



# In Search of Alternatives to Development: Learning from Grounded Initiatives

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## INTRODUCTION

Across the world, overwhelming evidence of the ecological unsustainability and social injustice of the current path of development has led to a range of responses. Substantial efforts have been made by various governments, corporations, and civil society towards ‘greening’ the economy, elaborating on, and attempting to adopt, principles of ‘sustainable development’. The most ambitious of these has been the 2015 agreement amongst countries to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With evidence of the impacts of the climate crisis mounting, these responses have recently been added to by, for example, ‘net-zero’ and carbon trading as well as by technical fixes such as geoengineering.

Peoples’ movements and civil society organisations, however, question these approaches. They point out that they do not challenge the fundamental structures that cause inequality, unsustainability, and injustice such as capitalism, statism, patriarchy, casteism, racism, and other forms of

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unequal power distribution. Instead, they argue that it is necessary to search for systemic, fundamental transformations, for alternatives *to* development. The reason for this is that the term, ‘development’, continues to be associated with increases in the use and flows of materials and energy which an already groaning planet cannot sustain.

There are multiple initiatives around the world seeking these alternatives. These include acts of resistance, or what Hawken (2007) refers to as ‘blessed unrest’. Others provide constructive solutions to human needs and aspirations that respect the Earth’s rhythms and limits and can lead to greater justice. These initiatives range from grassroots practices to ambitious ideological frameworks and futuristic visions, some of which are based on ancient Indigenous cosmologies. Collectively, they provide rays of hope in what currently seems to be a worsening situation of social tension and conflicts, the resurgence of regressive right-wing forces, and suffering caused by environmental damage.

Many of these initiatives were also crucial in enabling community resilience during the COVID pandemic, from which lessons need to be learnt. A tiny virus dealt a resounding blow to humanity and exposed the deep fissures in society, especially between those who have concentrated political and economic power in their hands, and those who lead lives vulnerable to the slightest fluctuations in the economy. The former used the opportunity to increase their authoritarianism and profit-seeking, while many of the latter lost livelihoods and are still to recover, though they do not necessarily want to go back to the insecurity of their pre-COVID lives.

‘Development’, ‘growth’, or ‘progress’ are clearly not intended as ends in themselves, although official pronouncements often appear to make them so. Instead, they are means towards human well-being. If well-being is about having secure ways of meeting basic needs, being healthy, having access to opportunities for learning, being employed in satisfactory and meaningful tasks, having good social relations, and leading culturally and spiritually fulfilling lives, economic growth *per se* does not achieve these. Additionally, there is no reason why well-being has to be attained through ecological devastation, or only enjoyed by the few. Human well-being can be realised through a diversity of alternative pathways and frameworks without endangering the earth and ourselves, and without leaving behind half or more of humanity.

This chapter describes the broad contours of transformation being attempted or needed, if we are to move towards socio-economic equity

and justice, and ecological sustainability.<sup>1</sup> I draw from broad principles such as social justice and well-being and cultural diversity that may be applicable across the globe, though in diverse manifestations. The initiatives I present are a complex mix of creating spaces within the existing system and fundamentally challenging it, of synergising old and new knowledge, and of retaining or regaining the best of traditional and modern life while discarding their worst. Most point to a different set of principles and values than the ones on which the currently dominant economic and political structures are based. While still very much on the margins, often threatened or submerged by the dominant forces, they all show the potential of a different future.

This chapter begins with an account of a process of networking and documenting alternatives in India, and the framework of transformation emerging from these. It goes on to describe initiatives of radical transformation in various spheres of human endeavour, and the principles embedded in, and emerging from, these. The chapter concludes with a glimpse of global processes resonating with those in India, experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic period, and key lessons emerging from these for the future.

## ECO-SWARAJ AND THE VIKALP SANGAM PROCESS

Human equity, a mix of equality of opportunity and access to decision-making forums for all, depends on equity in the distribution and enjoyment of the benefits of human endeavour and on cultural and ecological security. The Radical Ecological Democracy (RED) or eco-swaraj (Kothari, 2014) framework attempts to forge this kind of human and planetary equity. *Swaraj*, loosely translated as ‘self-rule’, became popular when used by Gandhi as part of India’s freedom movement against British colonial rule. However, its meanings extend more widely and deeply to include individual freedom and autonomy, the freedom of the human species, rights and responsibilities, and independence with interconnect-edness. RED is a socio-cultural, political, and economic arrangement in which all people and communities have the right and opportunity to fully participate in decision-making, based on the twin fulcrums of ecological sustainability and human equity. Here ecological sustainability

<sup>1</sup> It is substantially based on previous work by the author (see references).

is understood as the continuing integrity of the ecosystems and ecological functions on which all life depends, including the maintenance of biological diversity.

Since 2013, the vision of RED has been a basis for, and has been considerably enriched by, the Vikalp Sangam (VS) or ‘Alternatives Confluences’ process. This has provided a platform for groups and individuals working on alternatives to the currently dominant model of development and governance to network (see also Daga, 2014; Kothari, 2015; Thekaekara, 2015). It has a website with stories and perspectives from across India, a mobile poster exhibition and accompanying booklet (Kalpavriksh, 2015), and videos of the various initiatives. Its major activity, however, is the convening of regional and thematic confluences, or *Sangams*, across India.<sup>2</sup> By 2022, over 20 *Sangams* had been organised in various parts of India bringing together initiatives taking place in particular regions or under themes such as food and agriculture, democracy, health, alternative economies, and energy.

The *Sangams* are a space for people to exchange experiences and ideas emerging from their practices and to reflect on a range of endeavours. These include sustainable agriculture and pastoralism, renewable energy, decentralised governance, recognition of intersectionality, and craft and art revival. Importantly, these *Sangams* have spawned a more extensive global initiative with similar aims and activities known as the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, to which I will return later.

Beyond the sharing of practical experiences, one of the most important outputs of the Vikalp Sangam process is a conceptual framework of transformative alternatives initially drafted in 2014 and continuously evolving. Vikalp Sangam can be seen as a system subversion, in so far as it challenges the status quo and provides radical alternatives (Kothari, 2019). Together, the Eco-swaraj processes and the Vikalp Sangam framework address the key question: what constitutes a systemic or transformational alternative? The Vikalp Sangam website proposes that:

alternatives can be practical activities, policies, processes, technologies, and concepts/frameworks. They can be practised or proposed/propagated by communities, government, civil society organisations, individuals, and social enterprises, among others. They can simply be continuations from

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance [www.vikalpsangam.org](http://www.vikalpsangam.org) or [www.alternativesindia.org](http://www.alternativesindia.org). Access on January 23, 2023.

the past, re-asserted in or modified for current times, or new ones; it is important to note that the term does not imply these are always ‘marginal’ or new, but that they are in contrast to the mainstream or dominant system.<sup>3</sup>

According to this framework, a holistic, alternative society would be built on five interconnected and overlapping spheres, visualised as a Flower of Transformation (see Fig. 4.1).

Figure 4.1 a diagram in the shape of a mandala depicts the intersections of different aspects of social life. It has five main spheres: economic democracy, ecological integrity and resilience, direct and delegated democracy, cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, and social well-being and justice. These spheres intersect with each other, and together, reveal different aspects of a holistic development, as explained below.

In this framework, ecological integrity and resilience includes the conservation of nature and natural diversity, and ecological ethics in all human actions. Social well-being and justice refer to equity between communities and individuals, communal and ethnic harmony, and erasure of hierarchies and divisions. Direct and delegated democracy emphasises the ability for everyone to participate in decision-making and respect of the needs and rights of those currently marginalised. Economic democracy ensures that local communities and individuals have control over the means of production, distribution, exchange, and markets, while cultural diversity and knowledge democracy, acknowledges diverse knowledge systems and encourages creativity and innovation.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from <https://vikalpsangam.org>.

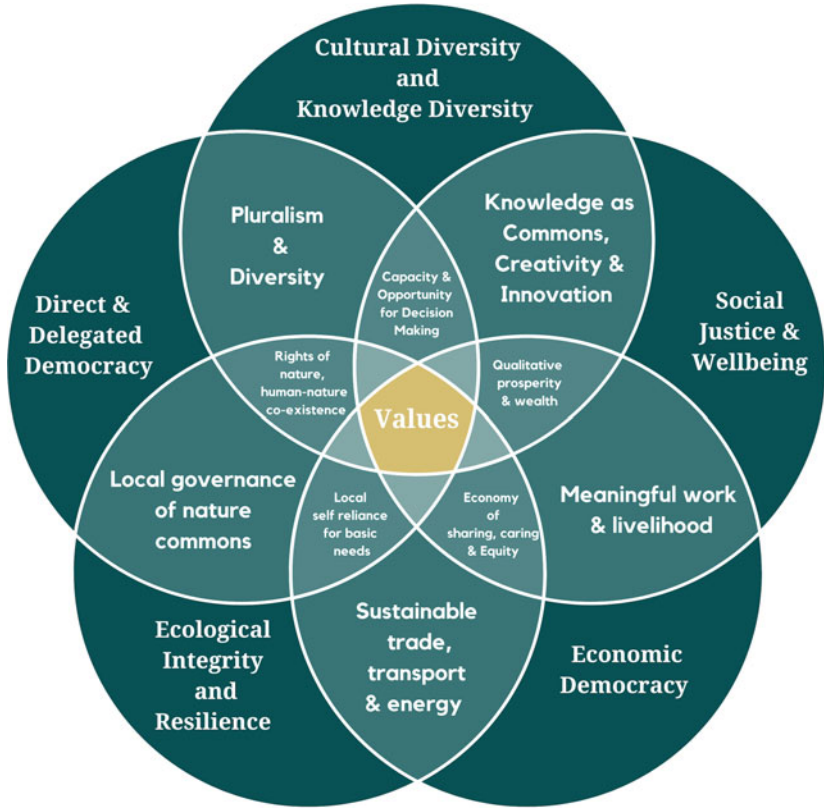


Fig. 4.1 Flower of transformation<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Originally contained in Vikalp Sangam's 'The search for alternatives: Key aspects and principles', <https://vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles/>; see also Kothari (2021).

## THE ALTERNATIVES IN VARIOUS SPHERES<sup>5</sup>

The areas of transformation identified in the Vikalp Sangam framework are reflected in approaches adopted in different parts of the world. Examples of these that focus on political, economic, socio-cultural, and ecological transformations are illustrated below.

### *Political Transformations*

Political transformations include initiatives and approaches towards people-centred governance and decision-making. Such forms of direct democracy or *swaraj* attempt to reimagine current political boundaries, making them more compatible with ecological and cultural contiguities, and to promote grounded democracy including through the non-party political process, methods of increasing accountability and transparency of the government and of political parties, and progressive policy frameworks.

The Kurdish Rojava and Zapatista regions in Western Asia and Mexico, respectively, have asserted complete regional autonomy from the nation-states in which they are contained. They have secured direct, radical democracy or democratic federalism 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, though not necessarily as autonomous as the first two mentioned, but with much key decision-making vesting in them rather than in their governments. In central India, beginning with the village Mendha-Lekha (Pallavi, 2014; Pathak & Gour-Broome, 2001) and expanding to a federation of nearly 90 nearby villages known as the Korchi Maha Gramsabha, there is an assertion of *swaraj* in slogans such as ‘we elect the government in Mumbai and Delhi, but in our village we are the government’.<sup>6</sup> The ‘freetown’ commune of Christiania

<sup>5</sup> This section is adapted from broad guidance used by the website [www.vikalp-sangam.org](http://www.vikalp-sangam.org), with additional guidance from the Alternatives Transformation Format (<https://kalpavriksh.org/publication/alternative-transformation-format/>), and material from the Radical Ecological Democracy and Global Tapestry of Alternatives websites (<https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org> and <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org>). All information was retrieved on January 23, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved on January 23, 2023 from: <https://vikalpsangam.org/article/reimagining-wellbeing-villages-opening-spaces-for-self-governance/>.

in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Svartlamon, in Norway, similarly claim levels of self-governance. While some of these examples do not engage with the nation-state, most demand recognition and claim what is due to them from the state whether this be access to welfare schemes, safeguards against corporate or other abuses, and/or other such support which they feel is the duty of any government to provide.

In many parts of the world, political boundaries intersect and interrupt the flows of nature such as in the case of a national boundary dividing a river basin, or separate cultural connections with, for example, armies blocking traditional routes of nomadic pastoralists. This is especially the case with formerly colonised areas of the world, such as South Asia, large parts of Africa, and many regions of Latin America, along with 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 implement policies and practices to re-establish flows and connectivity across frontiers. For example, the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative developed by local Indigenous communities and civil society groups, has established a bi-national protected region straddling the Ecuador–Peru border to protect the region from massive extraction of carbon-related resources.

### *Economic Transformations*

Economic transformations are brought about by initiatives that help to create alternatives to the neo-liberal or state-dominated economy and the 'logic' of growth and move away from indicators of well-being such as the gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita, to more qualitative, human-scale ones. These alternatives include localisation and decentralisation of basic needs towards self-reliance, support to producer and consumer collectives, and the development of innovative technologies that respect ecological and cultural integrity.

Democratic control of the economy, such as collective rights to land, forests, water, seeds, and biodiversity is seen as central to these forms of transformation. For example, *La Via Campesina* (The Peasant Route, in English), a global food sovereignty movement of several million small holders advocate for sustainable agriculture based on family farms.



Other movements include gaining democratic control over industrial or craft-based means of production, such as worker-led production in Greece and Argentina (Karyotis, 2019). Social and solidarity economies in, for example, Europe and North America, or community economies across the world, also demonstrate how non-capitalist businesses can thrive as economic units while ensuring that marginalised groups such as refugees or people with disabilities can secure dignified livelihoods (Gibson-Graham, 2019; Johanisova & Vinkelhoferova, 2019; Quiroga Diaz, 2019). There are also movements to re-establish the commons in contexts where public spaces and knowledge have been privatised (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019).

Economic democracy is also about gaining relative independence from centralised monetary systems and to move beyond money (Nelson & Timmerman, 2011). Movements for alternative economies further challenge GDP and economic growth rates as indicators of development, proposing instead a series of well-being models and indicators to provide a more robust, and locally relevant, idea of whether people are satisfied, happy, secure, and content. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness model, developed in 1972, provides a useful and bold—although with its own flaws—attempt to move away from GDP indicators. This new indicator approaches sustainable development holistically, valuing non-economic aspects of well-being just as much as economic progress. More recently, New Zealand, Finland, Iceland, Wales, and Scotland have formed a Well-being Economy Governments (WEGO) partnership. This collaboration promotes the sharing of expertise and transferrable policy practices to deliver human and ecological well-being.

### *Socio-Cultural Transformations*

Numerous initiatives have been developed to enhance social and cultural aspects of human life. These include protecting language, art, and crafts diversity, and respecting different ethnicities, faiths, and cultures. Several Indigenous peoples and other local communities are trying to sustain their mother tongue or revive it where it has all but disappeared. This is motivated by the fact that language is a key component of unique identity against the cultural homogenisation that has been part of colonisation. Sustaining Indigenous language embeds knowledge and information that are essential for continued survival and thriving of a community, are connecting factors between generations, and are tools for resistance

against various forms of domination from outside. 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, was established by linguist Ganesh Devy to document language diversity across India through the People's Linguistic Survey of India.

Decolonisation—the attempt to shake off the domination of colonial languages, cultures, cuisines, knowledge, cartography, and much else—is an integral part of these initiatives. For instance, there are several decolonial mapmaking initiatives to bring back depictions of the landscapes and of nations from the perspective of Indigenous peoples or other local communities whose mental and physical maps have been erased or drastically changed by colonial powers and nation-states. Similarly, movements asserting the importance and validity of traditional knowledge systems are making some headway in official governmental or UN institutions. In the context of the climate crisis, the Indigenous People's Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative 'emerged as an innovative response to climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges in Indigenous landscapes and environments'.<sup>7</sup> It has developed biocultural methods and tools based on Indigenous knowledge to assess climate change and local well-being and to develop alternative approaches to local biocultural realities. It is also increasingly recognised that the complementary use of multiple knowledges is necessary to fully understand and address climate change and reduction in biodiversity.

It is important to maintain caution in the current context of an increasingly right-wing agenda supported by the state (or elements of the public) in many countries. Initiatives which appear to be alternative in one dimension, such as sustaining appropriate traditions against the onslaught of wholesale modernity, would not be considered so if they have casteist, communal, sexist, or other motives and biases related to social injustice and inequity, or those appealing to a parochial nationalism intolerant of other cultures and peoples. The intersectional approach within the Flower of Transformation framework mentioned above can help to identify these concerns. It remains a challenge, however, how best to counteract these tendencies.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved on January 23, 2023 from: <https://ipcca.info/about-ipcca-history>.

A vital part of socio-cultural transformations are fundamental changes in education systems. These include initiatives that enable children and adults to learn holistically, rooted in local ecologies and cultures but that are also open to those from elsewhere. Alternative approaches stress the need to encourage curiosity and questioning along with collective thinking and doing. Indeed, they advocate the nurturing of a fuller range of collective and individual potentials and relationships, and synergising the formal and the informal, the traditional and modern, the local and global. An inspiring example is the Land University (*Universidad de la Tierra*) in Oaxaca, Mexico, a collaborative effort of Indigenous peoples and other communities in creating learning opportunities for children and youth that are radically different from the alienating, dehumanising, and culturally homogenising experience of mainstream schools (Bajpai, 2020).

Socio-cultural transformations also need the democratisation and re-commoning of knowledge and the media, and their use as tools for social transformation. This includes attempts to make knowledge part of the commons and freely accessible, such as the creative commons approaches, and alternative and innovative use of media forms for communication, such as community radio (India has about 150 of these) and open-source media platforms and free software (De Angelis, 2019; Guha Thakurta, 2017; Halpin, 2019; Raina, 2017).

Such transformations need to embrace initiatives ensuring universal good health and healthcare. This requires preventative means by improving access to nutritional food, water, sanitation, and other determinants of health. It also needs to ensure access to curative/symptomatic facilities to those who have conventionally not had such access, integration of various health systems, traditional and modern, bringing back into popular use diverse systems including Indigenous/folk medicine, nature cure, and other holistic or integrative approaches, and community-based management and control of healthcare and hygiene (Shukla & Gaitonde, 2017).

### *Ecological Transformations*

Ecological transformations include initiatives that promote ecological sustainability, including community-led conservation of land, water, and biodiversity, eliminating or minimising pollution and waste, reviving degraded ecosystems, creating awareness leading to greater respect for the

sanctity of life and biodiversity of which humans are a part, and promoting ecological ethics.

Initiatives such as Territories of Life are arguably more powerful a mechanism for conservation than official protected areas that tend to be top-down, undemocratic, and alienating for local communities. 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 has resulted in 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.

Given the enormous importance of energy transitions in the context of the climate crisis, many initiatives are encouraging alternatives to the current centralised, environmentally damaging, and unsustainable sources of energy and provide more equitable access to the power grid. These include decentralised, community-run renewable sources and micro-grids, equitable access to or community sovereignty over energy, promoting non-electric energy options, such as passive heating and cooling, reducing wastage in transmission and use, putting caps on demand, and advocating energy-saving and efficient materials.

Linked is the search to make human settlements sustainable, equitable, and fulfilling places in which to live and work. This requires sustainable architecture and accessible housing, minimisation of waste decentralised, participatory budgeting and planning of settlements, and promotion of sustainable, equitable means of transport.

## WHAT PRINCIPLES ARE EXPRESSED IN ALTERNATIVES?

At the core of eco-swaraj or RED is a set of principles that underlie many of the alternative initiatives mentioned above and to which participants in the Vikalp Sangam process have added considerable depth and nuance. The importance of these is that while alternative initiatives cannot be replicated from one place to another, given the diversity of local situations, it is possible to draw out underlying principles to devise locally appropriate practices and ideas. Principles that emerged out of the Vikalp Sangam process and in dialogues around RED and eco-swaraj include the functional integrity and resilience of the ecological processes and biological diversity underlying all life on earth. Respecting this entails a

realisation of the ecological limits of human activity and enshrining of the right of nature and all species to survive and thrive in the conditions in which they have evolved. Other key issues include equitable access and inclusion of all people to the conditions needed for human well-being and the right of each person and community to participate meaningfully in crucial decisions affecting their lives. Linked to these is the need to establish forms of governance based on subsidiarity and eco-regionalism and the responsibility of each citizen and community to ensure meaningful decision-making that is based on the twin principles of ecological integrity and socio-economic equity. Furthermore, these principles are founded upon respect for the diversity and pluralism of environments and ecologies and the need to develop collective and co-operative thinking and working. They are grounded in the ability of communities and humanity to respond, adapt, and sustain the resilience and adaptability needed to maintain ecological sustainability and equity in the face of external and internal forces of change.

### GLOBAL RESONANCE AND NETWORKING: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

Eco-swaraj as a worldview or concept, and its linked practices, has many resonating approaches across the world (Kothari et al., 2019). These range from ancient Indigenous notions (sustained over millennia or revived as part of current movements) of living well with the earth and one another (captured by contemporary concepts such as *ubuntu*, *sumac kawsay*, *buen vivir*, *kyosei*, *sentipensar*, country), to new approaches such as ecofeminism, eco-socialism, degrowth, and re-commoning. They also include radical reinterpretations of mainstream religions, trying to move away from their dogmatic and hierarchical institutional structures.

While these worldviews and concepts are extremely diverse, a core of ethics and values thread them together (Kothari et al., 2019). They share, for instance, the belief that we need to live with/within the Earth and all its beings, and that as humans we need to live in harmony and solidarity with each other. The uniqueness of each of these worldviews, and their differences, are worthy of respect through recognition by engagement. In this sense we have a pluriverse of ways of living, being, knowing, acting, and dreaming. It is, as the Zapatista say, ‘a world in which many worlds fit’ (Esteva, 2022). But it does not embrace all worldviews as acceptable designs for ways of life. Worldviews predicated on exploiting

and undermining others, such as capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and the destruction of nature and habitat, must be transformed to enable a pluriverse of justice, equity, and sustainability to emerge. While alternative radical approaches are spreading across the world and being re-asserted or emerging in current social movements, they remain scattered and for the most part have been unable to create the critical mass necessary to affect macro-changes. There is, therefore, a need for platforms and processes to bring them together, both as modes of resistance and constructive alternatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) revealed the vulnerability of much of humanity to events that shock the global economic system. It also exposed the dangers of a globalised world; whether or not the release of the virus was linked to ecological devastation, most certainly its lightning-fast spread across the earth was linked to global trade and human movement. It showed that people dependent on long-distance relations for their basic needs, including livelihoods, were the most vulnerable.

Conversely, examples from various regions of the world showed that communities whose basic needs were met and whose collective systems of healthcare, food production, and localised economic exchanges were strong, fared much better. In India, the Vikalp Sangam network has put together stories of COVID-19 resilience by forest-dwelling communities, women farmer groups, youth collectives, urban neighbourhood initiatives, and others.<sup>8</sup> The Global Tapestry of Alternatives has begun to do this more globally.<sup>9</sup> These stories contain many lessons on how rural and urban communities can be much more resilient to shocks and crises than the globalised capitalist and statist system. There is a need for ‘rainbow new deals’, that bring together the various spheres of alternative transformation into a much more holistic approach (Kothari, 2020a, 2020b).

Dominant economic and political systems often undermine such shifts or divert attention from their need by proposing deceptively simple agendas such as the ‘green economy’ and ‘sustainable development’ (Kothari et al., 2014). We are far from having an adequate understanding

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from: <https://vikalpsangam.org/article/extraordinary-work-of-ordinary-people-in-multi-language-translation/>.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from: <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/reports/pandemic/index>.

of the impacts of human activities on the environment, making preventive and restorative actions difficult. Additionally, there remains tension between various knowledge systems hampering synergistic innovation and the political and bureaucratic leadership for the most part lacks ecological literacy or a genuine desire for socio-economic equity. State and corporate power remains significantly unaccountable and corrupt, and patriarchy survives in various forms. Continued militarization and the vested interests that the military represents are a powerful force. Finally, there is often a feeling of ‘helplessness’ or apathy amongst the general public, or a willing acquiescence to the visions of consumerism, growth, and materialism.

Pathways to overcome these challenges encompass a series of strategies and actions. The kind of networking and linking of alternatives that the Sangam is attempting in India, and Global Tapestry of Alternatives in setting up at a global level, need to be taken much further. Constituents of these processes have recognised the importance of ‘resistance, civil disobedience, and non-cooperation (both collective and individual) towards the forces of unsustainability, inequality and injustice, and the decolonisation of mind-sets and attitudes and institutions’.<sup>10</sup> In India, networks such as the National Alliance of Peoples’ Movements have played a crucial role to bring these together.

Alongside these are actions to re-common what has been privatised or ‘enclosed’ in the past, facilitating the voice of Dalits (‘outcastes’), Indigenous Peoples or adivasis, women, landless, people with disabilities, minorities, nomadic communities, workers in all sectors, and other marginalised sections. Participants working on gender and sexuality issues have stressed the need for all of civil society to support their struggles. Promoting public awareness regarding problems and solutions and providing platforms for people of different faiths and cultures to understand and harmonise with each other, including through spiritual and ethical processes, has also been advocated. Through this and other means, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, while promoting the sharing of knowledge, experiences, resources, and skills, and engaging in continuous dialogue, are crucial.

<sup>10</sup> Vikalp Sangam’s ‘The search for alternatives: Key aspects and principles’. Retrieved on January 23, 2023, from: <https://vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles/>.

Other important strategies are engaging with political formations in both party and non-party form and using available democratic means of redressal and transformation while pushing for further enhancement of such spaces. In India, Vikalp Sangam has since 2019 joined with Jan Sarokar, a broad nation-wide platform that brings together dozens of networks of movements and organisations towards some common agendas that can influence the political arena. One of Jan Sarokar's key activities is organising *Janata* (People's) Parliaments, to bring people's issues to the fore.

Creating consumer awareness and options for more socially and ecologically responsible consumption patterns, especially in cities, is crucial. Here, the use of mainstream and alternative media and art forms is important, yet arts and crafts are not for instrumentalist use only. Instead, it is vital to integrate these 'into everyday lives, fostering the creative in every individual and collective, bringing work and pleasure together'.<sup>11</sup>

The Framework described above, or the vision of RED, could be one basis for an alternative, grassroots-up visioning of the future. But for this to emerge, much more iteration and dialogue is needed across themes, sectors, cultures, and geographies. Additionally, much greater work needs to be carried out on creating peoples' agendas in every sector or field of endeavour, building on ongoing practice and innovation. From this a critical mass of people and movements needs to emerge to take on the macro-forces of destruction and exploitation if we are to stand a chance to regain peace with the Earth and each other.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



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