

Ecoversities Alliance: a five-year experiment in cosmopolitical learning

Udi Mandel¹
Gerardo Lopez-Amaro¹
Kelly Teamey¹

¹Enlivened Cooperative – United States of America

ABSTRACT – **Ecoversities Alliance: a five-year experiment in cosmopolitical learning.** How can higher education be re-imagined so as to include multiple knowledge systems, for a world where many worlds co-inhabit? This is one of the questions at the heart of the Ecoversities Alliance, a planetary alliance of learning places and practitioners reimagining higher education, many of them emerging from social and ecological movements and indigenous communities. Constituted by more than 400 members, representing over 260 organizations in around 47 countries, the Ecoversities Alliance is engaged in experimenting, learning from and practicing ways to regenerate local ecologies, cultures and economies and challenge hatred, violence, monoculture, extractivism, overconsumption, and exploitation. This paper will draw from the perspective of three of its members who have been key participants since its birth in 2015 - as co-founders and steering committee members, reflecting on their learning in/with the alliance. This paper focuses on how the Alliance has been attempting to do what we are calling here *cosmopolitical learning*: learning how to learn in and between cultures, epistemologies, ontologies; learning to learn from, within, and beyond diversity.

Keywords: **Re-Imagining Higher Education. Political Ontology. Cosmopolitics. Knowledge Movement.**

RESUMO – **Aliança de Ecoversidades: uma experiência de cinco anos em aprendizagem cosmopolítica.** De que maneira o ensino superior pode ser reinventado de maneira a incluir múltiplos sistemas de conhecimento, por um mundo em que muitos mundos co-habitem? Esta é uma das perguntas no cerne da Aliança de Ecoversidades, uma aliança planetária de lugares e profissionais de aprendizagem que reinventam o ensino superior, muitos oriundos de movimentos sociais e ecológicos e de comunidades indígenas. Constituída por mais de 400 integrantes, representando mais de 260 organizações em torno de 47 países, a Aliança de Ecoversidades está engajada em experimentar, aprender e praticar modos de regeneração de ecologias, culturas e economias locais e enfrentar o ódio, a violência, a monocultura, o extrativismo, o superconsumo e a exploração. Este artigo irá se embasar na perspectiva de três de seus integrantes que foram participantes chave desde sua criação em 2015 – na condição de cofundadores e integrantes do comitê de direção, refletindo sobre sua aprendizagem na/com a Aliança. Este artigo enfoca a maneira como a Aliança vem tentando fazer aquilo que estamos denominando aqui de *aprendizagem cosmopolítica*: aprender como aprender em e entre culturas, epistemologias, ontologias; aprender a aprender a partir de, na e além da diversidade. **Palavras-chave:** **Reinvenção do Ensino Superior. Ontologia Política. Cosmopolítica. Movimento do conhecimento.**

Introduction. Emergence, interbeing and the crisis of the One-World World

Your kiss turned into heat
and then the heat,
movement,
which later
became a **drop of sweat**
that became steam
and later, wind... (sings Jorge Drexler, *Todo se Transforma*, 2004).

It is hard to write-think-feel emergence on a computer. So I am writing this out with a pencil in my notebook. With no screen in front of me I see the ocean and hear the crashing waves. And you, dear reader, now read these words most likely on a screen, an image-sound of the sea may emerge in your own consciousness. This composite miracle of communication across time and space, so often unnoticed, relying on countless technological, social, cognitive practices, worlds and relationships. When Engaged Buddhist activist, practitioner and author Thich Nhat Hanh (2002) invites us to look at a blank sheet of paper, as I am now doing, to disentangle the processes and practices that went into its making – the cloud, and rain, the sunshine, the labor of the logger, the food that nurtured him and the parents that raised him – he is pointing us away from the mundane to the miraculous and composite, to our *interbeing*.

‘Interbeing’ is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix ‘inter’ with the verb ‘to be’, we have a new verb, inter-be. Without a cloud, we cannot have paper, so we can say that the cloud and the sheet of paper inter-are (Nhat Hanh, 2002).

Indeed, without the kiss, the heat, the movement, the sweat, and the steam we cannot have a cloud. Interbeing is a *sweaty concept*, one of many that we will use throughout this article to share some embodied thoughts and practices related to the Ecoversities Alliance. To shift the often (objectively) distanced and head-based focus of conceptual sense-making and applicability, we explore and play with Sarah Ahmed’s use of a ‘sweaty concept’ which encourages each of us to see/hear/taste/smell/feel - and ‘sweat’ - concepts as they “are at work in whatever it is that we do” especially as they are coming “out of a body that is not at home in the world” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 12-13). Some concepts are sweaty, birthed from individual and collective becoming in the world, at times through shock or dissonance. Other concepts are turning words, like the koan tradition in Zen where a phrase is posed to the mind which, unable to apply habitual reasoning, sees its own reflection and is liberated (ie what is the sound of one hand clapping?). Similarly, the concept of *cosmopolitics*, which we dance with in this article, is a sweaty concept for us. It has lived with us in our 5 year experiment with the Ecoversities Alliance, not necessarily in this precise wording but in its

spirit and practice. Cosmopolitics is also a turning concept, first coined by Isabelle Stengers (2005) as an antidote, a slowing down (like a zen koan), to the practices and processes of the ontological commitments characteristic of modernity. Such commitments are based on Newtonian and Cartesian tenets in which all of the world's resources and beings are a collection of objects that can be measured, quantified and its trajectories predicted under the triumph of reason and science, universalized for progress and development as a modern/colonial regime of truth. This One-World World (Law, 2015) has taken upon itself the right to be "THE" world, subjecting all other worlds to its own terms and thereby programmatically stipulating their erasure. This One-World World (OWW) faces an urgent civilizational crisis through which humanity as inter-connected within planetary systems and all of its web of life faces unprecedented challenges and complex phenomena that are a direct consequence of the values and practices driving the OWW. The multitude of simultaneous challenges we all face overlap and should be treated as interacting systems rather than as isolated phenomena: extreme weather events, climate crisis, degradation of ecosystems, erosion of soil, dwindling stores of fresh water, biodiversity loss, thawing permafrost, the sixth mass extinction of species, overfishing, deepening inequalities and prevalence of systems of oppression, rise of fundamentalisms, forced displacements, epidemics and pandemics, femicides, wars, and systemic oppressions.

All three of us have experienced the 'sweaty' highs and lows of learning, researching and teaching within the walls of higher education for many years. Since we first met in 2013 as the initial seeding of the Ecoversties Alliance first began entangling kindred folks such as ourselves, we've been performing a dance of stepping in and out of academia. Within academia, we have had a myriad of sweaty encounters rubbing up against the increasing rigidity of higher education as it progressively rationalizes itself toward neoliberal and managerialist ends. We have observed how the commodification of all phases of knowledge production has taken hold. Pelias describes a "crisis of faith" felt by those who seek to work within the walls of academia with their impassioned hearts at the forefront:

They were teaching students who seemed more interested in grades than learning. They were working for administrators who seemed more concerned with the bottom line than quality education. They were going to endless meetings that didn't seem to matter, writing meaningless reports that seemed to disappear into the bureaucracy, and learning that service seemed to have little effect on others' lives. Productivity was the motto of the day, so they published article after article that no one seemed to read, particularly those who were the focus of the study. They wrote piece after piece on social issues, but none seemed to make any difference. They researched topics that got them promotion and tenure but seemed removed from who they were. They felt empty, despondent, disillu-

sioned. They felt spiritually and ethically bankrupt. Then some scholars began to recognize that the emperor and, for that matter, they themselves were wearing no clothes. They started to question why university life had to be that way, why they had to be removed from their work, why only certain forms of discourse counted as knowledge, why they didn't feel more connected to those they studied, why their mind should be split from their body, why they had to keep their emotions in check, why they could not speak from the heart (Pelias, 2004, p. 10-11).

The questions that Pelias poses resonate with us and a great many other colleagues and friends who've also been choreographing their own academic dances. In our experience, there is often an alienation of self and purpose as mainstream academia often pushes us to remove our hearts and bodies from our work. And, more significantly and perniciously, there is a direct relationship between higher education and the ecological, social, and economic crises we all face in the world today (Santos, 2010; Ford, 2002; Orr, 1992; 2004). The current university system is by definition designed as a pedagogical and epistemological 'regime of truth' engine driving the reproduction of the OWW that tends to reify the separation of mind from heart/body; knowledge from place; and self from community.

So then, what is the role of the university in dismantling the OWW and in allowing the emergence of new stories and possibilities, the blossoming of the Pluriverse or the 'world where many worlds fit'? These questions and insights situate how the Ecoversities Alliance continues to emerge into interbeing.

Amidst the nearly immutable stranglehold the university system reproduces and maintains within the OWW's regime of truth, there has been an increasing proliferation of new and counter-hegemonic universities emerging as imaginative responses to various colonial, post-colonial and/or neo-liberal forms of oppression (Esteva; Prakash, 2008) along with the multiple undercommoning practices (Harney; Moten, 2015). These new places of learning are attempting to go beyond their current role of reproducing the social order (Shukaitis; Graeber, 2007; Casas-Cortés; Cobarrubias, 2007). They instead seek to reconfigure the power relations that situate them and subsequently offer multiple insights of how higher education might be at the service of the diverse ecologies, cultures, economies, spiritualities and life within our planetary home.

In our engagement with the debates and practices attempting to germinate new and counter-hegemonic learning places beyond the modernist university, we landed on the term *ecoversities*. *Ecoversities* describes the reorienting of learning and knowledge which is happening all over the planet. This is a movement away from the modernist university's emphasis on its own paradigms and cosmovision as *the one, the uni, the mono – the only way* of learning, being, knowing, doing, relating, and inhabiting. It is a movement towards the learning, being,

knowing, doing, relating, and inhabiting of *eco-* from the Greek *oikos*- of our ecology, our home and our communities. Ecoversties describe these sites of innovation and reimagining that are rooted in place, seeded from local struggles and seeking to put learning at the service of communities, ecologies and spiritualities for the mutual flourishing of all of *us*.

With multiple cosmologies, visions, contexts, histories, languages, and geographies, at the Ecoversties Alliance we have co-tangled ourselves into a flourishing, nurturing and sometimes challenging ecosystem. We count amongst us somewhere around 260 'member' organizations from 47 countries (and 50+ languages), and over 400 individuals with active regional weavings in Latin America, the Pacific, India, Europe, Africa, North America, Asia and the Arab world. To be a member *ecoversity* means to participate in our dialogues and gatherings and to be actively involved in building forms of learning outside of the current status quo. As well as periodic gatherings (international and regional), Alliance members also participate through residency exchanges and learning journeys, publication outputs and collaborative projects, both regional and thematic.

This paper is a distillation of some key learning experiences whilst participating in and helping to nurture the Ecoversties Alliance since its inception. The three of us have lived through many processes, meetings, seminars, sessions and ceremonies co-hosted by us and other alliance members. We have also written and reflected on these diverse encounters since 2015 (see www.ecoversities.org). The authors are also current members of the six-member Steering Committee of the Alliance, contributing to the organization of this inter(trans)cultural community of practice. Whereas any perspective on a phenomenon, especially one as complex as an Alliance of such rich diversity as this one, is invariably partial, our hope is to provide in our reflections here some aspects of the Alliance which may be of interest to others similarly struggling (and sweating) with how to practice cosmopolitical learning.

One-World World and the Challenge of Knowledge Movements

Ecoversties harbor multiple communities of practice and learning, eco-pedagogies with experiences that respond to the critical challenges facing the planet. Some of them are accredited universities built from scratch, stretching and undoing the borders of disciplinarity of the old paradigm with the most innovative, creative, critical thinking; others create cracks of enlivened learning within the cemented, rigid structures of traditional universities; some refuse to be contained within the walls of grades and degrees; others are part of an intentional sustainable community, like ecovillages, eco-neighborhoods, or transition towns; some are seasonal and itinerant, creating intense and condensed spaces of conviviality and collective exploration; others have emerged as part of indigenous, feminist, Black, youth, social and environmental movements as an important dimension of the struggles translated into

pedagogies for training competent rebels; all of them multiply and nurture the wealth of experiences, practices, theories, ideas, and horizons of possibility in each one of their territories, urban or rural. The projects take many forms - holistic universities, traditional villages and eco-villages, ashrams, cafes, co-working spaces, prisons, under bridges, urban slums, farms, barbershops, and the like. From temporary zones of autonomous learning to well-established campuses, ecoversities blossom in many different shapes, textures and colors. Overall, we see ourselves as an emergent knowledge movement.

This knowledge movement slowly building all over the world, often under the radar of the media (mainstream and otherwise), is an emerging network of people and communities reclaiming their local knowledge systems and imaginations to restore and re-envision learning processes that are meaningful and relevant to the call of our times. Although diverse in its origins, this knowledge movement engages not only in critiquing and resisting our broken education systems, but also in cultivating new stories, practices and possibilities that reconnect and regenerate learning in local ecological and cultural ecosystems. We are witnessing a movement in knowledge co-creation and un/re/learning that shifts away from the modernist aspiration for the one and universal to an aspiration for/of *the many*- that which sustains and enlivens (both the human and the beyond-human). Similar to trends of social movements emerging in Latin America, this knowledge movement prioritizes epistemic decolonization; expanding discourses on the model of our overall civilization crisis through alternatives to development; and co-organizing in a way that centralizes communal logics and relationality (Escobar, 2018). The theoretical grounding of this work is informed by de-colonial (Andreotti et al., 2015; Grosfoguel, 2013), indigenous (Chambers; Blood, 2010; Martinez Luna, 2015), anti-capitalist (Santos, 2010; Harney; Moten, 2015; Shukaitis; Graeber, 2007) and ecological critiques of the university and the epistemology and ontology of modernity (de la Cadena; Blaser, 2018; Escobar, 2016; Ford, 2002; Ingold, 2017; Orr, 2004). Authors like Santos describe what we are referring to here as a knowledge movement for global justice that includes the end of the cognitive empire, giving space to an ecology of knowledges (Santos, 2018). Others like Escobar (2016), de la Cadena and Blaser (2018) place this reconfiguration of the episteme of the present historical moment through the concept of the Pluriverse as “partially connected heterogeneous socionatural worlds negotiating their ontological disagreements politically” (de la Cadena, 2015, p. 360). Transitioning from globalization to the pluriverse means wondering about “the multiplicity of mutually entangled and co-constituting but distinct worlds” (Escobar, 2016, p. 22). An oft-quoted aspiration attributed to the Zapatistas puts it succinctly: “We want to dwell in a world where many worlds cohabit”.

Prior to the emergence of the Zapatistas as a ‘newest social movement’ (Day, 2004; 2005), the strategies and tactics for social change by the majority of social movements tended to be either as improvements toward a more “multicultural” society or to counter hegemony with the

intention of becoming the new dominant majority. Tormey (2005) delineates different conceptions of 'utopia', explaining that while a 'utopian world' aims to create a new fixed and determinate social reality (ie. a new OWW), 'utopian spaces' purposefully eschew one master narrative of reality by encouraging politics, theory-making and practices that are experimental, non-hierarchical, locally-rooted, multiplicitous, open-ended, co-created and spontaneous. This 'utopian space' process involves the redefinition of the baseline of the political, facing the conflict, breaking the silence, making the antagonism among worlds public, interconnecting "such plurality without making the diverse worlds commensurable" (de la Cadena, 2010), and allowing for a radical destabilization of who can be a politician and what is considered a political issue with what actors, such as other-than-human-beings, like at Standing Rock, Mauna Kea or Wirikuta¹. 'Newest social movements', as Day (2004; 2005) explains, seek to create utopian spaces through 'affinities' of leadership and knowledge systems *outside* of the auspices of the state, allowing for greater freedom of learning and identity formation. The Ecovercities Alliance can be understood as a 'newest' knowledge movement with similar principles and practices, strategies and tactics. Rather than trying to improve education only from *within* the system through improvements of various kinds, the Alliance aims to strengthen the affinities between these utopian spaces of learning, many of which are re-imagining education outside of the system.

The regime of truth of modernity, the OWW, is based on a specific arrangement between politics and epistemology. According to de la Cadena (2010, p. 359), politics emerged with science "[...] to make a livable universe, to control conflict among a single if culturally diversified humanity living in a single scientifically knowable nature". This kind of politics is hegemonic and it tells its subjects what counts and what should be left aside. For example, other-than-human beings belong to the domain of 'indigenous culture' and never as political entities taking place in a potential disagreement, framing conflicts *only* as 'environmental' or a dispute for resources. Ontological differences are tolerated by liberalism but expelled from the space of political discussion. This denial of ontological difference obstructs the possibilities of alternatives *to* modernity. What is at stake is the resistance to attempted *ontocide* that fueled the expansion of modernity/coloniality since the "long sixteenth century" (Grosfoguel, 2013). The attempt to eliminate or subjugate difference and its pockets of resistance continues today, now under the claim of an all-encompassing modernity that claims for itself the pretension of universality. A central problem with the politics of the OWW is that "what from an indigenous viewpoint expresses a denial of ontological difference, the state phrases as progress, protection, and cultural improvement" (de la Cadena, 2010, p. 347).

Another way of doing politics is necessary to address the unacknowledged war against everything collective (Escobar, 2018) which the Zapatistas call the 'Fourth World War' - a war that defies any geographical boundaries and instead seeks to destroy anything that opposes or

obstructs the OWW and its extractivist and profit-seeking modernist machine (Marcos, 1997). These attacks are so strong that there is an urgent need to transition beyond the OWW of globalization and instead perceive our shared planetarization in order to create pluriversal conditions and possibilities. And yet, with the influx of diverse worlds emerging into being through movements of resistance, there is a simultaneous need to develop and enable translations between complex epistemological processes (Santos, 2007; Escobar, 2018) as well as multiple ontologies. “Transition toward the pluriverse thus calls for an expanded concept of translation that involves ontological and epistemic dimensions.” (Escobar, 2018, p. 66). These translational dimensions involve a type of cognitive justice that is rarely recognized nor fully understood. Many of the inevitable conflicts that have brewed within and across the Ecoversities Alliance arise due to our lack of tools to support (and sometimes even to name) the many moments when cognitive injustice occurs, even between those of us who are actively seeking and experimenting to co-create such translational encounters. Along these lines, Escobar describes the geo-epistemo-politics that lurks within and between social change and transition movements and the need for better tools for translation between them. Such tools might allow these movements to more closely perceive who, how and what is included and excluded. *How ought we to consider this other way of doing politics, one that recognizes conflicts as ontological and the world as messy, plural and becoming?* The term cosmopolitics coined by philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers has been useful for us in articulating this sensibility.

The cosmos must therefore be distinguished here from any particular cosmos, or world, as a particular tradition may conceive of it. Nor does it refer to a project designed to encompass them all, for it is always a bad idea to designate something to encompass those that refuse to be encompassed by something else. In the term cosmopolitical, cosmos refers to the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable, as opposed to the temptation of a peace intended to be final, ecumenical: a transcendent peace with the power to ask anything that diverges to recognize itself as a purely individual expression of what constitutes the point of convergence of all (Stengers, 2005, p. 997).

Whereas Stengers and Latour (2005) have focused on the ontologies of scientific communities and their interface with other knowledges and ethics that challenge these (in Stengers case, studies of anti GMO movements for instance), anthropologists Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena have explored how this concept and sensibility engages with the encounter of ontologies in contested political terrains related to land, resources and development in particular territories. Their work, drawing on fieldwork with indigenous and First Nations communities in Paraguay, Canada and Peru describes these encounters between modern, settler and development ontologies with those of the commu-

nities inhabiting these territories. In particular they bring into focus how non-human actors, such as mountains, forests, rivers and others are also subjects and political beings within the ontologies of indigenous and First Nations peoples.

Taking on these conversations of cosmopolitics we suggest that the notion of ‘cosmopolitical learning’ captures a key sensibility and set of practices which has emerged within the Ecovercities Alliance over the years. In this article we explore more what learning cosmopolitically has entailed, describing the challenges and possibilities of learning across ontologies, as well as in the emergent spaces in between.

One crucial endeavor is to challenge the instrumentalization of difference (the creation of oppressive and alienating hierarchies based on sex, gender, race, language, religion, class or any other form of difference) to perpetuate violent systems of injustice while at the same time finding ways to take difference seriously. This entails a radical inquiry with solidarity into our worlding practices, a querying of the kind of articulations, bridges, tensions and relatedness between them. Such inquiry in solidarity is reflected in the gatherings of the Alliance as an invitation rather than as a finalized or polished approach. The emergent nature of the gatherings and of the Alliance itself through its many encounters and projects is the condition of possibility for this encounter between worlds that are incommensurable and yet (possibly) translatable. Engaging seriously with difference, unlike the dominant way of instrumentalizing difference for the perpetuation of the status quo, is what sustains a horizon of trans-local learning initiatives gaining strength by coexisting and sharing. Here we encounter the possibility of a becoming where the everyday practices, the tensions and conflicts, and the mistakes that are a natural part of every learning process ground the practices and the interactions supporting a deeper relationality toward becoming friends, *compas*², kin to each other. This form of relationality looks very different from the typical goal-oriented networking that is found in academic or business circles.

The backdrop to the emergence of the Ecovercities Alliance is the weaving of members in this knowledge movement. This weaving began in 2012 when Kelly and Udi stepped out of academic positions where they had been teaching *about* such initiatives and movements, to (re/un)learn directly from amongst this diverse landscape of knowledge systems (‘autonomous’ places of higher education) emerging from social and ecological movements, and indigenous communities blossoming in all corners of the world. For a little over a year, they visited³ and were hosted in 20+ places in 13 countries (Canada, USA, Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, India, Portugal, UK). They met dozens of creative, courageous, inspiring and incredibly generous innovators in higher education and other learning spaces (Teamey; Mandel, 2016). During this journey, an unexpected outcome was the need felt to connect these autonomous places directly. Alongside Manish Jain, friend and co-founder of Swaraj University and Shikshantar Andolan, Kelly and Udi envisioned bringing these learning

communities together at a gathering where a mutuality of values and practices could weave in solidarity.

The first stop on Kelly and Udi's journey was *Red Crow Community College*. Situated in a former missionary residential school in the Blackfoot Reserve in southern Alberta, Canada, the college was teaching and intentionally re-integrating traditional Blackfoot knowledge and practices through a Blackfoot cosmological paradigm. Up until the 1970s, First Nations children were removed from their families and taught the culture of the settlers, the 'newcomers', through a government policy of assimilation that attempted to destroy indigenous culture. At Red Crow College, Kelly and Udi learned how the *Kainai Studies*⁴ degree was teaching a new generation, of both Blackfoot and non-Blackfoot, the knowledge (and language) that has sustained people in this region for thousands of years by reconnecting to the land and its living beings.

Narcisse Blood, a Blackfoot elder and co-founder of the Kainai Studies programme related a succinct metaphor of the university in relation to local ecologies and other forms of knowledge:

The basis of our relationship with the newcomers was fear. The fear was in the form of the forts and those big walls that they put around themselves, to keep them safe from the natives and thus the environment. That metaphor of a fort, for me, is really, really played out with universities. Universities think they know everything. They are afraid to go out of those walls. Especially here in North America. Hey, there's knowledge out there! (personal communication and also spoken in the film *Re-learning the Land: A Story of Red Crow College*, 2015).

The image of the university as the fort perfectly captures a number of the critiques of the modernist university laid out above. That Red Crow College should reclaim the physical space of the residential school whose explicit purpose had been to destroy the Blackfoot cosmology and way of life is a powerful reminder of what is at stake for individuals, communities and their ecologies when we speak about pedagogical wars. Bruno Latour uses the term "pedagogical wars" to describe the last 500 years of colonialism and the imposition of European cosmologies on the colonized (Latour, 2002). Grosfoguel (2013) describes this process as the four epistemicides/genocides in the long sixteenth century, processes of violence aimed at erasing the ways of knowing and being of women, Muslims and Jews, Indigenous, and Black people. It was the inauguration of a colonial, racialized, patriarchal, and gendered political system still hegemonic in the OWW seeking to subdue all other worlding possibilities.

For the Blackfoot at Red Crow College, learning, and re-taking control of their education has been a form of healing and empowerment (Chambers; Blood, 2010; Mandel, 2013). Although encountering numerous challenges (primarily neo-colonial), places like Red Crow College and many other spaces re-imagining higher education found inside and outside the Ecoversities Alliance have important insights, practices and

experiences to share that go beyond their place of origin and context of struggle. The Ecoversities Alliance, as an experiment in cosmopolitical learning, has been trying to understand, practice and embody what these lessons from, between and beyond these places might be.

Everything began with a gathering at an Ecovillage in Portugal in the summer of 2015.

How does the gathering gather? The Cosmopolitics of Facilitation

As the participants to the 1st Ecoversities Gathering of Kindred Folks Re-imagining Education started arriving at Tamera Eco-village in the South of Portugal, I became increasingly nervous. We had been building up to this moment over several months, planning and inviting people, and before that during a year of travel to many places re-imagining learning and higher education around the world. We were committed to openness, horizontality, emergence and cosmopolitical learning and hoped the invite had made clear these intentions. Beyond a minimal organizational infrastructure (including a light schedule of plenaries and open spaces), we were, as the saying goes, making the path by walking it. We were acutely aware that the experiment could go terribly wrong.

What I had not anticipated was how the politics, in our cosmopolitics, was to also focus on something as mundane as 'facilitation'. As the days went on it became clear that amongst the various tensions that emerged in the group related to the participants' socio-cultural-historical contexts, a number of these centered around how we should organize ourselves as a temporary learning community. As learning practitioners we were all adept at facilitation, this capacity – "to make easy" (in the etymology of the word) – is after all a feature of our craft as educators. What we had not foreseen were the reactions people would have when one's practices were questioned or when practices from other cosmologies were offered for how to gather. It became apparent that many educators present who had learned and practiced their craft in modernist educational settings had implicit assumptions as to what constitutes 'a proper way to gather'. The contours of these practices change, but amongst its key features we can identify efficacy, getting things done and being productive whilst adhering to a set timeline, and self-expression. In contrast, other ways of gathering present influenced by different cosmologies, in particular those affiliated with indigenous contexts, prioritized 'talking story', listening and consensus building and relationality – which includes both humans and beyond humans.

My nervousness and the anxiety experienced in my body during the days of the gathering also came from my sense of responsibility for the participants' wellbeing as one of the 'hosts' who invited them there. I sensed that the conflicts that had ensued were unsettling for some participants – even if on the whole they proved to be generative then and continue to be for all involved, even many years later.

That 'how to make easy', facilitation, should prove anything but that in a cosmopolitical encounter has been an important learning. Ontological and colonial battles were clearly being played out. Some of this no doubt also stemmed from the investment of egos and professional pride and attachment to individual practices and tools, and as such a reaction to being challenged and losing control. At the same time this also points to something deeper, which we have been continuously learning in the Ecoversities Alliance: that given that the Gathering in any cosmopolitical encounter lays the foundation to the conversation and the meeting across ontologies or worlding practices, how the gathering gathers is of utmost importance. Being explicit and transparent about this how, and co-creating it so as to honour distinct practices and values of gathering prepares fertile soil for emergence and authentic exchange.

Decentered hosting, listening and the Cosmopolitical Feast

An important learning for many of us at the Ecoversities Alliance, and especially us writing here, is that cosmopolitical learning, and being a host or co-host of such a gathering of cosmovisions, involves a decentering of one's own cosmovision and an acknowledgement of the gravity of the OWW. Part of this decentering is about opening up to other ways of learning and of being, knowing, doing, relating and inhabiting through an openness to experimenting with what that might be like. In concert with this, another part of this decentering involves exploring unfamiliar faculties in ourselves and our being (or rather becoming) in the world – not only with reason and intellect but also with our bodies and senses, our imagination and dreams, our relations to the land and its many beings. These practices of opening to other worlds within and beyond ourselves entail listening, receptive attention, and emotional openness to emergence, that which is still unknown and unformed. This “education of attention” (Chambers, 2008; Ingold, 2000) has the quality of interbeing we opened this paper with, and it enacts the sweatiness of cosmopoliticking.

In these gatherings our emphasis has been not just to begin to understand each other's worlds, but to allow for de-centered, transitional (Escobar, 2018) encounters *with* each other's worlds, to in a sense allow for the possibility of worlding, of slowing down, deep listening and *cosmopoliticking* together through a series of convivial practices and events that we co-create. In our experience cosmopoliticking has happened less through what can be framed as a politics of encounter, but rather as an encounter through conviviality, or *convivência* – living, or celebrating together. The feast, the root of conviviality and the etymology of *convivium*, in our Ecoversities gatherings have been made up of numerous ingredients harvested from worlding practices of participants from many parts of the planet who are at once co-hosts and co-guests, but more importantly co-learners.

The Ecoversities Alliance has now held five planetary gatherings (Portugal 2015, Costa Rica 2017, India 2018, Mexico 2019, Online 2020),

and twelve regional gatherings (four in South Asia; two in the Pacific Islands; two in Latin America - Mexico and Ecuador, two in Africa - Uganda and online, one in Europe-Mediterranean - Italy, one in the Arab World - Jordan, and one in North America - online). Over these gatherings the organizers, a mixture of people who have previously participated and local hosts, have been learning and improving the art of holding a light structure so that the aliveness of encounter and emergence across cosmovisions and in-place can arise. This light structure is always co-created and leaves ample room for emergence and for participants to re-configure the process of the gathering as it unfolds. We can call this the *Ecoversities Gathering Feast*. This feast is always changing but some flavours – or learnings – in it can be identified. The flavours of inter(trans) cultural dialogue, experiential and emplaced learning, inquiry in solidarity and politics of care, gift culture, de-colonising, and emergence have been a feature across these gatherings⁵. With each gathering we reflectively and iteratively learn more how to hold the container for this cooking and feasting together so as to better our practices. Whereas the first gathering in the south of Portugal, described above, kick-started this cooking and feasting process and created many questions, waves and sparks – some challenging and uncomfortable – we have gradually been learning how to learn – or cook together, in the spirit of ‘occupy our kitchens’ in which we reclaim “the domestic sphere, and with it, our sense of community and joy that comes from serving others from the heart of our homes: the kitchen” (Rivage-Seul, 2016). While we do not wish to be in any way prescriptive here nor offer a blueprint recipe, we have noticed in our experiments in cosmopolitical gatherings that there are some key ingredients which help the above flavors to arise. Also, we would like to emphasize this list as some key embodied (sweaty) and iterative learnings and practices, rather than abstract categories or principles we have followed:

- *Ceremonies, spiritual practices, visioning* – ritualistic ways of connecting with each other, the Earth and all living and nonliving creatures;
- *Somatic work* – based on the wisdom of the body, movement, playfulness, healing, breathing, and “embodying” our togetherness;
- *Discursive moments* – conversations, presentations of different projects via open spaces, facilitated activities to reflect on language, actions, gestures, dreams, struggles in our contexts and as a way to reflect on the Alliance’s goals and outcomes;
- *Indigenous and autonomous protocols* – rituals and tools for collective self-governing (pedagogy of *aloha, asambleas, cargos...*);
- *Reproductive work* – preparing food, cleaning, care for children, hands-on activities such as building, farming and ‘being in service’ to support the hosts and the needs of the community;

- *Conviviality* – spontaneous conversations, performativity, celebrations, music, meals with the local community, visits to the neighborhood and meeting local leaders and practitioners;
- *Learning in/from the land* – embracing the ecology of where we gather and its surroundings.
- *Learning yatra (pilgrimage)* – to visit and learn with/from local learning places of diverse types.

If we were to analyze the container offered by modernist universities, we would have a very different recipe list. Clearly the priority would be discursive moments, infrequently learning from place or context, depending on the disciplines in question, yet these would be almost invariably confined to a OWW cosmovision. The modernist university is by definition designed as a pedagogical and epistemological engine of the OWW. Whereas some of the other containers offered above do make occasional appearance in some modernist university contexts, these are rarely, if ever, part of a concerted design of the whole of the university as a place of learning and knowledge creation.

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

Mapping and Worlding Ourselves

I lay down on the hard tile floor. It is day 4 of our 5 day 1st Ecoversities gathering. The prompt question of 'why are we here together' is still echoing through my thoughts. We've just finished a 3 hours-long activity of slowing down to reflect on and articulate an answer to this question on three different small hexagram sheets through a few words. We then placed these hexagrams on an empty wall space, all 50+ of us, and began to qualitatively map ourselves into where we saw common threads between us, to name these threads and then to reflect together on what this might mean. Fast forward a few hours later, and we are again asked this question, but by a different facilitator from amongst us who often leads visioning sessions. We are told that we will be entering into a dream-like place of visioning. I try to quiet my mind, closing my eyes and relaxing my body as the session begins and we are told we are here now with the intention of receiving a vision as to why we have all been sent to this place, why we received the call to come and why we answered it. We are asked to smell the sweetest smelling place we can remember, to go to that memory and to allow the smell to take hold of our body. My body lurches and I am suddenly in June amidst sage and juniper, searching for wild lupine as it

is the season. The warmth of the bright sun is welcomed amidst a slight chill permeating the thin mountain air. My entire being suddenly feels a pure radiance to be here. We are then asked to go to a place where we feel in complete unison in all that is surrounding us, as though the Earth's heartbeat is our own. We are urged to listen to who is trying to speak to each of us in this place through our shared heartbeats and frequency. I feel my body deepening and spreading into the Earth between the sage and juniper. I hear whispers of ancient words I cannot consciously translate and yet my breathing slows and relaxes with insights being uttered of time immemorial, of ancestors living and loving this place, this land, its beings. We are asked to go to a place where we are overwhelmed with beauty and to connect with who is creating that beauty and sense of peace. My body soars through the wide blue sky over the steep dry cliffs surrounding the royal blue lake and the high white peaks. I see the immensity of edges bringing together sandy browns, evergreens, radiant blues, charcoal blacks and sparkling whites of textures sharp, wavy, dotted and threaded. I stop at the cliff-edge of the 2000 foot deep blue lake that has been the place of sacred and silent worship for thousands of years. Even though I have visited this place hundreds of times my body tightens with the magnitude of incredible awe I once again feel rippling through me. We are then invited to walk through a forest, to a path leading to water, to enter the water and allow ourselves to merge with the water, to feel the sun on our skin, the warmth, the gift of life, of light as we disappear into the water. I walk the steep path to the lake's edge, passing under towering Douglas firs and lodgepole pines, noticing an eagle soar over the water in the distance. My body, warmed from the incandescent life-giving sun, merges with the intense clarity of the water. Our final invitation is to shapeshift from the water to a form, to follow the sounds, the music in search of a vision that can form into an image that will be gifted back to the group. We are reminded to bring a guide to accompany us along our path. The music begins and I am suddenly swaying with the air, the water. I shapeshift into a giant sticky black gob, an angry god of the forest, spreading, seeking, growing and moving toward all of those that are there to extract, to destroy, to consume. I am rolling faster and faster in anger and yet my body is still lying on the floor. I feel an acute need to move, to run, to crawl, to slither. And then a calm voice soothes me. A gentle unrecognizable female voice. I pause in silence. A swirling vortex interrupts the peacefulness. Am I the vortex itself or am I being spun by the vortex? I cannot tell. I spin and spin, I am suffocating, breathless. Suddenly I fall to the forest floor. There are flowers everywhere, wildflowers in every color imaginable, wildflowers that I recognize from my childhood, running in the open fields that are now covered with manicured lawns and hastily constructed prefabricated homes. There are aspen, redwoods, giant ferns as I walk from this forest to that. The sea unfolds in my sight and there are elk, sea lions, dunes covered with long silky grasses. I feel threads of interconnectedness weaving every space in my body with all that I see, hear, smell, feel, taste. Suddenly the music stops. We are asked to take paper and to allow our body to draw without intellectualizing what it is we see, what image we want to share without concern to or for anyone else, to let our body create.

We are reminded that resistance is also a process. A black shape unfolds onto my page with roots, arms, threads emanating out into a brilliant variety of plants, flowers and trees. There is water too, nourishing all that is growing and seeding. We are asked then to share what the image is telling us about why we are here, not as an interpretation but what is needed from this image for us to be here. My senses are heightened and I feel as if I am listening to each person through my body and not my ears. And it seems that many of us are in a similar state as there is gratitude ushered forth with each utterance. Somehow we've travelled beyond time and space during this visioning, alone yet together. Fragments of memories and dreams, of places in the past with the present, of ancestors reminding, resurrecting... there are tears, shaky voices, glowing faces, newly discovered hope amongst remnants of trauma. I find myself amidst images of trees, roots, seeds, births, mothers, babies, clouds, oceans, sunshine, bees, butterflies. Surreal combinations of celestial constellations in tree branches, the tops of trees holding human heads and plant people illuminating reciprocity in one photosynthesis being. And through it all I feel the push and pull, the yin and yang of beauty and pain, suffering and hope.

Somehow through our own subconscious journeys, we have shared threads of breaking open space and time to bring ourselves closer to ourselves and to each other to seed and cultivate that which can become. In spite of being from such diverse lands and places, we've come closer to home, our oikos, to our deeper purpose of becoming fully human, awakening with humility to the partiality of our own lives that are interwoven and interconnected, gathering together to learn and weave together our hopes and our pain.

What did this visioning session illuminate for us as a collective about why we were called to come together? In the moments following the session a lively debate ensued, revealing new spaces of honesty and struggle, of humor and playfulness. We reflected on the violence and shared pain many of us continue to encounter in our daily lives, although different in each context, especially in its magnitude. We reflected on the newly discovered possibilities of hope, of building solidarity between us to other worlds that are possible. Although we explored the various images that we all put body and subconscious space/time to paper then (for several hours), we also compared and contrasted as to what emerged through the hexagram session prior to visioning. These conversations continued into the meal we shared later that day, into our nightly rendezvous in the 'non-alcoholic' outdoor bar – and still continue to this day, more than five years after this gathering occurred offering new insights through our relational inter-weaving.

It would not have been enough to have gone through this visioning exercise in isolation. The more head-based hexagram mapping exercise was an important door to walk through prior to the visioning. Rather than being thrown in hastily and inhospitably, we waded into our own/each other's worlds more slowly, deliberately in our deep listening to ourselves and to each other, encountering/entering into different ways of knowing, being, relating and doing, of opening spaces in our minds and then our

hearts, our subconscious – our collective consciousness. The importance here was this cosmopoliticking. Rather than a single partiality, a OWW, we all experienced a series of worlds, together and separately across time and space through memory fragments merging with the present, surreal and actual, revealing new insights about ourselves and each other.

For many of us the exercise was a coming home that defied any rational conjecture. In subsequent writings of this first meeting of the Ecovercities Alliance, a few participants described the multitude and diversity of deep learnings which emerged during and after the first gathering in Tamera Ecovillage. A number of us have reflected that it is precisely through such cosmopoliticking together, including conflicts of cosmovisions (and egos) that any meaningful decentering could have emerged (Pomarico, 2018).

Learning in/from Place and the more than human

The first Latin American Ecovercities Gathering took place August 21-26, 2018 in the semi-desert of the Altiplano Potosino in Mexico. As a way to de-center, the members of the Alliance in this region decided to be hosted by the land itself and not in an institution as a way to learn from the place, from the complexity of the struggle of people to create their own pedagogical spaces to revitalize local knowledges and weave a tapestry of viable alternatives. The purpose was to inhabit a context favorable to introspection, with sobriety and simplicity in the vastness of the sacred land of Wirikuta, a matrix of life. Eduardo Guzmán Chávez, a participant in the gathering and long-time activist in the region shares:

Wirikuta is a natural temple of the world. It is the spiritual Tibet where fertility is forged and the healthy creativity of humankind is guaranteed. Its subsoil is full of minerals. It is an intimate jewelry box where the fecund matrix of nature beats (Guzmán Chávez, 2020).

Wirikuta is a region with many community projects and with a history that condenses common experiences of the *América Profunda*, the presence of indigenous peoples, colonization, assimilationism, the mestizaje, rural life, extractivist projects, resistance, struggle and life. There are current further threats of mining concessions (150,000+ hectares for mining exploitation in the next 100 years). The invitation of the defenders of Wirikuta, our main hosts and teachers during the gathering, resonated with us “[...] to stop the insatiable development of our extractivist delirium. It is the heart. Let’s relate in a different way with nature. She will thank us. It will be the renewal of the world. A new agreement. Taking care of nature will feed us” (Guzmán Chávez, 2020).

Stopping the extractivist delirium and learning to relate differently to (our own) nature is an everyday, systemic task and not one that is achieved by decree or celebratory statements. It is the invitation of Wirikuta with its different symbolic universes, the epistemologies and ontologies of the people of the desert, indigenous and not, that requires the over-

coming of coloniality to be able to flourish. We co-create in the gathering a space where this learning and unlearning might happen, relating to ourselves, to the land, to the human and the more-than-human stewards of the land, planting the seed of a different time -not Western time- for a different agreement of life in Wirikuta, and in the rest of our common home. We listen to the stories of the Front in Defense of Wirikuta in resisting the imposition of extractivism, and we relate to the fire which remains lit throughout the 6 days of the gathering, day and night. We commune with the ancestors and the wisdom of the land in our offerings in the Bernalejo and we listen to the biographies that everybody brings in from the very different lands that are also communing and commoning temporarily in this learning space in which we dwell for a short blink in time.

During the opening ceremony we greet the directions, the elementals, the guardians of the land, we introduce each other to all beings present in our originary circle, asking for permission for the work that we will do. We receive the invitation to 'walk in ceremony', to create a sacred space not only during the 'ceremony' time but throughout the gathering – workshops, cooking, errands, panels and conversations become ceremonies. A challenging compromise, indeed, but one that carves out the possibility for deep listening and of encounter between the territories that are present and represented in that moment, open to what emerges.

One suggestion is that the gathering should have a fire lit during the whole duration of it. It is a way to mirror and offer our fire within for sowing the seed of this new tapestry of people linked to the defense of life and territories with a pedagogical approach. It is a way to cultivate our collective strength and a politics of care that includes the rotatory cargo (a community duty) of keeping the fire alive, day and night. It is the opportunity to create a space for gathering, telling stories, warm up in the cold nights of the desert and share our intentions for the journey we are about to share. It is also a way to honor the guardians of that sacred land by welcoming and inviting that spirit to our conversations.

The fire made no sense from a logistical point of view. It was hard to keep it lit even though we counted on the support of Ricardo, whose main task during the gathering was to take care of the fire while the rest of the group was doing their thing. But it was an invitation to gather, to keep that fire lit collectively, to prove ourselves that it was possible, a non-anthropocentric act of care.

Tending to the fire proves to be more complicated than anticipated. We have to coordinate the activities and the group is always moving between different spaces of the town. Ricardo must be fed and he also needs to rest. There are complaints of people not taking the task seriously, or people not showing up to their shift. Some find it a space to stay up all night and share music and stories. There are no restrictions on alcohol consumption and some people find it disrespectful in that sacred space, some people are rude, some others find it a delightful space to be in. Coordinating the different activities and the logistics between the spaces, I feel I have no time to respond to the demands and sometimes I feel it is a total

mess. I remind myself about the idea of being a de-centered host, but it is hard to avoid responding to people's needs and demands. I even wonder what is the point in doing this and I recriminate myself for the day I came up with such a brilliant idea. I don't really understand the world of the spirits, I'm not indigenous and do not belong to any particular tradition. Am I being too naïve? Am I being negligent?

But the collective effort sustains the fire and sustains the gathering. Many things go wrong. We need to move out of our hotel and find another place to shelter, we need to move the fire to the new place, the adobe bricks for the compost toilets we are building are delivered 5 hours later than expected, people have complaints, concerns, criticisms.

At the same time, there is a warm, creative, transformative energy that is also feeding our actions. We work, learn, unlearn, listen, play, cook, eat, and dream together. We are deep in the desert out in the open with the burning sun and everybody is focused on our collective ceremony, led by our local friends, in which we bring our petitions and gratitude. Some recognize the presence of ancestors and guardians of the territory. We offer our intentions to participate in the care and regeneration of Wirikuta as a matrix of life. Most of the people get into the temascal (or sweat lodge) where we sing our hopes and pains, present our prayers and sweat together to die and be reborn.

Our gathering finishes and then we close with a ceremony. The fire is off but it is also alive in the experiences that we had in those five days together, 40 people from 24 organizations from 10 different countries, planting the seeds of this network that we are co-creating together, a stained (ch'ixi) space for relating otherwise, re-memembering, being inspired by the land and her stewards, who remind us of the deep embeddedness of the universe narrated by the cosmic story that somehow coincides in this very geography and calendar, that ties us together, 'making kin' (Haraway 2016), deeply, unavoidably related in a commitment to our relatives, "the fire, the wind, the land, the sea, the rain, the deer, the turtles, the rock, the bees, the tlacuache, and even the mestizos, because we are branches-fruits-flowers of that neverending energetical miracle" (Guzmán Chávez, 2020).

CosmoConviviality and the uneasy encounter of stained worlds

We began this paper with an invitation to interbeing. The space of encounter for this possibility of interbeing which we have been experimenting with and in, is the Ecovercities Alliance, a community of practice of people and places around the world re-imagining other worlds of higher education. Given the multiple ontologies Alliance members bring as we have gathered over the last five years, the sweaty concept of cosmopolitics has helped us to understand some of the dynamics of what happens when such different worlds meet and collide. We have shared some stories that express the beauty and tensions of this articulation of worlds in what are fleeting but possible encounters between

the ancestors, the land, social movements, the more-than-human, and the inter-ontological. We stressed the importance of listening, decentering, co-creating and conviviality as key ingredients within the feast of cosmopolitical learning.

Given the multiple crises we live in and the complicity of the One World World in reproducing these crises, we need a new 'agreement of life'. We have a responsibility to care for life itself which involves re-thinking the way we live, the way we world the world, as individuals, as cultures and societies, and as a species. As a cosmopolitical task, this re-worlding is urgently needed and for that it is necessary to generate spaces of contact between worlds where the presence of the other is respectfully acknowledged with awareness of the multiple wounds, tensions and possibilities that we hold within our shared planetary heart.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui shares the Aymara concept of *ch'ixi* as a decolonizing practice. *Ch'ixi* in Aymara cosmology refers to the marbled grey color formed from an infinity of black and white dots that are unified for perception but that remain pure and separated (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018). *Ch'ixi* is also associated with certain animals like the serpent or the lizard who have an implicit duality in their constitution. For Rivera Cusicanqui, this motley description is useful for Latin American realities as it reveals an "[...] active recombination of opposed worlds and contradictory signifiers that weave a fabric at the very border of those antagonist poles" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2015, p. 226), of European and indigenous ancestry. These tensions are not resolved through *mezizaje*. Rather these tensions are sustained in a permanent struggle and contradiction. *Ch'ixi* is a decolonizing practice as it does not aim for fusion or hybridity but points to coexistence and inhabiting these contradictions, without denying its parts or seeking a synthesis.

Although primarily applied to Bolivian society and by extension to Latin America, *ch'ixi* resonates in all of us as we are living histories with strong contradictions between the multiple worlds that are articulated and embodied within us. The invitation for all of us is to work through these tensions in each territory, rebelling against identity as a straitjacket while simultaneously recognizing the importance of identity particularly for those groups that have been historically targeted because of it.

The space of inter-being is, thus, a stained one. It is not only sustained by reciprocity and harmony, but it also indulges in disruption and power-laden practices. In the acknowledgement of these tensions and the contradictions that inhabit each of us, at the Ecoversities Alliance there is a deliberate attempt to open spaces for learning that invites rebellious acts of a different civilizatory horizon as a possibility, both 'idiotic' in that its aim is not to induce action but slowing down reasoning and provoking the kind of thinking that would enable us to unlearn the single ontology of politics (Stengers 2005; de la Cadena 2010) while being utopic in the sense of an embodied, sweaty concept and practices.

Cosmopoliticking, in this articulation of stained worlds, demands the cultivation of the art of listening, the slowing down of reasoning so that the other can emerge in all of its enchantment, complexity and contradictions, neither ‘othering’ nor ‘sameing’, but inter-being. Without listening, cosmopolitics is empty since it is the act of being present and open that enables the sense of kin and the emergence of conviviality with the other that is also us. The ‘we’ of Ecovercities does not pre-exist the relations that constitute it, which is another way of saying that the Alliance, the sense of community, or better, the emergent sense of stained *comunalidad*⁶, is not taken for granted. Rather the opposite, it is by patiently, persistently and diligently listening that a ‘we’ starts to appear as a possibility, a sort of ‘we-ing’ of the worlds, a glimpse of an *ecoverse*.

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Notes

- 1 The indigenous community of Standing Rock, in North Dakota, USA, protested the construction of a pipeline for delivering oil in a route that crosses a landscape that is an interface between the levels of the cosmos. Mauna Kea refers to the protests of Native Hawaiians against the construction of a giant telescope at the top of Mauna Kea, a sacred place considered the zenith of their ancestral ties to creation. We will describe the case of Wirikuta further in this paper.
- 2 In Spanish, *compa* is an endearment term (short for *compañero/a/e*) for those who share a mutual sense of belonging to a cause. The etymology refers to those who share the same bread.
- 3 For a fuller account of visiting as a reclaimed methodology of inquiry in solidarity see (Teamey, 2016). Here we argue that just as part of this knowledge movement re-imagining the university, we also need to re-imagine and de-institutionalize research embracing other ways of knowing, relating and dwelling.
- 4 The Kainai are one of the four bands which are part of the Blackfoot Confederacy in Alberta.
- 5 For a fuller elaboration of these flavours see the list of publications and reports created by Ecovercities Alliance members and available from <https://ecovercities.org>
- 6 An experiential concept that enables the integral, total, natural, and common understanding of ‘making life’ (Martínez Luna, 2015, p. 100) founded on the four elements of territory, community, labor and fiesta.

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Udi Mandel's work focuses on enlivened learning practices for regenerating ecologies and communities and for reimagining higher education to offer hopeful futures. This has included a collaboration with social and ecological movements and indigenous communities across the globe.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5311-0014>

E-mail: udi@enlivenedlearning.com

Gerardo Lopez-Amaro's interests include co-labor, participatory-action research with people in territories where stained experiments and practices around Buen Vivir and cognitive, climate and relational justice are taking place, participating in a planetary, trans-generational learning ecosystem to birth worlds of dignity.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7577-2185>

E-mail: gtupac.amaro@gmail.com

Kelly Teamey has been active in the fields of international/sustainable development and education for the past 20 years. Her work has focused on critical approaches to educational policy and practices within international development contexts, looking particularly at how education, learning, and pedagogies can become transformative, holistic, and sustainably connected to local ecologies and communities.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2982-3364>

E-mail: kellyteamey@gmail.com

Editor-in-charge: Luís Armando Gandin

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