**Transforming the University to Confront the Climate Crisis**

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**Abstract**

Drawing on my own experiences at the University of California, Santa Barbara as a college professor of radical social change for thirty-one years who has been focused on the climate crisis for the past ten, I will explore the crisis of higher education with respect to the most pressing existential challenge of the twenty-first century and propose various approaches, actions, activities, and projects for both classroom teachers and networks of educators.

These will include the UC-CSU NXTerra Knowledge Action Network, the UCSB-developed nearly carbon neutral conference, and engaging students in designing and implementing systemic alternatives outside the classroom in their own communities such as Eco Vista in the 23,000-member student and non-student community of Isla Vista just adjacent to UC Santa Barbara, among others.

The UC-CSU NXTerra Knowledge Action Network, for example, is a collaboration of fifteen faculty from the University of California and California State University systems to produce teaching resources on the climate crisis, climate justice, and critical sustainability for university (and high school) teachers across all the disciplines from the humanities to the social and natural sciences. Currently comprising seventeen “topics,” we intend to build it out into new topics through a network strategy of connecting with teachers who can add to or deepen the range and scope of the currently covered aspects of the climate crisis.

The essay will end with a vision of new type of university, exemplified in the world-spanning Ecoversities Alliance, and dreamed of in Transition U and Eco Vista U, two prototypes that I am involved in co-creating with students, staff, faculty, and community members in Santa Barbara, California, and in the Transition US movement.

**Introduction: Education in the ~~Triple~~ ~~Quadruple~~ ~~Quintuple~~ Sextuple Crisis**

*Education should consist of a series of enchantments, each raising the individual to a higher level of awareness, understanding and kinship with all living things –* Unknown

*What is the pedagogy of justice in the current conjuncture where more and more of us recognize the future in the present?* – Manuel Callahan 2019

The interlocked triple crisis of capitalist globalization-driven inequality, bought- and paid-for democracies, pervasive cultures of violence – from our most intimate relationships to the militarism of the United States – has for a long time been bound up with the truly wicked fourth of climate chaos.  And now we have the wake-up moment of the coronavirus and the global rebellion for social justice of what might be called the George Floyd uprisings breaking upon these structural, systemic burdens.

So, how do we connect *this many* dots?  Every movement, organization, systemic alternative, and countless activists, theorists, and intellectuals are asking this as the crisis unfolds.

*The time has come to ask new questions of our own as teachers.*

Such as, to take a few:

What role does/can higher education – and colleges and universities in particular – play in addressing these crises?

How can we draw on our movements and systemic alternatives in the time of the Corona and George Floyd crises to create a different *kind* of university, fit for the purpose?

Everywhere, there is evidence that people are rethinking and imagining alternatives to our outmoded educational systems that pride themselves as the cutting edge of modernity[[1]](#footnote-1) and our moribund traditionally-defined academic “disciplines” (for a look at my own, Sociology, see Foran 2019). What systemic alternatives might offer an economy that works for all to meet real, basic needs; a new and better kind of politics and learning spaces to enable radical social transformation away from the corporate university constrained in its neoliberal depoliticizing straitjacket; shifts in culture and affect to design the whole ways of *non-violent* living we desire; the fair, ambitious, and binding global approach to the threat of climate chaos?

Sooner or later, climate change, of itself, will force systemic and radical social change on states and other elite institutions. As scholars, activists, and teachers we are compelled to ask in what ways can we assist in the birth of a pluriverse of possible paths for this journey?

This essay hopes to open up and contribute to such conversations by touching on some actual on the ground practices and pedagogies. My audience is teachers in high schools, secondary education, and college or university settings.

The journey takes us first to a (hopefully) radically useful set of resources for teachers and students, and then to a classroom that is not a classroom, and finally to some visionary alternative universities who are already travelling the path. Let’s go!

**Part One**

**NXTerra: A Network Strategy of Providing Transformative Resources to Teacher-Activists of the Climate Crisis**

*“We tried to create an autonomous place, open to learn by doing rather than by studying, as it was suggested by Ivan Illich, as it were a joyful activity of free people.”* *–* Gustavo Esteva

NXTerra is the name chosen for an innovative digital platform designed by teachers in the University of California and California State University system that was launched in late 2019. Its aim is to provide the materials for a “transformative education for climate action” and it offers seventeen “Topics” under the broad categories of the climate crisis, climate justice, and critical sustainability.

Crossing the humanities, social sciences, and “natural” sciences, topics range from climate change and religion to systems thinking, from climate fiction to climate governance, and from oceans and wildfires to community-engaged research, indigenous leadership, consumerism, and inclusive environmental identities. Here students and teachers who want to find videos, readings, syllabi, classroom activities, and more can draw freely from the resources we have archived and curated for this purpose. If, for example, a teacher of climate science wants to consider the importance of movements for climate justice by global youth in order to offer their students an outlet if they want to take action after learning the disturbing facts of our predicament, those materials and links can be found on the site.

Indeed, any teacher’s eyes open to the distress and anxiety that students increasingly feel today who wants to be able to help them work through and with those feelings can find help at the “Climate Emotions” page, put together by Sarah Ray, author of the new book, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet* (2020).

If one teaches sustainability studies, and wants to go beyond the discourse of small “s” sustainability studies that tell us of a renewable energy future sometime around 2050, or even the UN’s more comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals, then they can look for materials under what we call “Critical Sustainability Studies” and topics such as “deep adaptation,” “systemic alternatives,” or “infrastructure: past, present and future.”

A humanities teacher of language, the arts, or the philosophy of environmental and climate issues can find a primer on the climate science in the “Bending the Curve” page developed by Veerabhadran Ramanthan, professor of atmospheric and climate sciences at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, one of the world’s great climate scientists who is engaging with the urgency of politics and empowerment of young people inside and beyond the classroom. Ken Hiltner, a professor of English and Environmental Humanities offers all the materials he has developed for what might be called “Climate Change 101” for advanced high school students and college first-years, including the course website and YouTube channel videos.

My own topics on the site are “Climate Justice Movements” and “Systemic Alternatives,” my two best hopes for confronting the climate crisis. Both offer learners practical hope and ideas for engagement outside the classroom, as we shall see in the next section. Under the heading of systemic alternatives are materials on Transition Towns, *buen vivir*, degrowth, and ecosocialism, among others. And climate justice movements offers an introduction to the massively growing and inspiring global network of movements led by young people, frontline and fenceline communities of color, indigenous peoples, inhabitants of small island states, and the people who are doing the work of climate justice in all of these settings.

These are not just theories about radical transformation or stories about far-away struggles but instead invitations and maps for teachers and students who want to learn and connect with them in the real world.

As a final piece, readers should know about the “nearly carbon-neutral conference” model developed over the past five or so years by Professor Ken Hiltner of English and Environmental Humanities. In this extensive excerpt from the White Paper/Practical Guide he elaborates on how and why academics must consider and amend their habits of flying to conferences [this was before the Corona Crisis, of course, but one fears that we will return to this practice as soon as it seems feasible]:

[T]raveling by air is a privilege that few share globally. The overwhelming majority of people on the planet will never step foot in an airplane. Only 5% of the world’s population flies annually. Even among Americans, half do not annually fly and just a quarter do so three or more times a year. Unfortunately, academics often find themselves in this last, rarified group because of conference travel….

What’s worse, the traditional conference has more than just environmental shortcomings. The cost of airfare from anywhere in the developing world to anywhere in North America or Europe is often greater than the per capita annual income in these countries. Consequently, scholars from most of the world’s countries, and nearly the entire Hemispheric South, have long been quietly, summarily excluded from international conferences. Even in wealthy countries like the U.S., conference participation is, owing to vagaries in funding, a privilege unequally shared.

What’s to be done? While attending fewer or only local conferences is an option, at UCSB we have been developing and experimenting with an online, nearly carbon-neutral (NCN) approach for conferences. This model was first implemented in May of 2016. A second NCN conference, which featured Bill McKibben as one of its keynote speakers, took place at UCSB in Oct/Nov of 2016.

Even though online activity has its own carbon footprint, crunching the numbers for UCSB’s two pilot conferences revealed that their total GHG emissions were less than 1% of traditional, fly-in events. When asked if this NCN conference approach was successful, 87% of the speakers from the first event responded “yes,” 13% “not sure,” and 0% “no….”

In a nutshell, here is how this NCN approach works:

1) *Speakers record their own talks*….

2) *Talks are viewed on the conference website*…. Talks are organized into panels (i.e. individual webpages) that generally have three speakers each and a shared Q&A session – just like a traditional conference….

3) *Participants contribute to an online Q&A session*. During the time that the conference is open, which is generally two or three weeks, participants can take part in the Q&A sessions for the panels, which are similar to online forums, by posing and responding to written questions and comments. Because comments can be made at any time in any time zone, participants from across the globe can equally take part in the conference….

While this NCN model is just one of many possible, because this approach has advantages that go beyond helping to mitigate climate change, it makes clear that a range of new technologies have opened up exciting possibilities for reimagining the traditional conference:

1) Without the requirement of travel, scholars can participate from nearly anywhere on the globe….

3) Similar to open-access journals, the archive created by NCN conferences (both recorded talks and Q&A transcripts) gives nearly anyone anywhere on the globe, as long as Internet access is available, instant and lasting access to all the cutting-edge material introduced at the event. In contrast, traditional conferences are often closed-door affairs open to only a privileged few…

4) On average, the pilot conferences’ Q&A sessions generated three times more discussion than takes place at a traditional Q&A. A few sessions generated more than ten or fifteen times more, making clear that, while different from a traditional conference, meaningful personal interaction was not only possible, but in certain respects superior.

5) Because the cost of an NCN conference is considerably less than its traditional counterparts, a range of groups and institutions, such as schools in the developing world currently lacking the significant financial resources required to coordinate international conferences, are now able to do so. Our pilot conferences were cobbled together largely using free, open-source software....

7) Such events can result in far more efficient use of a conference goer’s time, as one can quickly scan through the text of a talk or a Q&A session for material of interest.

…. given the horrific environmental costs and inherently exclusionary nature of traditional conferences, the time has come to radically rethink this cornerstone practice of our profession. This NCN conference experiment is an attempt to do just that (Hiltner 2020).

I find it humbling and powerful that a simple professor of English has found a solution to what was previously considered nearly impossible (and thus outside the scope of the effort) by the otherwise ambitious Carbon Neutrality Initiative of the University of California, a ten-year project to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the ten campuses of the system to zero by the year 2025.

At UCSB, we have now held a half dozen such conferences, links to which can be found at the end of this essay.

This suggests what we already know: that humanity’s challenge to confront the climate crisis is not going to be led by governments, university-based climate scientists, corporations, and other market actors, but from the bottom-up, and relying in part on the full spectrum of approaches currently existing in the world’s schools.

**Part Two**

**Eco Vista and the World in 2025: Taking the Classroom into the Community**

*There is something frightening about facing new systemic pressures alone, be that challenges with pandemics, conflict, dislocation, trauma, family, mental health, financial meltdown, work, tragedy or a deeper crisis of meaning. For some of us, the old institutions, the old communities, might be a factor in mitigating systemic pressures of making a life in an increasingly complex world work. But for too many people, they are all too alone in their struggle to survive. In this context, what should a young person do? What is the best strategy for equipping yourself for life on a precarious and complex planet? And how best to contribute? –* Zaid Hassan, “The University of Full Catastrophe Learning” (May 4, 2020)

*A philosophy of teaching and learning*

My philosophy and perspective of an educational process graces the syllabi of all my courses, and reads in part:

*We are called now to get our hands, hearts, and heads aligned for action in the real world.*

Learning and teaching are complex, endlessly fascinating collaborations. I soak up enormous amounts from the students and teaching assistants in my classes, whom I view as colleagues and companions on an intellectual, sometimes life-changing journey. My goals for my classes include the development of critical thinking skills, acquiring the ability to work collaboratively, honing the art of applying theoretical concepts to actual historical, contemporary, and even future situations, and making connections between what we study and how we live.

I consider the educational encounter a *radical* process, because it contains the potential to change all involved in it, and thereby to contribute, however indirectly, to social change in the world beyond the classroom.

Two of the courses I teach every year now are Sociology/Environmental Studies 130SD: The World in ~~2050~~ 2025: Systemic Alternatives (the strike through of 2050 was found to be necessary a year or so ago due to the rapidly accelerating pace of the climate crisis) and Sociology 190A: Eco Vista. I taught both in the spring of 2020, entirely on-line, as the corona crisis shut down face-to-face teaching about ten days before the start of the ten-week spring quarter.

They go hand in hand because in the first we explore the pluriverse of systemic alternatives [indeed, we rely heavily on the path-breaking 2019 compendium of systemic alternatives found in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, edited by Alberto Acosta,Federico Demaria, Arturo Escobar, Ashish Kothari, and Ariel Salleh], with an eye to thinking through our collective crises to glimpse the values and practices of the various types of worlds we might want to live in as this crucial “decade of decision” unfolds. Doing this in the midst of the corona crisis took us out of any comfort zones we might have enjoyed and reinforced the necessity of collective reflection and work to take the first difficult steps toward those worlds.

The second course is more hands-on. “Eco Vista” was the name chosen in 2017 by a group of students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, acting together with long-time community members to describe their vision of turning their rather unusual community of Isla Vista into an eco-village in the next eight to ten years. Twenty-three thousand people live together in an area of .54 square miles, eighty percent of them between the ages of 18 and 24. In March 2020, the Eco Vista Transition Initiative became the 169th member and the newest link in the Transition US network.

Our aim is to inspire and instigate the foundation of a community with renewable energy, a flourishing and regenerative agro-ecology of public urban gardens, cooperative, affordable eco-housing, a circular eco-economy based on solidarity and meeting the real needs of the inhabitants, radical self-governance and community priorities determined by all who reside here, and to do so within a vibrant web of visionary cultural creativity.

We know that to achieve this aspirational aim will require significant political organization, social movement building, and visionary policy proposals – including the design of and strategy for achieving a systemic alternative – and perhaps even the invention of a new kind of party!  
  
*Isla Vista, a 50-year experiment in community built on five centuries of indigenous dispossession in the Americas*

The land on which Isla Vista and the adjacent university and city of Santa Barbara sit is indigenous Chumash land, and the crime of their dispossession by white settlers is a history we are acutely aware of, as seen in Sierra Emrick’s film on Eco Vista’s real foundations, *Eco Vista: What If* (2019). There will be no climate justice in California or anywhere in the Americas until this monumental injustice is overturned by making common cause under the leadership of indigenous and other frontline and fence-line communities everywhere.

Built on this tragedy and sold again in the mid-1950’s and early 60’s by the Regents of the University of California to unscrupulous private landlords with the inception of the UCSB campus, for the past half-century the unincorporated college town of Isla Vista has been a site for radical experiments in alternative ways of living, civil disobedience to authority, community self-governance, and environmental innovation. As an epicenter for both youth culture and intergenerational solidarity, Eco Vista consciously draws on these histories of struggle, which are well narrated in the book *Isla Vista: A Citizen’s History*, written by Carmen Lodise and a number of other community members who lived there from the 1970s onward.

Today, the community presents many opportunities for active engagement with some of the most critical issues facing U.S. society – food insecurity and injustice, landlord rip-offs, houselessness, and tenant struggles, mental and now physical health epidemics, sexual violence, the closing window for free speech, and the lawlessness of police-community interactions.

After a forty-year battle again landlords, college administrators, and the county of Santa Barbara, Isla Vista elected its first local government in late 2017 – the Isla Vista Community Services District. Two years later another referendum empowered this new government to tax utilities, drawing revenue to a $1 million annual budget by 2019. This would soon be followed by an even more surprising development as community interest in carbon-neutrality, just transition, critical ecological post-sustainability, and systems change from below has grown deep roots.

*The Eco Vista Project*

In 2017, two UCSB undergraduates, Jessica Alvarez Parfrey (now a member of the permanent community) and Valentina Cabrera (who has graduated and moved on to do this work elsewhere) started a project whose goal was to lay the groundwork for an ongoing effort to turn their community, Isla Vista, into a model “eco-village” through a thoughtful bottom-up process of engagement with others.

Over the summer and fall of 2017, the project was named Eco Vista, and activity began. Since then, students and community members, both inside and outside classes on topics such Interdisciplinary Studies 133B, The World in 2050: Systemic Alternatives, What’s Wrong with the World? How Do We Fix It?, and a regular group studies, Sociology 190A called, simply, Eco Vista – have worked in the community on projects around food issues, housing, energy, transportation, local cooperative start-ups, a newsletter/zine, community outreach, and a rich spectrum of cultural creativity. In the fall of 2019 the Environmental Studies/Sociology 134EC class “Earth in Crisis” engaged in a two-week exercise to produce the beginnings of an “Eco Vista Green New Deal” that resulted in a 27-page list of proposals for aligning Isla Vista’s next community development planning process with the most progressive versions of the concept, such as the Red Deal, the U.S. Green Party’s plans, the feminist GND, Bernie Sander’s detailed platform, and ecosocialist ideas [see links to all of these in the Websites section at the end of this essay].

There are now more than 250 people on the Eco Vista e-list, with bi-monthly General Assemblies, which continue to meet on-line during the roller coaster of the corona crisis. There are on-going working groups involved in projects that include a food forest and community gardens, tenants’ rights (including in UCSB housing), prototypes of worker-controlled coops, and more. As we imagine the future, we draw on the precious legacy and ideas of the late resident scholar and activist Michael Bean’s 2020 *Eco Vista Sourcebook* of imaginative ideas and detailed proposals for bringing about Eco Vista.

Conceptually our efforts are grounded in the latest thinking about Transition Towns, degrowth, *buen vivir*, just transition, radical climate justice, and the many worlds to be found in the compendium of systemic alternatives *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (2019). Another approach that guides our thinking and practice is adrienne maree brown’s *Emergent Strategy* (2017), which counsels working from the bottom up in an inclusive and un-predetermined way to generate collective analyses enabling members to articulate their desires and most sought after outcomes.

Some of this finds expression in the community values we have embraced and our invitation for participation, open to all who agree with them:

Community values and principles  
  
We are inclusive.  
We are democratic.  
We are non-violent.

We work collectively whenever possible, and all are free to organize their own activities and projects.

We are open to all points of view that are aligned with these values and supportive of the Eco Vista Mission.

We act and live out of love for the dignity of all living beings, and base this love on social and climate justice, and on radical hope.

*A Far-Reaching Significance?*

We are aiming high: to assist in laying the foundations for the establishment of an ongoing, multigenerational, student-community initiative for an equitable and just transition in Isla Vista, California, and to put the result, Eco Vista, forward as an experiential model that other small towns with college students might want to freely adapt for their communities. We consider what we are trying to do skill-building experiments in sustainable, resilient, participatory development, in a place we call Eco Vista, a very real place and also a timeless, cosmic community of radical visionaries and seekers.

I close with this passage from our mission statement:

In the end, Eco Vista is … a promise, a pledge, a dream, a future.

The promise of Eco Vista is that together we might create a place that is life-affirming for all its inhabitants and that might inspire others elsewhere – particularly young people in their own communities – to use their imaginations to create the innovative future communities we all want to live in, right now!

Our pledge to each other is to co-create, imagine, dream, and transform our community into a place that matches the name of Eco Vista. We want to dream and make manifest this vision together with you!

The Eco Vista dream is a communal, shared, joyful adventure – may it transport us to a place worthy of the love we feel for it.

The future of Eco Vista is … well, that’s what we hope and aim to find out!

**Part Three**

**Toward a Pluriverse of Climate Justice Universities**

## *“The crisis we are in indicates that we are brushing up against the limits of human reason. It is time we re-activate our diverse perceptions, senses, intuitions and entanglement with the non-human world.”* – from the Ecoversities website.

I would like to end this essay with a look at a few of the exciting visions of a new *type* of university, some of which I have encountered in my pedagogical strolls across the web, and many of them are gathered in the *Ecoversities* *Alliance* – as well as others which exist only in my mind’s eye, such as *Transition U* and *Eco Vista U*.

One of the most generative of pedagogical projects is Ecoversities, which was founded in 2015 with a gathering of 55 people from 23 countries at the Tamara Eco-village in southern Portugal. This was followed by a second gathering at EARTH University in Costa Rica two years later and a third in 2018 at Swaraj University in Udaipur, India. It’s worth observing that I have only recently discovered them, a delay which signals the importance of knowing about each other’s efforts so we can learn from and work with each other, especially given the ecological and public health limits posed by the crisis and the technological advances that make it possible to work together despite them.

Noting that the name itself draws on “the meanings of ‘home’ as locality and as an ‘economy,’” Ecoversities opens its website with these observations:

*ecoversities:**learners and communities reclaiming diverse knowledges, relationships and imaginations to design new approaches to higher education.*

*re-connecting*

*re-imagining*

*re-generating*

*What might the university look like if it were at the service of our diverse ecologies, cultures, economies, spiritualities and Life within our planetary home?*

*Here you will find an ecosystem of communities and organizations that are re-imagining the idea of the university and the purpose of higher education.…*

*The Ecoversities Alliance is a community of learning practitioners from around the world committed to re-imagining higher education to cultivate human and ecological flourishing in response to the critical challenges of our times.*

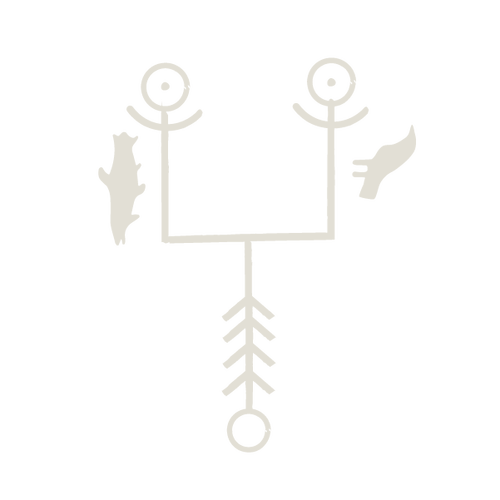
One might think of the whole as a sort of world social forum of alternative education and pedagogy that has met in this series of what the Zapatistas call *encuentros*, diverse gatherings which meet to collectively analyse common problems and co-create alternatives based on a network model after the initial gathering has forged relationships. With more than a hundred schools and projects of all kinds taking part, the Ecoversities Alliance does not take itself as a formal organization but rather “a process of trust and mutuality, a growing web of relationships that have been nurtured through our gatherings and beyond. **We are committed to learning from/ within/ beyond diversity**.” Readers may be familiar with some of the learning spaces involved, such as Findhorn College in Scotland, Deer Park Institute Center for Indian Wisdom Traditions in India, Kufunda Village in Zimbabwe, the School of Engaged Art Chto Delat in Russia, Swaraj University in Rajasthan, Universtatea Alternative in Bucharest, Schumacher College in England, Gaia University in Colorado, Universidad de la Tierra, or Unitierra in Oaxaca, Mexico, and its California counterpart, the Convivial Research and Insurgent Learning set of tools.

Hoping to nurture “an ecology of knowledges, radical pedagogies and learning commons which expands human consciousness and cultural and ecological regeneration,” the Alliance sets out the following values and orientations:



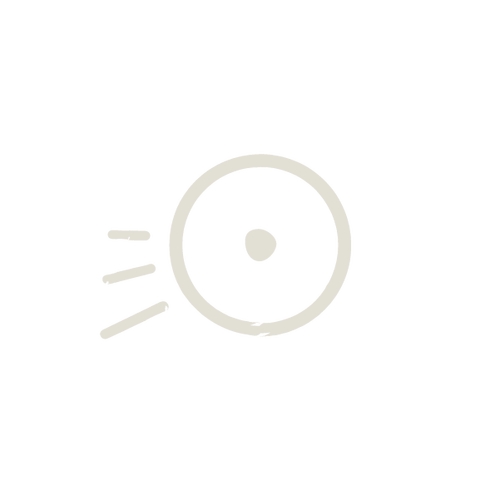
**Emergence**

An invitation to the unknown, allowing diverse ways of being, knowing, doing, relating to emerge.



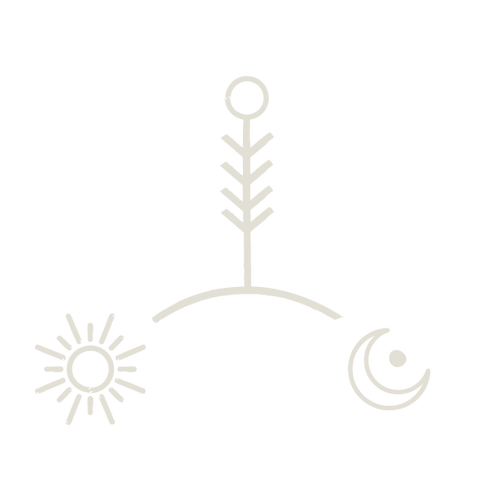
**Inquiry in Solidarity**

An invitation to be authentic and critically engaged with co-learners, whilst invoking self-reflection, kindness, and compassion to support others in their own inquiries and discoveries.



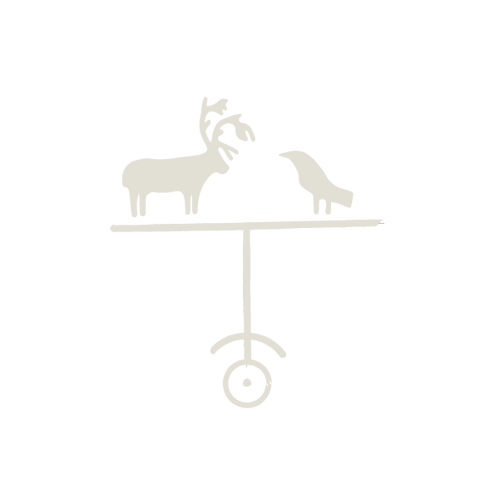
**Experiential Learning**

Learning with our senses, stories, spirits, hearts, hands, heads and homes in order to find ways we are interconnected, and entangled in each other’s struggles and dreams.

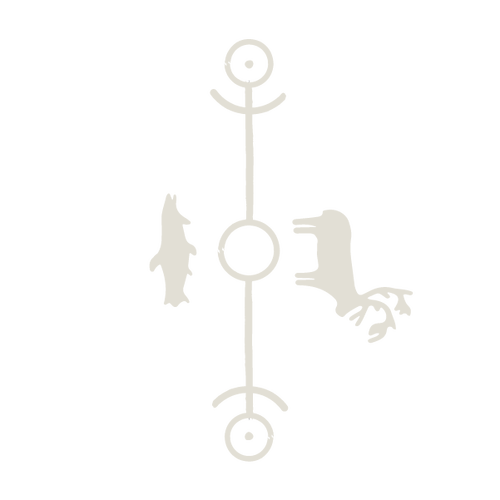


**Emplacement**

An invitation to reconnect with and learn from the land, the place and the non-human. To engage in and promote deep localization.



**De-colonising**  
An invitation to address, explore and unlearn the dimensions of oppression, power, and privilege that are part of our own lives, relations, tools, structures, histories and beliefs.



**Inter(trans)cultural Dialogue**

An invitation to learn in-between cultures, epistemologies, cosmologies, and to learning ways we might not recognize or have experienced before. To learn from/ within/ beyond diversity.

One of the significant outcomes of their collaboration is the *Pedagogy, Otherwise Reader*, edited by Alessandra Pomarico (2018), containing essays, testimonies, poems, and images by many members of the Ecoversities Alliance. Pomarico herself, writes intriguingly (at least for college teachers!) of a “third pedagogy” to be found (or imagined) somewhere between the business-as-usual university setting and the “deschooled, unlearning, creative” setting, inviting us to enter that space with no roadmap or boundaries where the real magic of “a radical tenderness can appear, that commitment and support develop, friendships blossom, alliances form, people fall in love, heal, build, and weave their paths together. It is in those intimate contexts that a revolutionary, radical love made of a thirst for justice, militant gentleness, and subversive soulfulness can form” (Pomarico 2018, 157-8).

In another essay, Manuel “Manolo” Callahan describes the work at the Universidad de la Tierra Califas, situated around the San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland Bay Area in California:

UT Califas is not confined to any buildings, nor does a cumbersome bureaucracy constrict it. Its “architecture” does not require a physical space much less shelter a bureaucratic apparatus…. As a prefigurative, convivial, and networked pedagogy UT Califas embodies a praxis of inquiry that claims the future in the present, hosting spaces that refuse to wait for a day when we can dismantle the dominant educational system (Callahan 2018, 95).

He concludes, and rightly so: “We must, as the Zapatistas recommend, learn how to learn. The global north must learn to learn from the global south and we must learn to learn from each other or we will consume our planet to extinction” (Callahan 2018, 105).

A question that arises for all systemic alternatives of all kinds is how to thrive in a malfunctioning global economy and in nation-states whose primary raison d’être is to support that economy to the detriment of their own inhabitants and life itself. One inventive and highly intriguing model is that of the “distributed open cooperative organization,” or DisCO, laid out in the document, *If I Only Had a Heart: A DisCO Manifesto* (Troncoso and Utratel 2019). Melding technologies like blockchain but going beyond them in a radical direction by repurposing them for cooperatives run on principles that draw from feminist economics (such as fair compensation for the care work performed by members/partners in the coop), the commons movement and Peer to Peer practices, and “open-value accounting” of the ecological consequences of production, the Guerrilla Media Commons and Guerrilla Translation Collective in Andalusia, Spain, are organized in this fashion.

What if this sophisticated model for alliances and networks of organizations that do climate justice work for free in movements, paid labor gigs for some of its members, and shares for doing the care work that makes everything run was applied to alternative education to address the perennial issue of how do its participants survive/thrive/live while doing the work? This model – and others like it that are emergent – certainly bears study and further discussion.

I will close with mention of two fledgling initiatives I am deeply involved with and that are only emergent for now. Transition U is a work in progress that I am involved in co-creating with students, teachers, and community members in the Transition US movement. Convened in the pages of *Resilience.org*, the e-journal of the Post-Carbon Institute and from among the membership of the Transition US movement in the fall of 2019, a group of educators from pre-kindergarten to adult education have met to discuss how we might work with students outside of the classroom and engage community members in the process of building systemic alternatives. We ultimately re-constituted two working groups, one for ages from zero (!) to middle school (eighth grade in the U.S. where students are typically 12-14 years old) and one for high-school and college-age students. Thus the project was renamed “Transition Schools” and the two groups within it have adopted the names “Educare” and “Transition U” respectively.

With the backing of Transition US and the resources (mostly human) that that affords, these groups are charting their way into the challenges of addressing the sextuple crisis. If fully realized, the potential of such a network of educators might be game-changing, as it would bring young, creative people into the Transition Movement and its many like-minded initiatives flying under their own banner anywhere. At the same time, it could seed innovative Transition living laboratories in college and university (and younger) communities, generate new knowledge/methods/practices/experiences of Transition; contribute to knowledge for Transition work by spreading awareness of such work in our schools; and scale up our efforts to new locations, demographic groups, and communities (Foran 2019a).

Time will tell what may come of this, and anyone interested can contact me to find out more.

Even more a notion than a group or a space at the moment is what I and a few others want to do with Eco Vista U as a teaching/learning/resource space of our Eco Vista community project adjacent – and now we come full circle – to the University of California, Santa Barbara in the town of Isla Vista. So far, we have founded the Eco Vista Climate Justice Press and published our first e-book, a work of climate fiction called *See You in Our Dreams* (Maía 2020), and that title may be the most fitting conclusion to this essay!

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Eco Vista Transition Initiative: <https://ecovistacommunity.com/>

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1. See Vicente Manzano-Arrondo’s wonderfully titled chapter in this volume: “Finding Hope in the midst of an Absurd University,” and the chapters on education in the recent volume *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education: Special Issue on the Anthropocene in the Study of Higher Education* (2019), particularly Ullmer and Maxwell. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)