

## Chapter 4

# Possible Futures



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**Abstract** The regeneration of the Global South is the regeneration of our beautiful planet. Recognising the immense transformation required to reach this aspiration, we remember that evolution is the death of the obsolete and the birth of the new. We acknowledge the critically flawed philosophies, arguments and institutional frameworks that define recent human history: fragmentation by modernity, sanitised reductionism of mechanistic thought, dominating exploitation of entrenched inequality. Standing at the precipice of civilisational collapse, we see and make visible the forces set in motion by hegemonic powers past and present—these run deep, strong undercurrents throughout our globalised capitalist human systems, today and tomorrow. Our ability to dance with complexity and chaos, even if awkwardly at first, underscores the emergent experimentation desperately needed to find new routes to our possible futures. A pluriverse already exists and awaits us, where restored and newly fostered ecosystems co-evolve with our freshly reinvigorated humanity.

**Keywords** Global South · Mother Earth · Colonialism · Modernity · Decolonization · Intergenerationality · Pluriverse

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## 4.1 Emergence from Folly

Welcome to Earth. Plants and animals used to thrive wild here in dynamic equilibrium. Life and death danced to the never-ending rhythms of birth, growth, maturation, abundance, nourishment, struggle, violence, death, decay. Infinite evolutionary experiments manifested life itself.

*Homo sapiens* were weavers of thriving ecosystems and volatile destroyers of hominids, dominating their tribal and ecological niches, expanding into others—just because it was possible. These behavioural trends have been echoed in other social species—primates, elephants, ravens and dolphins. It was our use of fire for cooking that diverted evolutionary investment away from the gut and into the brain (Brewer, 2020).

The invention of the farm separated specific plants and animals from their natural ecology—breeding crops and livestock specifically for human production. Reductionistic ecological discrimination. The rise of non-agrarian society led to a hierarchy of separation among human beings via the concept of the social class. The emergence of city states gave birth to the modern human civilisation—and its cyclical failure due to environmental destruction and military warfare.

Then came dominant ownership: empires, borders, propaganda, corporatisation, globalisation—false solidarity through separation. The ideology of expansionism outlasted the fall of empires and civilisational collapse, culminating in the recent propagation of the nation state. Technological advancement was a tool for distraction and control, developed to perpetuate and enforce geopolitical power through military might, and to propagate the idea that humanity can destroy what it cannot control.

The collapse of the Global South was also the collapse of Mother Earth. Today, the Global South stands as a metaphor for the unheard, unseen and unknown narratives of the world.

Throughout all of this, humanity remained an insignificant, negligible proportion of Earth's living biomass. Within two hundred years, the colonial project would bring the planet's astounding biodiversity its sixth mass extinction—through intentional, deliberate, reckless design of human systems for enslavement, extraction and exploitation—just because it was possible.

*Homo sapiens*, representing less than 0.01% of the planet's living biomass, have destroyed 83% of wild mammals, 80% of marine animals, 50% of plants, and 15% of fish (Bar-On et al., 2018). Millions of years of biological evolution disappearing without a mention. 2020 marked the crossover point when, for the first time in history, the total mass of objects produced by man has exceeded the total mass of living matter on Earth. The global mass of plastic produced since its invention is now greater than the total mass of all terrestrial and marine animals combined (Elhacham et al., 2020).

This tyrannical force of nature on Earth continues to blindly yet consciously follow this direction of damnation, insisting upon the civilisation of separation even as Earth's systems buckle and collapse around us, marching through quicksand towards a consumption-fuelled technocratic future for the privileged few (Bendell, 2020). Ancient Venus figurines are now theorised as symbols of survival and abundance

(Johnson et al., 2020), mirroring our contemporary worship of projections of privilege and opulence as our societies decay.

We remain mercilessly trapped in and vaguely aware of our folly. Our ability to understand and embody the deep transformations necessary in our cultural expectations of life will define our route to planetary regeneration—gentle or tumultuous.

## 4.2 The Story of the Global South

We don't know anything; we are just part of nature. When nature allows us to know something, however little about nature, we start to learn to use this wisdom to do good things too.

—Chief Ninawá, leader of the Huni Kuin peoples of the Amazon rainforest (video transcript).

We, in the civilisation of modernity, have much to learn from indigenous worldviews, particularly around the human–nature and human–human relationships. Indigenous spirituality teaches us that the heart, intention and consciousness with which you move and live in the world is of utmost importance. Sacred, even. The reverence with which we hold the divine design of Earth's systems defines the work of transformation for planetary regeneration.

“How does a tree photosynthesise to produce the air we breathe?” Chief Ninawá asks. “How does a bee hive produce honey? How would a bee do such a thing if it weren't for intelligence, if it weren't for reason? There is a great human egoism in believing that the human being is rational, or that only the human being is capable of experiencing pain, happiness or suffering. The Earth is sacred, the Earth hears, the Earth experiences suffering, and feels joy too.” He reminds us to give graceful thanks for the gifts we receive for free, “We *are* nature. We have a duty to make that connection with nature and with the Universe.” (Ninawá, 2020, video transcript).

Much of indigenous knowledge was lost to humanity when we stepped into the age of colonialism—one of intergenerational separation, apathy, and pain.

Pain is “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage.” The International Association for the Study of Pain recognises (Raja et al., 2020) the lived experiences of pain, noting:

- Pain is always a personal experience that is influenced to varying degrees by biological, psychological and social factors.
- Through their life experiences, individuals learn the concept of pain.
- Although pain usually serves an adaptive role, it may have adverse effects on function and social and psychological well-being.

Modern colonialism began six centuries ago when international sea trade turned into conquest through coercion. This is a time known to Europeans as the “Age of Discovery” starting in the fifteenth century. Within half a century of the first

expeditions, much of the indigenous South American populations were wiped out by European diseases delivered by Spanish and Portuguese explorers. Irreplaceable gold and silver art were melted down to meet European ransoms (Minster, 2020). African and Asian colonisation required more strategic design, planning and brute force.

The history of interactions among disparate peoples is what shaped the modern world through conquest, epidemics and genocide. Those collisions created reverberations that have still not died down after many centuries, and that are actively continuing in some of the world's most troubled areas. [...] We see in our daily lives that some of the conquered peoples continue to form an underclass, centuries after the conquests or slave imports took place.

—Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, p. 10.

Physical military domination gave way to hegemonic power through manipulating language, culture, morality and common sense. Hegemony implicates power and politics into cultural texts—reinforced through the stories peoples (are allowed or empowered to) tell and the images people (are allowed or empowered to) make (Gramsci, 1929, 1935). This is how oppression remains in our minds.

Indigenous peoples have gained increasing international visibility in their fight against long-standing colonial occupation by nation states, while enduring ongoing patterns of colonial dispossession and violence. In defending their collective rights to self-determination, culture, lands and resources, their resistance and creativity offer pause for critical reflection on the importance of maintaining indigenous distinctiveness against the homogenising forces of states and corporations (Samson & Gigoux, 2016).

As plural truths emerge slowly through research into indigenous stories and release of coloniser records (Radiolab, 2015), we must explore other ways of reimagining entrenched perspectives of histories. As one example, new epistemologies are experimented through the virtual worlds afforded through mainstream console game series such as *Assassin's Creed*. The game's detailed 3D visualisations depicting past worlds as accurately as commercially possible blends in together with semi-fictional plot lines loosely based on real recorded history (Masters, 2012; Ubisoft, 2012). *Assassins Creed III*'s eighteenth century protagonist is a half-Mohawk, half-English assassin who battles his own identity as his indigenous culture is decimated in colonial America.

The gamer is invited to become characters with diverse heritages, activating the interactivity of mainstream gaming in embodying the complex cultural circumstances of the times, as far as we can speculate, for modern edutainment. Powerful collective imaginations of sophisticated stories and histories are mainstreamed. Commercial console gaming is a technology-enabled experience where millions of people all around the world engage simultaneously in exploring stories within new complex worlds.

The global social experience of commercial gaming is one of building common yet distinct memories and (sub-)cultures, through nonlinear relationships in-game. Recent game design and world-building innovations enable diverse and plural perspectives in multiplayer and single player mode.

On the other extreme, the linear simplification of planetary and human history, as it is currently perceived and taught by institutional education systems, leaves us to the unfortunate prioritisation and pedestalisation of recent common homogenised experiences, discounting the diverse valuable lessons of human history—all of which pale in comparison to those required to prepare us for the imminent future of accelerated anthropogenic climate and environmental crises.

Climate change is not simply a political/environmental issue, something that can be resolved in the sparkling glare of cameras and behind the forced smiles of world leaders after a few carbon commitments. It is a spiritual crisis, an existential crisis, an epistemological crisis. And to meet it, we must come face-to-face with the noxious heap of ideologies we have swept under the carpet of orthodoxy. We must confront what it means to be human, the ironies and impossibilities of growth for growth's sake, the impasses of human agency, the linearity and limitations of capitalist teleology. The substructures of our experience as a species in these moments of charged transitions need to be upturned.

—Alnoor Ladha and Bayo Akomolafe (2017, p. 822).

If there is one overarching story of the Global South, it might be that of resilience in the face of painful, overwhelming oppression delivered alongside the attractive opulence of modernity. It might be that of boldly celebrating the diverse ways of life that remain continuing to tell the stories that matter in traditional cultures even as they disappear forever.

### 4.3 The Separation of Modernity

Humanity is now being invited to cross membranes—to dance (in the dark and awkwardly) with the complexities and chaos of existence. For a long time, unfortunately, we have tried to deal with the complexities by making the complex issues simple. Unsuccessfully, we have been trying to untie the knots that intersect our problems in this web of interdependencies that is life through a reductionist and fragmentary worldview. And still, we rely largely on the paradigms of dualisms, objectivity, linearities, determinisms, superficialities and materialities that guide the prevalence of static equilibrium over dynamic evolution, and the placement of the human (and a very specific sort of human) at the centre of control and creation.

Modernity is a worldview that is Eurocentric, rationalist, Cartesian, objectivist, reductionist, positivist, capitalist, liberal, patriarchal and white. Current wicked problems on a global scale do not simply arise from the absence of awareness or knowledge. They are deeply ingrained in an inherently violent modern-colonial habit of being (Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures, 2020). Modernity has been relying on fantasies and denials, spiralling again and again in loopy tendrils, wounding itself with abyssal grasping and perpetuating its own violent modern-colonial habits of being, as claimed by Alvarez-Pereira (2016):

- The *fantasy of exclusion and denial of bonds*, the insistence in seeing ourselves as separate rather than entangled and irrevocably interconnected with each other,

and indeed with all sentient beings and Earth herself, justify avoiding the shared responsibility of making damaged worlds liveable again.

- The *fantasy of omnipotence and denial of limitations* nurtures the insatiable, superficial material gratification, the belief in unlimited growth and control over the Universe, while denying the fact that the planet cannot sustain exponential growth and consumption.
- The *fantasy of measurability and denial of complexity* maintains the obsessive act of measuring and quantifying, ignoring the fact that life is also sacred, complex, diverse and not commensurable with a scalar, one-dimensional magnitude. What truly matters cannot be measured.
- The *fantasy of capital and denial of potential* transform the capital into an abstraction that doesn't support humans' creative and authentic values, denying that a prosperous future is built upon the non-computable cultural and artistic heritage.
- The *fantasy of power and denial of learning* accepts the existence of inequalities and hierarchies, denying the systemic violence and the fact that our comforts, securities and enjoyments are subsidised by expropriation and exploitation somewhere else.
- The *fantasy of certainty and denial of time* makes us hate the uncertainty of the future, as much as we avoid the certainty of our own death.

The more we excavate our assumed certainties and drive towards turbulent shores, the more we find just how complicit with the systemic crises we are. We are all complicit in upholding and reifying the meta-narrative of separation, of individualism, of hegemonic power. The trouble we need to stay within in the Anthropocene strikes at the “heart of things”, and “a ‘thing’ is only a ‘thing’ in ‘context’ of relationship [...] In other words, there are no ‘things’, only entanglements, and, by definition, an entanglement [...] is an ongoing promiscuity that makes thingness possible, the waltz of a thousand im/possibilities” (Ladha & Akomolafe, 2017, p. 831).

Therefore, human nature is an ongoing admixture of the deconstruction strangeness of becoming human, where we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles, to be able to write non-ending stories of becoming-with. The weaving of sympoietic stories involves exploring the limits more than the centres, expanding the edges so they can be seen as meeting points—instead of points of separation. To create paths across difference, there is a need to “reimagine the ways of living and dying attuned to still possible finite flourishing, still possible recuperation” (Haraway, 2016, p. 10).

This entanglement state, this sympoietic way of being, living and dying, however, is not a ‘new’ story. We don't need to create ‘new worlds’ to continue existing on Earth, we just need to look to the unheard and unseen stories that surround us, to imaginaries that were forgotten (Ladha & Akomolafe, 2017), only allowing the foreground of frenzied commercialism and social hierarchy to matter. Many indigenous peoples preserve worldviews that see humanity and Earth as the same entity, that believe that we breathe and dream together with this larger organism. *These people who are still clinging to the edges of the planet are the remedies for its*

*fever*. The people that still know this different way of inhabiting Earth and still are protected by this memory and are capable of thinking and creating other worlds.

Our time is specialised in producing absences: the meaning of living in society, the very meaning of the experience of life. This generates a great intolerance towards those who are still able to experience the pleasure of being alive, dancing and singing. And it is full of small constellations of people around the world who dance, sing and make it rain. (Krenak, 2020, p. 26).

There seem to be entangled possibilities in the idea of ancient futures: invoking the plurality of ways of living and seeing life may lead to emerging pathways, without the fixity of reductionist worldviews. Finding other ways which go beyond our limited conceptions of intelligence is to face abysses, embrace uncertainties and open portals to co-imagine collective transmutation strategies. Co-feel the embryos of the future that inhabit us and impose the urgency of the materialisation of “other possible worlds” through the experimentation of other modes of existence.

As the world we know seems to fall apart, understanding these possible micro-political movements, staying in this trouble together, going down the cracks and envisioning other ways of being, is to become agents of that insurgency. Life constantly seeks transfigurations to keep its pulse in the face of collapse, for example a river that dries up with the excess of colonial garbage and then moves underground, where it finds the possibility of flowing again now protected from such poisonous effects (Rolnik, 2018). A more beautiful future will spring from underground—and how could it not, if what is on the surface is coming apart?

## 4.4 Decolonisation

The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.

—Antonio Gramsci (1929–1935, pp. 275–276).

We are once again in an interregnum. The simultaneous collapse of all systems—ecological, economic, social and spiritual across the globe—bear testament to the obsolete narratives, processes and structures trying desperately to prop up a decaying and destructive order. The Earth has risen!

It's 2022. Humanity's greatest nemesis is a microscopic virus, bringing mighty nation states to their knees, halting the juggernaut of global economy, exposing the fissures and fractures of a broken, papered-over world. The COVID-19 pandemic is itself a decolonising force, “*the great equaliser*”, smashing through the barriers of propaganda, exposing the myth of development, inexorably highlighting falsehoods of the universal story of human progress propagated by the ruling classes of the Global North. The pandemic underscores our inescapable interconnectedness to all sentient beings on this planet and to the very Earth herself.

Being able to hold onto this embodied sense of our deep interconnectedness is a crucial step towards decolonisation of our minds and imaginations. Thus, decolonisation becomes a process—an ongoing peeling away of the layers of imposed identity conferred by the colonisers, rejecting the stories offered, and a general ripping off the veils of illusion created by malicious omissions and elisions to design palatable chronicles of progress, development and the white saviour model. Decolonisation enables us to see more clearly the “hidden” hierarchy of countries—the developed and the developing—the coloniser and the colonised.

Imagine a world where labour and resources in the global South were available to provide for local human needs, rather than appropriated for the sake of excess consumption in the global North. For reference, the scale of net appropriation from the South to North is staggering: 10.1 billion tons of raw materials, 379 billion hours of human labour, 22.7 quintillion joules of energy, 800 million hectares of land. That’s for a single year, 2015. All for Northern excess.

—Jason Hickel, referencing Dorninger et al. (2021).

Who benefits from the continuity of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism that is vastly more insidious and sinister, with its access to big tech, big pharma, big data and surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). To decolonise is to penetrate this heart of darkness and see in it the very foundations of simultaneous global systems collapse that COVID-19 has accelerated, revealing systemic fault lines to the horrified gaze of a cloistered world. Over at the World Trade Organisation, a proposal by India and South Africa to waive patent rules for the COVID-19 vaccine has been predictably *opposed* by Global North countries, including Britain, Switzerland and the USA (Amnesty International, 2020).

Every narrative of separation—from Earth, from other human and more-than-human souls, other countries and civilisations—holds the ominous machinations of neo-colonial manipulation rooted in power, privilege and protection for a few, continuously seeking to maintain separation, fuel scarcity and stoke fears to keep the hungry wheels of exploitation turning.

Decolonisation is the undoing of colonisation through collective acceptance, apology and acknowledgement of the generational ecosystems damage in genocide and ecocide. It is the call for the giving back of what was taken—land, ecosystems, peoples, bodies, artefacts, stories. It is the demand for uncomfortable acceptance through purposeful investment into uncovering our true common histories, the interwoven threads of crime and pain, of power and resistance, of visibility and voicelessness. It is the realisation that our pluriverses had been rudely interrupted, disrupted and discontinued, by the theft of our wealth. It is the grieving over the futures we had lost and will struggle for centuries to reinstate. It is the recognition of the great disconnect of heritage confusion that embodies much of the trauma of physical, cultural and economic clashes of civilisations. It is the demonstration of collective remorse through communal solidarity.

Decolonisation is the process of decay we must experience collectively, across generations and worldviews, in order to accelerate planetary regeneration. At its ultimate completion, decolonisation is the elimination of the structural, legal, political



and social privileges, domination, and legitimisation of the colonial class, and the classes that rule off the back of colonial hegemony.

To decolonise is to call out our recurrent pattern of depredation, dehumanisation and destruction of the Global South. Moving towards regenerative futures requires acknowledging and honouring these narratives. We must see through constructed realities masquerading as universal truths. This then enables a conscious shift towards a pluriverse—a world where many worlds fit.

As various grassroots movements play out across the globe, from Black Lives Matter to the Indian farmers' protests, the seeds of decolonisation, long germinating underfoot, now spurt up into seedlings. Light now shines through the structural cracks the establishment has regularly plastered over. Local movements everywhere are dethroning mainstream propaganda, making visible a fractured planet mutilated by centuries of exploitation.

These death-defying forces of trauma and resilience are now espousing loudly counter-narratives that lay the ground for a plural future. To decolonise is to defiantly resist.

The tree of life knows that, whatever happens, the warm music spinning around it will never stop. However much death may come, however much blood may flow, the music will dance men and women as long as the air breathes them and the land plows and loves them.

—Eduardo Galeano, p. 13.

## 4.5 Intergenerationality

Indigenous peoples have been defiantly resisting for six hundred years. Such is the importance of intergenerational work.

Intergenerational interactions are in themselves micro-pluriverses encapsulating stories and patterns of diverse experiences, worldviews and cultures. These spaces are crucibles of the past, present and future.

Modernity's constant need for recreating ruptures and revolutions with each generation stems in part from a constructed idea that elders and youth live in different worlds, signalling "progress". Generational divide slots each *generation* in chronological order with defined cultural stereotypes and descriptive identifiers. We have forgotten that we all exist in a shared space (Sayson, 2020). Generational identities normalise a story in which social interactions occur mostly within generations, not across them. This renders us lost to the wisdom of the past, unmoored and uprooted from our fluid contemporary traditional narratives, histories and evolutions.

Our differences are what makes our experiences beautiful. Accepting our own becoming regardless of age is vital in settling into the present. This helps us understand that *the future is already where we are*. We might then be more intentional of the futures we can build together. Actively curating an intergenerational world begets a sense of continuity in heritage and community—belonging (Sayson, 2020). Knowing *who* we are and *where* we are, knowing we see and value each other, empowers us to undo separation and seek re-alignment with Earth's systems.

This applies even in the most rigid of communities. Within conventional work, organisational structure and hierarchical procedures stratify and isolate through entrenched dynamics of power and anxiety. In a rapidly changing and ubiquitously connected world, intergenerationality is a stew of diverse perspectives co-iterating on anti-fragility and resilience.

In a forest, mature trees nurture and nourish young plants. As described in *The Social Life of Forests* (Jabr, 2020):

An old-growth forest is neither an assemblage of stoic organisms tolerating one another's presence nor a merciless battle royale: It's a vast, ancient and intricate society. There is conflict in a forest, but there is also negotiation, reciprocity and perhaps even selflessness. The trees, understory plants, fungi and microbes in a forest are so thoroughly connected, communicative and co-dependent that some scientists have described them as superorganisms.

Forests themselves are our ancestral societies. We carry in our DNA 4.5 billion years of evolutionary wisdom and innovation—intergenerationality goes beyond humans to our more-than-human ancestors. Earth's diversity is testament to life's embodiment of co-existence through weaving bonds of mutual nurturing and collective composting, where grief is decay (Su, 2020). We must acknowledge and remember the harm and pain that we have experienced in our local and global worlds. To be able to sense this discomfort, we must recalibrate our sensitivities and respect individual and collective therapy. We must expect, and seek to avoid, future harm.

Intergenerational work is a subject continuously present in co-creating possible futures, where life continually folds in on itself. Just as twisting fibres gives a rope its strength, past and future generations are entangled, and must become even more so. Purposefully weaving past wisdom with new innovation enables us to continually birth new worlds. This entanglement raises different perspectives, experiences, sensitivities of the layering and overlapping generations—allowing the integration of wisdom in diversity and resilience in long-lived human societies aligned with Earth's systems. Traditional knowledge does not lie only in the past. It is alive today and perpetuates our futures.

We must recognise the violence that persists. We must honour acts of witnessing, mourning and grieving. We must acknowledge and be empathetic to the nonlinear nature of intergenerational work—we are living and processing numerous historical moments all at once (Cardoso, 2020).

South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose describes the African concept of the collective, *ubuntu*, such that a community is “logically and historically prior to the individual”. This community is a *dynamic entity* between three spheres: that of the living, that of ancestors and that of those not yet born (Ramosé, 2002). This philosophy vitally articulates the gravity of taking the intergenerational “We” seriously. Many indigenous philosophies around the world hold similar local concepts of the collective. For example, in the Philippines, *kapwa* is the I in you, and the I in other. You-ness is also within them—you are not alone, you are embedded among *them* (Sayson, 2020).

Understanding our distinct roles in a complex, interwoven living system, and acknowledging inherent contradictions, must form the foundation of our stories and

cultures in seeking to avoid the mistakes of our dominating and disruptive ancestors. Regeneration of the Global South requires that we take seriously the reclamation of what had been, is being, and will be destroyed and violated (Sayson, 2020). Undoing this separation helps to build the might of our own societies and communities, reclaiming our stories and ourselves (Khan, 2020). This is the intergenerational work in building possible futures.

The might of a nation is the ability to tell its stories, be heard and follow on its thread. The Global South's history of slavery and colonisation is a great disruption to the might of our societies, leading to generations-long individual and collective identity struggles. Our histories must be spoken not through the eyes of the Global North, but shared with authenticity and integrity between generations within our local societies. If we want to strive for the wholesome thriving of life on Earth, we must hold dearly and humbly the connectivity of the different generations, carefully integrating past wisdom and new innovation (Khan, 2020).

## 4.6 Pluriverse

The world we want is a world in which many worlds fit. [...] Softly and gently we speak the words which find the unity which will embrace us in history and which will discard the abandonment which confronts and destroys us. Our word, our song and our cry, is so that the dead will no longer die. We fight so that they may live. We sing so that they may live.

—Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN).

We live in a world founded upon *one* universal narrative of growth and development for all. “*The West’s universalising tendency was nothing new, but it claimed a superior position for itself,*” Walter D. Mignolo writes (quoted in Reiter, 2018, p. 10). This unnatural, unrealistic and unachievable narrative has been a persistent backdrop of our modern culture; the social imaginary we teach ourselves to build identities within and religiously uphold. Our dominant narrative of modernity has arrogated to itself the right to be “the world”, subjecting all other worlds to irrelevance.

By essence, a pluriverse questions the notion of a universe, a “one-story-fits-all” formula in a multiverse world. It is convenient for the global ruling class to have a unifying, single narrative that supports the dominant paradigms legitimising the status quo. It is therefore critical to explore, unravel and articulate the hidden layers of the unheard, unseen, unknown and unacknowledged. Other truths lurk in the folds of the seemingly uniform. It is a journey towards reclaiming who we are as individuals, as communities, as societies, as ecosystems—towards wholly belonging to ourselves and our narratives.

Planetary regeneration cannot be co-created on the collapsing grounds of exclusion, extraction, exploitation and extermination. In the world we want, everybody fits, human and more-than-human, in a twisting dance.

We hence invite stories of lived experiences to collectively envision a future that works for all. It's okay that narratives clash. They work in their contexts and coexist in parallel. There will be a place for paradoxes, confrontations and absolute differences in every form. The moment we attempt to unify, we feed the conformity of modernity. Pluriversality thus becomes a portal to a regenerative future.

The economic, social, ecological and spiritual crises we are experiencing today are largely caused by an ontology that is unable to generate truly transformative solutions to the problems it has created. As we stand guilty of the sixth mass extinction and reflect on our velocity that has propelled us to this point, history impels us from universality towards pluriversality. We have no choice but to transition to a worldview without a centre and without margins, as proposed by South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose (2002).

This is a phase shift into a different way of being, seeing and relating to each other, and to the Universe. We are required to acknowledge and recognise the multiverse of stories and narratives of the Global South. Colonised worlds' ways of being have been delegitimised, invisibilised and ridiculed for centuries, even as indigenous knowledge was misappropriated and re-branded in service to Western capitalism. It is time to resurrect the trapped stories lurking in the folds and fractures of our modern civilisation, waiting to be illuminated, shared and integrated into the creation of a pluriverse.

Arturo Escobar's *Designs for the Pluriverse* (2018) advises changing how we make the world—changing our ways of life. The pursuit of *pluriversality* invites us to become intimate with difference and to nourish ourselves with it. It is a process of intellectual, emotional, ethical and spiritual decolonisation and remembrance.

Remember that our world is made up of multiple worlds, multiple ontologies, an infinity of realities that do not relate to the worldview of modernity. The simultaneous collapse of global systems underlines the obsolescence of material opulence peddled by Western civilisation. In this liminal space between stories, we are called to celebrate the infinite diversities of the many worlds that were once discarded and abandoned. We are invited to feel the irrevocably intertwined and interconnected nature of all life, not only as an act of conscious development, but as one integral to the very survival of life on Earth.

*Pluriversality* proposes, above all, a search for the recognition and celebration of the epistemological diversity of our worlds. It demands that new repertoires of human dignity and social emancipation be based on the *relational* dimensions of life, leading from struggles against oppression and exploitation to the reinvention of being, thinking and existing. Far from being imprisoned in identity essentialisms, these repertoires are contributions to the renewal and diversification of narratives from other possible worlds that are more just—human-to-human and human-to-non-humans (de Sousa Santos, 2019).

*Pluriversality* and these multiple epistemologies, whether new or ancestral, teach us to live with, and within, our differences. Practicing *otherness* involves deep concern with social justice, radical equality of beings and non-hierarchy. Purposeful exploration of other types of knowledge, offering insights into social life and social transformation, shows us ways out of monoculture. *Pluriversality* is a recognition of

the Universe regenerating itself. Without radically transforming our standard worldview, peace and planetary health are mere illusions. Yet, this is the civilisational transformation we have so longed for.

We speak of no less than a new notion of the human being, a true understanding of what it means to be a living being in the era of twin planetary crises—widespread instability and a growing insurrection against the increasingly evident effects of the so-called universalist worldview in a globalised world.

## 4.7 Midwifing Transformation

Transformation is far from incremental change—it is indeed the death of the obsolete and the birth of the new, through the evolutionary process of innovative experimentation. In our conscious cultural evolution towards planetary regeneration, we must embrace radical transformation.

It starts with humbling ourselves to be able to see the theatre of the absurd we have built and find impossible to leave. The civilisation of separation is the desperate grasping of monopoly crisis capitalism, a display of obfuscating hegemonic power in its corporate death throes—an aeroplane stalling. Recognise the upswell of resistant civic movements to this dominant civilisational model that has been vindictively upheld by the ruling classes since the release of the report to the Club of Rome, ‘Limits to growth’ (Meadows et al., 1972).

In collectively learning to see and acknowledge the ridiculousness of modernity, the mirage begins to fade and we gain a deeper understanding of our interwoven stories—past, present and future. We become more adept at acknowledging the spiralling damage of expansionism and colonisation, of globalised capitalism and industrial consumerism. Is this the world we wanted? Where did we go wrong?

When we process these explorations in communal discourse, we turn knowledge into wisdom. A deeper knowing of how we arrived at this point, without confusion, without denial, without judgement. This is our recent human story. Shared epiphanies will then inform us of what we must together do.

Public discourse serves as a collective processing in turning knowledge into memory, memory into wisdom. It must percolate through the social classes, especially leveraging the sympathetic minority within the ruling class, who will either lean in graciously or guarantee their unceremonious end.

This process begets quite naturally a deep cultural embodiment of this wisdom, where we disincentivise behaviours leading back down the same path of absurdity and encourage practices generating plural wealth in the direction of therapeutic healing for individuals, communities, ecologies and indeed Earth itself.

As these cultural innovations bubble up into new paths, we find our eyes opening to the ever-present truth that our world is, and always has been, made up of multiple worlds, each nurturing overlapping, overlaying worlds within it. Worlds within worlds within worlds: the pluriverse.

We cannot know without experiencing. When our human cultures and institutional systems are aligned with and supportive of this transformation, then we are literate.

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