Educação do Campo* more legal force. The MST still actively participated in these debates but was now only one of the dozens of groups laying claim over the meaning, content, and purpose of these educational ideas. This struggle for *Educação do Campo*—an education alternative of the countryside developed by, not for, rural communities— continues until today, despite ex-President Jair Bolsonaro's (2019–2022) attempt to eradicate these initiatives at the federal level while he was in office.

In 2014, the MST organized its Sixth National Congress, with 20,000 MST activists meeting in the capital city of Brasília to discuss the movement's new political program: "The People's Agrarian Reform." A central goal of the People's Agrarian Reform is to develop an agricultural model based on *agroecology* rather than agribusiness. Agroecology is a more sustainable agricultural approach that requires knowledge of nature, social context, and agronomy but is also always connected to the struggle of workers living in the countryside. In other words, agroecology is not only a process of substituting pesticides for other biological inputs or shifting from monocropping to diverse and integrated agricultural production, but moreover, agroecology is a process of transforming the entire agricultural system. As the MST embraced agroecology as a central strategy of its agrarian reform struggle, the movement's educational

project also began to more directly focus on agroecology in its schools and other educational programs. The MST Education Sector published texts about the relationship between education and agroecology and organized seminars on this topic, helping educators in areas of agrarian reform reflect on the importance of incorporating agroecology education into every level of schooling. The MST Education Sector also organized national agroecology campaigns, asking educators and students to develop surveys, research projects, workshops, field visits, and other activities that assess the agricultural practices in their communities, reflecting on how to transition to agroecology. Educators and students were also encouraged to establish their own school gardens, incorporate music about agroecology into the school day, participate in agroecological fairs, create bulletins about agroecology for their communities, write poems, and develop recipes using agroecological food products. In 2021, the movement helped publish a comprehensive volume, the *Dictionary of Agroecology and Education* (Dias et al., 2021), which has become a reference for educators nationally. Importantly, this new phase of the MST's struggle did not replace the previous educational practices that the movement had developed, instead adapting these practices to more directly support the new economic and social alternatives the movement is trying to build in the countryside.

Over the past 40 years, the MST has succeeded in implementing its educational proposal in public schools, universities, and early childhood and adult education programs across the country, affecting hundreds of thousands of students. A central component of building these educational alternatives has been contentious cogovernance, or the simultaneous use of collaboration with and protest of local educational officials and the federal government to push forward the movement's demands. Over time, the movement's educational proposal has shifted with the "materiality" of the landless movement itself and the different phases of the movement's struggle. This has produced an educational project that has been determined, in every instance, by the MST's class struggle, the fight for agrarian reform, and the alternative livelihoods activists have promoted at each historical moment.

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Emerging From Isolation—A Case Study of the Katchipedu Community and the Nook Learning Environment (India)[1]

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Summary

We discuss the contribution of 'Nooks' in creating holistic educational environments. 'Nooks' are community learning spaces in under-resourced environments that follow principles of self-designed learning to radically transform the understanding and role of 'education' in society. Using an outline of the conceptual approach, we present a case study situated in the village of Katchipedu in South India that exemplifies the potential of a self-designed learning environment in empowering an ostracised community.

Keywords

Self-designed-learning
Sustainability
Holistic education
Community development
India

Introduction: Conceptual Features

'Nooks' are physical community learning spaces that follow the principles of self-designed learning (SDL) (Neusiedl, 2021a). Currently spread across 32 locations in Africa (Uganda, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe) and Asia (India and Bangladesh), the Nook concept was introduced in 2016 by the India-based nonprofit organisation Project DEFY. The idea of Nooks was born from a deep questioning of the nature of dominant modes of institutional schooling—a model designed to reproduce exclusion, individualise failure and prepare students to participate in the future workforce (Ansell et al., 2020; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The team at DEFY asked, "*What would an education system look like in which people themselves decide what they want to learn, how they want to learn and for what purposes they want to learn*?' At the same time, they asked, '*How can we create a system free of indoctrination and the dissemination of predefined knowledge that exclusively serves the interests of the rich and powerful?*'

Set up in low-resource communities, each Nook is equipped with basic tools, locally sourced materials and technology, including laptops with an internet connection. When a Nook is first set up, conversations with community members help ascertain the value that it may bring to their lives. Importantly, Nooks are typically set up in partnership with organisations

that have deep expertise and experience of working in the respective communities and that can help navigate the particularities that come with each different setting. In this way, the Nook model seeks to adapt to contextual needs and aspirations and to transform into a space where community ownership sustains the model over time.

The SDL approach envisioned in Nooks entails several features. First, there are no teachers, standardised tests or curriculum in the Nook. Although Nook Fellows are present for guidance, facilitation and liaison support, projects at the Nook are learner driven. HundrED, a Finland-based organisation, noted the following: 'This project is completely driven by learners' curiosity and imagination. The community-focus also strengthens networks. It provides a safe space to explore new, meaningful concepts and projects to truly transform individual learning'. Second, there are no restrictions on 'eligibility', and all members within a

Figure 1. Description of the Nook Cycle Structure

Source: Project DEFY

community are encouraged to come to the Nook to discover their interests and engage in Nook activities. The current age variation within Nooks, therefore, is from 8 to 65 years. Third, Nooks follow a cycle-based structure designed to break preconceived notions on what constitutes learning through an exploration of one's interests in a safe space. These cycles, or 'stages', are further broken down into early projects, exploration, goal setting, design phase and the exhibition (see Figure 1).

These cycles repeat, and learners often diversify their interest areas over time, picking up new knowledge and skills to which they were previously not exposed. Because of the inherent flexibility of learning areas, projects are extremely diverse and range from tailoring to documentary-making to creating space-saving furniture. Of equal importance in the SDL approach within Nooks is the emphasis on building and creating a safe space with a community ethos and identity around the space. This is done through daily discussion circles, where learners engage in project-based troubleshooting but also talk about challenges they see in their communities. Simultaneously, community-building is a continuous pursuit through avenues such as exhibitions or outreach efforts aimed to cement the position of the Nook as a collaborative space that is open to all.

Case Study: Katchipedu Village, South India
Tracing the Vagaries of 'Development' and Socio-Economic Change in Katchipedu
With a population of approximately 5,200 inhabitants, Katchipedu is a periurban village and part of the Sriperumbudur town located about 45 km west of Chennai in South India. Rapid industrialisation was induced by the government of Tamil Nadu in the mid-1990s (World Bank, 2009) with a China-style development vision through the establishment of three industrial estates around Sriperumbudur (Homm & Bohle, 2012). The region quickly became known as the 'Detroit of India', with more than 500 multinational companies in operation, for example, Bharat Benz, BMW, Ford, Hyundai, Mitsubshi, Nissan, Royal Enfield, Dell, Flextronix, Lenovo, Motorola, Saint Gobain and Samsung (The Wall Street Journal, 2012), transforming Sriperumbudur from a village into an industrial hub over the past 20 years, consequently doubling its population (Government of India, 2011a; Hill & Woiwode, 2017).

In our research about periurbanisation of the metropolitan region of Chennai[1] (IGCS, 2016), we identified the village as an example of 'bypass urbanism' (Sawyer et al., 2021) in terms of socio-economic marginalisation and, here as well, also spatially excluded because it is located on the outskirts of the town, separated by a major highway and squeezed between several roadways. Infrastructure and resources are inadequate, while traditional infrastructure is largely defunct. For example, Katchipedu once had nine interlinked ponds[2],

but many of these are dried up now and abused to an extent of losing the connection between water and the village.

Rapid industrialisation meant that residents were forced to abandon their centuries-old occupations, such as agriculture and weaving, to find employment within the various new industry sectors. 'Company jobs' in neighbouring special economic zones (SEZs) and industrial estates remain more of an illusion than a real opportunity for Katchipedu's young workforce, even though some of them have diploma certificates. Men are mostly employed as drivers, water suppliers, construction workers, seasonal agricultural labour and other forms of daily industrial wage labour. Women also find daily wage jobs, and some do tailoring as a source of self-employed additional income. Several women are the breadwinners of their families and face overlapping vulnerabilities of gender inequality and social stigma. With an approximately 30% unemployment rate, the village is a startling example of the failure of the 'trickle down' effect (Government of India, 2011b).

Katchipedu's population mainly comprises Adi Dravida or Dalit (considered 'Untouchables' until that was outlawed)[3], communities that have been traditionally on the margins of society. Social vulnerability coupled with economic disillusionment, precarity and inadequate opportunities remain very high. As a result, the area has witnessed criminalisation of the youth and a gang culture associated with drug abuse, alcoholism, gambling and murder.

Katchipedu Nook: A Self-Learning Space in a Precarious Socio-Economic Environment[4]

It is against this background and the specific development configurations of periurban Chennai that Katchipedu was chosen for setting up a self-designed learning space with a unique partnership of five organisations, including a research institution, teaching college, an NGO and two foundations from Germany. The diverse partners involved demonstrate the value of cross-disciplinary expertise to address complex challenges. In the medium to long term, the Katchipedu Nook Project intends to initiate, develop and support community activities for building resilient periurban livelihoods in a fragile socio-economic and ecological environment.

Having started its operations in April 2022 with two staff members on the ground, the Nook journey has been eventful and exciting. Setting up the Nook is probably one of the trickiest phases, for it depends on building a strong and sustained relationship with the community. Rapport with the community was established through the everyday presence of Nook staff in the village, especially after the male staff member started living in the village. He reported several challenges:

The main problem I faced was that, as a male, it was very difficult to speak to women in the community. Women told me not to come alone because, if some people saw them talking to me, they would create rumours about us. Sometimes, some people stopped me to enquire about me, and I tried to explain about the Nook. But as I was roaming alone some people started suspecting me also … I realised I need some support in the community to manage this difficult situation.

Continuous community engagement through various means, mostly involving dialogues and hanging out with different community members, was one of the most important activities during the first months to build trust with community members and to make the Nook eventually become a part of the community.

Evidently, because the self-designed approach is different from school, the learning experience has to be exciting and inclusive to establish a 'Nook culture'. This was done through mutual agreement on rules like eschewing physical violence and promoting a culture of listening and speaking. To this end, storytelling was initiated where, each day, one of the learners tells a story or by encouraging cross-gender mingling among learners. One learner, Vaishnavi, said, 'In the Nook, I can do things which I once thought only boys could do'.

Opening and closing circle discussions, where learners share their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and questions, have been conducted. These include discussions on specific topics, such as talking about challenges like drug abuse, political divisions and gender roles faced in the community. These activities foster safe spaces and a culture of questioning, sharing ideas, teamwork, bonding and supporting one another in the Nook. Some learners have started leading and facilitating the discussion sessions.

Forging a community of learners through multiple activities and events beyond the learning cycles and learners' projects is another important element of the Nook. For example, a Saturday potluck was introduced to foster a sense of community. Several significant occasions, such as Independence Day, Republic Day and Ambedkar Jayanti[5] were celebrated through competitions, thought-provoking street plays on social awareness, community wall painting projects and other engaging activities. These collective efforts aim to foster inclusivity, promote awareness and strengthen the bonds within the learning community. Indo-German Centre for Sustainability (IGCS) initiated a Sustainability Workshop Series to promote proactive engagement for proenvironmental behaviour. Recognising that nature and the environment can be abstract concepts, especially for children, human–nature relationships were explored through meditation, artistic expression, field visits and role plays to facilitate discussions about concepts like the ecological footprint, waste segregation and pollution.

Katchipedu Nook: Achievements and Challenges

The Nook has successfully instilled a sense of purpose and ambition in the learners' lives, encouraging them to explore more options. As a result, learners feel more confident and empowered. It has enabled them to overcome the fear of public engagement, embrace failures and transform them into valuable learning experiences. Parents have noticed positive behavioral changes in their children as a result of their involvement with the Nook, and they firmly believe that the skills acquired in the Nook will greatly contribute to their children's future success and overall well-being.

For the women, the Nook serves as a space for confidence-building, guidance and overall betterment of their quality of life. The Nook has played a vital role in promoting gender equality within the community by empowering women to aspire for a better quality of life. Women who participate in the programme feel more confident and self-assured, also taking on more responsibilities within their families. One of the learners, Kokila, stated that, after coming to the Nook, she became more courageous to go outside her village and felt empowered to do things herself. Nevertheless, while the Nook has made progress in promoting gender equality, much work must be done to address the root causes of gender inequality within the community.

A persistent issue faced by the Nook is that only government school students from one part of Katchipedu currently attend the Nook. People from other parts of the community are reluctant to participate. The idea of self-designed learning is still novel to a large part of the community other than Nook learners and their families. Many people see the Nook as merely a service to the poorer members of the community rather than an opportunity for all. Furthermore, the people in the community are divided into factions based on their political or ideological inclinations, which are dynamic, at times shifting and hard to respond to in the work of the Nook. Even then, the unique approach to learning and community-building envisioned through the Nook holds the potential to bring about long-term social and economic changes among the learners and in the community. To achieve these goals, the Nook must continue to address the community's challenges—its socio-economic realities—and adapt to the changing needs of learners.[6]

Discussion and Conclusion

The Katchipedu Nook is a striking example of what we can call an 'anarchistic post-developmental education' (ANPED) (Neusiedl, 2021b), one based on cocreating nonhierarchical, free learning spaces without pregiven, fixed curricula.

The concept of ANPED refers to both the way of learning and education and its particular outcomes. At the level of education, we see how the Nook model breaks down and reinvents the centuries-old schooling model: young, tech-savvy, curious and open-minded facilitators instead of the all-knowing teacher; intergenerational learning instead of learning with only one's peer group; discovery and exploration according to one's own interest instead of pregiven, fixed curricula; and holistic, project-based learning instead of separate, subject-based learning.

In the words of philosopher Jacques Ranciere, the Nook model of learning presupposes the equality of all its learners. It posits that everyone, starting from an early age, is capable of making sense of the world and of creating meaningful lives alongside one another. For this, no one needs a teacher who tells them what to think and what to do—which is the classic school model, with its principal function of 'socialisation' into the existing dominant iniquitous system ('liberal democracy', 'neoliberal capitalism', 'market democracy'). Schooling attains its major function of socialisation precisely because it is assumed that people are not equal—they cannot make sense of the world on their own and need to be told what to do in life and which role to assume. In effect, this perpetuates the given dominant system, as we have also seen with persisting socio-economic challenges in Katchipedu (for a global context, see Mitchell, 2018; Bowles & Gintis, [1976] 2012). In contrast, the pursuit of challenging underlying exclusionary socio-economic dynamics is a long-term effort with the Nooks, here attempting to create an environment that strives towards a breakdown of these categories of exclusion through an emphasis on collaboration and conviviality. Specifically, opening and closing discussions around social inequality and challenges in the community are efforts in this direction. The Nook model is learner driven and aims at breaking stereotypes.

Learners are not told what to learn, how to learn, what to do and how to do it. However, learners do come with some preconceived ideas of what they would like to do and get inspired by others; for example, typical choices are tailoring or beauty parlour. These initial ideas, though, often change through the process of questioning, exploring, experimenting, failing and trying again. This is exemplified through the 'exhibition', where learners are encouraged to talk about their projects, irrespective of whether or not they are 'complete'. This flexibility and freedom to experiment and fail enables learners to come up with their own ideas, plans, beliefs and conclusions, which leads to a very different outcome of education. The broader importance lies in how the Nook approach seeks to reduce inequality of opportunity that exists in several contexts where Nooks are located. Parallelly, by expanding narrow definitions of education, the Nook situates learning as rooted in interests, needs, aspirations and challenges of the community to make education contextually relevant, thus making it part of a pluriversal development notion (Kothari et al., 2019).

Embedded within a structure of community-building, cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity, the Nook's self-designed learning model leads to what Ranciere calls 'subjectification'. Subjectification occurs once people start to act under the presupposition of equality and, therefore, question existing, pregiven and dominant identities, roles and alleged common sense assumptions of how the world works and what their role in the world is. We can already observe this process of subjectification in the Katchipedu Nook. For instance, girls and young women who are supposed to 'stay at home', develop their own aspirations or venture into fields of interest that are stereotyped as 'male oriented'. In addition, the learners from various class- and caste-based marginalised backgrounds are not just aspiring to do what their fathers or mothers do but instead develop their own aspirations and ambitions and engage in learning activities usually reserved for others. Furthermore, youth start to dream of a better life in their community instead of moving to India's megacities to serve as part of a cheap labour force. Finally, community members start to support and care for one another and improve their community and natural surroundings. All this ultimately challenges the dominant model of (neoliberal) 'development', its dogma of economic growth and individualistic view of the world, its inherent assumptions of the limitations of peoples' skills and 'usefulness' and, relatedly, its pregiven distribution of roles and identities ('poor', 'backward', 'uneducated' people who can only serve as a cheap labour force to keep the dominant development model going). Every day, Nook learners prove that an alternative to development-as-usual is possible.

Endnotes

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2. This was the typical, traditional 'water-landscape' in Tamil Nadu of cascading, interconnected lakes, canals and water bodies used for irrigation agriculture and also drinking water purpose until it became increasingly disrupted and dysfunctional by urbanisation (Harishankar & Vedamuthu, 2019).

3. In the Census of India SC (Scheduled Caste) and ST (Scheduled Tribe).

4. This section relies primarily on project reports by Project DEFY (2022), Project DEFY and IGCS (2023) and IGCS (2023).

5. The birthday of Dr B R Ambedkar, an icon for social justice who was born into the highly marginalised 'Mahar' caste. He remains a national idol because of his journey as a scholar, lawmaker, member of parliament and head of the committee that drafted the constitution of India.

6. This assessment was conducted by IGCS after one year of full-fledged operation.

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Urban Arts Education as Nonviolent Resistance in Honduras

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Summary

In one of Honduras' most marginalized urban communities, a group of local leaders provides an alternative to violence through urban arts and nonformal education. By taking part in breakdancing, rapping, graffiti, creative writing, and other arts within a cohesive group, youth experience healing through self-expression, positive identity development through creative and intellectual production, and security through the cultivation of community.

Keywords

Arts
Nonformal education
Community organizing
Honduras

Introduction: Resisting Ongoing Violence

Since the early 2000s, Honduras has ranked as one of the most violent countries in the world (Landa-Blanco et al., 2020). In a context negatively impacted by decades of foreign intervention and recent political turmoil, factors that include extreme poverty, structural inequality, and the international drug trade feed a range of forms of direct violence carried out primarily but not exclusively by gangs and other criminal groups (Gutiérrez Rivera, 2013; Menjívar & Walsh, 2017; Sanchez & Cruz, 2023). Although a small number of urban neighborhoods experience exceptionally high rates of violence (Berg & Carranza, 2018), Hondurans in rural and urban areas alike (UNAH-IUDPAS, 2020) and across social classes have become accustomed to frequent homicides and other violent acts in their everyday environments. The literature shows that chronic violence has pervasive effects, including widespread anxiety, a deterioration of trust, and collective trauma (Rinker & Lawler, 2018; Somasundaram, 2014). Living amidst such fear and distrust, many Hondurans feel helpless.

Furthermore, in Honduras' most marginalized urban communities, young people are starved for opportunities to study, work, or connect with one another in spaces that are not controlled by criminal groups. This very lack of opportunities is one of the primary forces driving youth into gangs and ensnaring them in cycles of violence (Pine, 2008). Rather than accept these injustices, however, some activists in vulnerable communities forge emancipating paths for themselves and their peers—not only avoiding violence but creating nonviolent alternatives to it. In the present article, I describe one such alternative: an urban arts collective, developed by grassroots actors, that provides youth in marginalized communities options that the broader society does not. This example demonstrates the power that ordinary people possess to create forms of peace amid violence and models the potentially transformative effects that locally led nonviolent resistance can have.

In what follows, I describe the example of Resiste[2], a group that combines urban arts and nonformal education

to mobilize youth and lead nonviolent change in their communities. Over the course of 2022, as part of a larger research project, I came to know this group through one-on-one interviews, a focus group discussion, informal conversations, and observations of some of their meetings and events. Based on this fieldwork, I briefly summarize Resiste's history and activities before analyzing the impacts of their work. By providing an alternative to the dehumanizing options that their surrounding environment offers, I find that youth in this collective experience healing through self-expression, positive identity development through creative and intellectual production, and security through the cultivation of community. Most importantly, this group demonstrates that those who can best create alternatives to seemingly endless cycles of violence are the people most deeply affected by them.

Resiste: A Community-Based Alternative for Marginalized Youth

Resiste started in the early 2000s when young men in a vulnerable neighborhood of San Pedro Sula started to breakdance. As its director explained to me, the group "basically was born out of the necessity to have different alternatives in communities for children and youth." In his geographic area, "these communities—which suffer a lot of violations of rights, abuse of authority, and so on—also lack opportunities." Frustrated by the lack of options, tired of hiding to avoid gangs, and inspired by the origins of hip-hop in urban U.S. neighborhoods that seemed to resemble their own, these young men began to breakdance to pass the time in a way that felt rejuvenating. A couple of breakdancers gradually grew into a few more; and by 2011, a collective had been formed. Over the next several years, Resiste evolved from an informal community group into a small nongovernmental organization. By the early 2020s, they had expanded to working in neighboring communities in San Pedro Sula and, to a smaller extent, in other urban locations in Honduras. Today, Resiste has approximately five staff members and 10 volunteers who carry out programming that reaches hundreds of young people like themselves.

The heart of what Resiste does—their "north star," as the director put it— is urban arts. Breakdancing is still their core activity; they teach youth the moves (starting with beginners and increasing in level of skill), hold practice sessions, and organize competitions. No activity, from large-scale events to informal meetings, transpires without at least a few moments to dance. Resiste links breakdancing with other arts—freestyle rapping, photography, graffiti, drawing, and painting, among others—allowing youth to choose the creative outlets that attract them most. Often, the group shares its art beyond its membership; graffiti art, for example, is celebrated by creating public murals that put the youths' positive stamp on their communities. As a complement

to their focus on the arts, Resiste has more recently begun offering activities on themes that include positive masculinities, human rights, and youth leadership, partially to tie their arts focus to relevant priorities of better resourced organizations working in their region. That is, the group has become adept at collaborating with international donors to carry out projects that employ urban arts as a vehicle for addressing other contextual needs.

At the end of 2022, I observed a celebration that marked the group's eleventh anniversary as a formally constituted organization. Resiste brought a couple hundred youth from four marginalized neighborhoods in San Pedro Sula to a large community center in the city's downtown. The main event was breakdancing: lessons, demonstrations by accomplished local judges, and a competition that built in intensity throughout the day. It also incorporated a photography exhibit, speeches, and freestyle rapping. From mid-morning until late afternoon, young people moved about the protected and festive space, showing off skills, learning new ones, and simply having fun together. The hosts—the core leaders of the organization and their volunteers—watched proudly, frequently jumping in to participate in activities with the other youth. The event did not seem like something organized by an NGO for beneficiaries but rather like a large party among friends and family.

Near the end of the event, one of the core leaders said during a speech, "In our communities, there are youth fighting with firearms, fighting with other weapons, but we're battling with dance and rap. We have to do something different; we have to make a change." The hundreds of young people in the room beamed and cheered in unison, a striking example of the power of a vision of the future that is shaped by local leaders.

Arts as a Vehicle toward Healing, Dignity, and Safety

The arts are commonly regarded as a luxury—a subject not valuable enough to be prioritized in educational funding, for instance (Lahmann, 2024). As the example of Resiste shows—by virtue of being something that youth enjoy and that allows them to be their authentic selves, embedded in this case within a collective of peers—people living in situations of vulnerability and violence can harness the arts to create alternatives in a bleak environment. In my conversations and time with Resiste, based on members' insights and my observations, I have found their work to foster healing through self-expression, positive identity development through creative and intellectual production, and a sense of safety through the cultivation of community.

One of the effects of living amid chronic violence is that survivors carry innumerable wounds—including losing loved ones, living in fear, and being directly attacked. When it

comes to addressing violence in Honduras, as I learned in my broader research, the needs to tackle the immediate issues of reducing homicide rates or preventing future violence means that tending to the less tangible effects of collective trauma is a lower priority. In Resiste, dancing, rapping, writing, and creating visual art enable youth to release some of the pain that they have endured by the very nature of living in an insecure environment in which their rights are not respected and they are not provided viable educational or employment opportunities through which to escape. As one member put it, "We don't have a culture of going to a psychologist." However, the expressive nature of art plays a therapeutic role, enabling "venting" and "generating [emotional] release." In part for this reason, Resiste youth often described the positive feelings that their arts-based activities bring; as one young leader explained, "I think I've only felt peace in the moments when we're in an artistic event. There are some who are painting, some who are dancing, and others doing bike tricks. Everybody is doing what they like. So, in those moments, I really feel peace because everybody's having a good time and doing what they like." Although providing the experience of release and a sense of calm are not the explicit mission of the organization, these phenomena are some of the forces that make youth so motivated to engage in Resiste activities.

In their unequal society, young people in marginalized urban communities such as those in which the members of Resiste live are told that they are powerless. Narratives that appear in the media and the documents of government agencies or international organizations emphasize these youths' disadvantages but rarely acknowledge their capabilities. The creative and intellectual production that youth in Resiste engage in reject the dominant narratives and demonstrate that they are not dependent on outside help. In their lyrics, for example, Resiste artists have commented on the ways that they have navigated their unsafe environments and chosen to reject the enticement of violent gangs. In essays that they have published in alternative news outlets, some have critiqued the systems, actors, and structural violence that exclude them from meaningful social opportunities. As one leader said at the group's anniversary celebration, "Even though we're youth, no one can take away our right to voice our opinions." These intellectual and creative contributions, for one, show that Honduran youth do not need anyone to give them voice; they have resonant voices and have found a range of outlets in which to express them. Additionally, making their voices heard in this way provides publicly available evidence to refute the notion that they are powerless, giving them something they can point to, to remind the world of their dignity.

Finally, despite a range of efforts to reduce violence in Honduras, the environment that the youth live in is a dangerous one. Homicide rates in their neighborhoods are consistently high, and many members of Resiste have lost loved ones to gun violence. Their arts collective cannot, by itself, stave off the sources of violence that threaten them. Nevertheless, the youth have forged deep, almost familial relationships in their collective, providing them with some sense of safety. One volunteer explained that he is involved in Resiste "because, for one, I like to serve, to support my community and other communities that have social problems. And I feel that I'm with my family," which makes him "feel at peace." Another member explained that being part of a "crew" founded in a more positive identity than what gangs offer "provides protection and security within the community," enabling youth to be the ones who increase their own safety. Although Resiste members have a clear-eyed understanding of the dangers around them, they also know that a vital community based on caring relationships can provide a sense of security, which is another important way that this group rejects the injustice and precarity of their broader society.

Overall, when they speak about their work, members of Resiste have described it as a clear and necessary alternative to the reality they were born into. Finding joy and dignity through art shows youth, as one leader said, "That there's a way out." Resiste members believe that "it's our responsibility to leave our world better off for the next generation," and they know through experience that their approach works. In a poignant encapsulation of the alternative that this urban arts collective provides, a young leader said, "Before, we knew about the reality in our community but didn't have this organization, or know what to do, or how to create change. Then, we realized that we could."

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Part 5

(Un)learning from Decolonial and Indigenous Knowledges

Placing Epistemic Justice at the Core of Educational Transformations for a Just Future

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Summary

Education has a key role in responding to the calls for transformation considering urgent global challenges. We propose a refocusing of educational efforts on an 'epistemic core' so that education can effectively contribute to such transformations. This places knowledge/s—and the ways that young people can all consume, recognise, and produce those knowledge/s—at the heart of educational practices.

Keywords

Educational transformations
Epistemic justice
Pedagogy

The Global Policy Drive for Educational Transformation

Urgent calls for transformation towards more just and sustainable societies are now at the centre of many current global policy debates. Although this entails a recognition of the urgent social and environmental challenges that humanity and life face in general, the idea of 'transformation' adds a utopian point of view to our imagination of the future (Sobe & Benavot, 2023). Within this context, education is positioned as a key contributor to the societal transformations that are required if more just and sustainable futures are to be attained (UNESCO, 2022). However, the precise ways in which education systems should be transformed is still a matter of debate. While the balance between quality and equity is still at stake, with often narrow conceptions of quality dominating global policy drives, the need for *just* transformations has become central.

Concerns for justice, albeit mostly understood as equity and not always explicitly named, have featured in education policy agendas at least since the establishment of the Education for All initiative in the early 1990s and are now central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The initial focus on expanding educational access has been paired with a focus on both quality and equity. Although this may seem indicative of a strong commitment to justice, the way in which this emphasis has been articulated, especially regarding questions of process, pedagogy, and experience, is noticeably vague (McCowan, 2010); in addition, equity concerns are often sidelined in favour of narrowly defined 'quality' aims (Unterhalter, 2019). This contributes to the predominance of often simplistic assumptions about how to make education systems more inclusive, for instance, by simply adding topics to curricula.

Recent efforts, such as UNESCO's work on the Futures of Education (UNESCO, 2022), have sought to address this problem by proposing a 'new social contract' in which education should be 'organized around principles of cooperation, collaboration and solidarity', rather than on those of competition and individual achievement that are now

dominant. Although we concur with this agenda, we believe it can be furthered through a refocusing of efforts on what we define as the 'epistemic core' of education—a notion that puts epistemic justice at the centre of educational transformations. Our arguments are grounded in findings from JustEd—a multi-country, mixed methods study about the role of education as justice in enabling secondary education's contribution to sustainable development—and are further theorised in Balarin and Milligan (2024). Here, we focus on the most significant findings from the Peru case study.

How Justice is Often Done in Schools in the Global South

Image 1. Mural in Fieldwork site (school) in Lima – the text reads "Believe everything is possible"

Source: JustEd Perú

Peru is a particularly relevant case in illustrating how justice is being practised in secondary schools, especially in countries in the Global South. Although at the policy level there is a distinct presence of justice-related issues, such as a focus on intercultural education, gender equity, environmentally active citizenship and interpersonal conflict prevention, the way in which such issues are presented in existing policies and then raised in the National Curriculum, textbooks and classrooms is often superficial and tokenistic.

A clear example is that of cultural diversity, which is approached in a celebratory and highly depoliticised manner that omits any connection to lived experiences of injustice and discrimination to which cultural diversity is often linked. Schools, especially those in marginalised areas, provide little opportunity for students to codify, understand and act upon the regular experiences of discrimination, exclusion, violence, and general lack of well-being that characterise daily life in the places in which they live.

Likewise, environmental issues are approached in technical, albeit equally superficial, ways that focus on individual action without raising questions regarding the unequal burden of responsibilities and impacts of environmental problems at

various levels. There is also a consistent lack of systemic thinking to understand the interconnection between different processes and problems.

A cross-cutting issue in how schools address these and other relevant topics—such as histories of violent conflict or gender equity—is the prevalence of what we have defined as 'shallow pedagogies' (Balarin & Rodríguez, 2024). This refers to how classroom practices fail to promote students' capacity to analyse, reflect or critically think about different issues. They are pedagogies that do not enable students to connect school knowledge with their everyday experiences, which often contradict the normative ideas presented to them in school and which do not enable students to grasp complexity nor to deal with difficult or 'divisive' issues.

Image 2. A Fieldwork Site (school) in Lima

Source: JustEd Perú

When engaged through the participatory methodology we used in the JustEd Study—which encouraged students to reflect on their experiences and on the everyday injustices they encounter through photographs, videos, and drawings—students were able to articulate (to some extent) relevant issues. It was clear, however, that they do not count with spaces within or outside of school as making sense of these experiences and connect them to official knowledge. The result was often a sense of confusion—a feeling that their knowledge of things that mattered to them was like an 'incomplete puzzle'—but also a powerful sense of not having anything to contribute to change or transform their everyday realities.

In the JustEd study, we highlight how epistemic justice, which can be understood as 'equality in the consumption, recognition, and production of knowledges' (Balarin & Milligan, 2024, 130), underpins and centres the role that education can play in promoting social and environmental justice. We find, however, that shallow pedagogies weaken the epistemic basis of education by preventing young people from making sense of the world around them—including

the multiple contradictions between their experiences of injustices and the formal school curriculum—and from developing the epistemic resources to consume, produce and critique the knowledges needed to enable positive and transformative action (see also Shields & Muratkyzy, 2024).

Refocusing Educational Justice on the Epistemic Core

We argue that, to mobilise and strengthen the justice potential of education, justice-oriented secondary education reforms should be grounded on the epistemic core of education. This borrows from Elmore's (1996, 2008) conceptualisation of an 'instructional core', whereby teachers, students and content and the relations between them contribute to pedagogical quality. We see an epistemic core as the presence of and relationship between the following:

1. Openness to students' experiences and the place where they live to broaden knowledge and promote an understanding of what it means to contribute;

2. Rich pedagogies that connect to experience, develop critical thinking and lead to understanding of complexity; and

3. A broad range of epistemic resources, including materials and content that is sound and diverse.

Through refocusing around these three elements, we (re) imagine secondary classrooms where diverse knowledges are recognised and consumed, and young people can engage with public knowledges in critical and autonomous ways. Classrooms that enable students to understand how knowledge is produced and where they can grasp

the epistemic value of knowledge diversity without falling into the trap of relativism or extreme polarisation that today often limit public discourse around crucial societal and environmental concerns (see Robertson, 2013). It is in the process of enabling students to become competent consumers and producers of knowledges that schools can prepare them to make contributions to meaningful transformations beyond education.

Developing Just Pedagogies

The difficulty with any reimagining is what this might look at in practice. There are several initiatives that propose transformations to secondary schools, some of which specifically address justice-related issues (Steinberg, 2022; Tikly et al., 2020). Although there are similarities with some aspects of what we have discussed, none seeks to specifically address the question of knowledge in the way we have. Transformations to strengthen the epistemic core of education will require multiple pedagogical innovations. One way in which this could be considered is by drawing on some of the proposals from the broader JustEd Study, which is based on findings from Peru alongside those from Uganda and Nepal, that consider the merits of six existing pedagogical dimensions. These dimensions highlight the importance of connecting learning to place and histories, supporting understanding of complexity by drawing on multiple disciplines, developing students' capacity for critical reflection and strengthening their understanding of how knowledge is produced and how it can be used for different types of action (see Figure 1 and Soysal, 2023; Soysal et al., Forthcoming). This approach should be brought into conversation with other ongoing efforts to rethink secondary education so that the epistemic core can be mobilised, and education can contribute more meaningfully to young people's imaginings of alternative and more hopeful futures.

Figure 1. Taking a Justice Approach in Education

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY OF PLACE
Learning is situated in and meaningful for the place where young people live and connects with children's lived experiences, including of (in)justices

USING INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING IN TEACHING ABOUT JUSTICE RELATED ISSUES
Bringing in diverse disciplines to consider diverse impacts of environmental and climate change concerns, including the experiences of those most affected, inequalities and equity.

CRITICAL THINKING
Develops understanding and critical reflection of how knowledge is produced, arguments are made and how knowledge may be dismissed based on prejudice.

TAKING A JUSTICE APPROACH
to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that supports learners to analyse, critique and evaluate issues and understand the world around them.

SYSTEMIC THINKING
Supports analysis of issues related to justice from multiple perspectives to have an in-depth knowledge about the issues and considering the interconnected nature of all parts of a system rather than considering them as isolated issues.

INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY
Nurtures understanding about one's own responsibility in relation to justice as well as the roles and responsibility of national actors and multi-national actors.

REPARATIVE PEDAGOGY
Teaching and learning incorporates reparative methods and approaches, for example creativity, multiplicity of 'truths' and acknowledging and dignifying past experiences.

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Eclipsing the Conditioning of Colonial Modernity: Soul-Based Learning as a Practice of Living Mythology in Transgressive Learning

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Summary

In a world marked by separation, where the conditioning to forsake our own souls for external expectations runs deep, decolonizing the soul as an educational project remains an elusive yet pertinent foray for experimentation. This think piece explores soul-based learning as a radical act of reclaiming the essence of our being and cultivating a transgressive practice of desire and potentiality within the heart of colonial modernity.

Keywords

Soul-based learning
Transgressive learning
Subconscious
Colonial modernity
Programming

Introduction: An Educational Trajectory for Emancipation from Within

Despite the many crises we face in education, the idea that we are going to make our way out of this polycrisis through new processes of educational enculturation continues to persist. We see this in the ways mainstream educational processes continue to insist on opening up new forays of what needs to be taught or what we need to know to show up differently in the world. What remains out of view in this perspective is a more personal and nuanced understanding of the kind of education that inspires radical reclamation of the *essence of our being* or what this think piece conceptualises as the *soul* as the foundation for transformative holistic education. This perspective sees as important the spiritual concept of sovereignty, which takes seriously the need to champion education approaches that help "clear the soul of the societal conditioning that predates, controls" consumes and commodifies our desires in degenerative ways (Kulundu-Bolus, 2023, p. 15). This entails starting somewhere else in our quest for social and ecological transformation. It is about tending to the health of our internal landscapes as the deepest barometer of what we can sustainably create in the world. Bhaskar substantiates the need for personal transformation to come to the fore of emancipatory educational purposes by stating the following:

> The traditional political standpoint has assumed that it is possible to impose emancipation or freedom from without, externally heteronomously… it can only come from within, it can only be a self-emancipation …without a standpoint orientated to radical self- transformation any socialist or any other emancipatory project will merely replace or displace one set of master- slave relations with another. (Bhaskar, 2002, p. 222)

This think piece explores novel pedagogical approaches in interrupting the "colonization of the unconscious," a concept that helps us understand how our most intimate subconscious

renderings often run based on programming that we have received through intergenerational colonial imprinting (Andreotti, 2022). It further challenges the idea that the only worthy education ought to follow the prescripts of "discursive intellectualisation" or even "dialogic consensus-building" toward more experimental forays that foreground the soul as a precept for other ways of working (Andreotti, 2022). More is said on the limits of the discursive intellect as a model for social and ecological transformation:

> *The very concept of the discursive intellect can no longer be identified with purely formal analytical thought. It must be extended to include dialectical thought, in which concepts are stretched, teased and distanciated, as in metaphor or poetry, so as to bring thought into line with a new or deeper level of reality.* (Bhaskar, 2002, p. 134)

The power of working with metaphor as a grounding, nuanced, and liberatory principle in transgressive learning will be explored in greater detail here, highlighting the affordances this way of working offers us by bringing us into direct relationship with the experience that our very souls are entangled in. This work has the ability to give us a deeper and different sense of what reality consists of beyond the pervasive presets we inherit in the overculture.

Exploring the Possibilities of Soul-Based Learning

Soul-based learning, also known as "soul-based coaching," is a feminine, spiritually grounded pedagogical approach that deepens our relationship with all of life (Van Helsdingen, 2024). It challenges us to see everyday life and the challenges therein as metaphorically saturated. Meister Eckhart intimated that when the soul wants something to be known, she throws out an image in front of her and steps into it (Eckhart, 2009). The work of soul-based learning is a deep foray that steps into the metaphors and gestures that the soul throws out in an exploratory embodied way. The present work is a branch of the experimental work initiated by David Grove a renegade psycho-therapist who incorporated his native understanding of Māori ways of being to produce ways of working he termed "emergent knowledge." Emergent knowledge is a theory of self-discovery that facilitates an individual's exploration into their inner landscapes of their mind, body, and soul (Wilson, 2017). It is a theory of self-discovery that advocates for the "integration of spiritual and emancipatory social quests through an embodied feminine approach to the sacred and the soul" (Gradle, 2007, p. 1501). The power and reliance of metaphor as a navigational tool in transgressive learning is highlighted within this way of working through understanding that, when we begin to recognize and uncover everyday events as "metaphorically saturated," our sense of ownership and conscious relationship with all of life deepen (Shantz, 1999, p. 65). In doing so, it taps into the ecosophical experience of wholeness

that underpins the African philosophical concept of *botho* or humanness. In the following, more is said on how *botho* links with the perspective of a saturated relationship with life:

> *The human organism is included in [the] unfolding process of evolution. Through auto-poetic activity the human being is constantly interacting with its environment, with nature in pursuit of 'self- preservation' … the pursuit of 'self - preservation' is simultaneously a direct or indirect, immediate or meditated…preservation of the universe as a wholeness. In this process, the human being everywhere and at all times gains new insights into nature and also makes new discoveries. As a result, old forms of lifestyle might be totally abandoned or modified.* (Ramose, 1996, p.100).

Here, Ramose gives us insight into the movement, discovery, and sense of becoming at the heart of the philo-praxis of *botho*. Adding the lens of metaphor to the auto-poetic movement and discovery that a human soul is undergoing in their being and becoming enables us to better apprehend the often-unnoticed subconscious forays and how these interactions are part of our relationship with the world. Thus, a focus on metaphorically embodied knowledge helps one develop a deeper sense of relational capacity that shifts as we come to invoke and embody what has surpassed, that which is ongoing, as well as that which "we would like to have happen" (Van Heldingsen, 2024). This is about opening new portals for the choices that we can make without dissolving into the often-abstracted notions of "agency" that can have the soporific effect of cancelling out the vital internal dimensions of movement, saturation, and impetus needed to authentically move in integrity out here in the world. In this way, "paying attention to gestural images and impulses as articulations of interior spaces and desire" creates incredibly authentic portals of learning that get to the heart of each individual's situated experience, what they have reason to value, and emergent insights into what their ecosystem needs to reconcile itself with a greater whole. Here, the task for the educator or the coach in each instance is one of re-visioning or "(re)stor(y)ing" a language of image and metaphor as a living mythology of consciousness (Gradle, 2007; Vallabh, 2022). This sense of a living mythology is critical when one apprehends the often overdrawn subconscious moral systems and traumatised metaphorical landscapes we use to describe what is happening in the world. Meaningfully traversing the metaphoric landscape that each individual holds challenges us to step out of a closed degenerative story of life and into the shifting ground of our own unfolding relational capacity. Here, the infinite possibilities of our chosen trajectories can recover and percolate as a signal of our psychic health. As the lyric in the song *wide awake* suggests:

There will always be,
somewhere to start.
Some inkling of yourself,
that you can trace,
Some inner phase
that must be transcended,
Some part of yourself
you've been waiting to face.
(Kulundu- Bolus, 2020, p.338.)

This kind of rich embodied metaphorical "(re)stor(y)ing" has recently come to be understood in its capacity to create the changes that we long for in educational process (Vallabh, 2022). Here, the good news of neuro-plasticity gives us a different way of thinking about what can assist and strengthen our educational efforts in substantive ways:

Neuroplasticity is the incredible ability of the brain to change throughout our lives. It's the fact that every time we learn or do something new, our brain changes…. We can take agency over this to expand our horizons… rather than reinforcing the negative narrative inner subconscious brain. Repetition and emotional intensity are key to creating lasting changes in our brain. (Swart, 2023)

The new synapses connected through intense and repetitive, embodied, and metaphorical "(re)stor(y)ing" that soul-based learning generates warms up the neuroplasticity of the brain to actualise new pathways aligned with what one desires to have happen. This practice is a slow and strong way to step into new ways of being within and without that can shape the world toward a future that is worthy of our longing (Rushdie, 1997). As one continues to accept this kind of cocreative role with reality, as one sees to believe that they can indeed participate in the great orchestra of life, the conscious choices that one makes can better gravitate toward visions beyond the spell of separation composed by colonial modernity. My contention is that this process takes time and consistency. It takes time to disrupt the hold that subconscious programming has on us toward being able to actively live into a different version of reality that exceeds haunting threats of scarcity and limitation. It begins with the will to establish one's capacity to cocreate reality. It can continue to build the sensibilities to perceive and lean into that which will serve the greater whole much more intentionally.

Soul-based learning gives us the opportunity to begin this journey by honouring the deep metaphorical forays each individual is traversing. Slowly undergoing the heart of that living mythology can recreate one's relationship with life. This work zooms into a nuanced experience of what it means to be human for each situated individual, touching on ways of knowing that are tender, personal, and potent while also signalling trajectories for a greater sense of our belonging in the world with human and nonhuman connections.

Some grounded ways with which one can begin this work is by considering the words we use to describe a particularly heightened situation that is perplexing. For example, imagine that someone describes a situation as "tight." One could slowly start to provoke the metaphorical landscape that is ensconced in their experience.[1] Here are some clean questions you could ask someone or even facilitate yourself as you try to invoke the metaphorical landscape that best embraces the experience: What kind of tight is that tight? And is there anything else about tight? Does tight have a size or a shape? And where is tight? What would tight like to have happen? These questions and many other clean questions that are chronicled in Carol Wilson's (2017) comprehensive archive of the work of David Grove have the potential to open up a whole odyssey of experience and trajectories that begin to unravel the gifts and openings that this experimental way of working may hold.

Endnote

1. Clean questions are very open questions that invite whoever is doing the asking to stay out of the way of the meaning making and allow the person who is journeying to really color in their own interpretation and gradually step into their metaphorical landscape without anyone imposing their thoughts on them.

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Interrupting Denials in Casteist-Colonial India: Indigenous Youth's Insights for Imagining Educational Alternatives

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Summary

The SDG 4 agenda regards youth engagement as key to transforming societies. Yet educational transformation remains elusive as influential education actors continue to design programs that disavow the lived experiences of youth. In this article, we argue that Global South youths' expertise in navigating inherently exclusionary and colonial societal structures may offer unique pedagogical insights for imagining educational and societal alternatives.

Keywords

Indigenous youth action
Casteist coloniality
Denials
SDG 4 agenda

Introduction

"I don't want trouble … I have to depend on these people for a job", said Vrinda, a coresearcher in the Youth Researchers of Attappady Collective (YRAC). The YRAC, an Indigenous, youth-led research collective in Attappady, which is located in the south Indian state of Kerala, faced a dilemma—should we share the digital story that presents our research findings on social media? The digital story compares national and state policy guidelines for inclusive education with the experiences of Indigenous/Adivasi youth, providing evidence of policy misuse by educators, doctors, and government officers in Attappady's schools. Or should we restrict the circulation of the story because these very officers can hinder the provision of many services intended to support ST youth?

This dilemma represents a key challenge that impedes SDG 4 policy promises to engage with youth "as change-makers, knowledge-holders, and partners" (UNESCO, 2023). Even though youth engagement is seen as an important strategy for societal transformation in national and global policies (Department of Youth Affairs, 2022; UNESCO, 2023), interventions and the indicators for successful youth inclusion continue to be defined in ways that are unresponsive to the casteist-colonial conditions at the root of systemic exclusion (bodhi, 2021; Kalemba & Farrugia, 2021; Stein et al., 2022). How might education progress differently if it sought to "transform the interconnected structures that marginalize some populations while privileging others" (Patel, 2016, p. 23), instead of attempting to include Global South youth into a system that is designed and regularly refashioned to exclude them (Dryness & Sepúlveda III, 2020; Slee & Allan, 2001)? In the present article, we share selected insights from a youth participatory action research (YPAR) inquiry into ST youth's experiences in Attappady, India, to advocate a redirection of gaze in the SDG 4 agenda—from identity-based inclusion and youth development strategies

to the "denials" (Stein et al., 2022) that stand in the way of imagining educational and societal alternatives. We argue that Global South youth's expertise in navigating an inherently exclusionary and persistently colonial world can offer pedagogical entry points to imagine "otherwise possibilities" (Crawley, 2016) for education.

Background: Living on Colonized Land, Learning at the Borders

The Indigenous communities of India have many names, including Adivasi, Scheduled Tribes (ST), and the names of over 720 tribe groups. In April 2022, eight young members of the Irula tribe from Attappady cofounded the YRAC with the first author. The YRAC aims to reflect on and respond to the persistent exclusion experienced by ST youth in educational spaces. Attappady is one of seven administrative units in Kerala designated as a "tribal development block" because of a concentrated population of ST communities in the region. According to India's Ministry of Tribal Affairs, tribal development blocks were established to protect the "interest of tribals through administrative support and promotion of development efforts" (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021). However, like many ST peoples across India, the YRAC experiences development as ongoing settler colonial control (Costa, 2019; Wadhwa, 2020) exerted by the state development apparatus and the settlers living on stolen land.

Living in a colonial context in an "independent" nation-state means that YRAC members and other young ST youth join "millions of people around the world who dwell in the borders," not of nation-states but of the epistemic and ontological borders of the modern/colonial world (Mignolo, 2012, pp. xx–xvi). In the borderland occupied by the YRAC, exclusion and youth (dis) engagement are interpreted through the lens of Indigenous dispossession in a casteist-colonial society. Nevertheless, as the following section demonstrates, mainstream education programs continue to prioritize a "business as usual + selective Indigenous content – guilt and risk of bad press" (Jimmy et al., 2019, p. 6) approach to youth engagement while disregarding the lived experiences of ST youth.

Theater for Youth Engagement: Building Skills, Reinforcing Stereotypes

A nongovernment organization (NGO) partially funded by UNESCO and supported by the state employs street theater as an educational, youth development tool. Every year, the NGO stages street plays in many of Attappady's 192 hamlets, including the hamlet in which YRAC coresearchers reside. NGO officers choose the themes for these plays based on their perceived relevance to the daily lives of ST peoples. In the past, plays have addressed "problems" like alcoholism, ST women's health, and drug addiction among ST youth. The youth who are selected to join the theater production learn valuable interpersonal skills as they travel and perform

for a diverse audiences that include ST hamlet members, students, educators, development officers, and government representatives. These youth engagement programs also open up temporary—and occasionally permanent—employment positions for ST youth. However, as Saritha, a YRAC coresearcher notes, the social "problems" that are highlighted in these plays are disconnected from the role played by state-supported land dispossession in the creation of these problems:

If you look at each of these issues properly, you will see that the problem is not ST people's lack of awareness … ST women's health is a common theme because of the increase in infant deaths in Attappady … But ST children did not die during our grandparents' time. Why? Because they had their own plot of land on which they grew their own food … We don't own land anymore. Most of our ancestral land has been appropriated, either by settler communities from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, or by state departments in the name of development and forest conservation … So now we depend on government rations.

Saritha, like many Global South youth, is "intuitively occupying and transforming" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. xxv) spaces of knowledge production by critically analyzing current systemic crises, while linking these crises to historical and ongoing conditions of coloniality (Bellino & KYRG, 2018; Nixon et al., 2022). Undoubtedly, educational interventions like street theater that youth in Attappady encounter every year will result in skill development and employment for some ST youth. Indeed, the skills and chances of employment that these programs offer are crucial, given the limited postsecondary opportunity structures available to ST youth. However, as coresearcher Soumya explains, youth engagement programs, even when intended to provide context-specific forms of support, can exacerbate ST youth exclusion by re-inscribing stereotypes:

What makes me angry is that these street plays portray ST peoples as uninformed and clueless … like we don't understand what is going on around us. And then the development officers and the journalists they invite post pictures on social media to show how they are educating and helping us.

Soumya's insight about ST representation is especially relevant since policy documents continue to use the term "backward" (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2020) to describe ST peoples. This myth of backwardness is cemented by dominant development narratives in India that either ignore Indigenous people's dispossession or justify it as a necessity for national development (Xaxa, 2021). Against this background, the task of learning from Global South youth's critical analyses of the systemic crises they navigate in their

daily lives is urgent and indispensable to the SDG 4 vision for a "transformative education agenda."

Confronting Denials, Developing Radars: Imagining Education "Otherwise"

We consider "denial" to be a productive lens to understand why a transformative education agenda remains elusive. For the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures (GTDF) collective, the illusion that universal designs like the SDG 4 agenda can create equitable societies is not entirely rooted in ignorance of the operations of coloniality in education. Rather, it is rooted in the denial of systemic colonial violence, the inherent unsustainability of the dominant system, and the complexity of educational injustice, which sustains the illusion that quick fixes can transform a deeply flawed system (Andreotti, 2021; Stein et al., 2022).

Mainstream education programming is steeped in these denials as it continues to neglect decades of scholarship showing how education is complicit in reinscribing an anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and casteist status quo (Sriprakash et al., 2016). Therefore, we are not convinced that the exclusion that is built into global and national policies can be transformed through "meaningful and not only tokenistic youth engagement" (UNESCO, 2023, p. 16). However, we invite those in the Global North involved in "low-intensity struggles" (Stein et al., 2022, p. 280), which includes the first author, to confront and interrupt these denials by learning from Indigenous youth and others who are involved in "high-intensity struggles." According to Stein et al. (2022), people involved in high-intensity or high-risk struggles are fighting to survive in an inherently unsustainable system—the very system that those involved in low-intensity or low-risk struggles are fighting to sustain. In our invitation to those involved in low-risk struggles, we include what Wilkerson (2020) conceptualizes as "dominant caste" educators, policymakers, and practitioners who are located all over the world.

In practice, this would require educators to develop what Stein et al. (2022) refer to as "band-aid and fragility radars" (p. 284) to discern whether an educational intervention denies or interrupts existing systemic exclusions. For instance, in its desire to develop ST youth, the theater program we described earlier provides false comfort through temporary employment and skill-building opportunities for a small group of youth. As Soumya and Saritha note, this "band-aid" intervention denies its complicity in reinforcing harmful stereotypes of ST peoples. Similarly, we might have shared YRAC's digital story about the misuse of disability accommodation widely if it were not for the "fragility" of dominant caste and non-Indigenous stakeholders and their history of aggression against those who "exercise refusal of unconditional affirmation" (Stein et al., 2022, p. 284).

Confronting denials and developing radars are just a couple of tools out of many that already exist, which can be employed to imagine "infinite alternatives to what *is* … as a means to disrupt the current configurations of power and inequity" (Crawley, 2016, pp. 2–3). We believe that Indigenous youth and others who are consistently engaged in high-intensity struggles to survive in a colonial/modern world have unique intellectual, pedagogical, and political insights required to imagine these alternatives. The willingness to recover, learn from, be taught by, and act on these insights is the urgent task that confronts those in the pursuit of transformative education action.

Endnote

1. The YRAC coresearchers remain anonymous in any document, publication, or social media posts that may be accessed by state officers. In addition, the names mentioned in the manuscript are pseudonyms chosen by the coresearchers. This is to protect them from any repercussions, a threat that always faces youth and other activists in at least this context.

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Critical Pedagogies in Neoliberal Times: Teachers' Voices of Resistance from Rural Peru

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Summary

This paper discusses critical pedagogies as a potentially powerful approach for reappraising indigenous epistemologies in Peru, where education policy is dominated by neoliberal agendas. Operating within this restrictive environment, a group of rural teachers are creating their own set of critical pedagogies which celebrate and exalt Quechua culture.

Keywords

Critical pedagogies
Rural education
Peru
Rural teachers

Introduction

Over the past three decades, social justice has become an increasingly salient theme in educational debates clearly marked by the hegemony of neoliberal education. Neoliberal governance has provided a model focused on investment and individual outcomes, which has only deepened inequalities in countries like Peru. The Peruvian case shows how deep injustices such as poverty, gender disparities and full access to quality education affect the rural population most severely. Within this scenario, a social justice approach through critical pedagogies emphasises the key role of education in fighting against these systems of oppression while reappraising indigenous epistemologies. Teachers are particularly relevant actors in addressing these challenges.

In Peru, the voices of rural teachers have been persistently overshadowed by official channels and their deep-rooted technocratic approach. Based on this context, the present paper discusses the potential of critical pedagogies in reappraising indigenous knowledge production through the voices of a group of rural teachers in Peru. The first section summarises the condition of rural education in the country under the hegemony of neoliberal policies. The second section focuses on the voices of these rural teachers by showing their pedagogical contributions in fighting against social injustices. Finally, the third section closes the paper by providing a brief synopsis of the main elements required to inform policymakers into prescribing socially just rural policies.

Rural Education and Intercultural Bilingual Education in Peru Under the Hegemony of Neoliberal Policies

Rural education in Peru has been historically excluded from the state's priorities. Rural settings host a rich cultural diversity in terms of both languages and the diverse ethnic groups, where 25.8% of the total population identify themselves as indigenous peoples. From these groups, 16% declare a native language to be their mother tongue, such as Quechua, Aimara and Ashaninka (National Census, 2017). However, the legacy of colonialism, historical exclusion and racism have left rural areas in highly disadvantaged positions compared with urban settings.

For example, the latest national assessments on quality education reveal that 66.4% of children in Huancavelica (rural Peru) do not achieve the expected level of literacy for Year 2 (primary level). In contrast, in regions like Tacna, 55.7% of children achieved the expected level (MINEDU, 2022).

The response from the state in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been linked to Intercultural Bilingual Education. In 1972, the first National Policy on Bilingual Education was approved. Although this policy neglected to mention the concept of interculturality whereby Western knowledge is in dialogue with indigenous cultures, it did recognise the multicultural reality and diversity in the country (Trapnell & Neira, 2004). Years later, in 1989, the Peruvian state approved the Intercultural Bilingual Education Policy. Even though this policy was the first to include the concept of intercultural education, the approach limited the inclusion of knowledge and the culture of indigenous speakers in the country and focused less on other cultures (Trapnell & Neira, 2004).

In 2016, the 'Sectoral Policy on Intercultural Education and Intercultural Bilingual Education' was approved. The policy aimed to reappraise the cultural and linguistic diversity in the country through bilingual education. Two years later, in 2018, the 'Education Policy for the Population in Rural Areas' was approved to expand the educational opportunities of rural children.

Even though these policies have made intercultural bilingual education visible in the policy field, these advances are insufficient for addressing the profound issues linked to postcolonial wounds inflicted by centuries of racism and exclusion. Additionally, under neoliberal policies, indigenous epistemologies have been overshadowed by marketisation mandates where education operates under market logic (Robertson, 2009). Neoliberal policies in the country have been marked by a technocratic approach focused on efficiency in quality and learning, which equates to standardised test results while missing key components of pedagogy at school level that should be central for learning processes (Balarin & Saavedra, 2023). Furthermore, the liberalisation of education has brought about the rise of low-fee private schools with no regulation and poor-quality education (Balarin et al., 2019).

In this sense, neoliberal policies do not base their actions on robust conceptualisations of equality and social justice; these axes are present, but they do not have an explicit link to critical consciousness, dialogue, and oppressive conditions (Chitpin & Portelli, 2019, p. 3). To address these issues, the current paper highlights the relevance of critical pedagogies from the practice of social justice of a group of Peruvian rural teachers in reappraising indigenous epistemologies.

Where Are the Rural Teachers Fighting Against Neoliberal Policies in Peru? Their Voices Through Critical Pedagogies

From rural Peru, a group of primary and secondary teachers in rural Cusco and Ayacucho[1] are proposing alternative pedagogies to fight against inequalities while reappraising indigenous epistemologies. Based on intercultural pedagogies and critical pedagogies, rural teachers' voices can be summarised in four key principles:

- Promoting dialogue*:* Through dialogues between teachers and students, the historical discrimination against the Quechua culture can be addressed. For example, one teacher from Cusco is problematizing this issue through an explanation of the meanings associated with Quechua surnames. For example, meanings associated with 'guidance' and 'strength' are helpful to empower students to be proud of their Indigenous roots by reflecting critically about their own heritage and history. As this teacher said, *'So, I give each student a mission [based on their surnames and meanings] and they work together. So, it is how to bring that cosmovision to put each one "in their spirit." It is not monetary value, it's spiritual value. It's emotion.'*

- Fighting against banking education: These teachers criticise the prevailing model of banking education as a firm obstacle that prevents children from feeling free. In other words, banking education minimises or annuls students' creative power to stimulate the interests of the oppressors (Freire, 1970). As one teacher from Cusco points out, banking education focuses on literacy and on numeracy to assess these skills oriented to the job market. However, he proposes arts to expand children's creativity and critical thinking. He says, *'When you ask a primary school teacher what do you do? They say, what I do is make teaching materials, but I say, 'that's art! They are using singing as an educational material; I use art to make children sing.'* Through songs and dances, these teachers are contributing to reinforcing an important facet of the indigenous identity.

- Engaging with the community*:* These rural teachers conceive of the engagement with the community as a key dimension in reappraising and exalting Indigenous knowledge production. They encourage students to talk with the 'Yachaq' (wise elders in the rural Andes) in Quechua to stimulate use of the language while preserving their cultural elements. For example, one teacher from Ayacucho invites 'Yachaqs' to teach students how to cultivate the land while others are invited to give talks about festivities and/or important dates relevant to the community. This cultural information is key in building the communal calendar at the beginning of each year. As one teacher from Ayacucho says, '*These activities motivate us*

as a family, all of us who are there, showing our emotional expressions of joy and sadness, and being united.'

- Stimulating 'Buen vivir' as a way of resistance: These groups of rural teachers are connecting 'Buen vivir' to a *'quality of life, not only material but also spiritual. Communities are defined in an expanded sense, which includes some non-human elements or even the whole environment'* (Gudynas, 2016, p. 727). In this sense, two rural teachers from Cusco are implementing a small farm (*la chacrita*) in an open space as part of the school. This small farm is connected to Andean symbolism as teachers are promoting environmental care while reinforcing the indigenous culture. As one teacher said, '*It is a way of living, I feel the energy, your strength, there is a feeling, you are not going to have that with scientific (Western) methods. Plants, water, nature are before me. You can look at the cosmos and contemplate, many times. The Incas spoke to their deities, to the water, to the earth, they understood you'.* These experiences are going beyond what is considered pertinent in the formal curriculum of the Ministry of Education in Peru.

These four principles show alternative ways of reappraising Indigenous knowledge through dialogue, critical thinking and 'Buen vivir,' where the community plays a vital role. In this line, López (2021) considers that, in some Latin American countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru, there are some spaces where indigenous leaders, teachers and organisations are implementing their own models of intercultural education by questioning the ontology of school knowledge and including indigenous knowledge and values.

Summing Up the Key Elements for Making Socially Just Rural Policies

Rural education in Peru is still faced with historical issues linked to exclusion, racism, poverty, and a lack of support from the state. Even though policies on intercultural bilingual education have been implemented to support rural education, the technocratic approach, and the liberalisation of the educational market in the country has resulted in narrow conceptions of educational learnings and even less attention on issues of social justice and indigenous knowledge. There are critical approaches that should be included to address these historical issues. Based on the voices of a group of rural teachers in Peru, we propose the following elements:

- Include critical pedagogies as the main axis in rural education: Through the promotion of critical concepts within this approach such as dialogue and critical consciousness, intercultural bilingual education should reflect critically on colonial wounds to strengthen the Indigenous heritage.

- Promote arts and alternative pedagogies as viable options to fight against banking education: Based on the practices of social justice carried out by the rural teachers in this paper, the inclusion of critical dialogues, dances, songs and creative activities stimulate the critical consciousness of rural children linked to their indigenous roots. Furthermore, the role of community and the inclusion of wise elders ('Yachaqs') are key considerations in reappraising the meanings and significance of native knowledge.

- Encourage a discussion about 'Buen vivir' and its care of the environment while reappraising indigenous knowledge: As these rural teachers from Peru, the inclusion of environmental consciousness through projects like small farms in rural Cusco are not only raising consciousness over environmental issues but also reappraising the value of native elements since Inca times. In other words, 'Buen vivir' promotes a spiritual dimension which is at the base of the pedagogical practices of this group of rural teachers in Cusco and Ayacucho.

These key elements emerging from a group of Peruvian rural teachers' voices may start a process of transformation from their own rural communities to challenge a top-down approach to public policymaking. Their testimonies are notable examples of persistence and pride connected to their indigenous roots.

Endnote

1. These are four rural teachers from schools in Cusco and Ayacucho who are part of a doctoral research in-progress. Following a narrative approach to understand their practices of social justice, a set of in-depth interviews were applied in 2022. The findings included in this paper are part of a narrative analysis that is still in progress.

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Dismantling Epistemic Violence: A Decolonial Social Justice Agenda Within South Africa's Higher Education Curriculum

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Summary

It is without a doubt that the education landscape in South Africa is framed and continues to be shaped by political, social and economic inequality. This article draws attention to the critical social justice agenda of the decolonial project in higher education. This agenda demands cognitive justice ensuring the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge of African (and broader non-white) scholars, including the literacies of Black females and the working class, into the modern knowledge canon.

Keywords

Decolonial project
Knowledge parochialism
Cognitive justice
Colonisation
Transformative praxis

Introduction

It is without a doubt that the mobilisation demanding free education across student movement(s) at universities in South Africa (and elsewhere) also mobilised the demand for the decolonial politics of knowledge. The argument is that the alienation that students experience in these institutions of higher learning, which ultimately strip them of their dignity, can be attributed to the knowledge orientation to which they are exposed. Thus, there is a call for an approach that expresses an African-centred humanness towards knowledge orientation. The phenomenon of 'defamiliarisation pedagogy' should provide contestations regarding instances of colonisation in higher education, which is important in exploring the decolonial perspective of the notion of access. This phenonmenon will also focus attention on hierarchies of power within educational contexts and how that translates to (re)conceptualising transformative praxis.

Calls for decolonising education first emerged on the African continent in the context of struggles against colonial rule during the 1950s and 1960s. These were based on a negation of modern colonial education whose organising principle centred on shaping the colonised into colonial subjects, in the process stripping them of their humanity and full potential (Fataar, 2018, p. VI). The argument is that literacies of Black women and women of colour and the poor working class and Indigenous knowledges as a whole suffered an 'epistemicide', in which Western knowledge is deemed superior. This not only calls for overhaul of such a knowledge but pluralisation when it comes to knowledge production of the subaltern. The present article focuses on the importance of epistemological change in higher education, drawing on the critical decolonial social justice agenda and the need for cognitive justice in the curriculum.

Eurocentrism and Higher Education

It is important to briefly explain what I mean by decolonisation, especially as it relates to epistemic decolonisation. Following Mbembe, decolonisation 'is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. It is about defining clearly

what the centre is' (2016, p. 35). Ngugi (1981, p. 93) adds that Europe cannot remain at the centre of the universe at African universities; Africa must be at the centre. This is what I mean when I use the term 'decolonisation'.

However, those who have assessed decolonisation efforts over the past two decades have found that the very normalisers of colonial structures cannot be relied on to deliver real decolonisation and have continued to act in defence of both their privilege and colonised structures (Stein & Andreotti, 2017, as cited by Shaik et al., 2021, p. 970). This does not come as a surprise because, by their very nature, universities are responsible for maintaining exclusion and alienation but, more importantly and crucial to their survival, maintaining colonial manifestations. What this Eurocentrism does is invalidate Indigenous approaches of knowledge and scholarship and African identity (or ways of being) inside and outside of academia, which I argue is a form of violence. This exposes the hierarchies of power within educational contexts and the ways in which these translate to (re)conceptualising transformative praxis within higher education as a decolonial justice agenda. This is why Western scholarship is often filled with claims of misery or some irrationality when it relates to Africa, which needs a white messiah to survive. This kind of Eurocentric indoctrination through the curriculum 'seeks to universalize the West and provincialize the rest' (Zeleza, 2009, p. 133). As Said (1994, p. 8) points out, the Western European literature has for centuries portrayed the non-Western world and peoples as 'inferior' and 'subordinate'; this helped 'normalise' racism among the colonialists and developed a notion that 'Europe should rule, non-Europeans ruled' (Said, 1994, p. 120, as cited by Heleta, 2016).

This domination of Western, capitalist, heterosexual, White and male epistemologies, perspectives and experiences in higher education brings into the fore nothing but alienation. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, by all of this, I do not mean doing away with White men and women from the curriculum, but I instead mean not treating them as the all-knowing canon. Doing this this creates 'knowledge parochialism', which is the idea that one's own knowledge system is superior and, thus, sufficient for complex living, thus also maintaining Western dominance. I should also make clear that I do not want to maintain the status quo by adding bits and pieces of Africa or the 'other' into the already existing Eurocentric-focused curriculum. This would resemble what Pillay (2015) critiques as 'a supplemental concept of history, where we now add African Studies onto the existing curriculum with the danger of once more ghettoizing it from the other mainstream disciplines.' Thus, I call for the approach to 'rethink how the object of study itself is constituted and then reconstruct and bring about fundamental change (Garuba 2015).

Cognitive Justice and the Decolonial Social Justice Agenda within the Curriculum

Within higher education, cognitive justice is a 'normative principle for the equal treatment of all forms of knowledge' (Van der Velden, n.d., p. 12). This does not mean that all forms of knowledge are equal but that the equality of knowers forms the basis of dialogue between knowledges and that what is required for democracy is a dialogue among knowers and their knowledge. This is even more necessary because of the ways that the Western canon is deemed superior to Indigenous knowledge and creates this phenomenon of 'hegemony' of knowledge forms that undermine other Indigenous epistemological forms.

Pursuing this further, it should be noted that this is not a call for the 'decentering' of 'African knowledge'. This would be counterrevolutionary, being contrary to popular belief and risking being isolationist. I caution against this because there are no knowledge systems that are homogeneous. Indeed, we can also use [different] knowledges to answer questions or plug the gaps created by unitary knowledge systems (De Sousa Santos, 2014). Thus, the change at universities must entail 'decolonising, deracialising, demasculanising and degendering' the institutions as well as 'engaging with ontological and epistemological issues in all their complexity, including their implications for research, methodology, scholarship, learning and teaching, curriculum and pedagogy' (HESA, 2014, p. 7).

Visvanathan offers us illustrative criteria, although not comprehensive, that one may develop further of how knowledge can be produced:

- Each knowledge system, if it is to be democratic, must realise it is iatrogenic [i.e., harmful] in some context.

- Each knowledge system must realise that in moments of dominance it may destroy life-giving alternatives available in the other. Each paradigm must sustain the otherness of other knowledge systems.

- No knowledge system may 'museumify' the other. No knowledge system should be overtly deskilling.

- Each knowledge system must practice cognitive indifference to itself in some consciously chosen domains.

- All major technical projects legitimised through dominant knowledge forms must be subject to referendum and recall. (2007, p. 215)

There is unquestionably a need for epistemic openness of knowledge. Although these criteria are not exhaustive, they are nonetheless useful as a tool that draws attention

towards the curriculum as a social justice agenda that 'conceives of the university as a site for the inculcation of multidimensional critical change agency' (Maseko, 2018, p. 78). This is important so that the mentalities of coloniality within the curriculum are dealt with not only for the purposes of establishing an African-centred knowledge system but also for building one that shows interest in social transformation within the transformative agenda within broader society. Cognitive justice requires the bringing into relation of different knowledges, that is, 'the plural availability of knowledges'. It also entails being cognisant of the fact that knowledge is seen as part of people's practices, thus contextually situated, rather than being autonomous and objective or 'outside'. This has important ramifications for learning, leading to a critical question: If one is not a participant within knowledge practices where particular knowledge forms were generated, how best does one acquire this knowledge (Leibowitz, 2017, p. 104)?

Way Forward: Conclusion

Mignolo proposes delinking (from the Western episteme and canon) as a precondition for the decolonization of the mind and for the emergence of pluriversality, that is, the recognition and re-emergence on the global map of systems of knowledge produced outside the Global North (see 'Re-Emerging', as cited by Gallien, 2020, p. 38). A significant point that Mignolo underlines is the need for de-Westernisation in creating the 'pluriverse' because power differentials and colonial thinking are not ruled out by virtue of de-westernisation as long as the world is still marked by conformist capitalist ideas of extractivism and exploitation. If people inside and outside institutions want to genuinely transform and contribute positively to the socio-economic dynamics of the African continent through the curriculum, they need to dramatically change the ways in which they teach and what they teach because decolonisation is more than changing the material. The current Western epistemologies and experiences taking centre stage in the curriculum do not offer much reimagining on the future of a decolonial Afrocentric curriculum because many academics still assume Western knowledge systems are unquestionable truth(s). Thus, there is a need for progressive academics and students, here with a concerned public, to find ways to hold institutions into account while dismantling epistemic violence in universities. Opposition to the project of decoloniality is deeply entrenched in university structures; thus, these elites will do anything to resist and challenge any contestation which seeks to destabilise the status quo. We need a radical departure from these colonial knowledge systems. As the decolonial thinker Boaventura de Sousa Santos observes, we must confront Western modernity as a form of 'abyssal thinking' because it is a mentality of coloniality.

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Part 6

Responding to the Climate Crisis

Responding to the Climate Emergency: Creating Regenerative, Equitable Education Systems

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Summary

We have reached the environmental limits of the 500-year project of modernity, and our response now will determine life for centuries. This article details how regenerative education—as philosophy, design ethos, and life practice—can move society away from catastrophic overconsumption and toward ecological balance. We provide existing examples as avenues for systemic change.

Keywords

Climate emergency
Regenerative education

Professor Emeritus of Geophysical and Climate Hazards at University College London, Bill McGuire, recently observed that "when it comes to the climate emergency—we are in deep, deep s***!" We open in this way to call attention both to our collective peril and continued actions intensifying the problem, most recently as illustrated in the global climate conference (COP28) process dominated by fossil fuel influences, whose carbon products existentially endanger humans and life on earth. We have reached the planetary and human limits of the 500-year project of modernity and its drivers of heteropatriarchy, racism, capitalism, and colonization. How we respond over the next 30 years may well determine the next 1,000 years.

We must transform society away from catastrophic carbon consumption while simultaneously reorienting education systems toward postcarbon futures. This article proposes a theoretical shift across both society and education to regenerative living, specifically through "regenerative education." Regeneration means "renewal or restoration of a … biological system" and "spiritual renewal or revival." We add political and economic dimensions to regeneration as important for fundamentally rebalancing our priorities toward humanity and the planet rather than toward profit. Reshaping education from workforce production into preparing students for postcarbon thriving requires nonreformist reforms that infuse critical pedagogy and address long-standing inequities.

The praxis of regenerative education expands on the "full development of the human personality" to include not just the individual, but now the "ubuntu" understanding of the self as connected to all society and the eco-inseparability of all life. We offer current examples across education settings and derive key principles of regenerative education from them. Identifying, scaling up, and adapting programs like these will help transform society to address the immediate

climate emergency while creating education systems that can prepare future generations to continue evolving toward regeneration.

Problem: The Climate Emergency

Why is Global Warming Happening?

The science is unequivocal—humans have caused global warming by burning trillions of tons of carbon into the atmosphere over the past century. Scientists identified 2023 as the hottest year on record globally by a huge margin, "the hottest in 174 years of record-keeping … and likely the hottest in the last 125,000 years." They further warn that, instead of an aberration, 2023 serves as a harbinger for the future. Professor Andrew Dressler offers an ominous warning: "Every year for the rest of your life will be one of the hottest [on] record. This in turn means that 2023 will end up being one of the coldest years of this century. Enjoy it while it lasts."

What Does Global Warming Mean for Current and Future Generations?

The 2021 policymaker summary from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states, "Climate change is already affecting every inhabited region across the globe with human influence contributing to many observed changes in weather and climate extremes." The United Nations Secretary General warned that "we are coming to a point of no return." Regarding the impact on our collective future, UNICEF released a Children's Climate Risk Index, revealing "that 1 billion children are at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of climate change. That is nearly half of all children. And it is happening *today*."

How Are We Responding to the Climate Emergency?

One word describes our climate response: failing. The climate clock is ticking fast. Humans have about five years to stymie and reverse the climate disruption and destruction we have triggered. Despite moderate clean(er) energy investments, fossil fuel producers continue to increase extraction, exacerbating our ecocidal polycrisis that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. Our systems of collective action—governments, corporations and markets, annual climate change conferences (COP), and national education systems—remain trapped in paradigms of increasing domination through extractive, monopsonistic capitalism (Nathan, 2021).

As evidence that fossil fuel interests have thoroughly co-opted human economic and political systems, our collective COP gatherings to respond globally to the climate emergency have been led recently by oil industry executives, including COP28 by the chief executive of the United Arab Emirates state oil company Adnoc (COP28), and COP29 by Azerbaijan's ecology and natural resources minister, another former oil industry executive.

Active planetary degradation perpetuated by fossil fuel companies prevents us from acting together in an urgent way to bend the curve of carbon release, avoid climate catastrophe, and prioritize postcarbon policies, decisions, and decisive action. The climate is tipping, but humans are the ones tipping it, especially people and corporations actively suppressing information and action.

How Must We Respond?

We must transform society away from catastrophic carbon consumption while simultaneously reinventing education systems orienting toward postcarbon futures. This chapter contributes to this volume in two ways: 1) identifying a foundational theoretical shift for transforming society using regenerative design principles and 2) further applying these principles to education systems using an approach we call regenerative education.

Why Regeneration?

Solutions to the climate emergency often reference "sustainability", however, humans cannot simply sustain the current reality, especially not trending toward ecological degradation. The term "regeneration" (meaning biological and spiritual restoration, with added political and economic dimensions) offers an overarching approach that actively renews systems and fundamentally rebalances human priorities toward life. Regeneration extends past agriculture or education, functioning as a philosophy, design ethos, and life practice.

For longer-term species survival (including humans), inhabiting the Earth requires regenerative living in all forms. The overarching solution to our self-created climate emergency is restoring balance in the natural world. To do so, humans must evolve and rediscover our collective connection within the ecology of life. Although this phrasing may resemble a neo-spiritual platitude, its realization represents our human imperative. The eventual zero-sum game of human habitability on Earth means that ecological balance is not a trope, but instead is our destiny.

Achieving ecological balance through regenerative living means that we do not overproduce, overconsume, or otherwise distort natural, mutually beneficial relationships. Instead, we must recalibrate how we approach life, in particular carbon consumption and its permeation into most facets of society, all while preparing our future generations to embody this approach. But regeneration does not mean mass poverty or taking "the world back to the caves", as proffered by the COP28 president regarding the results of phasing out fossil fuels. Rather, human ingenuity and new economic arrangements could meet this moment.

For instance, what would have happened if Exxon had pivoted to renewable energy based on its own [scientific predictions of the climate emergency in 1977](#)? Looking forward a half century, what is the thought experiment for 2077? What will our descendants say about what we should be doing right now? We have a vast reservoir of untapped potential that is currently restrained within the limit system of modern capitalism, itself predicated on fossil fuel consumption and controlled through mass political disenfranchisement.

Conceptualizing Regenerative Education

Societally, we need to not only learn about, invent, and invest in regenerative systems in real time but also reshape and translate our education systems to reflect the underlying principles of a regenerative approach to education, living, and collective life. As a political project, mass education began in Prussia as a mechanistic system with the primary goal of preparing workers for factory roles within the extractive economic system, a model persisting across the globe today. Instead, our education systems must shift to answering the question of how we can live regeneratively together on the planet.

Education is a quantum endeavor that simultaneously reproduces and transforms individuals and society. Rather than replicating current systems, regenerative education entails a true embrace of the "[full development of the human personality](#)" not just for the individual but now for the "[ubuntu](#)" understanding of the self—a self connected to all society, based on the eco-based inseparability of life from life, human to human, and human to all species.

Reshaping education from workforce production into preparing students for postcarbon thriving requires transformative nonreformist reforms infusing critical pedagogy, moral imagination, and compassion, all addressing long-standing inequities. Students need to become aware of and adept at what it will take to live on an increasingly ecologically fragile planet. We need to reframe what basics mean—not math and language—but learning about *and doing* regenerative food production, inventing regenerative energy systems, discovering and deploying carbon sequestration methods, redesigning cities, and so forth.

From a social perspective, regenerative living also means learning how to live together collectively on the planet, including ending military actions, rather than devolving into quasi-apartheid autocracies. It is difficult but necessary to imagine not only everything students will need to understand but also how a supportive system looks because we have not yet seen it on the planet. Nevertheless, we do have key examples of components of such a system, some of them familiar to many in education.

Regenerative Education as Praxis

Building on Paulo Freire's centering of praxis, regenerative education engages students in living an ecologically balanced life. At its core, regenerative education is true lifelong learning. Adults now must better understand a rapidly degrading ecological reality and its causes while simultaneously imagining and creating regenerative education systems for ecological realities that do not yet exist. We must then socialize two billion youth (and adults as well) through public education to understand the climate emergency they are inheriting as some [countries](#) currently do regarding climate science.

Understanding the reality and causes of the climate emergency and the necessary steps for climate action also requires a different ethical and political education. How can we recalibrate education to foster the moral eco-imagination? Current neo-colonial and neo-fascist systems actively increase inequity while dissuading regenerative praxis. For example, Texas, a key fossil fuel–producing jurisdiction, recently passed legislation designed to [distort climate change within its curriculum](#). We require a long-term education project of critical pedagogy with large-scale political contribution, including child, youth, and adult development trajectories preparing for active civic participation and cultivation of the moral imagination to develop the political capacity to hold power actors accountable.

Examples with Aspects of Regenerative Education

We offer brief profiles of four examples that illustrate what regenerative education looks like—living regenerative education alternatives—across the spectrums of nonformal to formal school and levels of education (TK12 to higher education). These examples demonstrate an already viable reality that we could imitate, scale, adapt, and integrate into existing education systems, programs, and communities. We explore elements of these approaches as emerging principles of the praxis of "regenerative education".

Local Example: [Herb N' Soul Sanctuary](#)
As a nonformal, local education example, Herb N' Soul is an urban oasis minifarm, campground, learning space, and herbal tea shop near Atlanta, Georgia, USA, with the goal of fostering healing, personal renewal, and new connections with Nature, the forest, the soil, peace, and quiet. Many African Americans living in low-income neighborhoods of Atlanta have little contact with nature, animals, and farming. Herb N' Soul provides a sanctuary and healing space, an urban garden, and an illustration of an ecological way of life for youth groups, families, and neighbors. Founded by Trina Jackson (a social justice educator, scholar, imam of Atlanta Unity Mosque, and farmer) and Kim Jackson (a Georgia State Senator (district 41), Episcopal vicar of Common Ground

Church in Atlanta, and farmer), Herb N' Soul embodies the interwoven, multifaceted, intergenerational dimensions of resistance to unhealthy patterns of living, and experiential learning about regenerative living practices.

Regional Example: SoulFire Farm

As a nonformal, regional education example, Soul Fire Farm is an "Afro-Indigenous centered community farm" founded in 2010 in rural New York, USA, committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system. The farm raises and distributes food in surrounding low-income communities to end food apartheid. Training programs on sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism, health, reparations and land return initiatives, environmental justice, and systems and policy education for public decision-makers reach over 50,000 people each year. Founder Leah Penniman, MA, a Black Kreyol farmer, mother, soil nerd, author, and food justice activist, has studied farming across the Americas and Africa and written multiple books, including Farming While Black: *Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land*.

National Example: College of the Atlantic

Founded in 1972, The College of the Atlantic (COA) in Bar Harbor, Maine, USA, enriches the undergraduate liberal arts tradition through a distinctive educational philosophy: human ecology. Instead of following the traditional academic tendency of organizing academic life into separated subjects, disciplines, and schools, the human-ecological perspective integrates knowledge across disciplines and from disembodied academic study into personal experience to investigate—and ultimately improve—the relationships between human beings and our social and natural communities. The overarching human ecology theme emphasizes that everyone is a part of a complex and interactive living world, challenging students and faculty to cross traditional discipline boundaries to seek fresh combinations of ideas. As such, all COA student design their own course of study in human ecology and go on to work in various fields as carriers of the human ecology mindset and core values.

International Example: Tostan

Founded in 1991 and located in Dakar, Senegal, Tostan has worked across eight African countries, reaching more than five million people to empower rural communities for positive social transformation using holistic education programs. Tostan has evolved its offerings into a three-year, village-based, local language community education program aimed at fostering community well-being and dignity for all. The program uses a human rights–based approach embedded in local language and cultures using Indigenous cultural processes to propose consensus action for change. For example, "When challenges arise, a gathering – referred to as a "pénc" in the local language of Wolof … is called to bring together the whole community for discussion." Tostan's commitment to transformation of and by individuals within a collective indigenous approach illustrates the type of holistic ecological perspective that forms one way of doing regenerative education.

Synthesis of Regenerative Education Principles

The four examples profiled above illustrate several salient principles of regenerative education:

1. Commitment to restoring the balance of human life in the natural world that considers humans as part of, not separate from, the natural world;

2. Blending of an inter-generational range of forms of education—formal, nonformal, experiential, informal—to foment deeply transformative learning for action;

3. Regenerative pedagogy focused on a true embrace of the "full development of the human personality," not just for the individual but also embodying the "ubuntu" understanding of the self as connected to all society based on the eco-based inseparability of life from life, human to human, and human to all species;

4. Intersectional linkage of education/learning to advocacy, activism, and commitment to community well-being and social transformation in the direction of regeneration.

As exemplified in these examples, education can play a role in shifting from its current destructive workforce development orientation to trigger urgent regenerative action. We need multidimensional change: (1) urgent/rapid shifts in behavior at scale; (2) deep fundamental shifts in perspective and values away from consumption and extraction toward transformation and regeneration; and (3) new creative capacity for sustained, iterative adaptation as the fundamental conditions of life are transformed by climate disruption and climate-sensitive shifts of the way we live. These examples illustrate how education is already being designed to serve these three key strategic aims in the service of a profound transformative shift to regenerative education and regenerative living.

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Activism Countering Extractivism: Reimagining Relating Through Public Pedagogy on Instagram

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Summary
Although education transformation lags behind the immediacy of intensifying climate and environmental crises, activists are using Instagram to counter fossil fuel developments. Learning from Instagram's anti-pipeline activism as a form of public pedagogy, this paper explores how education might better contribute to the anti-extractivist transformations necessary to advance justice within the climate and ecological issues of our time.

Keywords
Extractivism
Social media
Public pedagogy
Activism
Pipelines

The increasing intensification and unevenness of climate impacts and ecological degradation present a crucial moment for rethinking education. Many scholars question the extent to which education in its current form fully addresses the deep colonial capitalist—indeed, extractivist—roots of the climate and ecological crisis, particularly because education itself relies on these same colonial capitalist foundations and is impacted by neoliberal policies. Therefore, transforming mainstream education in relation to climate change involves excavating extractivism's onto-epistemic foundations, along with the relations it creates—attending to alternatives to create education anew.

Although education transformation lags behind the immediacy of intensifying climate and environmental crises, activists are taking up social media for public education that counters fossil fuel developments and presents anti-extractive alternatives. In opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline—a controversial development that crosses the territories of multiple Indigenous nations in western Canada—overlapping networks of concerned citizens, Indigenous land protectors, and environmental activists have used Instagram to document pipeline construction, teach using infographics, and express solidarity through reshared posts. Understanding these efforts as a form of *public pedagogy*, I have traced this activism for the past few years (Karsgaard, 2023), considering not only what formal education might learn from pipeline public pedagogy but also how education might better contribute to the anti-extractivist transformations necessary to advance justice within the climate and ecological issues of our time. Dialoguing the composite images (Niederer & Colombo, 2020) of prominent anti-pipeline Instagram posts[1] with examples from my empirical study of pipeline public pedagogy, the present paper highlights both dominant extractivist relations and anti-pipeline resistance, drawing attention to relational alternatives performed by grassroots movements. Even though social media's economy serves colonial capitalist purposes, activists appropriate Instagram to both critique the settler state and transcend it by reanimating relations with more-than-human beings, activating anticolonial

movements, and reimagining relations through political aesthetics, providing relational public pedagogies that can inform formal education otherwise.

Extractivism in a Settler Colonial State

Mainstream education is complicit in the ongoing climate crisis because of its foundations in Western extractivist modernity and reiterations of the status quo, even though this infusion has not been universal in locations where Indigenous, African, and other alternative land-based cosmologies persist in influencing learning, as with land-based education. Defining land and bodies as resources valued solely for their profit, extractivism denies the inherent relationality of all things (Simpson & Klein, 2017). Extractivism is buoyed through Canadian discourse and education, which tend to celebrate the nation's resource histories and economy, while shrouding the Indigenous dispossession necessary for fossil fuel projects and depicting anti-pipeline resistance as criminal or "anti-Canadian" through, at times, violent discourse (Figure 1). The criminalization of resistance disproportionately impacts Indigenous peoples, who more often oppose pipeline developments on their sovereign lands (Crosby, 2021). The White supremacy inherent to extractivism is masked in an economically-based moral imperative that homogenizes the benefits of resource infrastructures for "all Canadians," despite the actual benefits of a relatively small capitalist—and largely White settler—class (Barney, 2017).

Extractivism is a worldview as deeply ingrained in mainstream education as it is in creating climate and environmental injustice. Many education systems naturalize resource extraction at all costs through petro-pedagogies (Eaton & Day, 2020) as well as through individualized and neoliberal

Image 1. Composite Image Associated with the Hashtag #buildkm (for "Build the Kinder Morgan Pipeline"[2]). [3]
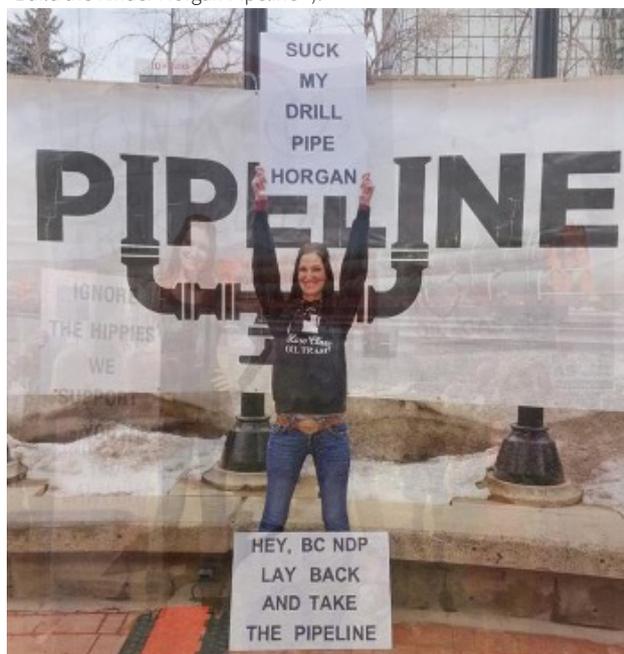
approaches to climate and environmental action. These approaches do little to explore other "ways of relating to and with land/nature/one another on terms that are other than, or more-than modern" (Tilley & Parasram, 2018, p. 306) as mainstream education marginalizes nondominant ways of knowing and being, ultimately reducing future possibilities to mere modifications of current extractive relations.

Finding New Relations: Trans Mountain Antipipeline Public Pedagogy

Other ways of relating, however, are evident through Instagram's antipipeline public pedagogy. Activists can boost anti-pipeline messaging through re-shared posts; make scrolling actionable through petition sites via "link in bio"; use memes to critique policy decisions; and inform the public through information swipe-throughs. Various forms of creativity, subversion, and appropriation are evident as activists take up the affordances of a platform created for data extraction and sale for public pedagogy around the Trans Mountain pipeline. The realities of Instagram's economy – not to mention its complicity in human rights issues through mineral extraction and significant energy expenditures— present tensions for activists seeking to educate about social and ecological justice. At the same time, activists' subversive uptake of the platform reveals a form of public pedagogy that brings together the political and educational dimensions of popular culture, supporting cultural critique and social justice—and speaking back to formal education.

Trans Mountain pipeline resistance utilizes various Instagram affordances to directly critique the settler state, calling out its inherent extractivism and White supremacy, while reanimating relations with more-than-human beings. Many posts utilize the location tag for "Canada" or hashtag for Canada's Prime Minister, #trudeau, to speak directly to state representatives and in response to state policies, sometimes humorously replacing the Prime Minister's name with #crudeau. Anti-pipeline activists address compounding environmental and climate impacts of the pipeline, such as harmful effects on endangered orca populations, the consequences of oil spills on key watersheds (Figure 2), and contributions of the pipeline to greenhouse gasses, which reveal the ways extractivism destroys our more-than-human relations. The phrase "water is alive," which is seen faintly in the background of Figure 2, highlights water protection in the face of extraction, in keeping with the resistance at Standing Rock to pipeline development across Sioux lands. The phrase evokes the deep "relationship between humans, water, and the earth" (Rosiek et al., 2020), providing an alternative onto-epistemology that foundationally opposes extractivism.

Image 2. Composite Image from the Hashtag #stoptmx (for "Stop the Trans Mountain Extension")

In addition to addressing relationality with more-than-humans, much antipipeline resistance connects fossil fuel developments with the colonial relations that persistently harm Indigenous peoples as well as the land, demonstrating an urgent need to reconfigure human relations. For example, activists use information cards (Figure 3), along with the hashtag, #mmiw (for "missing and murdered Indigenous women"), to draw attention to the violence against Indigenous women by pipeline workers stationed in temporary habitations, known as "man camps," in rural communities along the pipeline route. Although Indigenous communities have long appealed to the government to address the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, pipeline construction has instead remained a state priority, where fossil fuel developments are expedited through regulatory processes that circumscribe Indigenous sovereignty (McCreary & Milligan, 2018). Activists connect the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women to consent and Indigenous sovereignty by invoking the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through the hashtag #UNDRIP. UNDRIP calls for the express participation of Indigenous women in processes related to climate change and human rights (Priority 5) and demands that states honor Indigenous sovereignty by seeking "free, prior, and informed consent" to territorial and resource use (Priority 8). By linking #mmiw and #UNDRIP with the Trans Mountain pipeline, activists provide a critique of the White supremacist and hetero-patriarchal nature of colonial extractivism, which puts Indigenous peoples in the complex position of "fighting against the whims of the State not only to protect their lands but also their continued existence as nations" (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019, p. 24). At the same time, through an appeal to international policy that supports Indigenous

peoples' inherent rights, activists show the possibilities for reconfiguring colonial relations—a reconfiguration that is arguably even more important than action on climate if we are to move forward in a just way (Whyte, 2020).

Image 3. Composite Image from the Hashtag #transmountainpipeline

In Instagram's public pedagogy, visual aesthetics perform powerful alternatives to extractivist relations, transcending the racist representation of Indigenous peoples and the depiction of the land as *terra nullius*. Here, I am thinking of aesthetics in the political sense of Rancière (2013), whereby artistic expressions like Instagram posts interrogate or intervene in the existing hierarchical and classificatory structuring of the sensible world that rationalizes inequalities and justifies extractivism. For example, antipipeline posts linked to the Tiny House Warriors (Figure 4), a group of Secwepemc land defenders who have blockaded construction by building solar-powered tiny houses along the pipeline route often interrupt colonial representational regimes by depicting the bodies of Indigenous women present on the land. Images show women working with solar panels or raising fists in solidarity. Repeated depictions of faces and bodies enable self-representation by land defenders that refuses their depiction as criminals, violent protestors, or "savages" (Lane, 2018). In keeping with the anti-extractive efforts of the Tiny House Warriors, along with the group's support for Secwepemc sovereignty, the cultural and aesthetic production that emanates from these positions is a strategic motion of refusal: to evade capture, resist co-optation, and renew Indigenous ways of life through the creative negation of reductive colonial demarcations of being and sensing. In this way, Indigenous art contributes to decolonization by disrupting colonialism's linear ordering of the world and its conditioning of possibility (Martineau

& Ritskes, 2014, p. V). Despite the ongoing surveillance of Indigenous land protectors on social media, these activists can pick up their smartphones to perform, depict, and share alternatives to the extractivist status quo, complementing their frontline action with creative expression.

Educational Alternatives for

Image 4. Composite Image Associated with the Hashtag #tinyhousewarriors

world that justifies extraction, formal education might also engage in aesthetic experimentation through pedagogy and with resources, materials, and educational spaces (within and beyond classrooms and schools). This form of experimentation should foreground those knowledges that have been extracted or delegitimized, involving more-than-human co-creators. In doing so, anti-colonial ways of thinking and being may open space for education grounded in relationality, reciprocity, and kinship, whereby humans are not the center of learning and decision-making but are inherent within webs of relations among all things.

Non-extractivist Futures

Instagram's public pedagogy asserts a land-based issue within and against the economies and cultures of digital media, racist and colonial representational regimes, and the broader ecology of relations under the settler state. Learning from Trans Mountain public pedagogy holds the potential to inform formal education, which might draw on knowledge and theory from such Instagram affordances as hashtags and imagery. Particularly where education continues to be overly reliant on hierarchically developed curriculum created by the very colonial authorities addressed by pipeline resistors and broader anti-extractive movements, research through social media might inform public education for relationality and solidarity, particularly when social media findings are dialogued with communities (Duarte & Vigil-Hayes, 2021).

Considering the complexity of land-based issues like fossil fuel developments, whose impacts extend far beyond merely environmental or climate impacts, anti-extractivist approaches to climate education might more directly confront the failures of Western modes of thought and engage with alternative onto-epistemologies, moving toward reconfiguration of political, economic, cultural, technological, and material relations. As aesthetics hold political potential to interrupt the current hierarchical structuring of the

Endnotes

1. Composite images were created in Photoshop by hierarchically layering the top 10 most liked images associated with each hashtag, with the image featuring the most "likes" on top. Considering that many Instagram activists are highly surveilled by government and industry, composites protect user identities by preventing against reverse image searching.

2. Kinder Morgan was the initial company contracted to build the pipeline. After the Government of Canada purchased the pipeline in 2018, the Trans Mountain Corporation, a crown corporation, took over the contract.

3. The province of British Columbia (BC) under Premier John Horgan's New Democratic Party (NDP) did not support the pipeline, which caused interprovincial conflict with the neighboring province of Alberta, which is home of the oil sands, where much propipeline action originates from.

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A People's Pedagogy for Climate Action in the Indian Sundarbans

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Summary

The chapter discusses the development of a transformative pedagogy to create youth activists to address the climate emergency in the Indian Sundarbans, a delta region with five million inhabitants scattered across 54 islands that is now facing increased cyclonic storms, coastal erosion, and frequent floods. The chapter outlines methods to overcome pedagogical barriers and catalyze action in this climate-vulnerable region.

Keywords

Climate change
Transformative learning
Environmental education
Sundarbans

Cyclone Amphan struck India in March 2020, causing catastrophic damage to the Sundarbans. The people of the Sundarbans are no strangers to the devastating effects of cyclonic storms, but this time, the disaster struck in the middle of a global pandemic and India's ill-conceived lockdown. In the aftermath of previous cyclones, people had migrated out of the region to financially cope with the devastation and loss of livelihood. However, now, migration was no longer an option. The population was left to rely on sparse relief materials provided by NGOs and the government. The region's increasing ecological fragility and the need for a more resilient development model could not have been clearer.

Image 1. Flooding and Destruction of Homes Caused by Cyclone Amphan in March 2020

Source: Paschimbanga Khetmajoor Samity.

In response, an attempt was made to create a people's pedagogy on the environment and climate change with an agricultural workers union (Paschimbanga Khetmajoor Samity or PBKMS). The aim of this pedagogical project was to create youth activists (age: 15–30 years old) who could bring attention to the problem of climate change in the Sundarbans and join the struggle for just and sustainable development.

The account that follows does not attempt to address the theoretical aspects of creating transformative learning or effective climate change education. Several authors have addressed this in detailed treatises (Sterling, 2011; Singh, 2023). Instead, the present paper describes the practices

and pedagogical methods that enabled us to create a pedagogy for climate action, here as a guide for educators, and community organizers in other parts of the world who face similar struggles after explaining the need for a people's pedagogy in the context of the Sundarbans.

The Need for a People's Pedagogy
Climate Reductionism and Other Failures of "Development"
The Sundarbans is a hydrologically active delta formed at the confluence of three rivers: the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna. It is characterized by meandering rivers that continuously reshape the land through erosion and sedimentation alongside estuarine mangrove forests. On the Indian side, it is inhabited by approximately five million people scattered across 54 islands. These inhabited islands are protected by about 3,500 km of embankments that keep out the surrounding seawater.

Image 2. Community Rebuilding of an Embankment After a Breach

Source: Paschimbanga Khetmajoor Samity.

Historically, the islanders have been very marginalized in terms of access to resources and opportunities and are now further confronted by the multiple impacts of climate change. This vulnerability is compounded by long-term government apathy combined with a top-down system of planning. Economic policies such as the promotion of resource-intensive agriculture and adaptation through export-oriented tiger prawn cultivation have impacted food security and increased the marginalization of livelihoods. Moreover, the abdication of responsibility regarding the rights of the islanders as citizens has led to the erosion of state-funded healthcare to the point of meaninglessness and the dismantling of the public education system.

The development discourse in the Sundarbans over the past decade has become dominated by "climate reductionism," which attributes all changes in environment and society to climate (Hulme, 2011). This perspective leads to misunderstandings of the landscape, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. For instance, poorly planned permanent embankments neglect the resultant increased siltation of waterways and freshwater water flooding risks during monsoons (Chaudhuri et al., 2020). Meanwhile, experts situated outside the Sundarbans ignore the history of displacement in India and advocate for a "strategic and managed retreat as adaptation" (Danda et al., 2020).

Hence, a pedagogical framework that integrates climate science with a historical and socio-economic analysis of the region was necessary to develop an understanding of the intersection of ecology, politics, and society and the vulnerabilities found on multiple fronts.

The Miseducation of the Young
Our workshops involved participants with a high school education, and this made some pedagogic tasks easier. The participants could read thermometers, graphs, and maps with minimal help. Mainstream education along with access to information through smartphones had pedagogical advantages but also numerous limitations, including the following:

- An internalization of a hierarchy of knowledge: Immersion in the mainstream education system makes students rely solely on books and lectures, leading to a lack of trust in their own observation skills. Young people brought up on the internet and cable television also do not respect the knowledge systems of their ancestors (Gadgil et al., 1993).

- An unquestioning acceptance of the dominant development paradigm: Educated youth in the region are optimistic about India's growth and development, which is viewed in terms of physical infrastructure and consumer goods. However, the lack of livelihood and employment options and the environmental impact of the dominant development model have been overlooked (Kumar et al., 2009).

- A failure of formal environmental science education to transcend the boundaries of the school classroom: Environmental concerns have been a part of school curriculum in India for the past 30 years. However, the inclusion of environmental science and ecology has gone hand in hand with the adoption of an economic policy focused on increasing consumption (Kumar, 2018). The environmental science curriculum has also been focused on external knowledge transfer, here devoid of an emphasis on student inquiry and completely disconnected from the reality of the changing local environment (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Stevenson, 2007).

- Multiple erasures of knowledge and culture: The traditional ecological knowledge base built over centuries by farmers, fisherfolk, and forest-dependent people is being lost at a rapid pace because of an internalized hierarchical ranking of knowledge systems and the intervention of the state (Gadgil et al., 1993). The state has removed the right of communities dwelling near the mangrove forests on the environmental commons, promoting a "one-size-fits-all" approach to multiple

aspects of life in the region, ranging from agriculture to conservation. This erasure extends to a drastic erosion of syncretic religious and cultural traditions (Jalais, 2008). The failing public education system is fostering right-wing influence, leading to deep-seated fissures among religious communities, particularly among young people coping with socio-economic and environmental precarity (Lall & Anand, 2022).

We have used student-led research as the foundation for discussions and partnered with a grassroots organization that has decades of experience sensitizing people to class realities, systemic disenfranchisement, and the nature of capitalist power to embed our analytical frameworks in a broader vision for a future society. A trans-disciplinary analysis has been created to address the multiple erasures at work and the threat of disintegration of the social fabric.

The Building Blocks of a People's Pedagogy
A Research-Analysis-Action Cycle
A research–analysis–action cycle (Figure 3) is central to our pedagogy, aiming to convey the ecological fragility of the region and help perceive changes without relying solely on a top-down approach.

Figure 1. The Research-Analysis-Action Cycle
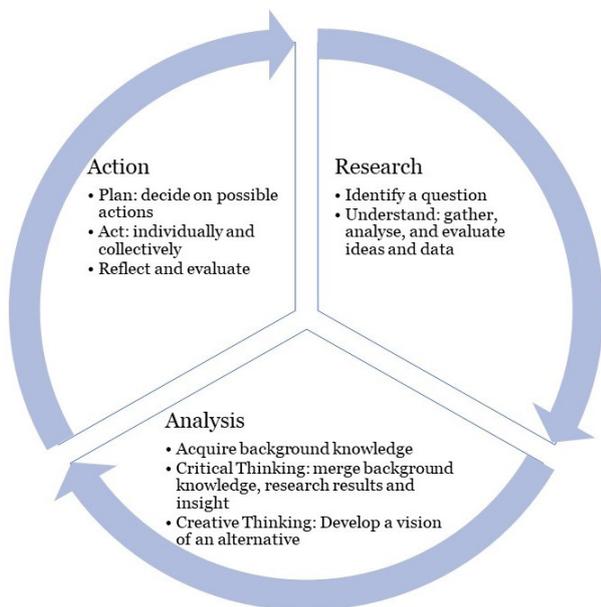
The research component of the process started with a video documentation project where the students were asked to interview a senior citizen in their own village about the social, environmental, and political changes in the region. Oral histories were followed up with by a larger app-based survey of Sundarbans residents to enable students to analyse large amounts of data and speak to populations beyond their immediate village communities. The message from the research was clear: The consequences of environmental

change were making livelihoods unsustainable, migration was driving young people away from the region, and the political space for dissent was growing smaller.

The results formed the basis for our analysis of climate change in the Sundarbans, which was correlated with global experts' predictions.

In the action dimension, youth action groups formed in the workshop spaces have become community educators with the aim of galvanizing collective action. We are now trying to use our workshops as spaces to also develop strategies for resilient agriculture and eco-friendly, resilient low-cost housing by combining knowledge from external experts and local stakeholders with youth acting as observers and facilitators of this exchange.

A Merger of Global and Local Expert Knowledge
Image 3. A Cycle Rally for Environmental Awareness. The Placards Shown in the Image on the Left Say: "Not Dole, Not Charity. We Want Environment-Friendly Development" and "Make Eco-Friendly Embankments. Save the Sundarbans"

Source: Paschimbanga Khetmajoor Samity.

Climate change is a global issue, but local observations of the changes in the climate and local mechanisms to deal with those changes are essential for an understanding in the appropriate local context. It is equally important to connect the factors that influence the material development of the region to the larger picture of a planet in peril. Additionally, learning about movements from around the world against fossil fuel capitalism creates a sense of possible action through collectivization and solidarity, helping students deal with climate fatigue (Hickman et al., 2021).

An alignment of global knowledge with continued local experiential learning is crucial (Gruenewald, 2003). Although expert analysis is effective in communicating the theoretical perils of the current development paradigm, a visit to a coal mine and conversations with mining communities enables a much deeper understanding. Historical analysis and economics can be used to communicate the likely consequences of a "managed retreat" in the Indian context, but a visit to a refugee camp with displaced people from

a neighbouring submerged island creates a more visceral reaction than any narratives with historical precedents or statistics could have communicated.

Scientific Experiments and Gamification to Communicate Complexity

Scientific knowledge is a necessary (if not sufficient) catalyst for environmental action. For many phenomena ranging from the simple (thermal properties of gases) to the complex (thermohaline currents), basic science experiments are much more effective than a textbook explanation. Gamification is often a very useful way of simplifying complex interactions between society and environment and for developing a capacity for action (Bachofen et al., 2012). Addressing agricultural challenges of altered climatic patterns or preparing a resilience plan for an incoming cyclone is confounding because students feel that they lack any practical experience, but during a game, they can strategize effectively and clarify their own conceptions much better than in a discussion. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre has a very diverse repository of games that can be easily adapted to various contexts (Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre, n.d.).

Space for the Co-production of Knowledge

Image 4. Images from a Climate Science Workshop. Clockwise from Top Left: Discussion on the Basic Concept of a Greenhouse Effect, a Simple Thermohaline Current Demonstration Using a Plastic Tank and Food Coloring, and Demonstration of the Use of a Thermometer

Source: Paschimbanga Khetmajoor Samity

The aim of community environmental education should be to translate between local observation and scientific education to respond to climate perturbation. In creating a space for co-production, it is important to recognize that communities are not homogeneous and that people inhabit different geographies.

In the Sundarbans, for example, the perception of environmental change varies widely depending on both proximity of an island to the mainland as well as occupation of an individual. Even on a single island, there are multiple levels of socio-economic and caste inhomogeneities. Monsoon rains, for example, for a higher caste land-owning farmer who is living inland brings vital freshwater for cultivation while, for a lower caste landless islander who is living next to the embankments, it brings anxiety of a breach or a tidal surge.

In our workshop spaces, the participants began to construct their own local geography (Figure 6). Descriptions from multiple participants helped build a composite view of the region. Multiple facets of inhomogeneities must be considered in creating such coproduction spaces and a lot of work must be done to foster empathic understanding across social divides.

An Effective Grassroots Partner

Image 5. The Construct Your Own Geography Exercise Where Participants Stand in Front of a Map of the Region and Describe the Location of their Home on an Island, their Local Environment, and their Perception of Different Seasons and Weather Events.

Source: Paschimbanga Khetmajoor Samity.

Our grassroots partner in this project helped us frame the scientific understanding of climate change in a broader context that included a socio-political, economic, and historical analysis of the region, as explained before. The most meaningful contribution of our partner, however, materialized in planning and empowerment for realization of the action dimension of our framework. This empowerment involved the development of a sense of responsibility and direction for action is critical to convey a sense of urgency without surrendering to a doomsday scenario. A partner organization that has experience with community activism in the region is critical to the development of a sense of empowerment.

The Way Forward

Climate change is a global phenomenon, but vulnerability is a local nonhomogeneous experience. An effective pedagogy of climate change must integrate local perceptions with global risk assessments. For a body of knowledge to emerge from such a pedagogic space, a two-way collaboration between educator and student is essential.

Our pedagogy has relied on student-led research and the analysis for the coproduction of knowledge in our workshop spaces. We have used global expert knowledge to connect the socio-scientific factors that influence the material development of the region to the larger global picture of a planet in peril. At the same time, we have acknowledged that local communities are not all-knowing and that a merger with global expert knowledge is essential to explain local changes observed, understand larger planetary and economic forces at work, and, finally, form a sense of global solidarities that help emerge out of despair.

For transformation of a student's priorities and mindsets as well as deeper conceptual understanding, student-led research, independent field inquiry, and continued experiential learning have proven to be very effective. We have developed a sense of agency and prevented "doomism" and fatigue among youth by incorporating an action dimension with an experienced grassroots partner.

We have not ignored the multiple inhomogeneities and hierarchical social relations in our communities. We have considered these differences in creating a coproduction space because knowledge is always shaped by the social relations and power dynamics in the process of producing knowledge can imprint upon the knowledge that is produced. Collaborative capacity, when used effectively, however, can reshape social relations.

In our work, ecological concerns were never privileged over socio-economic concerns of the youth. We have tried to create a working-class climate pedagogy that is not centred only on climate science but also on everyday struggles over access to livelihoods, food, housing, energy, and transportation. This holistic agenda was present in every step of our research-analysis-action framework.

Admittedly, it is not possible to easily quantify the success of a transformative pedagogy, but the fact that we have a core activist team of 25 youth who are prepared to be community educators out of about 140 youth we engaged indicates some change.

From my world of the university classroom, my assumption when I started working as an educator was that, if we can communicate the science or socio-scientific issues better somehow, our communities and political systems would take over and respond with action. In the world of grassroots climate education in the Sundarbans, however, it becomes clear how difficult it is to move away from "business as usual" but, at the same time, how important it is that we do.

Image 6. The Core Team of Young Climate Activists from the Sundarbans Trained in our Workshops

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Part 7

Highlighting Education in Conflict and Emergencies

Migrants and Refugees in School Curricula: New Narratives to Progress Global Justice

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Summary

This chapter reflects on the curricular approach to international migration, seeking to understand the way it contributes to or challenges education for societal transformation for a just future. We argue that, far from top-down approaches, the mobilization of local experiences and the promotion of a decolonial view have a key role in fostering new narratives that challenge the idea of subaltern and that focus on migrant's contribution and participation in the creation of alternatives.

Keywords

International migration
Curricular justice
Migrant's right to education

Introduction

School curricula have become one of the most relevant social territories in the dispute about what is meaningful and validated knowledge—and, thus, the ultimate purpose of education systems. This debate has been historically present in the struggle for the realization of the right to education from an emancipatory perspective (Gomes, 2012), along with recent claims for epistemic justice and decolonization of the curricula at national, regional, or global levels. It implies conflicts and negotiations around the worldviews to be taken into account.

Migrants, refugees, and displaced persons compose a paradigmatic group to understand current challenges, given it also mobilizes complex global issues, such as the new forms of hate speech and racism, national- or identity-based violence and discriminations, and the rise of authoritarianism, among others. Drawing on our previous empirical research developed in Brazil, Colombia, and El Salvador, as well as through literature review, the proposed chapter reflects on the curricular approach to international migration, seeking to understand the ways it contributes or challenges education for societal transformation for a just future.

We argue that, far from top-down approaches, the mobilization of local experiences and the promotion of a decolonial view have a key role in fostering new narratives that challenge the idea of subaltern and focus on migrants' contribution and participation in the creation of alternatives.

Securitarian View and Power Relations

There are numerous unresolved questions related to the way societies see migration, an issue deeply permeated by inequalities, power relations and biopolitics. One thing that illustrates this very well are the notable attempts to regulate migration flows—controlling the nonauthorized but inviting the desired ones. International mobility has become a symbol of an open society, but some are simply not welcome or allowed because of walls, racialized frontiers, endless regularization or visa bureaucracy, discrimination, and xenophobia. There are currently more than 70 walls and more

than 1,300 "detention centers for migrants," a euphemism for prisons. It is not about being native or non-native; it seems to be that the freedom to move is deeply connected to racial, economic status, and gender markers and the category of "migrant" will be added to and negotiated with all others (Magalhães, 2019).

At the global level, approaches to migration as a social problem have prevailed (Castles, 2010), and a negative and securitarian view of its subjects have been fostered (Fassin, 2011). Migrants are frequently represented as an eminent danger that threatens local populations or as victims without agency capacity.

Education is among the many pieces that interact as discourse builders to shape current narratives and practices. We can depict the discourses in observing educational policies, practices inside schools and classrooms, and pedagogical resources, particularly curricula and textbooks, which have a key role to play. Being social and political constructions, curricula promote a society's—or at least the dominant group's—explicitly and tacitly valued perspectives, principles, social aspirations, and identities. They can counter stereotypes, reduce prejudice, and develop immigrants' sense of belonging when reflecting diversity to support teachers; in contrast, inappropriate textbook images and descriptions can make students feel excluded or misrepresented (UNESCO, 2019).

The literature, particularly from the Global North, acknowledges migration as a much more present topic in curricula and contemporary textbooks whenever compared with previous decades. Immigrants have been portrayed in "problematic terms," usually connected to cultural differences in the constant "they" and "us" of the nation-state and the so-called "challenge of integration." In many cases, racism and xenophobia are acknowledged; however, no alternatives are presented. In the Global South, the mainstreamed global migration discourse has been often reproduced in the curricula and textbooks, with very simplified explanations. The group of "migrants" keeps being represented in a homogenous way, with a few but important attempts to approach the topic from alternative views.

New Narratives

Despite not being an easy task, there is room for an important shift in the tone as a way to add plurality, a critical view, and multiple perspectives. That is, much richer content can be shared with students if one is seeking to promote global social justice. There is a clear need for sharper data as well as rights-based language. There is also a need to problematize myths with evidence and to invert the problem to be overcome. It should be emphasized that human mobility is a natural part of world history and that inequalities need to be tackled. Moreover, there are important critical

voices overlooked by school curricula that not only can better represent diversity but also effectively offer different narratives.

The false idea that there is only a single way to live and understand the world is part of the same colonial ambition. There are different knowledges that have never entered schools and would be more than ever helpful in offering new possibilities to exist and share the planet; these include presenting the narratives about human mobility as well as offering a new vision and vocabulary about circulation, frontiers, and, therefore, migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

The Cameroonian Achille Mbembe reminds us of the accident that represents our place of birth and its weight of arbitrariness and constraint. At the same time, Mbembe (2017) notes how human the act of going from one place to another is. This same author has been disseminating a vision of African diaspora, one shared by other authors, in which African migrants, instead of subaltern, are seen as active citizens and protagonist actors of globalization. In this sense, learning to move is part of human history and a vital part of the creation of culture.

Likewise, the Brazilian indigenous philosopher Ailton Krenak (2020) points out that the current rigid borders constitute an out-of-date standard that actually creates obstacles to exchange and learning. If we want a world of peace, he insists, the borders cannot be a block wall but instead a transition place. In her *Habiter la Frontière,* Leonora Miano (2012) shares a similar idea when proposing a vision of borders anchored in a space of permanent reception—and not rupture. She defines border as the place where worlds inevitably touch and a place of constant oscillation: from one space to another, from one sensitivity to another, and from one worldview to another. The border evokes the relationship and gives birth to a new meaning.

Learning From Local Experiences

While schools cannot be responsible for the failure of politics, they can be places where plural narratives and practices arise. Far from blueprints and top-down approaches, rights-based changes are complex and take time because they involve multiple dialogue, daily negotiations with subjects, and a strong connection with local contexts. The literature has drawn attention to the importance of city-level policies as means to claim for people's rights (UNESCO, 2019). In this sense, among various possible local cases, we will briefly shed light on São Paulo, a cosmopolitan yet unequal megalopolis with migrants from all over the world, in which a newly issued curricula orientation for teachers which point to alternatives.

Launched in 2021 and available to all educational levels— from early childhood care and education to secondary level

as well as adult learning and education—the pedagogical orientations are summarized in a 156-page document named "Curricula of Migrant People" is a thematic extension of the city's official curricula. Gathering different voices, including the voices of migrants living in São Paulo, it also brings normative, theoretical pieces, and, most importantly, lessons learned from local public schools' experiences. Migrants' economic, social, and cultural contributions to the city and country are acknowledged, and instead of external prescriptions, there is explicit interaction with historical demands of migrant movements as well as an important list of artistic and literary resources for educators that can be helpful in mobilizing their own experiences as well.

The document addresses discrimination and xenophobia, inviting students to think about Brazilian contradictions: The immigrant presence is a vital part of the country's history and life, yet the topic is seen as a low priority concern in the social and political scenarios. Although there is an image of an open, welcoming, and cordial nation, migrants keep facing selective hospitality, racism, and daily discrimination.

One interesting aspect is that the curriculum is not a standalone piece but an important step in a path that has been traced for many years connected to a broader struggle of guaranteeing migrant's rights—whose protagonists were the subjects themselves. The decades-long presence of migrant and refugee movements of various kinds in the city and their organized claims have resulted in new comprehensive local legislation policies and, at a slower pace, practices. An important milestone has been the year of 2013, when the local administration responded to those requirements with local policies for migrant people. It created the Coordination of Policies for Migrants (CPMig), within the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship (SMDHC), with the proposal to act in a "transversal, intersectoral and participatory" manner. The foundational documents stressed rights-based policies in opposition to the security view or labor market protection.

Amid the emergence of new institutional arrangements, policies, and narratives, education for migrants also gained a new institutional place. The local Secretary of Education added the thematic to its Center of Racial and Ethnic Education, which advises the formulation of curricula, evaluation, and teachers' training, previously focusing at Afro-descendant populations and Indigenous people. The visibility of migration as a human right, the overcoming of xenophobia, and the development of intercultural pedagogical practices were integrated as new priority lines.

Although the "intercultural" approach is far from being implemented in actual daily educational practices, it is fundamental to name it as a guiding principle. As Walsh (2019) observes, the plurality of decolonial experiences nowadays have in common an ethical and political intention to overcome processes of discrimination, inequalities, and dehumanization. In the case of Brazil as well as in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, migrants participate in a historic struggle for the construction of more egalitarian and plural schools. The region's educational systems were built on the idea of homogeneity, which was related, in turn, to the formation of the nation-state and a certain national identity to which all others should adjust. Indigenous populations, afro-descendants, migrants, and people with disabilities, among many other groups, were (and in many cases still are) systematically excluded.

Among the many lessons learned from the review of education policies for migrants and particularly curricular approaches about migration in different contexts, we found that a shift toward more just educational systems depends on problematizing migration discourses and integrating new narratives. It also requires a clear intention to foster a real rupture with the processes that come from and have been still blended with the colonial, racist, and patriarchal logics and their exclusionary projects.

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Pedagogical Love: The Relational Condition for a Socially Just Refugee Education

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Summary

This paper proposes adding a fourth pillar of relational justice as pedagogical love to Fraser's (2009) conceptualisation of social justice in the context of refugee schooling. It contends that the relational realm can be a site for mitigating (or generating) injustices independently and in relation to the cultural, economic, and political conditions for social justice. Therefore, it is a politically significant site for understanding and tackling misrecognition, maldistribution and misrepresentation within school systems and processes, which contribute to hindering young refugees' learning, feelings of safety, sense of belonging and ability to flourish and regain a sense of home in their new environments.

Keywords

Social justice
Relational justice
Pedagogical love
Refugee education
Sense of home

Adding a fourth pillar of relational justice as pedagogical love to Nancy Fraser's (2009) conceptualisation of social justice was an argument developed based on doctoral research with a group of Syrian refugee students, aged 13 to 16 years old, in an academic school in London, UK in 2019 to 2021.

Fraser's framework of social justice holds parity of participation as the 'normative core' of justice. It argues that justice requires 'social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life' (Fraser, 2009, p. 22) and that, to overcome injustices, it is necessary to dismantle institutionalised obstacles that prevent people from participating on an equal level with others as full partners in social interaction. Accordingly, Fraser proposes that achieving participatory parity is contingent upon three crucial elements: cultural recognition, economic redistribution, and political representation.

Driven by Fraser's concept of social justice as participatory parity, the inductive research framing the present paper aimed at offering young Syrians a platform to represent their educational and social experiences at school while recognising that their voices matter and must be heard and acted upon. The broad questions that underpinned the study were initially concerned with what may promote or hinder the children's educational and social experiences in and through school in a new and unfamiliar cultural milieu.

The young Syrians' testimonies (Al-Waeli, 2024) effectively illustrated their awareness of the pressing need for conditions of social justice:

> I could not find … compassion, care … justice, equality, or help for learning [in this school]. [Omar, 16] (p. 111)

> School [and] teachers could have been a [buffer] against what we face every day in and out of school … but teachers never listen and do not care to ask what is wrong or whether we need help … They never asked whether I was coping … learning … or what issues I had. [Malak, 14] (p.114)

[Teachers] do not help much when they say, 'if you don't like it here then go back to your country' … I just know I don't belong here … they don't hear me … I want to find a place where I can feel heard … [and] seen … [and be] successful and content. [Sultan, 15] (p. 115-116)

The children's words highlighted the perceived absence of social justice and the prevalent hostile culture in their school, which can be attributed to the 'Hostile Environment' policy enforced by the UK government. The policy aims to reduce the number of asylum-seekers entering the country by imposing stricter limitations on their access to and entitlements for various social services (Pinson & Arnot, 2009). For schools attending to refugee students, this meant grave cuts in funding and educational budgets that resulted in being unable to provide proper teacher training, support, or adequate measures to address the numerous needs of those students, including their safety, learning and well-being. Hostility is further reinforced by the political and media discourses, often depicting refugees as a danger to the social unity of British society and a burden to the country and welfare system, leading to social exclusion even within schools (Pinson & Arnot, 2009). Additionally, the neo-liberal culture of performativity and standardised approach to education rendered schools and teachers unable and/or unwilling to employ socially just practices that counter the status quo. Finally, many schools in the UK were reluctant to accept refugee students because of concerns about the impact on exam results and school performance (Pinson et al., 2010).

These factors have impacted the schooling experiences of the Syrian children who described feeling unsafe, excluded, unappreciated and unequal to their peers, which led to a loss of motivation to learn or belonging. They attributed these negative experiences to the misrecognition/unrecognition of their needs, identities, capital, circumstances and daily struggles; the absence of moral and material support to address their needs and concerns; the misrepresentation of who they are and what they want from their school; the disregard of their voices in matters that concern their learning and well-being; and, most importantly, the lack of sustainable love, respect and compassion in their daily interactions particularly with teachers (Al-Waeli, 2024). Their accounts highlighted the significance of recognition, equitable distribution of resources, fair representation and sustainable nurturing relationships in promoting social and academic flourishing. This is especially crucial for refugee children because school is a fundamental environment to establish social connections and adaptation to their new home (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

Therefore, the framework outlined in the present article presents a coherent argument drawing from Fraser's conceptualisation of social justice and its relation to the concept of love in educational institutions and the significance of a holistic understanding of social justice in regaining a sense of home and ordinariness.

Regaining a sense of ordinariness in the new countries of resettlement has been addressed by Kohli's (2011), who contends that the young refugees' journeys extend beyond reaching their host countries, continuing through three main trajectories: seeking safety, cultivating a sense of belonging and developing a will to succeed in their new environments.

However, these three trajectories do not occur in a vacuum. The acceptance or refusal of prevalent social and political attitudes and policies control and constrain the paths that refugee children pursue to regain a sense of home. This means that achieving longer-term equal participation and success is influenced by the extent to which young refugees are allowed to equally participate in and develop meaningful relationships with their social milieu (Kohli, 2011). As such, McIntyre, and Abrams (2020) substantiate the need for a moral and normative conceptual framework of social justice, within which the necessary material and social conditions can be investigated. McIntyre and Abrams argue that 'Fraser's 'participatory parity' lens allows us to consider how far systemic factors affect [how] schools and those within them respond to the needs of young new arrivals' (2020, p. 31).

Accordingly, a sense of ordinariness can be regained when refugee students are perceived as equal peers in daily school interactions while their experiences, capital, abilities and requirements are recognised; when they are being allocated the necessary material and non-material resources to participate on an equal level with their peers; and when their voices are heard, their contributions are valued and their needs are acted upon.

Nevertheless, these conceptualisations overlook the vital aspect of relationality that has been repeatedly stressed by many feminist and education scholars and communicated by the refugee students in the present study.

First, Fraser's framing of social justice does not consider the relational realm, a fundamental site where injustices can be perpetuated or mitigated through affective relationships independently and in conjunction with the political, cultural, and economic spheres. In so doing, it ignores the interdependent nature of human beings and their inherent propensity for forming relationships with others within their various circles (Lynch et al., 2021). Affective relationships are not isolated but rather interconnected with the cultural, economic and political domains and can influence and be influenced by them. Inequalities in the affective domain can lead to laws and policies reinforcing economic, cultural,

and political injustices. Conversely, the inequalities in these three domains can impact the ability to establish and sustain affective relationships, where institutional policies and processes determine those deemed worthy of receiving love and care and those excluded and othered, here based on cultural, social, economic and political factors. The relational pillar, therefore, holds political significance for social justice as parity of participation and must be recognised on its merit and in its interrelation with the political, cultural and economic arrangements of societies (Lynch, 2012).

In neoliberal and capitalist societies such as the UK, love and care relations have become increasingly privatised, being confined to intimate and familial circles. Personal attitudes about love became entwined with societal and cultural politics and the ideological apparatuses of the state. Love ceased to exist in public discourse and policies, and power and domination took over, employing love as a political tool of othering, perpetuating domination, exacerbating injustices and cultivating fear and marginalisation (hooks, 2000).

In the educational context, Freire emphasises the notion of caring relations as a panacea for issues of social justice by advocating for transformative love that 'looks larger [and] sees deeper' into the implications within the classroom and beyond it (1998, p. 74). Freire's love is not a romanticised, individual act of generosity from teachers but rather an inspiring, critical, challenging and transformative conception that humanises education. It implies a critical stance that is actively political in nature and seeks to transform the lives of marginalised students and employ transformative education to address the deep social injustices, where teachers delve beyond the personal to understand the economic, political, cultural and social forces that work to seed and exacerbate injustices, dehumanise people and distort their capacity to succeed and prosper. This understanding reflects that love cannot exist without justice (hooks, 1994), while justice is not possible without loving and compassionate pedagogies in schools (Kaukko et al., 2021).

Second, understanding the search for safety and its relation to belonging and success in Kohli's framework should extend beyond the physical and legal aspects to include the moral prerequisite of providing relational safety, which is embedded in the ethics of love. Indeed, Kohli associated feeling safe with stable, just, and inclusive relationships. Similarly, growing meaningful circles of belonging and developing a will to learn and succeed are contingent on supportive and nurturing relationships that extend beyond the duty of care. Thus, in refugee schooling settings, regaining a sense of ordinariness should be an outcome of enjoying equal, caring, and healthy relationships between refugee students and their schools and teachers, who endeavour to create inclusive and loving spaces. These environments will then become home to caring

pedagogies that are adjusted, reshaped, and adapted to refugee pupils' changing needs at different points of their settlement journey (Kaukko et al., 2021).

When translating these arguments in the context of refugee education in the UK, it stands to reason that, for schools to become socially just spaces where students can feel safe, belong, learn and regain a sense of ordinariness, a holistic framework of social justice that encompasses the relational, cultural, economic and political conditions must be in place. Situated within this framework is Kohli's concept of the resumption of ordinariness, as championed by McIntyre and Abrams (2020) [see Figure 1].

Figure 1. A Framework for Socially Just Refugee Education
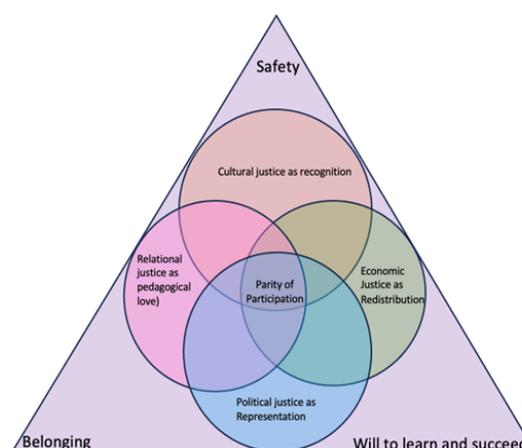
The relational pillar in this framework is represented by pedagogical love, a sustainable enactment of good teaching and pedagogy and an ethical disposition that frames the work of teachers and schools. This meaningful practice is developed through partnerships between school leaders, educators, and refugee pupils. It embodies Freire's notion of just education that incorporates an implicit theory of love and consolidates it into everyday pedagogical practices. Pedagogical love is a political and critical concept that stems from faith in social justice and that aims to empower students and educators. It entails creating, engaging, reflecting on and sustaining reciprocal moral arrangements that cultivate caring practices in educational settings.

Implementing these pedagogies of love substantiates and sustains forming safe and inclusive communities within educational institutions and classrooms where feelings of belonging and a will to learn are optimised. This can be achieved by creating and nourishing mutual relationships of trust, care, commitment and respect between leaders, teachers, and students and by recognising and acting upon the abilities, needs and voices of both educators and refugee students. As such, sustainable loving pedagogies become

indispensable for socially just, transformative learning, helping refugee students heal, rebuild day-to-day patterns, and regain a sense of belonging and ordinariness (Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2020), as one of the study participants contended:

> '*A good teacher loves [her] students and respects them … makes them feel trusted, so they can trust her … If I were a teacher, I would make an effort to help my students, I would never hurt … or punish them … I would include them, listen to them … make them feel welcomed… I only learn well if I feel accepted and appreciated as a human with feelings and needs* [Omar, 16]' (Al-Waeli, 2024, p. 111).

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Future-Oriented Pedagogies: A Response to the Challenges of Today's Conflicts, the Case of Colombia

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Summary

This article explores the pedagogical initiatives from three educational sites in Colombia: the school, local library and a women's organisation. Their everyday actions and strategies have opened spaces for creating new futures outside the rigidities of the armed conflict and its legacy. Despite the difficulties, their efforts are evident in the everyday lives of the communities that keep struggling for peace.

Keywords

Future-oriented pedagogies
Everyday peace

Many societies suffer from intractable wars rooted in social inequalities, socio-political issues and ethnic conflicts. Children and young people grow up amid socio-economic and political rivalries that seem to never end. The presence of conflict in the everyday lives of people makes it difficult to envisage a way out. Sometimes, education falls prey to those conflicts, too, because of its absence, lack of quality or segregation (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). These contexts present pressing issues such as militarisation of educational sites and the presence of violence at a structural level (e.g., state neglect, lack of reparation or human rights violations by the state). Violence itself constitutes an oppressive force, and young generations face decisions about participating in it to make a living. This article examines Putumayo, Colombia, where conflict has fractured the social fabric and deprived the communities of opportunities for progress and sustainable peace.

Children and young people internalise the experience of everyday conflict in Putumayo. This first-hand knowledge of war certainly influences people's language, interactions, expectations and life choices. It also changes the way they understand themselves and others (Sanchez-Merteens, 2017). Children's playgrounds percolate with fear, anger and apprehension. Likewise, illegal groups quickly capitalise on the context of poverty and state neglect, forcing people to grow illegal crops. Not only does this affect people's lives, but it causes environmental destruction and reinforces generational cycles of poverty and violence. For example, some towns suffered from massacres and extreme violence, plunging people further into a spiral of poverty and marginalisation. However, despite the devastation, signs of hope emerge from everyday actions by some education agents who make room for alternatives. Here, a pedagogy leaning towards the future takes place.

The realisation that violence has become an oppressive force coming from different fronts (the state, armed groups, illegal crops, etc.) moves people to think of alternatives (Freire, 2017). This involves the creation of counter-narratives and non-violent mindsets. Here, memory plays a vital role in making sense of the past and how past and present conflate,

which involves decisions in terms of what to remember or forget (Jelin, 2020). Likewise, in the act of remembering lies the possibility of hope (Solnit, 2016). Remembering comes with an understanding of the need to break cycles of oppression and violence, but it also informs what daily actions to take. In this sense, education agents in Colombia have embodied hope in everyday peace actions, which has scaled up in ways that are evident today (Mac Ginty, 2021). This constitutes a lesson for educators who face everyday conflicts and inequalities that normally seem to be undefeatable.

A response to the challenges of conflict has taken place in the form of pedagogies that open future possibilities. Certain forms of dialogue, interrogation and learning have appeared in the everyday experience of schools, local libraries and social movements. This is never a straightforward process because schools and other educational sites face tensions, contradictions and discontinuities. However, teachers and other education agents propose strategies that show children and young people ways of nonviolent expression, re-membering and reimagining the present and the futures yet to come. Education agents embody forms of communication inviting to adopt sophisticated forms of conflict where dialogue and listening are the main source (Zuleta, 2011). For example, the local library welcomes everybody, irrespective of their political views, social class or gender as long as violence is not exerted. Teachers at school propose new forms of learning that involve the use of imagination and nonviolent expression. Here, too, anger—not violence—is welcome because it becomes the fuel for creativity (Quintana, 2021). It

Image 1. Local Library

Source: Author

is here where education agents navigate contradictions and tensions seeking to unfold new futures.

Even while living in areas of conflict and facing their own difficulties, teachers also envisage possibilities. They have seen the effects of Western forms of development and state neglect that are detrimental for the communities (e.g., Plan Colombia, oil exploitation, and guerrilla and paramilitary groups). However, remembering here means looking ahead and imagining possibilities of change where communities become the owners of their choices and contribute to peace in the region, the country and the world. For example, a local library has become a peace library where intergenerational interactions promote peaceful attitudes. A magazine has become a creative vehicle of expression where people have the space to channel their fears, hopes, expectations and frustrations into poems, photography and short stories, escaping the rigidity of a context where no expression is allowed. This is a difficult endeavour and requires the participation of state universities and local authorities who occasionally provide funds to the library. It also involves the creativity of young volunteers who go to universities in other regions of the country and bring new ideas that promote participation of the community. However, the lack of support sometimes makes it more difficult, but their persistence helps the magazine stay afloat.

The library also has a local radio programme that has broadcasted for more than seven years. In it, they seek to strengthen their community ties and reject violence to the tune of Latin American protest music. This was especially difficult in times of paramilitary action in 2010, but the response of the community was positive. Likewise, they came up with initiatives, such as play in public spaces, where children would give up their toy weapons and embrace more creative forms of play. This happened a few times and was a good example for parents and children of alternative forms of play where violence is not needed. Extracurricular activities and multimedia projects (although access to technology is scarce) help children and young people unfold other possibilities based on a sense of dignity and nonviolence (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Freire, 2017; Gill, 2014; Santos, 2015). Some of the children who participated in those initiatives are active members of the community and work in different areas of the region, and some affirm how positive the local library was when making life choices. In fact, some political leaders are young people who promote forms of governance respecting nature and human rights. Funding is a scarce and some of these initiatives stop at times, but this library has become an example of peace-building recognised nationwide that continues the struggle.

The school also has a powerful role in the community, particularly when it mobilises outside physical and institutional boundaries. Some teachers have come up with creative ways to draw pupils' attention to their potential and agency. Sometimes, this has involved difficult conversations where teachers are challenged about their choices compared with what is available outside the school (e.g., illegal crops yielding quick profits or armed groups/the armed forces,

whereas teachers have low wages). It is here where teachers practice pedagogies that unfold futures; that is, teachers and pupils make sense of their everyday experiences and interrogate their choices and imagine possibilities (Freire, 2017; Gill, 2014). Thus, together, they carry out sports activities, theatre, radio programmes and storytelling that challenge the logics of the conflict and their consequences for people, communities, and the environment.

For example, with the theatre company created by a schoolteacher, pupils have engaged with the community and travelled to other regions of the country, showcasing their talent and their message, which has allowed them to get in touch with other realities and contexts. This is a powerful initiative because they can express and propose forms of understanding the conflict, its effects, and alternatives while acquiring multiples skills (e.g., artistic or multimedia skills). This depends on funding available and what students and teachers collect from other activities, but it has inspired young people to study and pursue fulfilling walks of life. Sometimes, the government or NGOs provide financial help or spaces to participate with creative products where children tell stories and express their views on the conflict and its effects. Here, then, pupils receive cultural sources and expand their human connections, fostering their capacity to aspire to other (future) realities where they make their own informed choices (Appadurai, 2013). Although not all the schools in the region have adopted this approach, there are a few examples of schools making efforts to help pupils and their communities; this also includes hybrid work with NGOs and the implementation of strategies to provide children with a wide range of inspiring options that can foster conscientious thinking.

Another educational site is that of social movements, specifically the women's organisation resisting conflict and its impact. Women in Putumayo have experienced gender violence from both armed groups and the state. For example, they have been deprived of opportunities for land restitution because men hold ownership of the deeds to the land. Thus, women have tenaciously articulated modes of being in the face of oppression, engaging in entrepreneurial and educational activities. They have created cooperatives taking the leadership and providing for their families, which promotes a balance of power at home. Additionally, they occasionally work together with state institutions and NGOs by running workshops where they teach men and women about diversity and how to overcome discrimination based on gender or sexuality. In doing so, they question macho culture and educate their families and other members of the community. This has reconfigured relationships and led to more equal forms of cooperation between men and women as well as respect for diversity. This is not an easy task, but women have articulated powerful and creative forms of communication with their families and communities, opening spaces for dissent and diversity now and in the future.

Women have also created local museums where they display artifacts and artistic creations (e.g., poems and songs) that narrate the conflict and its effects and also invites a way to break the cycle of violence. Additionally, they have conquered platforms for participation at a local and national level, where they contribute to understanding the conflict from a feminine perspective and promote peaceful alternatives to overcome violence. All these forms of everyday actions constitute mechanisms that reconfigure the social fabric, dismantle violence and restore a sense of human dignity (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Freire, 2017; Gill, 2014; Santos, 2015). In addition, political views are diverse, and people work together irrespective of those differences. There are tensions, misunderstandings and conflicts at times, but violence is less likely to be the way to deal with them.

The struggle for peace is a difficult one, and political and social processes seem to put those efforts to the test. However, despite the obstacles and top-down processes, education agents have come up with alternatives that continue to bear fruit. Most children who experienced conflict in the past now work in their communities as teachers, doctors and other professional, technical, and artisan jobs. They recognise the value of schools, local libraries, and women's organisations as educational spaces where they could dream of other realities. The struggle continues and peace seems to be a utopia, but as the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano once mentioned, utopia is there for us to keep walking. The communities affected by the armed conflict keep walking, reimagining their futures amid uncertainty and some achievements. In the meantime, teachers imagine futures now and work with their pupils on various initiatives that seek to give them access to new worlds yet to be discovered, but bravely envisaged in the present (Berardi, 2017; Lanzeni & Ardèvol, 2017; Ratto & Boler, 2014).

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Reimagining Education: Integrating the Arts in Schools with Refugee Children

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Summary

This project sought to explore how the arts and art education can be integrated in formal and nonformal education spaces to bolster psychosocial well-being, academic achievement, social cohesion, and peace among refugee and host communities in the Kyangwali settlement in western Uganda. It recognizes the myriad benefits of the arts as part of a holistic and futures-oriented education.

Keywords

The arts
Holistic education
Well-being
Refugees
Uganda

The arts awaken children's creativity and imagination (Greene, 1981). Children have the ability to reveal young people's "beliefs about themselves, their roles in society, and social locations" (Albers, 1999, p. 7). The arts also provide both short- and long-term benefits, including positive and lifelong contributions to physical and mental health and well-being (Buser et al., 2023; Ryff, 2019; Winner, 2022). For children and youth whose lives have been disrupted and displaced by armed conflict, war, and natural disasters, engagement in the arts can further strengthen individual and communal resilience and help mitigate trauma (Jones, 2018). Furthermore, UNESCO's recent Futures of Education Report, which seeks a new social contract for education that embodies "justice, cooperation, and the transformative power of knowledge" states the following:

> *Artmaking provides new languages and means through which to make sense of the world, engage in cultural critique, and take political action. Curricula can also cultivate critical appreciation and engagement with cultural heritage and the powerful symbols, repertoires, and references of our collective identities* (2021, p. 73).

Recognizing the myriad benefits and contributions that emerge through engagement with the arts, in addition to valuing the arts as a worthwhile endeavor in and of itself (Winner, 2022), the present article portrays our initial efforts to integrate the arts as an essential part of holistic education in refugee displacement settings. Holistic education "seeks to help students grow and develop in all dimensions: intellectual, emotional, physical, social, imaginative, and transpersonal" (Johnson, 2023, p. 5). The "Ubumwe: Exploring Arts for Education and Psychosocial Support with Refugee Children and Youth" initiative[1] set out to explore how the arts can be integrated in both formal education and broader community spaces as a way to bolster psychosocial well-being, academic achievement, social cohesion, and peace among the refugee and host communities in the Kyangwali settlement in western Uganda.[2]

Although the provision of basic literacy and numeracy skills in refugee settings around the world already proves quite challenging, we argue that the creativity, self-expression, and related skills, knowledge, and understandings fostered through the arts demand equal attention and are fundamental to improving literacy and numeracy. We further argue that an education for refugee and national learners that meaningfully includes the arts can contribute both to the rebuilding of refugees' countries of origin and social cohesion and peace on both sides of the border. The pursuit of the arts can also help us achieve wider goals in refugee and humanitarian settings, including contemporary efforts to decolonize and localize aid (see Time to Decolonise Aid report here), which can occur when existing local arts practices, traditions, and artists are recognized and supported to inform curriculum development, instruction, and community engagement.

Prioritizing the Arts and Piloting Ubumwe

The Ubumwe project, which means "unity" in Kinyabwisha, was initiated at the request of a school leader running a community-based school in Kyangwali who believed that art education has the power to change learners' experiences by promoting creative expression, collaboration, and reflection. Although the "creative arts"—in the form of music, dance, drama, arts, and crafts—are included in the national Ugandan curriculum, which schools serving refugee learners also follow, the arts are rarely taught. Ultimately, it is up to the head teacher's discretion in each school if formal arts classes will be offered or not. Anecdotal accounts among education actors in Uganda attributed the absence of the arts to a combination of factors: few art teachers, limited knowledge, and inadequate lesson plans for teaching the arts, a lack of teacher professional development and supervision, prioritization of examinable subjects, and a lack of time and resources to support the arts and related materials, among others. The situation in Uganda mirrors the devaluation and deprioritization of the arts that we can observe in many conflict and non-conflict-affected schools and school systems globally (Jones, 2018).

To rejuvenate the provision of the arts at the school in Kyangwali, project partners from the local primary school, Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and Teachers College, Hopelink Action Foundation (HAF) Uganda, the AfriChild Center at Makerere University, and two New York City–based arts organizations, Artolution and Arts Ignite, worked together to design and implement a curriculum for Primary 3, 4, 5, and 6 students. The lessons in Primary 3 and 4 focused on the performing arts, and the lessons in Primary 5 and 6 focused on visual arts, based on our assumptions of students' readiness and skills to engage in these distinct activities. Project partners engaged and sought approval from the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Education and Sports at the national and district levels, the National Curriculum Development Center, and refugee and education actors working in the settlement (e.g., the United Nations refugee agency and Windle International, the main nongovernmental education provider in the settlement) to ensure buy-in and alignment with other education goals.

The project team led a one-week teacher professional development (TPD) workshop near the settlement, with 13 teachers and three school leaders from the school. The workshop was led by Uganda-based teaching artists from Artolution and South Africa– and U.S.-based teaching artists from Arts Ignite. Workshop sessions included teaching theater, storytelling, music, dance, painting, drawing, and sculpture-making; utilizing arts as a teaching method in other core subjects; reviewing P3–P6 curricula; measuring program outcomes and the feasibility of implementing the curricula in their setting through surveys and reflections; and practicing the lesson plans demonstrated by teaching artists with students at the school.

Image 1. Teachers apply what they learned during the TPD workshop.

Teachers and workshop participants explored performing arts education and applied arts-integrated instructional practices by devising and presenting short stories and original

choreography led by Arts Ignite teaching artists during the workshop. They also engaged in collaborative brainstorming sessions to develop a mural and "foundstrument," a sculpture from recycled materials that was inspired by Artolution's "*foundstrument, soundstrument.*" On the last day of the workshop, the teachers utilized their learnings from the workshop to lead students through community-building activities at the school and present the mural and sculpture they created while at the workshop. Students were also given the opportunity to add their own illustrations to the mural and paint the sculpture.

Image 2. Learners paint a mural at their school.

After the TPD workshop, the teachers piloted the curriculum with students during the regular semester. They received ongoing support through a virtual community of practice (managed via WhatsApp) and shared their experiences, learnings, and reflections with the Ubumwe team along the way. In tandem, local Artolution teaching artists facilitated community-based and public arts activities in which students, teachers, and community members (including out-of-school children) came together at the end of the term to paint a mural and build a "book of hope" out of recycled materials.

Recognizing the Benefits of the Arts

Teachers' observations and reflections on their learners' engagement with the arts illustrated a myriad of benefits, including creative thinking, active participation, higher attendance, and improved teacher–student relationships. They noted their students' creative thinking as they witnessed new ideas developing in the classroom. After engaging with lessons about designing Kitenge (cloth with colorful designs worn in the region), for example, a teacher shared their own and their students' revelations that they could also make Kitenge:

We … see people who are putting on Kitenges. We know that maybe they are from industries … [but] we are unable

Image 3. Students and teachers create a "Book of Hope" sculpture out of recyclable materials.

to make them. But you find even us, even a child in P5, P6 is able to make Kitenge. So new ideas were developed [among] pupils. They [realized] they can also get more ideas from themselves and make those things (Teacher interview: November 2023).

In a different example, a teacher observed learners' eagerness and active participation: "Everyone would like to participate … compared with those normal classes. However, these activities when we are playing, everyone was eager [to] participate." The teacher went on to highlight another change during the implementation of the new curriculum: "Children would come to school daily—even those who [typically] do not come to school every day. Since we brought [the arts curriculum], children were no longer absent" (Teacher interview: November 2023). Another teacher noted improved dynamics between teachers and students, stating, "One [change] was the children started loving [...]. It improved the teacher-pupil relationship. … the children now were [keen] to engage with teachers, especially where they feel [they have] not understood or something like that" (Teacher interview: November 2023). Project partners also noticed shifts from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogies, through which teachers had to relinquish control so that their learners could engage in the creative process. Teachers new to the arts were also experimenting with different approaches and simultaneously learning from their pupils. In confronting their own challenges creating and facilitating visual and performing arts for their learners, teachers also developed a stronger appreciation of the arts.

More rigorous and longitudinal research, including measures on improvement in well-being, is certainly needed to better study the short- and long-term benefits of teaching the arts in this setting beyond a short pilot project, but the initial changes are promising and occurred relatively quickly. The two key and somewhat predictable lessons learned from the pilot project, in terms of introducing the arts to teachers who are not artists themselves, is that more time is needed to support both professional development and curriculum implementation activities. The experience also demonstrated opportunities for local artists to support formal art education delivery and community arts endeavors.

Image 4. Local Library

Pursuing a Holistic and Culturally Relevant Education Through the Arts

The arts have the ability to shape and improve the lives of children and youth, including those living amid conflict and displacement. Young people deserve access to a quality and holistic education that affords them the opportunity to acquire multiple literacies across subjects and experiences. Jones (2018) speaks about art "as an innate form of 'literacy,' accessible to anyone, of any age, in any culture, speaking any language" (p. 11), while UNESCO describes the importance of "futures literacy" for students—that is, the "ability to understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do" (p. 71). The arts provide a guide to the future as they are a "powerful way for students to explore their worlds, to know themselves and their relationship with the world, and to become better human beings" (Albers, 1999, p. 7). Although the fields of education in emergencies and refugee education tend to focus on ensuring minimum standards for education,[3] fostering art education accentuates attention to the development of the whole child.

Integrating the arts into formal and nonformal spaces in refugee and humanitarian settings also creates openings to identify and build on existing arts practices while avoiding the importation of models from the "Global North" that may or may not align with students' (and their teachers') needs. Embracing the arts in this way may contribute to efforts to decolonize humanitarian and development spaces, along with the associated educational policies and practices that disrupt rich local traditions. Identifying and upholding local arts practices and creating opportunities for local artists to feed into further education and community developments will ensure a holistic, humanistic, and culturally relevant education that centers on the arts.

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Endnotes

1. The Ubumwe project was funded by Columbia World Projects.
2. The Kyangwali refugee settlement hosts approximately 135,000 refugees, primarily from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and South Sudan, while Uganda as a whole hosts over 1.5 million refugees across its 13 refugee-hosting districts. Over 80% of refugees and asylum seekers are women and children, and 56% of the population is under 18 years old (See UNHCR Uganda Dashboard).
3. While the INEE Minimum Standards mention art, music, and drama, they are often offered as a means to an end rather than a central component of educational programming.

Part 8
Amplifying Education for Liberation

'Laboratories of Learning': Why Social Movement Education and Knowledge Matters

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Summary

Drawing on the findings of a three-year collaborative research project and recently published book (Novelli et al., 2024), this short piece makes the case that learning, education and knowledge-making taking place inside social movements really matters in the struggle for social justice and social change. Our research project sought to answer a simple but profound question: How do movements learn and make knowledge, and what is the effect of that learning and knowledge-making on activists, movements, societies, and social change? The project explored these issues in collaboration with leaders and activists from four social movements in Turkey, Colombia, Nepal, and South Africa. Our findings suggest that social movements in the Global South, struggling in some of the most complex and conflict-affected contexts, can offer us exciting, innovative insights into the myriads of ways that movements learn and produce knowledge as they struggle for a better world. We propose that it is precisely social movements located at the intersection of theory and practice that provide the potential to test out latest ideas, new thinking, and the limits of what is possible. They are 'Laboratories of Learning' from which both social theory and social action can develop and move forwards in new, imaginative, and transformative ways.

Keywords

Social movement learning
Popular education
Radical pedagogies

Introduction

How do movements learn and make knowledge, and what is the effect of that learning and knowledge-making on activists, movements, societies, and social change? This simple but profound question provided the foundation for a three-year collaborative research project (2018–2021) exploring the learning and knowledge-making processes of four vastly different social movement institutions located in four distinct countries and continents, as they advocate for peace with social justice in contexts of violent conflict, authoritarianism, and/or its aftermath.

The institutions, which were core partners in the research, are the following: NOMADESC, a radical human rights NGO based in Colombia that, through popular education programmes and human rights support and accompaniment, has brought together a range of diverse social movements in southwest Colombia, including trade union, Indigenous, Black communities, students, women's groups and peasants; the Housing Assembly, a grassroots organisation from Cape Town that fights for decent housing in post-apartheid South Africa and brings together different homeless and shack-dweller communities across the city; the HDK (Peoples' Democratic Congress), an umbrella organisation that brings together diverse social movements from across Turkey with a vision for a pluriethnic and democratic state, including Kurds, leftists, women's groups, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ and others; and the Madhes Foundation, Nepal, an organisation that works with and for the excluded Madhes community of the Tarai plains of southern Nepal. The Madhesh have suffered widespread discrimination but have begun a process of reclaiming their rights to land, dignity, and peace. In diverse ways, each organisation advocates with and for marginalised communities, seeking to defend and extend their basic rights to education, health, housing, life, dignity, democracy, and

equal treatment before the law. To different degrees, each organisation has also been the victim of state and parastate repression, violence against its members and activists and sustained surveillance and persecution.

Our research was coproduced by investigators working alongside social movement leaders and activists in-country and combined detailed case studies of the learning and knowledge-making processes of each social movement institution, which was developed through participatory workshops involving leaders, activists and supporters of the different movements and was incorporated within that a dynamic process of intermovement learning and knowledge exchange, here facilitated through a series of workshops and field visits to the respective country contexts, with the objective of building collective knowledge and intermovement solidarity. In that sense, this was both a research project and a solidarity process aimed at both producing new research insights and ideas while simultaneously strengthening the learning and knowledge-making processes of the respective movements and building bonds of solidarity and understandings across contexts, movements, and struggles.

In the next two sections, we briefly outline some of the background thinking to the research and then present some of the major findings, which will be useful for readers, activists and movements around the world to engage with and reflect upon and to hopefully encourage them to engage more fully with the freely available open access book (Novelli et al, 2024).

Background to the Research

Back in 1989, Alberto Melucci argued that social movements were cultural '*laboratories of experience'* within which '*new problems and questions are posed. New answers are invented and tested, and reality is perceived and named in different wa*ys' (1989, p. 207). Our research drew inspiration from this insight, extending it to explore the ways that social movements are themselves 'laboratories of learning.' Our central argument is that social movements have the potential, but only if we listen hard enough, to point the way forward to new modes of analysis, new ways of acting and resisting and new strategic directions to aim for and aspire to; that is, social movements are important sites of learning and knowledge-making yet have often been ignored by both mainstream academia and society. We also made the case for the need to fundamentally rethink our understanding of what constitutes education and learning and expand our horizons beyond formal and non-formal education to a more holistic, temporal and relational understanding of the multiple learning spaces that social movements offer to their leaders, activists, and followers. We believe that social movements, operating at the intersection of theory and practice, have

privileged insights into the nature and operation of the system within which we all inhabit. Those insights emerge out of and through struggle processes, and both historically and contemporaneously can provide new ways of knowing, thinking and being. Therefore, researching movements and their knowledge and learning processes can help us to better understand the limits of the possible in the struggles to come.

Key Findings

In engaging with and researching these movements and their learning and knowledge-making processes, we bear witness to rich and exciting processes of struggle, where social movements are engaging with the crucial issues of the day: the revolutionary subject; class versus identity politics; gender and patriarchy; unity and diversity; imperialism; prefigurative politics of living inside and outside of capitalism; state theory and state power; solidarity and its challenges—not in some abstract and distant academic way but through analysis, experimentation, engagement and adaptation. In doing so, they are testing out the limits of the possible in contextually grounded situations and building sophisticated, nuanced analyses of the complexity of social action and social struggle. None of this is easy, nor are they necessarily successful, but these processes are rich with theoretical and practical possibilities—a vibrant learning process that is producing a new vocabulary and grammar of social movement resistance.

Second, emerging from this research is a much stronger recognition of the need to return to definitional struggles over what constitutes education, learning and knowledge in social movements and its challenges (Choudry, 2015; Novelli & Ferus-Comelo, 2010). One insightful challenge, as noted by Tarlau, when reflecting on the weakness of the popular education/critical pedagogy literature, on the one hand, and social movement learning literature, on the other hand, is that '*critical pedagogues need more organisational thinking and social movement scholars need a more pedagogical focus*' (2014, p. 369). At the heart of this challenge, we believe, is that much critical pedagogy literature focuses on the practices of radical learning and, in doing so, prioritises the nonformal learning space rather than fully embracing the broader Freirean idea that the social movement itself—as a totality—is the school and that the '*struggles and actions, their forms of organisation, their "culture", in the broadest sense, constitute the starting point of popular education and its on-going field of enquiry*' (Kane, 2001, p. 13). Our research evidenced this: although we can learn a great deal from exploring the processes of nonformal education—and the NOMADESC/UIP case in Colombia is a rich example of that— we need to link it together with a broader exploration of the way activists and the social movements themselves learn and develop knowledge across the span of their activities, delving deeper into those diverse 'spaces of learning'. These broader

'spaces of learning' should also be part of the pedagogy discussion, but this requires a broadening out of the concept of pedagogy to link these spaces together.

In the present research, we have linked pedagogy to the oppositional social forces that are struggling over the production of new subjectivities. This has led us to the task of inquiring into the different forms of '*socialisation, education and work that promote rebellious or, on the contrary, conformist subjectivities*' (Santos, 1999a, p. 41). What does an alternative pedagogy of producing rebellious subjectivities look like? What is its social base? Within this understanding of pedagogy related to particular social forces with particular goals and objectives, we can begin to explore what a critical pedagogy of our movements might look like, the nature of the social forces that have given it life and what the particular pedagogical modalities are that are being deployed in the construction of counter-hegemony. Whether declared or undeclared, explicit, or implicit, each of the social movements explored has a 'strategic pedagogy' that transcends the movement's activities. It conditions and frames interactions, and it is these diverse social movement pedagogies that represent the sites of learning and contestation.

Third, and in relation to this, our research has evidenced the potential value for social movements of taking a much more conscious strategic pedagogical approach to social movement learning and knowledge-making. A comprehensive approach that transposes the '*different spaces of learning*' (from the classroom to the factory, meeting, and march) and develops a clear strategy to maximise opportunities for learning and knowledge-making, analysis, and reflection. This might begin with a serious nonformal programme of education emerging from a solid diagnosis of movement learning needs that must open up to recognise the vibrant spaces and debates that can be stimulated to take place across the movement's activities. An approach that identifies the different learning needs of leaders, members, activists, interested and general publics, eventually building a coherent strategy.

Fourth, we make the case for the centrality of education in the production of post national subjectivities. Across our case studies, we have evidenced the struggle over the production of new subjectivities, which are revolutionary in aspiration and rooted in the concrete realities and inequalities of the contexts analysed. We believe that these address, in diverse ways, a central contemporary challenge around the world. We live in societies shaped by very particular nation-state relationships, often rooted in colonialism, where dominant ethnic groups shape the nature of entry into citizenship regimes, with many unequally included and others excluded. These exclusions are rooted in various combinations and degrees of racial, religious, gender and class hierarchies,

and the task of many contemporary social movements is to attempt to construct alliances between different resisting subjects to challenge that hegemony. This touches on a central challenge voiced by Mahmoud Mamdani (2020) in his recent book *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*, where he calls for a break in the relationship between nation and state.

This is important for us because we believe that this research provides some glimpses into that process, which is both prefigurative in aspiration and intention and extremely challenging in practice. Our research with the HDK in Turkey, for example, evidence what it means to project a postnational vision in an extremely aggressive and nationalistic state. It goes beyond the slogan of unity in diversity to showing what it really means to bring together divergent oppressed groups. In part, it has been about recognition and respect, but it is also about recognising historical injustices, unequal capacities and the need for space for diverse historically marginalised communities to work out their positions and stances. It also means ensuring that different oppressed groups feel included in decision-making, do not get rehierarchised and feel a collective stake in the political project. It is also about the construction of a collective vision that is inclusive of difference but that also projects forward bonds of unity and common purpose. For HDK, the post-national political project also requires the production of a postnational political subject that can hold these divergences together, which is itself a pedagogical process. The centrality of gender in this process is crucial as a unifying revolutionary subject, as is the recognition of the sovereignty of minoritised political subjects, which have been long marginalised through state policy.

In Colombia, we can similarly see in the NOMADESC/UIP project the struggle over the production of new inclusive political subjectivities: one of which is the 'victim.' In that process, 'victims' of state crimes and human rights violations are reconceptualised as actors with agency, historical memory, dignity, and purpose. The concept of 'victim' cuts across gender and ethnic lines and provides a collective and unifying framework for many Colombians that have suffered from state repression. For NEMAF and the Madhesh, a great deal of work has been done in building a unified Madhes political subject out of a history of maltreatment and humiliation. At this stage in their political struggle, rather than reaching out to other oppressed groups, they are working on building the confidence in their own collective political identity. This appears like the South African revolutionary Steve Biko's approach to 'Black consciousness' and the need for self-organisation. Finally, moving to South Africa, we can see in the Housing Assembly intensive work in building unity among Cape Town's precariously housed communities. Central to this has been the construction of the home as a site of organising and

resistance, with strong gender dimensions. All these processes of subject formation are highly educational processes requiring reframing, dialogue, and negotiation, but where successful, they can unleash powerful social forces.

Fifth, while the struggle for diversity, inclusion and representation in social movements is an ethical position aimed at redressing historical processes of marginalisation, it is so much more than that. The process of bringing diverse groups together starts the process of redressing the epistemicide that has dominated social theory and social movements. Working towards an 'ecology of knowledges' is radically transforming some of the movements, changing both the means and the ends of their struggles. The ideas emerging from historically marginalised communities, like the Indigenous, the Black movements, women's movements, the Kurds and the Alevis, are forcing social movements to rethink their relationship to industrialisation, modernity, the environment, the state and patriarchy, producing new 'cosmologies' that have the potential to construct vastly different futures.

Sixth, we argue that there is no magic bullet for radical social change but that we can learn a great deal from the contextually rooted praxis of social movements working things out on the ground in the process of struggle. Central to this argument is that doing research is not about the pursuit of the discovery of perfect formulas for radical struggle. Rather, it is about understanding that opportunities, decisions, and movement processes are taken in particular times and places, have unintended and intended outcomes and that these dynamics change over time.

Seventh, the stories of these social actors, who are working in extremely difficult conditions and often paying a very high price for their activism (emotional, social, political and economic), shine a light on the beauty of the culture, wisdom, knowledge and courage of people who have often been long marginalised, silenced, felt 'unwanted' and seen as 'undesired' simply because of who they are and what they represent. Thus, studies like this are extremely important to make these spaces, these people and their knowledges and histories visible so that we can all be better informed and collectively build a just 'ecology of knowledges.' We have much to learn.

Finally, we make the case for more collaboration between academics and social movements to break the impasse we find ourselves in. Working with and for social movements is first an ethical position. It is centred on the idea of breaking down the distinction between researchers and researched and putting into practice the idea of 'nothing about us without us,' which is a central pushback to an increasingly commercialised research industry. This is a messy and

challenging process but can bring rich rewards both in terms of strengthening the effects of research for movements and in sharpening and strengthening research insights and findings.

Working through radical theory and ideas with social movements through praxis has the potential to bridge divides, enrich both social movement action and university campuses and support the development of both better theory and better practice. Our work as 'translators' can help bridge not only theory and practice, but also diverse movement spaces, sharing experiences, strategies, and knowledges. Recognising the rich ecologies of knowledge that exist between social movements and universities, building and strengthening links, provides a productive route forwards for both social theory and societal renewal—a form of intellectual commoning that can help build the future in the present, a prefigurative future rooted in dialogue, dignity, joy, reciprocity, equality and solidarity—values that are needed now more than ever.

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Student Activism in Secondary Education: A World of Alternatives

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Summary

It is common to consider university students as the younger actors in movements and in political participation, but political activism can start before individuals reach higher education. This paper will provide an overview of the alternatives produced by school students fighting across the planet for an improvement of the educational system and for a fairer society, showing how they are manifesting their political agency. A reflection will emerge on the need to consider school students as potential key actors for change, hence abandoning paternalistic stances.

Keywords

Student activism
Secondary education
Participation
Student movement
Alternatives

Student Activism in Secondary Education

In the understanding of how education works and on its connections to broader societal issues, it is quite common to overlook the active role of learners, especially while they are enrolled in secondary education. Effectively, comprehensive studies start to appear just related to the behaviour of older students, already in tertiary education. This paper, while far from exhaustive, will give an idea of many examples, of the different natures and from various areas of the planet, of secondary student participation in proposing alternatives to the hegemonic ideas of neoliberal education and society. Often, school students have been active in key social movements, even initiating some of them. The '*mochilazo*' and the '*pinguino*' movement in Chile represented key school student initiatives with a broader impact at the beginning of this century. However, high school students also mobilised in support of other movements as well, such as the ones against the neoliberal reform of the labour market in Italy and France or the movements against the Iraq War and in Solidarity with Palestinian people in the UK (Ancelovici, 2011; Donoso, 2013; Le Mazier, 2020; Lipari, 2022; Somma & Donoso, 2021; Woodcock, 2020). *Democracy and Disorder* by Sydney Tarrow (1989) underlines the relevance, both for number and disruptiveness, of learners of secondary education and vocational education and training in the mobilisations between the 1960s and the 1970s in Italy. Given the relevance of school students and the affirmation even at a global level of movements led and composed by them (e.g., Fridays for Future), I think it is time to give them space and produce studies that are useful for a better understanding of their participation.

The concept of student agency, as described by Manja Klemenčič (2024) related to higher education (HE), can be a valuable starting point and should be introduced to analyses of student political action in secondary education as well:

Student agency refers to students' capabilities to navigate and influence their learning and education pathways and environments. These capabilities are conditioned by agentic opportunities that emerge for students from the external environment, from the [higher education (HE)] 'structures

and processes' and agentic orientations that are internal responses of the student to the HE environments. […] Students enact political agency—individually, collectively or through proxies—toward changes in HE environments (i.e., institutional changes) or toward changes in society (i.e., societal changes). (Klemenčič, 2024, p. 11)

This brings together with a student impact theory, which visualises the fact that learners are not passive elements in the political arena but that their agency can be purposefully and strategically directed towards social change (Klemenčič, 2024, pp. 13–15). This notion is an essential premise for an analysis wishing to abandon paternalism and to learn from students as from any other component of society.

An Unexplored World of Alternatives

The first alternative I would like to show is the School Strike for Climate Action (SS4C) in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. These two networks, which share the same name, emerged in the wave of environmental global protest launched by Greta Thunberg and adapted the general claims and goals of the movement to their national contexts. Although other groups did something similar in different parts of the world (including Fridays for Future), the two SS4Cs are different from other groups against climate change for the fact that school students were in leadership roles. The students demonstrated an incredible confidence in the use of social media and built an official list of chapters based in different towns and cities, here connected to strike maps elaborated to ease participation on mobilisation days. According to Hilder and Collin (2022), the birth of these incredibly skilled activists in Australia should be connected to more than a decade of actions in schools of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition in a process of 'educative movement building' in which 'they are shaping a new politics of climate justice; not merely reflecting shifts in political norms, values and actions but enacting them' (p. 808). This was a quite strong manifestation of student agency, coming after many years of learning through mobilising in diverse ways, without renouncing new elements and accepting the opportunities of a broader, global wave of protest.

Staying in the southern hemisphere, we look at what is probably the biggest democratic school student organisation on the planet: the Brazilian Union of Secondary Students (UBES). With a huge organisational structure covering the vast South American country, UBES has been an active voice of Brazilian politics since its foundation in 1948. The fight for better and more equal public education for all goes together with an increasing role of Black activists and leaders subverting the hierarchies of class and race (Gomes, 2022). With a rich history that includes the action in clandestinity during the dictatorship, a successful campaign for the reintroduction of the teaching of philosophy and sociology in Brazilian schools in the 2000s and, in more recent years, the fight for quality education together with the struggles against authoritarian backlashes and broader societal causes. The year 2016 saw more than 1,100 schools occupied by secondary students in the country against cuts to the secondary education budget (Gomes, 2022), and new mobilisations were organised accompanying the developments of Brazilian political life in opposition to Bolsonaro's policies. The 2021 campaign 'Vida, Pão, Vacina e Educação' (Life, Bread, Vaccine and Education) in partnership with higher education student unions (UNE) and of postgraduates (AEPG) managed to merge traditional demands with claims for social justice and for an adequate national vaccination policy against COVID-19 that was devastating the country. After the electoral defeat of the far-right in 2022, UBES has been defending the result from the accusations of fraud by Bolsonaro and even recently has co-organised rallies for democracy under the slogan #DefendaADemocracia. The organisation has a standing on international politics as well, being part of the OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Students), for example, being vocal on the need for a ceasefire in Gaza. Additionally, UBES arranged and diffused the list of events for the global call for action on January 13, 2023, and shared data on the disruption of Palestinian schools to foster Solidarity (Borges et al., 2024).

Travelling to Europe, we can find a great variety of unions representing school students. Their European umbrella, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, plays a double role. One is as a student representative body, with assemblies and working groups directly participated in by school student leaders. The other is a nongovernmental organisation, with a board (executive political body) and a secretariat (composed of employed professional officers) involved daily in advocacy and bargaining towards the European Union and other international bodies. What effectively is an example of movement institutionalisation, reinforced for decades since the foundation in 1975, keeps elements of clear radical action with campaigns on topics beyond sectoral classifications and projects involving the unions creating an environment of transnational learning, producing tools for action and supporting the members in organising on the ground.

As previously mentioned, Italy and France are good examples of school student resistance to educational cuts and changes. To illustrate, della Porta et al. in 'Contesting Higher Education' (2020) describe how university student mobilisation was triggered by neoliberal adjustment, with a reduction of students' rights. Complementary to this, secondary school students also mobilised when similar reforms targeted their educational sector. Secondary school students, moreover, focused their protest actions on broader societal issues in

these countries, with huge protests being organised against labour market reforms in Italy (2014) and France (2016); in partnership with labour unions, secondary school students contributed to the protests of the Yellow Vests.

In my activism and now in my studies, I have had the opportunity to see school student unions at work. Despite having extremely limited financial resources and facing enormous obstacles to access the mainstream media and the political debate, these unions have always produced interesting examples of well but self-organised action. A case that is worth mentioning is the second-hand school book market. In multiple Italian cities every summer, the two school student unions UdS and RSM put in place this measure to fight against the high costs of textbooks and dictionaries, which are not covered by welfare measures (with limited exceptions). Occurring in schools or in friendly places, such as cultural centres, these markets see the unions selling and purchasing used books, helping families to understand which editions are still appropriate for the ones adopted in the classes and also allowing students with limited economic resources to access the needed textbooks. This grassroots action also represents an opportunity to denounce divestment on education and argue for the need of a stronger and more comprehensive social welfare.

Looking at School With Different Eyes

This overview of cases of student action can let us look at secondary schools and their students through a different lens, even though many more examples could have been added. What makes all of these pieces part of an alternative is the centrality of school student leadership. Despite not having the right to vote and being quite frequently patronised, secondary school students express clear will of participation and, when put in the right conditions, express a conscious understanding of their own agency and potential impact. The mix of participation and structure enables these organisations to spread in their contexts, tackle different tasks and keep radical goals and objectives, maintaining high competence related to their own constituency without renouncing broader societal and political goals. The examples taken from the academic literature of the past few decades and the more recent ones discussed in the present paper are also evidence of great transformative potential of organised school students. I believe that these should be more commonly thematised and analysed, not just put at the side of other movements or actors that are more frequently object of research and public debate.

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Woman, Life, Freedom: A Framework for Social Transformation in Iran

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Summary

The death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini while in Iranian police custody sparked the Woman, Life, Freedom (WLF) movement in 2022. This chapter delves into the ongoing conscientization process within the movement, focusing on its guiding philosophy, Jineology, an emancipatory feminist framework. It further unpacks the WLF movement's evolution into a revolutionary praxis, instilling hope in Iran for social transformation.

Keywords

Gender emancipation
Jineology
Iran
Conscientization
Freire

Understanding the interconnectedness of state, capitalism, and gender oppression is essential for social transformation and radical system changes. Therefore, in alternative discourses, incorporating feminist frameworks into economic and political systems is crucial. As an emancipatory feminist framework that serves as the backbone of the political system in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, Jineology, often known as Rojava, stands out as a compelling alternative. Jineology asserts that social transformation must dismantle women's subordination, which serves as a tool of political control, is influenced by capitalism, and reinforced by the state.

When such a liberating framework is aligned with a social movement's critical learning and conscientization process, it can inject a dose of hope for building an alternative democracy into practice. This situation describes Iran's current context after the emergence of the Woman, Life, Freedom (WLF) movement, through what Freire called a "revolutionary praxis" (Freire, 1970, p. 126). More specifically, the movement's multidimensional and leaderless nature has contributed to a critical conscientization process, promoting dialogue and learning within the movement.

From an educational lens, this chapter attempts to unpack the conscientization process unfolding in Iran through the WLF movement by reflecting on its guiding principle "Woman, Life, Freedom," and the associated philosophy: Jineology. This chapter is organized into three main sections: (1) a brief description of the Jineology framework; (2) an exploration of the WLF movement's characteristics within the Jineology philosophy; and (3) a reflection on how these interconnected concepts align with a revolutionary praxis, mirroring Freirean pedagogical approach.

Jineology, the Kurdish Feminist Framework

The origins of Jineology can be traced back to the Kurdish Resistance movement in Türkiye in the late 1970s through Abdullah Ocalan, the founding member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Azeez, 2023). Influenced by thinkers like Murray Bookchin, Ocalan expanded his vision from Kurdistan

autonomy to producing an antistatist and anticapitalist liberation approach, one based on direct democracy, feminism, multiculturalism, environmentalism, and communalism (Azeez, 2023). This shift led Rojava's society to adopt a democratic confederalism as an alternative political system, with grassroots democracy, gender emancipation, and ecology as its key pillars.

Ocalan's focus on gender emancipation eventually gave rise to the ideology of Jineology, the science of women, in 2008 as the backbone of Rojava's political system (Azeez, 2023; Blaszczyk, 2018). With its guiding principle, "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi," meaning "Woman, Life, Freedom," the philosophy of Jineology places gender emancipation before the liberation of the homeland, in which the occurrence of the latter is conditional to the former (Duzgun, 2016). This framework takes gender as an analytical lens to challenge the power structures at the intersections of gender, race, and class within historical, economic, and socio-political contexts (Shahvisi, 2021).

In addition to its intersectional focus, which is in line with Black feminism, Jineology also aligns with ecofeminism, highlighting how patriarchy within the statist capitalist system exploits nature. It emphasizes that the liberation of women is closely intertwined with the liberation of ecology from patriarchal capitalism (Azeez, 2023; Blaszczyk, 2018). Moreover, in Rojava, Jineology acknowledges the agencies of women in their local context, placing value on autonomous spaces for women's grassroots radical action, formulation of collective solutions, and mobilization. Furthermore, Jineology is concerned with a collective liberation for all women at the intersection of class, ethnicity, race, and religion from the violence of the state while considering their agencies and the subjectivity of their lived experiences in their local context (Azeez, 2023).

WLF Movement Characteristics and Jineology

The death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini on September 16, 2022, while in police custody for wearing an "improper" hijab has catalyzed the most profound and sustained political turmoil ever experienced by the Islamist Regime (IR) in Iran (Bayat, 2023). Following her tragic death, waves of protests, led mostly by women, immediately emerged, mobilizing around two million individuals across 160 cities and small towns in Iran (Tohidi, 2023). This extraordinary event has elicited remarkable international solidarity, particularly within the Iranian diaspora.

From a sociological lens, Bayat (2023) characterizes the movement in Iran as a revolutionary course that not only centers on the feminist ideals but also seeks to "reclaim life, a struggle to liberate free and dignified existence from an internal colonization," that, because of the primary focus of this colonization, "women have become the major protagonists of [this] liberation movement." To put his statement within the Jineology framework, the characteristics of this movement, notably its main slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom," signify the conscientization of people regarding the connection between the political control of women's bodies and dignity and control and assault on the dignity of the entire nation in Iran. It means recognizing that women became a colony of the state, where their liberation is a priori requirement for liberating the nation or, according to Freire, for their full rehumanization.

However, in addition to its overarching objective, these WLF characteristics also reflect critical elements of the Jineology framework. First, it is important to point out the origin of its guiding principle "Woman, Life, Freedom" and its intersectional nature. The very first large-scale protests for Jina's tragic death took place in her hometown, Saqqez, a majority Kurdish-populated city. The attending Kurdish women at her funeral took off their headscarves, symbolically chanting "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi," (i.e., woman, life, freedom), which then spread out across the country for the next five months. Jina Amini was a young, Kurdish, Sunni woman. Each of her identities highlights social factors such as gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, and religion, which are all major bases of layered marginalization by the IR.

Second, like Jineology's philosophy, which highlights the interconnectedness of women and ecology in the context of capitalist patriarchy, the WLF movement acknowledges the exploitation of the environment by the economic strategies of the IR and their influence from global consumer capitalism. For example, new resistance songs that emerged in the movement each included references to environmental issues like a lack of environmental management (e.g., extinction of rare species) as well as excessive fossil fuel extraction and its corresponding outcomes (e.g., air pollution and dried-up reservoirs).

The third element is the emergence of a collective agency within the movement for collective liberation. Unlike the Green Revolt and previous uprisings, this movement mobilized wider concerns and constituencies, including ethnic minorities (Kurds, Lors, Baluchis, Arabs, and Azeris), LGBTQ+ community, youth, middle- and working-class families, urban and some rural communities, and diverse social groups. Marginalized individuals began openly sharing their lived experiences of state oppression, while various social groups converged their activism towards the WLF movement. This process further enhanced people's awareness of the state's oppression, fostering national solidarity and a collective commitment to contest the state's hegemony.

Finally, a transnational feminist feature of Jineology, that considers the complexities of historical, internal, and external

social and politico-economic conditions that shape a nation's mobilization is another reason its framework fits Iran's movement the best. The WLF movement could not happen overnight. Behind it, it has the accumulation of the previous uprising learnings; the impact of over 120 years of women's movement and "nonmovement"; feminist discourses in Iran; and "connective actions of noncollective actors" who do not pursue a political protest but rather established alternative norms to achieve a dignified life that has been denied to them.

WLF Movement, a Revolutionary Praxis

Although the WLF movement fits the underlying elements of Jineology, it also closely aligns with Paulo Freire's approach in several embodied commitments. The first commitment is a partnership with movements of the oppressed that expanded in message, size, and make-up. This companionship commitment has three layers. First, it has been the first time in the history of Iran that men actively participated in widespread protests in support of women's rights and against the state's violence, chanting "Woman, Life, Freedom" across Iran. Similarly, for the first time after the revolution in 1979, Iranians across the globe have come together, united in raising the voices of Iranians inside the country.

The second layer is related to the intersectional nature of the movement that created collective solidarity, uniting people who have been systematically marginalized by the IR and/ or the previous oppressive systems in Iran (e.g., LGBTQ+ community, women, the ethnic and religious minorities, and more), regardless of their class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion. For example, Friday prayer sermons in Suni areas of Sistan and Baluchestan and funeral ceremonies for Kurdish victims of the IR's violence mobilized the most diverse group into the streets (Bayat, 2023). Many traditional veiled women also identify themselves with the WLF movement, including Fatemeh Sepehri, a political prisoner who is sentenced to 18 years for defying the system. However, the IR's response to this national solidarity has been more intensified violence, arrests, and killing, particularly toward ethnic minorities such as Kurds and Baluchis, which the IR's securitization propaganda accused of separatism. The IR response has backfired and further strengthened this collective solidarity and the quest for collective liberation.

The last layer of the partnership with the oppressed concerns the multidimensionality of the WLF movement. Workers have been active in some labor strikes and protests in this movement. However, their mobilization has not fully materialized yet given the neoliberal restructuring of the 2000s, which fragmented the working class and their job security in Iran (Bayat, 2023). However, teachers and university students have emerged in their place as a powerful opposition group with strong organizational and protest experiences. Even high school students and other members

of Gen-Z showed a strong presence in this movement, being raised and/or politicized by parents who were part of previous uprisings, including the Green Revolt in 2009. Some examples include organizing staged sit-ins, defying mandatory hijab, or having courageous performances in school like taking down the supreme leader's picture from the wall. This convergence of diverse social groups has created a collective claim to not only feel and share it but also act and reflect on it (praxis).

The second commitment, also dialectically linked to the first one, is an ongoing conscientization process. Although intense state violence, arrests, and killing slowed down the protests, it did not end the uprising. Instead, the protests changed their format to civil disobedience and daily resistance, which has embarked on an irreversible course. For example, nonverbal performances, such as women's defiance of wearing a hijab, mostly in urban areas; inspirational speeches and statements, especially from political prisoners; emerging resistance art, literature, and poetry; and public sites such as walls and paper money have all become rich resistance repertoire since then. In other words, this grassroots movement has entered a revolutionary praxis phase, manifested in an ongoing critical conscientization process. The motto also changed from chanting "Woman, Life, Freedom" to whispering "Woman, Life, Freedom is an everyday practice" to institutionalize this mindset into everyday activities and as an act of commitment to this social transformation.

The third commitment is connected to the leaderless and party-less status of this grassroots movement. Although not without challenges at least for the future of this movement, this feature created a problem-posing learning process within the movement, favoring the conscientization process. More specifically, it has allowed for horizontal momentum to challenge the existing power dynamics by bringing marginalized experiences and realities to the forefront. This process facilitated pedagogical and dialogical learning within the movement because everyone has become both the educator and learner at the same time while promoting each other's learning.

Furthermore, while the protests slowed down, the commitment to social transformation and conscientization is still ongoing. On January 5, 2024, Roya Heshmati, a Kurdish activist in Iran, was lashed 74 times—a new intensified pressure from the state—for defying the hijab rule in public spaces. In her detailed description of her experience on her Instagram page, she said that she was not counting the lashes as landing on her body; instead, she was singing one of the resistance songs to herself:

In the name of Woman,
In the name of Life,
We'll be free from the chains of slavery,
Our dark night will turn into dawn,
All the whips will be axed…

Her story offers a compelling illustration of how women transformed the WLF slogan into everyday practice—into praxis. These events of sharing the intentional pedagogical acts now created a space for critical reflection, becoming dialectical moments that link the movement to education through its liberating framework.

The WLF movement in Iran, which has been led by women, exemplifies the conscientization process through the philosophy of Jineology. It emphasizes collective liberation by women's emancipation, intersectionality, and an ongoing commitment to social transformation, mirroring Paulo Freire's pedagogical approach. Although the movement's future remains uncertain, the journey toward social transformation and liberation in Iran continues as individuals embrace the everyday practice of "Woman, Life, Freedom," fostering resistance and hope for radical change.

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Connecting Libyans Concerned with Socio-Cultural Transitions Through Education

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Summary

This chapter is a description of an ongoing nonformal pedagogical project called EduLibya. Flanked by our conceptual proclivities and lived experiences as a researcher/educationalist in the UK and a systemic psychosocial practitioner in Libya, we bring together people in/from the education sector in Libya, a country still reeling from the uprising in 2011. The hope for this space is the co-construction of a community that can engage in a common language for transitions.

Keywords

Systemic or ecological thinking
Language and communication
Solution-focused approach
Pragmatist transitionalism
Libya

Introduction

UNESCO's International Commission of the Futures of Education (2021) report recognises that 'education needs to be rethought in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty and fragility' (p. 2) and calls for a new social contract for education to highlight its power in bringing about transformations in our societies. However, not just any education can trigger such a transition, such an ameliorative process—the purposes and conditions of the educative processes must be continuously worked on (Dewey, 1916/2018; Koopman, 2009). How do we develop and enact such a new social contract?

In Libya, the conditions in which education took place for over 40 years were highly controlled and rigid under the Gaddafi regime (1969–2011). There was no responsive organic adaptation. If 'reform' happened in the Libyan education system, it came from the top or from outside and the top, rather than from inside and the bottom of the system. Examples of this are the reform in 1976 spurred by Gaddafi's (1975/1999) new 'Third Way' (beyond capitalism and socialism), which is described in his manifesto, *The Green Book*, and the reform in 2006, which consisted of importing some elements of the Singaporean curriculum. Not much was instigated by students or teachers or education researchers or academics. With a system so tightly controlled from primary to tertiary education, where innovation and creativity were stifled or even prohibited (Ben Giaber, 2023; Milton, 2022), it is no wonder that now, when the heavy hand that held the ropes is gone, we have what John Dewey would call 'an indeterminate situation'. In these types of situations 'habitual ways of acting are frustrated or insufficient' (Garrison, 1996, p. 395) in keeping us going meaningfully and responsively.

Although Libyans continue to rote-memorise topics in school subjects to pass high-stakes national examinations, they graduate into a society in ruins for which their education is

irrelevant. Something is not working. All that Libyans can articulate about the educational system and the teaching and learning in Libya now is 'something must change'. All agree that we live in a society ready for transition (there is too much civil conflict, lawlessness and institutional corruption or incompetence), and most point to schooling as the place to start this change. Libya is in transition in all its dimensions. However, what kind of change is wanted is still not clear and still inchoate. What do we want? Who can get us there? How do we want to get there? How do we know when we got there? And, of course, why do we want this?

We are proposing that these questions are best stated but not answered. At least, not just yet. To name and define the aims and methods of education, we feel, would restrict the conversation and build new rigid walls that will stand in the way of more inevitable change and transition that Libya will go through. What we do propose, however, is inquiry and connecting conversation. In the following paragraphs, we illustrate such provocations that invite richer conversation, and maybe a little less of that neoliberal-framed measurable action and impact evaluation.

EduLibya: A Nonformal Pedagogical Initiative

We are cofounders of EduLibya, an online pedagogical space bringing together Libyans (from inside and outside the education sector there). In a country that is ever-transitioning and ever-shifting with its ever-elusive democratisation processes, what could a meaningful education look like? What is it now, and what would we like it to be? These are the generative questions that drive EduLibya.

Inspired by theoretical imaginaries found in John Dewey's (1916/2018) political and educational philosophy and the Bateson family's (E. Bateson, 1972/2000; N. Bateson, 2016) approach to ecological thinking, EduLibya connects Libyans concerned with societal transitions through diverse forms of education (formal and non-formal). It engages with formal education and schooling as well as nonformal and extra-curricular pedagogical experiences. All of us in EduLibya are linked to the education sector as students, teachers, parents, workshop leaders, researchers, psychosocial practitioners and so forth.

At the heart of EduLibya is a commitment to conversation and community-building around the role of education in Libya. We see education as part of a greater *ecology* of human practices in society—it is just one dimension that interacts with and interrelates with various threads of the Libyan socio-cultural fabric. We do not aim to offer solutions to problems; instead, we aim to make deeper connections with each other, our thoughts and our practices in the hope of proposing ways to 'face what is yet to come'.

EduLibya moves through time and space organically, with ever-fluctuating members communicating about ever-changing needs. The intentionally elusive end in view (Dewey, 1916/2018) for this space is the coconstruction of a community that can build a common language for change and movement in whatever direction is most needed at the moment.

Malak in Derna: Emergent Possibilities and Necessary Shifts

The EduLibya group was supposed to reconvene its monthly meetings in September 2023 after the summer break to integrate new ideas, suggestions and ways forward. However, Storm Daniel hit a coastal town called Derna on September 10, 2023. The heavy rainfall resulted in the collapse of two neglected dams, resulting in the flash-flooding of whole neighbourhoods and causing thousands of deaths (World Health Organization, 2023) and unimaginable devastation that wiped out whole generations of families. There was a break in structured communication among EduLibya group members in what seems to be the type of withdrawal we needed to individually make sense of what happened. The following unspoken yet present questions were as follows: How can we meet this? How can we best proceed?

I, Malak, had the opportunity to work on these questions by collaborating with colleagues in the field. My 'expert' yet 'not-knowing' stance was guided by systemic thinking (Bertalanffy, 2009; Pakman, 2004) focusing on understanding relationships, the interconnectedness of ideas and information by means of communication. Meeting with 25 trainees in Derna, the solution-focused approach to change provided me with the conceptual framework as a possible way to move with the challenges that presented themselves.

This group of professionals and graduate students worked as school counsellors as well as mental health and psychosocial support providers in different contexts in the most affected areas of Derna. As I got to know them, I realised how important it would be to propose an approach that was strength based and future oriented (BRIEF, UK, n.d.), especially in what seemed to be a despairing place. Each person I met and talked to in this group had a story of loss and suffering to tell that was unfathomable, yet my very presence there, my bringing myself into their context to talk-try possibly useful ideas for their work, provided a space for transition that we all sensed immediately. Our work together involved working with and on hope. Nora Bateson has called this way of learning *transcontextual mutual learning* together, a *symmathesy*, where we 'meet, not match, the crisis' so that we can 'learn to be in the world another way' (Bateson, 2015, 2023). For example, in Derna, one trainee shared how her children were afraid of the rain now; here, I had a choice to talk about trauma and the ensuing difficulties, the criteria and symptomatology, or to ask her how she, as a mother,

already knew what to say to her children. She replied that she told them that 'dams only break once,' that the rain is a friend and that she reminded them how they used to laugh and play in the rain. In articulation, this trainee became 'unstuck' and gave shape to hope.

Gregory Bateson has argued that we think in terms of stories, and he has often stressed the importance of metaphors (CyberneticExplorer, 2023). The stories shared in Derna were full of metaphors: metaphors of loss as it was being worked through, ways of allowing for pain to take its time and still find some space to ask questions and wait for answers to emerge. The solution-focused approach to psychosocial support invites such stories through questions. How do we know we are coping? What will we notice about the way we are moving forward? How will we know this work we are doing together here is useful? The answers to these questions were inherently hopeful. Asking questions from different places (Nora Bateson) allows us to move through our stuck-ness. The ubiquitous and cloying *zbatt* (mud) after the floods could and did bog down some stories, yet somehow, there was always a question that followed.

Conclusion

Education, both formal and nonformal, carries a large weight. It promises so much. It is the place where we transition, where we change, from one cognitive state to another, from one experience—from one interaction between us and our environment—to the next. Education is not, as Dewey (1916/2018) reminded us, a place where we learn how to live later. Rather, it is—ever-changing and ever-social—life itself. The inherently social, interactive and connecting experience of learning together is most vital and most visible in seismic situations where we need to come together to ask questions and explore answers. Revolution? Come inside, let's talk. Climate disaster? Take a seat, let's talk. Corruption chaos? Do you take sugar in your tea? Let's collect and connect with each other. However, let's keep talking, in EduLibya and elsewhere, even if the cloying mud is washed away or firmly caked into our socio-cultural infrastructure because the next change is just around the corner.

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Breaking the Chains of South Africa's Apartheid Education: The Legacy of the Educational Fellowships

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Summary

This paper uncovers a hidden history of the Non-European Unity Movement's (NEUM's) educational fellowships in the Western Cape, South Africa. It shows why the vision and strategy of the educational fellowships still has validity today, 30 years after apartheid formally ended. The enduring crises in the education sector, among other critical areas where social delivery has failed visibly, attests to the relevance of this vision.

Keywords

Alternative politics
Educational Fellowships
Nation building
Conscientization

The contribution of the Non-European Unity Movement's (NEUM's)[1] affiliated educational fellowships to developing an alternative political and educational outlook during South Africa's apartheid years is largely absent from academic and activist writings. This omission is of particular concern, considering that the educational fellowships, operating as they did within the harsh climate of the repressive apartheid state, conscientized in profound ways a generation of youth who were exposed to its emancipatory ideas.

Pursuing in Gramscian terms a "war of position," the fellowships sought to nurture an alternate counter consciousness to the hegemonic one of the apartheid ideologues. Thus, while apartheid education sought to deprive Black youth of a broad humanistic outlook for one that prepared them for the world of work in a "white" supremacist state, the fellowships worked concertedly to undermine this strategy and to nurture a cadre who would not only subvert the impoverishing system but also contribute to the construction of an alternative democratic society. In many respects, this vision remains pertinent three decades after the official cessation of apartheid. It is with this in mind that an evaluation of the educational fellowships has validity, particularly its quest to explore the possibilities of developing a critical social consciousness at local community level and to further the South African nation building project.

The Emergence of the Educational Fellowships

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the fellowships sustained the NEUM's noncollaborationist ideas and practices in the public domain.[2] A strategic decentralizing and expansive initiative on the part of the movement, soon after the rise to power of the National Party in 1948, the fellowships were primarily intent on advancing the central rationale of its predecessor the New Era Fellowship (NEF), founded in Cape Town in 1937 (Soudien, 2019). The NEF constituted a discussion and debating society that brought together a core of radically minded persons with an internationalist outlook. Its mission focused on raising the political consciousness of people and providing the space for the intellectual training of critically minded cadres (Abrahams, 2005; Dudley, 2005). The organizers of NEF contended that the key to a political solution in South Africa did not lie in "racial" factionalism

but rather in the unity of the working class and the solidarity of the oppressed Non-European[3] people (Lewis, 1984, p. 181). This perspective encompassed all who sought universal citizenship rights and equality under the law (Mokone, 1991, p. 4).

Although the Educational Fellowships of the 1950s followed in the footsteps of the NEF, they emerged within a different context and political climate. By then, a nonracist and non-collaborationist[4] outlook had gained considerable ground in many Western Cape schools and communities reserved for the disenfranchised. The presence of various affiliates of the NEUM, which included the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA), Cape African Teachers' Association (CATA), Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and others, testified to the pervasiveness of the movement's ideological orientation in the region. In addition, non-racial school sports and the civic movement were key areas where political activists became increasingly prominent after the early 1960s, following the Langa-Sharpeville[5] killings and subsequent banning of political organizations and individuals.

The forerunners of the fellowships in the Western Cape were the Athlone-based Cape Flats Education Fellowship (CAFEF) and the Southern Suburbs South Peninsula Education Fellowship (SPEF), created in 1951 and 1954, respectively. Fellowships were also established nationally, following mostly the same aim (Chisholm, 1994 p. 256; Drew, 1991 p. 454). TLSA teachers and similarly minded activists were central to the educational fellowships and directed their efforts into these community-based structures since they were viewed by the regime as educational, not political bodies.

During the repressive years of the 1960s, with the shutting down of political spaces, the fellowships became arenas where pupils and teachers were politicized, developed their intellectual horizons (Parker, 2006)[6], and where they could acquire knowledge that had a social purpose and was not solely academic.[7] CAFEF lectures covered a range of topics that included the following: the land question, the social value of music, mathematics and philosophy, and more. At its core, this counter-hegemonic project held firmly to the ideas of non-racialism, non-collaboration, and anti-imperialism.

In the unforgiving conditions of legislated racism, where parents were short-changed financially, SPEF ably assisted students through a bursary fund, established for those intent on furthering their studies.[8] To further counter the debilitating social-cultural effects of apartheid, youth were exposed to alternative activities to broaden their worldview[9] and to see themselves as part of a much broader community. The effect of these interventions was that by the 1970s, when the repressive machinery of the state had silenced virtually all political opposition in the country, the fellowships still held forth. A student at Harold Cressy High school at the time could confidently state: "These were the first fora that existed where there was open public discussion of political

issues, there were just no other."[10] For the younger generation, the fellowships had become forums of enlightenment where world and local literature, film, and politics came under the spotlight and where the dialectic of the local and the global became the norm for regular participants (Omar, 2008)[11]. This inter-play between the local and international had as its central intent to subvert the isolationist strategy of the apartheid regime, and to inform and give inspiration to the cadres of the underground resistance movement.

When the countrywide student revolts of 1976 erupted, ending the virtual political lull of the 1960s, SPEF members viewed it as the outcome of "work that they had done over almost two decades in the schools and in the broader organisations, particularly in the Western Cape" (Slingers, 2005). This radical influence was further advanced when the 1980 school boycotts saw students forge links with the rising workers movements, which at the time encompassed the Wilson-Rowntree, Fattis and Monis, and Red Meat strikes, among other worker actions.

The Resonance of the Educational Fellowships

Having reached their high point by about 1979 (Omar & Viljoen, 2008)[12], the fellowships lost their luster as the 1980s progressed (Chisholm, 1994, pp. 257–258). By then, other avenues within the liberation movement had opened, with many fellowship adherents continuing their ideological work in a range of local, civic, political, and educational structures that were not necessarily oriented toward Unity Movement. These included the united front National Forum, with its sizable socialist and Black Consciousness membership, as well as the United Democratic Front, with its brand of African National Congress (ANC) politics.

In these structures, former fellowship adherents maintained their critique of the socio-economic system and sought to cultivate an alternative perspective to the mainstream market–oriented one. This counter-hegemonic project they proceeded to carry out well into the postapartheid democracy.

The dawn of the new South Africa witnessed the beneficiaries of the old apartheid—National Party—regime and the new ruling elite, who were allied with the antiapartheid movement, find common cause. As a consequence, the ANC-led government's neoliberal policies entrenched enduring inequalities, particularly in education (Christie, 2021; Fisk & Ladd, 2004). Within the post-1994 climate of economic austerity and cutbacks in the public sector, teachers and others who were advocates of the fellowships would continue to hold to their emancipatory critique. They opposed the government's market-driven policies that neglected the holistic development of children within disadvantaged under-resourced schools, the very same schools that had been disadvantaged under apartheid. Ongoing media reports, up to the present, attest to the deepening crisis in South African basic education.

In resisting this downward spiral within particularly impoverished school communities, the TLSA contended that "our children" deserve nothing less than the best education, whom, they emphasised, had to be adequately equipped for life beyond school (Abrahams, 1997, p. 17).

The legacy of the educational fellowships politics and pedagogical values transcends its historical lifespan. As such, its transformative and emancipatory contributions provide valuable insights and strategic possibilities for countering the current crises in South African education.

Endnotes

1. The NEUM comprised principally the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD), All African Convention (AAC), and the Anti-Segregation Council (ASC).

2. The politics of the NEUM's affiliates was tied to the policy of noncollaboration and the Ten Point Programme (TPP). Drew (1996, pp. 16–17) notes that, consistent with its Marxist roots, noncollaboration meant the refusal by the oppressed Black population to work the instruments of their own oppression, that is, segregated and inferior political institutions. The TPP demand of full democratic citizenship rights for all South Africans remained the hub of movement's politics (Tabata, 1974, pp. 59–61).

3. Non-European meant those striving for a common citizenship or those who had been deprived of full political rights (Dudley, 2005).

4. A central contention of the fellowships, as NEUM affiliates, was to dispel the notion of race as a scientifically valid criterion for categorizing people. The concept of nonracism flowed from this perspective: nonracism as the negation of "race" and "racism." The interconnection between nonracism and noncollaboration is central to this paper.

5. The PAC-led antipass law demonstrations of 21 March 1960 in Sharpeville resulted in the killing of 69 people and the injuring of 180 others. In Langa in the Cape as well, violence erupted at the police station, with an undisclosed number of people killed and many others maimed and wounded when the police opened fire on the crowd.

6. Parker, June 10, 2006.

7. Choral competitions and an annual lecture were organized in the early 1960s, here keeping with SPEF's constitution (Information courtesy of Dawood Parker). SPEF strove to provide facilities for debate and discussion on subjects of interest to members; encourage the pursuit of knowledge in the sciences and humanities; and provide financial assistance to deserving students' (South Peninsula Education, Fellowship Constitution, March 1954).

8. SPEF's bursary fund was established in the 1960s.

9. Frequent trips were made to the Kalk Bay mountains and Table Mountain. Occasionally, youth were addressed by senior cadres (Parker, 4 May 2006). In aid of funds, for its annual bursary and to demonstrate its organizing capacity and ability to reach into the community, from 1974 to 1976, SPEF organized three fun runs (SPEF letter to all high schools regarding the Annual SPEF Big Walk In Aid Of Funds, March 6, 1975).

10. R. Omar, October 2, 2008.

11. Songs of Joan Baez, Buffy-Saint Marie, and writings of Pablo Neruda, Bertolt Brecht, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Frantz Fanon and films on international struggles were drawcards, as well as local poets, such as Dennis Brutus, Arthur Nortje, and Wally Serote (archival documents courtesy of Dawood Parker, Shaun Viljoen, and David Kapp).

12. Omar and Viljoen, September 25, 2008.

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Part 9

Advancing a Way Forward

On the Tasks of the Critical Scholar/Activist[1]

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Summary

Times of severe economic, political, and ideological crises require thinking rigorously about complex act of becoming a "critical scholar/activist." This article outlines nine key tasks, including bearing witness to negativity, identifying spaces of possible action, broadening research, connecting to social movements, mentoring new critical scholars, and using professional privilege to open often closed spaces.

Keywords

Critical scholar
Scholar activist
Sociology
Mentorship

Especially during a time of severe economic, political, and ideological crises, thinking rigorously about role of the "critical scholar/activist" is even more important. This type of analysis is best engaged in when it is based on a lived recognition that serious critical work needs to be done in relation to its object. Indeed, this is not only a political imperative but an epistemological one as well. The development of substantive critical understandings of the multiple relations of differential power and of the actual possibilities of interrupting them should be dialectically and intimately connected to actual movements and struggles (Apple, 2006, 2013; Apple et al., 2009).

Michael Burawoy (2005) provides us with one cogent model of what this means in practice. What he has called "organic public sociology" details the key elements of how we might think about ways of dealing with this here (Burawoy, 2005). In his words, but partly echoing Gramsci as well, in this view, the critical sociologist:

works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local, and often counter-public. [She or he works] with a labor movement, neighborhood association, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organizations. Between the public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education … The project of such [organic] public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life. (2005, p. 265)

This act of becoming (and this is a project, for one is never finished, always becoming) a critical scholar/activist is a complex one. Because of this, I want to take one element of these commitments—the role of critical analysis in education—and connect it to Burawoy's vision. In doing so, I draw upon my much longer discussion of this in my book *Can Education Change Society?* (Apple, 2013). My points here are tentative and certainly not exhaustive. However, they are meant to begin a dialogue over just what it is that "we" should do.

In general, there are nine tasks in which critical analysis (and the critical analyst) in education must engage:

1. Critical analysis must "bear witness to negativity."[2] That is, one of its primary functions is to illuminate the ways in which educational policy and practice are connected to the relations of exploitation, domination, and subordination—and to struggles against such relations—in the larger society.[3]

2. In engaging in such critical analyses, critical analysis also must point to contradictions and to spaces of possible action. Thus, its aim is to critically examine current realities with a conceptual/political framework that emphasizes the spaces in which more progressive and counter-hegemonic actions can, or do, go on. This is an absolutely crucial step because, otherwise, our research can simply lead to cynicism or despair.

3. At times, this also requires a broadening of what counts as "research." Here, I mean acting as critical "secretaries" to those groups of people and social movements who are now engaged in challenging existing relations of unequal power or in what elsewhere has been called "nonreformist reforms," a term that has a long history in critical sociology and critical educational studies (Apple, 2012). This is exactly the task that was taken on in the thick descriptions of critically democratic school practices in "democratic schools" (Apple & Beane, 2007) and in the critically supportive descriptions of the transformative reforms, such as the citizen school and participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil (see Apple, 2013; Apple, et al. 2019; Gandin & Apple, 2012; Wright, 2010). The same is true for CREA, an interdisciplinary research center at the University of Barcelona that is a model of how to build a research agenda and then create policies and programs that empower those who are economically and culturally marginalized in our societies (Aubert, 2011; Flecha, 2009, 2011; Gatt et al., 2011;) and for significant parts of the School of Education at University College, Dublin. It too has been at the center of research and action that stresses not only poverty and inequality, but movements towards equality (see, e.g., Lynch, 2022; Lynch et al., 2009). This is also very visible in the recent material on the creation of counter-hegemonic "third spaces" in education (Anderson et al., 2023). Many more centers and institutions in multiple countries could be listed here.

4. When Gramsci (1971) argued that one of the tasks of a truly counter-hegemonic education was not to throw out "elite knowledge" but to reconstruct its form and content so that it served genuinely progressive social needs, he provided a key to another role "organic" and "public" intellectuals might play. Thus, we should not be engaged in a process of what might be called "intellectual suicide." That is, there are serious intellectual (and pedagogic) skills in dealing with the histories and debates surrounding the epistemological, political, and educational issues involved in justifying what counts as important knowledge and what counts as an effective and socially just education. These are not simple and inconsequential issues, and the practical and intellectual/political skills of dealing with them have been well developed. However, they can atrophy if they are not used. We can give back these skills by employing them to assist communities in thinking about this, learning from them, and engaging in the mutually pedagogic dialogues that enable decisions to be made in terms of both the short- and long-term interests of dispossessed peoples (see Apple et al., 2009; Burawoy, 2005; Freire, 1970).

5. In the process, critical work has the task of keeping traditions of radical and progressive work alive. In the face of organized attacks on the "collective memories" of difference and of critical social movements, attacks that make it increasingly difficult to retain academic and social legitimacy for the multiple critical approaches that have proven so valuable in countering dominant narratives and relations, it is absolutely crucial that these traditions be kept alive, renewed, and, when necessary, criticized for their conceptual, empirical, historical, and political silences or limitations. This involves being cautious of reductionism and essentialism, asking us to pay attention to what Fraser has called the politics of redistribution and politics of recognition and representation (Fraser, 1997; see also Apple, 2013; Anyon et al., 2009). This includes not only keeping theoretical, empirical, historical, and political traditions alive but, very importantly, extending and (supportively) criticizing them. It also involves keeping alive the dreams, utopian visions, and "nonreformist reforms" that are so much a part of these radical traditions (Apple et al., 2009; Apple, 2012; Jacoby, 2005; Teitelbaum, 1993).

6. Keeping such traditions alive and supportively criticizing them when they are not adequate to deal with current realities cannot be done unless we ask the following: "For whom are we keeping them alive?" "How and in what form are they to be made available?" All of the things I have mentioned above in this taxonomy of tasks require the relearning or development and use of varied or new skills of working at many levels with multiple groups. Thus, journalistic and media skills, academic and popular skills, and the ability to speak to very different audiences are increasingly crucial (Apple, 2006; Boler, 2008). This requires us to learn how to speak in different registers and say important things in ways that do not require that the audience or reader do all of the work.

7. Critical educators must also "act" in concert with the progressive social movements their work supports or in movements against the rightist assumptions and policies they critically analyze. This is another reason that scholarship in critical education implies becoming an "organic" or "public" intellectual. One must participate in and give one's expertise to movements that aim to transform the dominant politics of redistribution, recognition, and representation. It also implies learning from these social movements (Anyon, 2005). This means that the role of the "unattached intelligentsia" (Mannheim, 1936), someone who "lives on the balcony" (Bakhtin, 1968), is not an appropriate model. As Bourdieu reminds us, for example, our intellectual efforts are crucial, but they "cannot stand aside, neutral and indifferent, from the struggles in which the future of the world is at stake" (2003, p. 11).

8. Building on the points made in the previous paragraph, the critical scholar/activist has another role to play: They need to act as deeply committed mentors as someone who demonstrates through their lives what it means to be *both* an excellent researcher and a committed member of a society scarred by persistent inequalities. They need to show how one can blend these two roles together in ways that may be tense but still embody the dual commitments to exceptional and socially committed research and participating in movements whose aim is interrupting dominance. It should be obvious that this must be fully integrated into one's teaching as well.

9. Finally, participation also means using the privilege one has as a scholar/activist. That is, each of us needs to make use of one's privilege to open the spaces at universities and elsewhere for those who are not there, for those who do not now have a voice in that space and in the "professional" sites to which, being in a privileged position, you have access. This can be seen, for example,

in the history of the "activist-in-residence" program at the University of Wisconsin Havens Wright Center for Social Structure and Social Change, where committed activists in various areas (the environment, indigenous rights, housing, labor, racial disparities, education, etc.) were brought in to teach and connect our academic work with organized action against dominant relations. It can also be seen in a number of Women's Studies programs and Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nation Studies programs that have historically involved activists in these communities as active participants in the governance and educational programs of these areas at universities.

Conclusion

These nine tasks I have discussed above are demanding, and no one person can engage equally well in all of them simultaneously. What we can do is honestly continue our attempt to come to grips with the complex intellectual, personal, and political tensions and activities that respond to the demands of this role. This will not be easy, for it involves a searching critical examination of one's own structural location, one's own overt and tacit political commitments, and one's own embodied actions once this recognition in all its complexities and contradictions is taken as seriously as it deserves.

Yet if we look around the world, there are individuals, researchers, institutes, coalitions, unions, and social movements that have played—and continue to play—such a large part in the continuing struggle to build an education that is educationally, culturally, and politically truly critically democratic in nations and "nations to be." Can we do less?

Endnotes

1. This chapter is a revised and updated selection from M. W. Apple (2013), *Can Education Change Society?*

2. I am aware that the idea of "bearing witness" has religious connotations, ones that are powerful in many parts of the West, but may be seen as a form of religious imperialism in other religious traditions. I still prefer to use it because of its powerful resonances with ethical discourses. However, I welcome suggestions from multiple religious traditions, as well as other critical educators and researchers for alternative concepts that can call forth similar responses.

3. Here, exploitation, domination, and subordination are technical not rhetorical terms. The first refers to economic relations, the structures of inequality, the control of paid and unpaid labor, and the distribution of resources in a society. The latter two refer to the processes of recognition, representation, respect, and "voice"—and to the ways in which people have identities imposed on them. These are analytic categories, of course, and are ideal types. Most oppressive conditions are partly a combination of the three. These map on to what Fraser (1997) calls the politics of redistribution, the politics of recognition, and the politics of representation.

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