

For EDGE webinar

I.

I'd like to start with two statements on the climate crisis to convey the importance of thinking with, and linking together, systemic alternatives from below, which is what the GTA is attempting to do. The first is from Greta Thunberg in a recent interview with the *Financial Times*, in which she repeatedly said that her main message to those in power is that they need to "treat the crisis like a crisis." "We are rapidly moving in the wrong direction," she said, and quoting the IPCC, insisted in that "we need unprecedented changes in all aspects of society ... we do not know what this looks like, because nothing like this has been attempted before" (<https://www.ft.com/video/69bca16a-8be6-448c-b097-c2b73f8b2010>)

The second statement is Bill Gate's recent book, *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*. His approach calls for "gigantic steps" through a combination of technological innovation, policy reform, and financial incentives all centered on clean energy technologies and aiming towards zero GHG emissions as the goal. He doesn't question the belief in growth, unlimited material prosperity, and unlimited energy supply (albeit of the right kind; he explicitly states these are good things). If Greta articulates an epochal concern out of sense of anger, seeking to elicit an unconditional commitment on us all, Gates' solutionism sees any meaningful action as coming from the top –corporations and governments above all–, precisely those less likely to treat the crisis like a crisis. As he himself says, "we need to change completely and also stay the same." Some of the changes he proposes will be needed; at the same time, his vision is a clear example that changes within the system are no longer enough.

II

So we need to look elsewhere, in the space of those for whom the climate and broader ecological crisis is indeed an everyday occurrence, at the grassroots and in intellectual-activist spaces world-wide directly connected with the GR. The GTA is founded on the premise that it is at this level that some of the most inspiring visions about both the crisis and strategies to deal with it are emerging, as my fellow GTA speakers will illustrate. There, we find an overarching sense of the crisis. As Latin American indigenous movements have been saying for several decades, we are confronting a *civilizational crisis*, a *crisis in a particular mode of existence* – Western, capitalist, patriarchal, colonial, or what have you. One of the most powerful articulations of such crisis is the concept of *Terricidio* –terricide, or the killing of Earth--, proposed about five years ago in the Wallmapu (Mapuche territory) by the Movement of Indigenous Women for Buen Vivir, or collective wellbeing. This concept includes the killing of both the tangible ecosystems and the spiritual ecosystems; by destroying the Earth, we damage the possibility of all humans and other living beings to live and thrive. To give a striking example from Colombia, a country that is right now undergoing a huge crisis due to the callousness and brutality of the current regime: Over the past five years, about 350,000 hectares of the Colombian Amazon have been clear to give way to 800,000 heads to cattle. One million peasant families have less land than one cow, and 1% of the landowners possess 80% of the land. Such a government will never treat the ecological crisis like a crisis. This is terricide.

Let me mention that the concept of the Anthropocene is an important concept, yet it lends itself too easily to managerial and technoscientific approaches, such as Gates'. It continues to be anthropocentric; it cannot disengage from many of the notions that caused the crisis, such as growth, progress, productivity, and so forth. The concept of terricide makes it clear that what is at stake is Life itself. As the same indigenous women who proposed it say: *Necesitamos una revolución del pensamiento*, we need a revolution in our thinking. Which takes me to the last point I want to make.

III

If we are in the midst of a civilizational crisis—a claim that very diverse groups in both the Global North and the Global South are making, from movement activists to spiritual teachers—it follows that we need to start thinking seriously about transitions from the dominant model (centered on things, objects, consumption, growth, individualism, and so forth) towards a pluriverse of ways of being, knowing, and doing—a multiplicity of worlds in co-existence. We find rich clues for such transitions in the transformative initiatives that are sprouting world-wide. What we sense emerging from these spaces is a certain condensation of thinking which emphasizes the following six principles or axes for strategies for transitions:

- Attempts to make life again more communal, searching for collective solutions;
- The relocalization of many productive activities, such as food;
- The strengthening of local autonomies;
- The de-patriarchalization and de-racialization of societies;
- The re-integration with the Earth;
- Fostering convergences and confluences among transformative alternatives through expansive forms of networks and meshworks.

It is clear that all of these strategies go against the grain of the current globalizing forces, which break down communities, de-localize production, undermine local democracy, strengthen patriarchal and racialized social orders, and separate us even more from Earth.

IV

To conclude, I'd like to emphasize that all of this points towards the need for new stories about life and the human. The modern story, despite its remarkable technological, material, and cultural productivity, has become lethal for humans and the Earth. The climate and biodiversity crisis and the obscene income and wealth inequality we witness today are the most striking manifestations of this state of things. As we see it, a pluriverse of stories is rising; they all emphasize the need to start from the radical interdependence of everything that exists *as the real foundation for life*, beyond the modern premise of separation of humans and nonhumans (anthropocentrism), mind and body (narrow-minded rationalism), and between “us” and “them” (coloniality). We collected many of these expressions of life lived in interdependence in

Pluriverse: A Postdevelopment Dictionary, such as Ubuntu from Southern Africa: “I am because you are, because everything else is.” These stories entertain a multiplicity of notions of the human, questioning anew the dominant “mono-humanist” model of the human --secular, liberal, rational, individualist--, within which we are trapped.

As these evolving stories become the source of conversations for action about the epochal concerns of our times, they are bound to enrich the practical imagination in their call for a *profound reorganization of how we live*. Through these conversations, we can feel again that we are genuinely co-inventing the world. As the Earth, and Life, continue to emerge as the central actors of our time, this is the historic opportunity that our collective project sees as being tapped by the most innovative efforts arising from below. In the last instance, what is at stake is an interconnected *mobilization for a new way of dwelling on the Earth*, one that offers different futures and futures in difference for all living beings. Perhaps that’s what many young people world-wide, and the disenfranchised poor of the world, feel and are trying to articulate.