

TERRITORIES OF TRANSITION

CULTURE HACK
LABS



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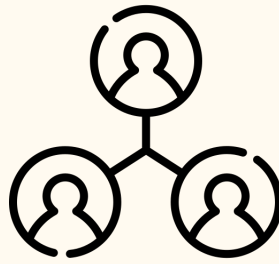
Territories of Transition

Introduction

In the age of the Anthropocene, the idea of land ownership sits at the heart of an extraction-based global operating system. US and European land laws have been created by the logic of separation from and extraction of the natural world, class hierarchies, elite ownership, structural racism, and the enclosure and privatization of the commons. For example, in the US the wealthiest 1% of households own 40% of the country's real estate. This report aims to re-enchant public imagination around the ideals of the commons as a response to our social and ecological crises, moving from what John Kenneth Galbraith terms "private affluence and public squalor" toward George Monbiot's notion of "private sufficiency and public luxury".

In this project, Culture Hack Labs has partnered with the Schumacher Center for a New Economics to draw attention to the pluriverse of alternative ways of knowing, being and living with the land. We take particular interest in exploring Indigenous narratives that speak to the spirit of the commons and challenge us to move toward radical relationality with one another and with our planet, as these are already opening up new cultural possibilities. We aim to shift public narratives on land to create the conditions for models of collective, post-extractive, post-anthropocentric land stewardship to flourish—so that we may improve our quality of life, rekindle connection to the Earth, and deepen our relationships with one another.

Our goal in this report is to assess the narrative space around land and the commons, and to propose key frames that can be used in unity and solidarity by communities around the world working toward social and ecological justice.



Ask: Developing a Point of View

In the ‘Ask’ phase of our research methodology, we inquire into the context that is driving our current narrative research project. To situate us, we have articulated the context, the importance of Indigenous voices and finally our Point of View (PoV).

I. The Context: Land, commons and socio-ecological crisis

Global crises of recent years have highlighted the interconnectedness of our collective challenges and exposed the flaws in our social systems. From the COVID-19 pandemic’s connections to biodiversity loss and cross-species virus transmission, to the war in Ukraine’s linkages to the world’s dependence on Russian oil, to the increase in record-breaking climate change events, we are constantly reminded of the need to transform our relationship with the land on which we depend.

These living alternatives exist through the commons, yet they are often invisibilized within our dominant cultural narratives and structures of power. From Indigenous land defenders to community-led, solidarity-based responses during the pandemic, examples of commoning—even if not self-identified as such—are manifold.

According to the IPCC, we now only have eight years remaining to turn the tide on climate before we lose any hope of achieving 1.5 degrees. Yet, mainstream solutions to climate and environment are inadequate at best. While high-level initiatives through international agreements, multinational organizations, national government regulation, multi stakeholder coalitions, and industry partnerships helped shape a context for urgency and action, they alone are not going to solve the problem. We need bolder, radical solutions that are fundamentally relational—led by the people most impacted and grounded in the place-based, on-the-ground lived experiences of communities and their relationships to their lands.

II. Our Point of View

The goal of this initiative is to hack the narrative around land ownership in the US and Europe to create a cultural context in which it is possible to transition as much land as possible out of private ownership into community land trusts or other forms of

commons-based ownership models before the onset of deeper ecological breakdown and financial collapse.

III. Our Theory of Change

At Culture Hack Labs, we believe that all power rests on the ability to harness and control language; and humans make sense of their world through stories. They reveal how our struggles - from land to labour, biodiversity and even our very bodies - are part of the same global system, one that prioritises the production of capital - in other words, economic growth - over Life. everything else, and at the expense of everything else.

Given the escalating climate emergency coupled with the foreboding warnings of the IPCC report, we must acknowledge that existing narratives about our relationship to Other and our Selves have led us astray. Conversely, many Indigenous cultures are life centric, making them relevant alternatives to the fragile, calcified and destructive narratives of late stage Capitalism and Progress. Indigenous peoples are also defenders of 80% of the world's biodiversity and have shown that their territories are interwoven with their cultures. By drawing inspiration from Indigenous wisdom and practices such as animism—or applying deeply anthropocentric and spiritual qualities to land and non-human life—we aim to reframe the narrative of land and the commons in service of our collective future.

We are therefore able to articulate a three-prong theory-of-change or three ways through which we believe we can create a broader understanding of the necessity of the commons.

We must transition the global operating system to be rooted within a post-extractive, post-anthropocentric worldview. We are amidst a great transition. The humanist and capitalist values typified by the Enlightenment have manifested through colonialism, “accumulation by dispossession” and neoliberal hegemony. The result is that we have brought humanity and the vast majority of the living world to the brink of extinction. Therefore, we must transform our collective values, our understanding of ownership of the world and humanity's place within it.

Land ownership is at the foundation. Indigenous stewardship of land preserves biodiversity around the world while instituting cooperative models of ownership. These models, in stark contrast to neoliberal models of hyper-individualized ownership, create the outcomes that lead to greater equilibrium between human and more-than-human life, leading to greater levels of ecosystemic flourishing.

Culture is at the root of shifting belief systems. Developing new social and cultural beliefs towards ownership and the collective stewardship of land will be a critical lever in this transition. This is because land ownership, and indeed many of the causative factors of the transition, are not solely economic nor political but fundamentally cultural.

Literature Review

To begin our research inquiry, we needed to ground our analysis in a clear understanding of the narrative space, that is, the different permutations of living alternatives that place emphasis on a life in common. We conducted a literature review, for this purpose, which consisted in a critical review of academic and gray literature of the commons, land and Indigenous narratives on land, to help paint a picture of the existing narrative and narrative communities across the landscape. This literature review provides a general mapping and starting point for our analysis, through this we found three key themes 1. *Conventional Themes*, 2. *Radical Possibilities* and 3. *Indigenous Perspectives*. These three themes find themselves in all aspects of our research, and in many ways the purpose of this project is to weave them together to find new narratives for the transition.

An important note should also be made about the term “land” and its relationship to the discourse on the commons in general. In very general terms, we found that the usage of “land” signified an inert, enclosure of some “thing” that could be owned, traded or exploited. For this reason we opted to focus our research efforts on the “commons”, as a more viable theoretical and conceptual anchor for our strategic objectives. For this reason the literature review is focused on understanding the differing permutations of the “commons” from traditional, to radical and also ancient.

Conventional Narrative Themes on the Commons¹

The term “commons” is used in many different ways that paint very different visions of the world to different groups. The following are what the Culture Hack Labs team identified as “conventional” narratives on the commons that carry relative salience across the professional fields of science, economics, and international policy in sustainability.

- **The Tragedy of the Commons**

This influential framing emerges from the U.S. ecologist Garrett Hardin’s 1968 essay on “The Tragedy of the Commons”, which uses cases of overgrazing, overfishing and pollution to argue that environmental degradation occurs when access to natural resources is not privately or publicly managed, citing that individual short-term interest is to take as much of a resource as possible, resulting in resource depletion. It is deeply rooted in neoclassical economic philosophy and an anthropocentric view toward nature as a fixed object for human benefit. In addition, it inherently pits humans against the environment via the

¹ These themes focus only on narrative communities that self-identify with the term “commons”. It excludes many relevant narrative themes that speak to similar ideas but do not explicitly identify themselves with the “commons”. This is thus a limiting choice given the relative low-profile of the term commons in popular discourse, but it is still helpful for understanding the genealogy of the commons.

Malthusian narrative of overpopulation (e.g., “Freedom to breed is intolerable”). This frame has influenced dominant dualist conservation and environmental policies that regard humans and nature as separate, and has provided justification for either government/state control of land (e.g., designated conservation areas, command-and-control policies) or private ownership of land in order to resolve the “tragedy”. According to Hardin, “Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.” Marxist geographer [David Harvey](#) argued that this narrative helped justify the dispossession of Indigenous populations in North America. More recently, this framing can be seen in the rise of market-based conservation solutions (see David and Natasha’s [document](#)), including [green growth](#) strategies (in contrast to degrowth), and [stakeholder capitalism](#).

“As commons scholar Lewis Hyde has puckishly suggested, Hardin’s “tragedy” thesis ought to be renamed “The Tragedy of Unmanaged, Laissez-Faire, Commons-Pool Resources with Easy Access for Non-Communicating, Self-Interested Individuals.” (Quote from *Free Fair and Alive*)

- **Commons as self-governance beyond market- or state control**

Nobel prize-winning political economist Elinor Ostrom effectively challenged the “tragedy” thesis in her 1990 book on *Governing the Commons*. She conducted a ‘meta’ survey of the literature on the management of the commons, showing that informal negotiated arrangements in local communities – neither private nor public ownership – that included all relevant stakeholders were effective methods to manage the commons and fairly and sustainably share common resources.^[3] ^[4] Ostrom’s thesis of how to successfully manage the commons has had a [wide influence \(an example of the spread of her work in the political and economic academic community; an example of her influence in more mainstream media\)](#). Today, for instance, some architects of publicly accessible resources – [which they term as ‘public goods’ - for Web ‘3.0’ have cited Ostrom as an influence \(in this case blockchain-based file storage\)](#). Building on this line of work that looks at commons governance beyond the private/public dichotomy, Italian jurist Ugo Mattei² and commons scholar David Bollier are more recent thinkers that discuss commons in relational terms. Silvia Federici’s³ feminist scholarship on the role of care and ‘reproductive labor’ in the commons has also been influential in this space.

- **Global Commons**

This set of narrative frames applies the commons on a global scale.

One version is based on the [Planetary Boundaries framework](#), an influential framework in the international climate science and policy world led by Johan Rockstrom from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. This research includes all the Earth’s

² Mattei, Ugo. 2011. *Beni Comuni: Un Manifesto*. Gius. Laterza & Figli: Bari, Italy

³ *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 2019

atmosphere, land, oceans, etc., and defines boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive, a “safe operating space for humanity”, including the atmosphere, water, bio-chemical processes etc..^[2] It was this definition that has been adopted for instance by the University of Tokyo’s new Centre for the Global Commons and the Global Commons Alliance.

A variation of this physical/bounded definition is to treat the commons at a planetary scale as *social* as well as biophysical boundaries: Kate Raworth’s Doughnut Economics framework places the Planetary Boundaries framework within a “social foundation” derived from internationally agreed minimum social standards, as identified in the 2015 SDGs. Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive.

These global definitions tend to pay no heed to the governance or social arrangements that manage the commons within those boundaries, but simply define them in physical terms (or in terms of social outcomes). But nevertheless this analysis does in general and helpfully lead to a discussion of what governments need to do to rescue and maintain these global commons. In the hierarchy of political actors, governments are seen as the most important, in that they dictate the legal and legislative framework of possibility, then the private sector which acts within this framework, and somewhere ill-defined, but definitely beneath the top two layers, individuals and citizens. Such narratives almost invariably reaffirm the presumption that government is responsible for citizens’ security and wellbeing, including in challenges like maintenance of the global commons.

On the other hand, defining the commons as global land, water, atmosphere etc does open up debates about the macro-policies needed to rescue the planet’s environment, such as the need to reduce resource consumption or, for instance, de-growth.

Finally, an entirely separate definition of the Global Commons based on legal and governance structures rather than planetary science is used by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It refers to resource domains that do not fall within the jurisdiction of any one particular country, and to which all nations have access.^[1] International law identifies four global commons, namely the High Seas, the Atmosphere, Antarctica and the Outer Space. These resource domains are guided by the principle of the “common heritage of mankind.”

● Digital Commons

The “digital commons”, or “cyber commons”, describes the global network of interdependent information technology infrastructures, telecommunications networks and computer processing systems, as well as the digital environment in which social communication occurs over computer networks. Influenced by Ostrom’s work, this narrative on the commons aims to leverage digital technologies to enhance social cooperation, for example, through the Open Source movement, platform cooperatives,

Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs), distributed cooperative organizations (DisCOs) and more. There is potential for bringing discourses on the digital commons in closer conversation with conversations around land commons—for example, the role that digital tools (e.g., distributed ledger technologies) might be leveraged to support land-based, cooperative decision-making and restoration practices at the bioregional scale or inter-regional level.

Toward the Commons of Radical Possibilities

The “conventional” narratives outlined above fall short in capturing the richness of the commons and the radical potentiality of the commons as illuminated by more recent commons scholars such as David Bollier and Natasha Hulst, collaborators on this project from the Schumacher Center for a New Economics. The ability to see commons in this way requires a fundamental shift in how we view and understand the world—an ontological shift, or *OntoShift*, as characterized by David Bollier and Silke Helfrich in their book *Free, Fair and Alive*.

To this end, seven broad land narrative themes were identified that together support the larger narrative of the commons as a radical response to the social and ecological crises of our time.

- **Equality and democratization**

Land access lies at the heart of issues of equity, regenerative agriculture, ecological restoration, renewable energy, and climate drawdown. At a time of an ever-widening wealth gap, the need to broaden and secure access to land is urgent. Policies and peer-based strategies to make land more readily accessible and affordable to more people, especially young farmers, lower-income families, and underserved urban areas (“food deserts”, “food apartheid”, “food security” and “food sovereignty” are sub-themes related to food). Aside from achieving access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewals, this narrative focuses on affordable housing as a fundamental right rather than a commodity. Community economics positions various forms of ‘housing commons’ (e.g. Community Land Trusts and housing cooperatives) as a third alternative between rent and purchase and as a solution for gentrification and displacement. It is not the individual question ‘how do I want to live?’, but the joint design of the question ‘how do we want to live together?’. There are many examples of citizens shaping this together and creating access and secure forms of tenure (see models). Some national governments are realizing the need to combat speculation in land with affirmative policy interventions such as land-value taxation (Henry George) and land trusts (tax breaks for some types). There is an enormous body of literature on these types of policy interventions.

- **Decentralizing ownership and decision making**

Capitalist land ownership tends to concentrate wealth and power, and undermine democracy. By contrast, localized models of land ownership and (peer) governance can decentralize decision-making and encourage more socially and ecologically responsible land use by constraining the dynamics of market-driven land ownership. The latter privileges concentrated ownership by a small minority of people exercising absentee (investment-driven) decisions about land, often involving fewer farmers working the land and greater economic inequality.

- **From extractive to regenerative land use**

Environmental stewardship of land – as facilitated by certain organizational forms and finance – can bring farming into greater alignment with degrowth logics and ecological sustainability. The point is to treat land as a commons or community care-wealth, not as a market commodity. By removing land from the market and holding it in robust commons structures, the imperative for extractive farming practices is removed. In its place, the potential emerges to regenerate land and food systems for ecological and social value creation. Much of this dialogue is emerging between the environmental community and social justice community.

- **Land grabbing and land theft**

Land grabbing is the disputed practice of large-scale land conquest, by buying up or leasing increasingly large tracts of land in the Global South, by domestic or foreign multinational corporations, by governments, and by individual purchasers. Corporations and speculators are buying up farmland, urban housing, and natural resources in the Global South as well as Europe and the U.S.⁴ with increasing speed.⁵

In the Global South, community-held lands are especially subject to land theft. A significant proportion of farming takes place on community-held lands. In fact, up to half of the global land area, including waterlands, rangelands and forests, are traditionally managed in some collective form. Formal recognition of community land rights remains a critical foundation upon which to combat land theft. Recognizing and securing these community lands, and acknowledging customary tenure as a basis for establishing lawful property rights prevents involuntary land losses from external sources and sustains the action required to responsibly steward and develop these lands. The organization LandMark⁶ focuses on recognizing and securing these community lands. Moreover, private property rights do not adequately protect against land grabbing. As land prices rise globally and wealth is increasingly concentrated in fewer hands, community ownership and peer governance can

⁴ <https://agfundernews.com/bill-melinda-gates-revealed-as-largest-private-farmland-owners-in-us.html>

⁵ “1% of farms operate 70% of world's farmland.” The Guardian

⁶ <http://www.landmarkmap.org/>

safeguard land from the capitalist market pressures, thereby counteracting the “monopoly effect”.

- **Reparations and (De-)Colonization**

A great deal of land in the past was bought with the profits made through slavery and colonization, or the compensation that slaveholders received at the end of slavery. This history – and ongoing economic and social discrimination – demands reparations and other forms of racial justice.⁷ One important proposal for addressing structural racism and inequality is to move more land into community land trusts (CLTs), making it easier for groups such as African Americans to gain access to land for farming, housing, and other purposes while neutralizing capitalism’s tendency to generate greater structural inequality. Acquiring more land for CLTs dedicated to African-American cultural use could be a reconciliatory measure that is so deeply needed to repair deep, historical wounds. It would serve as a practical and effective reparation that would benefit many African Americans and communities, and could at the same time reclaim land for ecological and socially valuable purposes⁸.

- **“Convivial Conservation” vs. Market-based Conservation**

The presumed separation of humans and nature has led to two major conservation strategies – creating wilderness areas (“neo-protectionism”) and “market based conservation” (offset programs, REDD+, “Nature-based solutions”).⁹ A more holistic approach, “convivial conservation,” calls for constructive stewardship and symbiotic cooperation between humans and land, instead of separation.¹⁰

- **Ethical, spiritual, political and philosophical context**

Economic historian Karl Polanyi¹¹ called land a gift from nature and referred to it, like money and labor, as a “fictitious commodity” because it is not actually produced for sale. It helps to acknowledge that the treatment of land as private property is an artifact of modern, Western culture. According to Polanyi, land, labor and monetary policy should not be subjected to unregulated ‘free markets’ because it results in treating people and ecosystems as objects subject to the whims of markets, rather than as living entities with

⁷ “Living on Earth: Farming While Black: A Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land: Kali Akuno on Imagination and “The Ways We Can and Must Resist,” Resilience. See also

<https://www.landcoalition.org/en/uneven-ground/executive-summary/>

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/ecological-civilization/2021/02/16/vandana-shiva-reclaiming-commons>

⁸<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-07-22/black-commons-community-land-trusts-and-reparations>

⁹https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/09/planting-trees-planet-people-nature-climate-crisis-communities?CMP=twi_gu& See also <https://greenfinanceobservatory.org> and <https://convivialconservation.com>.

¹⁰ Kothari, A and Salleh, A et al. (2019). Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary. Tulika Books, New Delhi – in particular, see chapter: Convivialism (pp.133-136)

¹¹ Karl Polanyi, 1944 The Great Transformation, Beacon Press,

their own intrinsic needs.

Before modernity, land as commons was the norm. The view of land as a commodity to be exploited rather than part of the public commons is still relatively recent. Land, but also labor and money as production factors, were only introduced as commodities in economic thinking from the 18th century onwards. Still, many philosophical traditions are based on the political spirituality of stewardship. It is at the heart of how the relationship between Man and Man, between Man and Nature, and between Man and 'the higher' or 'ultimate' in life is seen in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and many 'natural/animistic religious' traditions. The political spirituality of stewardship is at odds with the modern culture from which modern ideologies arose. In Indigenous societies, communal stewardship of land, reciprocity and living in balance with Nature are still the norm

Indigenous Perspectives: Opening an Inquiry toward Radical Relationality

“What happened to us at the turn of the century with the loss of land, when our land was divided out in individual allotments, had a profound irreversible effect on our people, more profound than the closing of schools or courthouses or anything. When we stopped viewing land ownership in common and viewing ourselves in relation to owning the land in common, it profoundly altered our sense of community and our social structure. And that had a tremendous impact on our people and we can never go back.”

- Former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Wilma Mankiller, speaking to the Indian policy that led to her peoples' fragmentation¹²

As part of the literature review, CHL explored Indigenous perspectives on land as a sort of aspirational, orienting set of views that could inform the OntoShift required to see the commons, as well as to offer lessons in how to further push the boundaries of the commons toward radical relationality—that is, moving toward a completely different way of seeing and being in the world that centers relationships as the starting point, including between people and land, and people and Nature. As exemplified by Nasa Indigenous leader from southwest Colombia: *somos la continuidad de la tierra, miremos desde el corazon de la tierra* (“we are the extension of the earth, let us think from the earth’s heart”).¹³ These perspectives are thematically grouped across the areas below:

¹² The Native Americans. 1994. VHS. Directed by John Borden, Phil Lucas, George Bordeau. Turner Broadcasting System Productions.

¹³ Escobar, Arturo. 2020. “Thinking-Feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South.” *Epistemologies of the South: Knowledges Born in the Struggle*. Edited by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses. Routledge.

- **Land as a relational concept**

Animism - Many Indigenous worldviews carry an element of animism, whereby land is alive and seen as a part of a genealogy and process rather than a fixed object or end-state.¹⁴ Deep anthropomorphism is applied to land, often through cultural practices such as storytelling. For example, the term “land-making” is used to describe how Cree youth re-cover, re-make, and re-turn land-based practices and relationships to urban spaces¹⁵. Nicholson and Jones¹⁶ describe the Aboriginal notion of Country rather than land:

“Country defined by an Aboriginal person is multifaceted, it includes the physical, non-physical, linguistic, spiritual and emotional. It includes self, and feels emotions as we do...Country is family, incorporating its animals, plants, landforms and features right down to the smallest of things like a grain of sand.”

Through the lens of animism, the commons can be seen as alive through human-land relations, as grounded in practices toward radical relationality.

Place as the foundation of knowledge production - Land is often conceptualized as the site where situated knowledge emerges. Rather than through abstract intellectualization or theorization, knowing, being, and doing all emerge from place. These epistemologies employ the notion of the pluriverse (that the world is made up of multiple worlds, multiple ontologies that are far from being exhausted by the Eurocentric experience). An example is Te Kawa for Maori peoples, which was developed in the rights to Nature case of Te Urewera, a former national park in the North Island of New Zealand. Te Kawa outlines a unique governance mechanism that oversees stewardship of Te Urewera, that includes Maori leadership in the governing body. The text of Te Kawa reads: “for all, implementing the new Te Urewera Act and Te Kawa o Te Urewera will involve *a process of unlearning, rediscovery*

¹⁴ Swancutt, K. A. (2019). Animism. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 1-17; Bird-David, Nurit. (1999) ““Animism” revisited: personhood, environment, and relational epistemology.” *Current anthropology* 40, no. S1; Todd, Z. (2016). An indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn: ‘Ontology’ is just another word for colonialism. *Journal of historical sociology*, 29(1).

¹⁵ Hatala et al. 2019. “Re-imagining *miyo-wicehtowin*: Human-nature relations, land-making, and wellness among Indigenous youth in a Canadian urban context.” *Social Science & Medicine*, 230, 122-130.

¹⁶ Nicholson, M., and D. Jones. 2018. “Urban Aboriginal Identity: ‘I Can’t see the Durt (Stars) in the City’.” In *Remaking Cities: Proceedings of the 14th Urban History Planning History Conference*, 378–387. Melbourne: Centre for Urban Research, RMIT University.

and *relearning*.”¹⁷ Related ideas include those of “place-agency”¹⁸, “place-thought”¹⁹ and “thinking-feeling with the earth”²⁰.

- **Decolonization**

“Land back” - The land back movement draws attention to land as sovereign territory, in defiance of the dominant Western state-based system and worldview. It is a political project toward decolonization, and serves as an underlying logic for initiatives that seek to return land to Indigenous stewardship such as the Oakland Sogorea Te’ Land Trust. Through this lens, commons may be seen as a remedy for land dispossession and restorative justice.

Land as the city - This narrative critiques the urban-rural divide in imaginaries of land and Indigenous history and relations in the city. Land is acknowledged “here” in the city, not “out there.” For example, Libby Porter and her colleagues suggest the concept of the Aboriginal City “to prise open the possibility of a more ethical relationship with what has always been there...to account for the tendency to essentialize Indigeneity as a human condition ‘closer to nature’ and therefore Country as synonymous with and reducible to ‘nature.’ The sovereign Aboriginal City is what has always been her and remains.”²¹

- **Creating alternative futures: contemporary political framings**

Buen Vivir²² & Rights of Nature²³ - These are two social and political movements that are responses to the Western “civilizational model” of globalized development. In Latin America, this emphasis is strongest among ethnic movements, but is also found in peasant networks focusing on agroecological food production systems such as Via Campesina²⁴. Closely related is the “transitions to post-extractivism” framework, originally proposed by

¹⁷ Tanasescu, M. “Rights of Nature, Legal Personality, and Indigenous Philosophies.” *Transnational Environmental Law*, 9:3.

¹⁸ Barker and Pickerill (2020). “Doings with the land and sea: Decolonising geographies, Indigeneity, and enacting place-agency.” *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 44(4).

¹⁹ Watts, Vanessa. 2013. “Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!).” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 2(1).

²⁰ Escobar, Arturo. 2020. “Thinking-Feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South.” *Epistemologies of the South: Knowledges Born in the Struggle*. Edited by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses. Routledge.

²¹ Libby Porter, Julia Hurst & Tina Grandinetti (2020) The politics of greening unceded lands in the settler city, *Australian Geographer*, 51:2, 221-238

²² Kothari, A and Salleh, A et al. (2019). *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. Tulika Books, New Delhi – see chapter: Buen Vivir (pp.111-114); Gudynas, E. (2011). *Buen Vivir: today's tomorrow. development*, 54(4), 441-447; *The Guardian*, (2013) *Buen vivir: the social philosophy inspiring movements in South America*.

²³ See a recent literature review on the Rights of Nature (theory and case studies) from the Earth Law Centre; Guzmán, J. J. (2019). Decolonizing Law and expanding Human Rights: Indigenous Conceptions and the Rights of Nature in Ecuador. *Deusto Journal of Human Rights*, (4), 59-86

²⁴ Imperial, M. (2019). New materialist feminist ecological practices: La via campesina and activist environmental work. *Social Sciences*, 8(8), 235

the Centro Latinoamericano de Ecología Social in Montevideo, which has gained significant traction in South America to move past extractivist models based on large scale mining, hydrocarbon exploitation, or extensive agricultural operations, especially for agrofuels such as soy sugar cane or oil palm.²⁵

Rights of Nature - This legal movement granting legal rights to Nature, has progressed rapidly since 2008, from Ecuador to Aotearoa New Zealand to India to the United States and beyond. In particular, developments since 2017 have marked a shift away from framing Nature as a generic single entity, separate from human culture, and toward the creation of rights for specific natural entities, mostly rivers.

Collectively, these Indigenous perspectives on land encourage us toward a new set of questions: What might the commons promise us when we view land as alive rather than inert, a process rather than a fixed object, human and nature as indivisible rather than separate? What can Indigenous concepts from “place-agency” to “place-thought” to “thinking-feeling with the earth” teach us? If land and place are the starting point for knowing, sensing, and understanding the world, how can we embody the notion that land is made and not found?

²⁵ Escobar, Arturo. 2020. “Thinking-Feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South.” *Epistemologies of the South: Knowledges Born in the Struggle*. Edited by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses. Routledge.

TERRITORIES OF TRANSITION

LAND BACK TO RIGHT RELATIONS



Analytical framework

Through the conventional frames as well as emerging models to describe the commons, we see an emphasis on forms of ownership and cooperative models of governance. The underlying logic of this position remains firmly rooted within an anthropocentric paradigm that implicates ‘life as resource’ in service to the ‘resource liberating’ practices of Man. That is to say, it does not question the larger systemic and ecosystemic implications of human activity, or perhaps more accurately, the ethical issues that lie at the center of the transition to a post-Anthropocentric reality.

There needs to be a transformative approach that questions the cultural underpinnings and belief systems that sustain the current understanding and framing of the commons. We need to push for new narrative frontiers for collective evolution. To venture into this new narrative territory, we must reassess the atomic basis of culture, *human subjectivity*. Indigenous wisdom traditions which reveal a ‘radical relationality’ as the defining feature of our reality, point to a far more integrated model of Self and Other. These paradigms of *radical relationality* offer new potentials for our understanding of the commons in a far more complex and important direction. Allowing us to explore new narrative territories that transcend the spectrums of ownership/commons, managed/unmanaged, resource/commodity, for example.

The commons of ‘radical possibilities’ start moving away from understanding the commons in terms of ‘models of *resource* ownership or management’²⁶ and brings us closer to developing a conception of the commons in terms of *radical relationality*. It is this evolutionary trend within the narrative space that we are particularly interested in understanding.

The *radical relationality* that is proposed by these conceptions of commons can never be fully achieved without inquiring into the language that originates in modern Western culture and sustains the concept of private property. This is what Bollier & Helfrich question in their book, *Free, Fair and Alive* (2019).²⁷ To them, the commons require what they call an *OntoShift*: a shift towards a new ontology.

‘So to truly understand the dynamics of the commons, one must first escape the onto-political framework of the modern West. One must make what we call an “OntoShift” — a recognition that relational categories of thought and experience are primary.’

²⁶ *Free, Fair and Alive* (2019), Bollier & Helfrich

²⁷ Sometimes new realities are not recognized because there is simply no vocabulary and logic to make them legible to the culture. (...) As we tried to explain the phenomena of commoning, we experienced a similar frustration with a deficient discourse. We came to realize that the discourse of conventional politics and economics cannot properly express what we have witnessed. There is a lacuna in the contemporary vocabulary which serves to keep certain realities and insights shrouded in darkness. *Free, Fair and Alive* (2019), Bollier & Helfrich

This shift is made possible through changing language. Terms like ownership, governance do not allow one to escape the reality carved out by modern Western culture.²⁸ We need a new language that can ultimately open up a different reality.

Bearing in mind this critical inquiry, we can build an analytical framework that we will use to make sense of the data we will collect through our research process. The following framework identifies four ‘clusters’ or dimensions to understand the commons; they serve as hypotheses of what the narrative space should look like based on the literature review.

1. **Ownership:** In this dimension, the commons is understood through distinctions in ownership, for example private ownership compared to collective ownership.
2. **Management:** The management dimension makes distinctions in how resources are managed or governed - from private or institutional governance to collective management.
3. **Stewardship:** This dimension lays emphasis on the important role of local communities in managing and safeguarding the commons and the ecosystem that contains them and lives through them.²⁹
4. **Culture:** In this dimension, the commons is discussed through a cultural lens, in particular the distinction between a Subject vs Object culture and a culture that adopts Radical Relationality. This dimension also discusses language or the “OntoShift” that will prompt the cultural transformation that is necessary for the commons to be widely accepted.

²⁸ The moment is ripe for those of us in the secular West to ponder the general belief system developed during the Renaissance and expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the capitalist societies that arose from it. We moderns live within a grand narrative about individual freedom, property, and the state developed by philosophers such as René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. The OntoStory that we tell ourselves sees individuals as the primary agents of a world filled with inert objects that have fixed, essential qualities. *Free, Fair and Alive* (2019), Bollier & Helfrich

²⁹ “Thus, implicit in our framing of environmental stewardship throughout this article is a focus on the often-central role of local people in caring for the environment that they are proximal to, connected to and, in some contexts, that they depend on for subsistence needs and livelihoods. (...) “Our focus on local stewardship also aligns with an increasing emphasis on local communities and resource users in conservation and environmental management policies, programs and practice globally, as evidenced in initiatives such as community-based conservation (CBC), community-based management (CBM), community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), indigenous and community conserved areas (ICCAs), integrated conservation-development projects (ICDPs), locally managed marine areas (LMMAs), “other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMs), and urban stewardship initiatives (Barrett and Arcese 1995; Berkes 2004; Cinner and Aswani 2007; Govan et al. 2009; Krasny and Tidball 2012; ICCA 2013; Jupiter et al. 2014; Jonas et al. 2014; Riehl et al. 2015; Campos-Silva and Peres 2016).” Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework (2018)

Listening: our methodology

Our research and methodology are geared towards identifying a list of critical narrative communities as well as the frames they amplify. A narrative community is a group of people or institutions using the same set of narratives when discussing a topic. Once narrative communities are identified, we analyze their core logics and assess their potential to achieve our Point of View. For this, we map them onto a modeled version of the narrative space to consider how close they are to achieving narrative evolution i.e. in this context a version of the commons that centers radical relationality.

Overall, we follow five key steps from the moment we start listening.

1. The team identifies the most important themes within the narrative space using the expertise and knowledge present in the team.³⁰
2. We then identify the most recurrent language in these themes.³¹
1. Using these insights into the language, we search for narrative communities related to our point of view.
2. Through an analysis of the attention, network and power (see next section) of these communities, we can start identifying frames and logics.
3. These insights allow us to draw a map of the narrative space, and through this begin to develop a reframe strategy.



Listening: Looking for Narrative Communities

We do not seek to identify all narrative communities that exist in the narrative space. We focus on critical narrative communities or narrative communities with the most potential for narrative evolution: those that can help us achieve our goals outlined in the Point of View and those that can bring the narrative space towards an evolutionary point: radical relationality, in our context.

To look for narrative communities, we start by identifying overarching themes through the expertise and knowledge of the team. We then consider language.

³⁰ See also [here](#) for the initial research.

³¹ We do this by uploading the shared bibliography onto Maxqda, a data analytical software which calculates the frequency of words and word combinations.

1. Identifying themes

Three overarching themes were identified (along with smaller cross-cutting themes).

1. Food and Agriculture: how can the commons ensure sustainable agriculture and food security?
2. Public access to urban land: how can the commons secure housing, public spaces and other public & collective needs that exist in urban contexts?
3. Preserving Indigenous access to land: how can the commons safeguard Indigenous's land rights but also the knowledge that relates to it (Indigenous cosmovisions, traditional knowledge, etc.)?

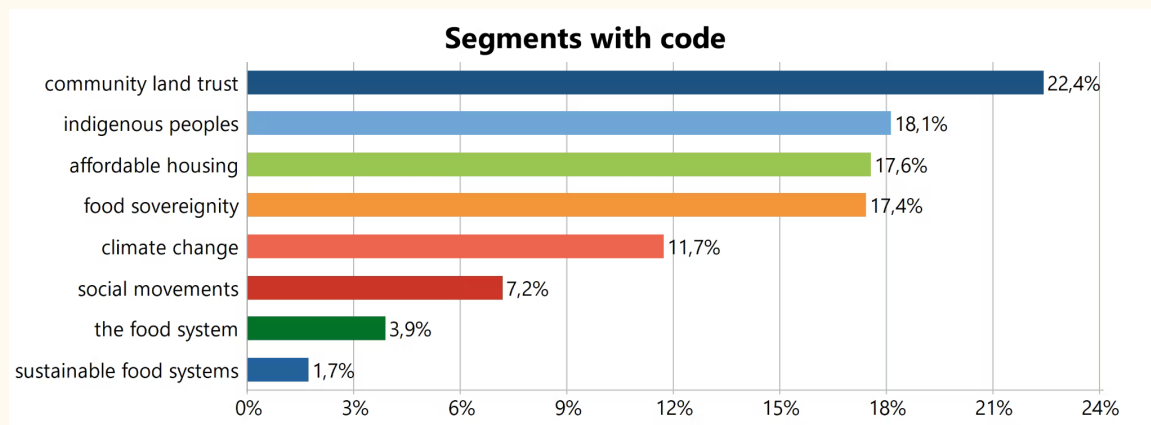
Within these thematics, the Shumacher team identified a number of narrative communities grounded in lived praxis and drawing from existing research on the commons. While not all of these groups self-identify as commoners practicing commoning, they each embody the spirit of commoning to differing degrees. These are briefly outlined here, with more detail in [refer to this [Appendix](#)]:

1. **Building sustainable agriculture by bypassing or stinting markets for land and food:** Projects to remove land from market speculation and purchase via CLTs for farmland; Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farming, where households share agricultural risks with local farmers via annual purchases and upfront shares in harvests; agricultural coops for both farmers and food consumers, a time-tested way for them to enhance their market power while building social solidarity; ambitious multistakeholder initiatives to reinvent regional food systems; agroecology and permaculture; community forests in municipalities for conservation, recreation, limited timber harvesty, and/or local economic support; conservation trusts; urban agriculture and community gardens; and gleaning, the time-honored right of commoners to take leftovers and waste following harvests and market sale, including food banks.
2. **Using urban land as commons to maximize public access and benefits:** Affordable housing projects that decommodify land to lower the costs of housing, mostly by using CLTs, cooperatives, and other legal structures and through cooperative governance; managing public spaces and facilities as commons, including movements to reclaim spaces for commoners and/or public use; commons-creating infrastructures, projects that seek to use building, digital technologies, and public spaces as shared infrastructure to support collaborative creativity and commoning.

3. **Using land as commons to secure traditional and Indigenous (noncapitalist) land access and rights:** community land rights and traditional land tenure for Indigenous peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolk, smallholders, and customary users of land; secure land tenure; gender and land rights working toward equal land rights and access for women; food security in the Global South; convivial conservation, climate solutions and ecological restorations that empower local people to steward land through participatory decision-making.

2. Language frequency

We used [a data analytical software](#) to calculate the most recurrent word combinations within the literature shared by the Schumacher Center. This gave us another pathway into identifying narrative communities. We consider that the most frequent terms are indicative of the most prominent conversations, which are, in turn, indicative of narrative communities.



We then ran a media analysis³² using keywords³³ to identify and focus on communities which are the most likely to hold influence over the narrative space. The media analysis gave us information such as: How big is the community? What are they talking about? How? Do they touch upon various issues? Who are the main actors in this conversation? Where are they located?

For a sample of the data found for each community, see [here](#).

We choose to focus on the most influential communities because we can then craft strategies that can leverage their influence to reshape the narrative space.

³² For the media analysis, we used data analytical software, [Meltwater](#).

³³ Community Land Trust, Land Trust, transitions town, fearless cities, municipalism, decommodification and Land, cooperative and land, community and land, Land Back, Rights of Nature, Buenvivir, ubuntu and land, community and agriculture, food security, local food and land, slow food, urban agriculture, agroecology, urban farming, ecocidio, ecocide, climate change and land, bioregionalism

We also drew insights from big listening and small listening to corroborate, complement or correct some of these findings.

Finally, we were able to identify seven narrative communities.



Narrative Communities (Assessment I): Attention, Network & Power

In this section, we describe each narrative community. For each narrative community, we also consider their attention, their network and power. We seek to describe, locate and understand the influence of each community.

By “**attention**”, we ask when and where the conversation started and when and where it is located today. The “**network**” requires us to look into the most influential nodes of the network - voices, actors domains, platforms? The **power** assessment specifically considers the influence of narrative community over public discourse i.e. the narrative space.

For the full assessment of the narrative communities, see [here](#). Below is a summary of each assessment.

A. Community Land Trust

This narrative community is composed of many local communities advocating for CLTs as a way to ensure affordable housing and address socio-economic inequalities in large cities.

Attention: Community Land Trusts began in the US in the early 1960s concomitantly with the Civil Rights movement, partly in response to segregation practices affecting the housing rights of Black people and poor communities of color. So far, Community Land Trusts have been mostly discussed in the Global North, in large cities. This does not mean that there are not equivalent concepts and terms in the Global South.

Network: Community Land Trusts are part of a growing youth-led movement - as young adults are the most affected by the housing crisis. The conversation also includes local policy makers, journalists, urbanists, academics, local politicians, and housing rights activists.

Power: This narrative community has low media presence at the global level. It has a stronger local presence (local press, journalists, etc.). It connects with local politics, as CLTs are often discussed in the context of local governmental policies.

B. Land Back

This is a narrative community led by North American Native Americans reclaiming the land that was taken from them during colonization as a form of reparation, but also to protect nature, biodiversity and Indigenous' spiritual practices.

Attention: The Land Back movement started in 2018. It was introduced by Aaron Tailfeathers, a member of the Kainai Tribe of the Blackfeet Confederacy of Canada. Subsequently, the NDN collective integrated Land Back in their manifesto and the LandBack campaign was officially launched on Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2020.

The narrative community is present in the Global North, and in the US principally. However, we see it reaching the Global South, as decolonization of the land is the core logic behind the movement.

Network: The conversation is principally led by Indigenous groups in the US, including artists and the general public opinion. It is mostly happening in English.

Power: This community is social media savvy, and knows the codes of pop culture. It has therefore a high social media presence, and a big influence on pop culture. Land Back has become a meme.

C. Rights of Nature

The Rights of nature narrative community is a growing conversation that sees the recognition of land & nature's legal personality as a way to secure their protection.

Attention: The concept of rights of nature was first introduced in 1972 by an American law professor, but Ecuador is the first country to have introduced this concept in 2008 in its constitution. Today, the narrative community exists both in the Global North and the Global South, with a slight prominence in Latin America where there have been recent seminal legal cases (Ecuador, Bolivia, Chilean Constitution).

Network: This community is principally led by lawyers, NGOs, environmental activists and Indigenous environmental activists.

Power: This is not a big community, nor one that holds a big pop culture influence. (Not like Land Back). It is prominent in the NGO world and social movements.

D. Comunalidad

Comunalidad is a Global South narrative community that prioritizes a decolonial and

Indigenous-centered view of the land, one that is based on a collective and lived experience of the land as opposed to a theoretical one. It also critiques language and concepts used to describe land (property, rights, etc.) that were inherited from modern Western culture, but do not represent Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies.

Attention: ‘Comunalidad’ was developed as a concept by Indigenous & Mexican anthropologist Jaime Martinez Luna in 1972. The narrative community exists in the Global South, particularly in Mexico

Network: The community is driven by Indigenous activists, decolonial activists, Indigenous land defenders, including progressive academia.

Power: This narrative community is growing principally in Mexico. It is an example of what Indigenous stewardship and spirituality look like when recovered, integrated and practiced. This community has no intention of influencing the Global North. This may explain its low significance in terms of number. Because this community is focused on changing language and epistemologies, it makes it highly significant from a narrative evolution perspective.

E. Food sovereignty

Food Sovereignty is a narrative community that argues for the rights of people to control, decide and manage the means of producing the food they consume. It is tied to land rights, as land is where food is produced. .

Attention: Food Sovereignty was first introduced by La Via Campesina movement in 1996. The narrative community is present across the Global South and North, with slightly more occurrences in the Global North.

Network: This community is led by experts and NGOs, the UN, but it also includes local press, farmers, public opinion, Indigenous people.

Power: Within the theme of food and agriculture, food sovereignty seems to be the only narrative community that manages to cut across various issues: agriculture, Indigenous sovereignty, environment, land rights, food security, etc. However, it is not a significant conversation.

F. Ecocidio

Ecocidio is a growing narrative community in the Global South. It has grown in recent mobilizations against extractivist megaprojects.

Attention: The term “ecocide” was first introduced in 1972 in reference to the toxic chemicals used during the Vietnam War, which destroyed the local environment. During the drafting of the Rome Statute in 1998, many lawyers tried to have it included as an international crime. Today, the narrative community is principally located in the Global South, and spikes when civil society mobilizes against land grabbing and extractivist

projects.

Network: When there are mobilizations, like currently in Mexico around the Tren Maya, we can find this conversation in the mainstream press, in public opinion on social media, including activists and celebrities.

Power: Because it tends to surge around specific campaigns, this narrative community is quite local, regional and intermittent. It is currently growing more in Latin America. It is a very powerful, consistent, coherent community using the same language.

G. Bioregionalism

Bioregionalism is an emerging & regionally-focused narrative community that proposes an alternative to nation-state & man-made borders to define the territory. Instead, the land is defined according to nature and ecosystems. People are grouped by their common attachment to the same local and regional ecosystems, instead of nationality or ethnicities. New solidarities, new forms of sharing and caring for the land can emerge.

Attention: Bioregionalism was first introduced in the 1970s in the US by environmentalists. This narrative community is mostly located in the Global north. It is a local or regional conversation.

Network: This narrative community is composed of policy makers, non profit organizations, local initiatives, public opinion, artists, activists and also Indigenous people.

Power: This is not one of the biggest narrative communities given its very localized attention, but interestingly it is more visible than “transitions town”, for instance.

TERRITORIES OF TRANSITION

OUR HEALING IS BOUND TOGETHER AND OUR LIBERATION ENTANGLED



Narrative Communities (Assessment II): Logics & frames

In the second part of our assessment, we look at the frames and logics of each narrative community. We assume that there are other narrative communities that can emerge at a later time. We consider therefore the narrative communities to be representative or illustrative of certain patterns. Their *logics and frames* are therefore generalized. Logics become archetypal behavior, meaning they might apply to other communities we have not identified yet. We also again consider the *purpose & potential* of each narrative community; their potential to bring evolution to the narrative space.

The analysis is, in turn, useful for our mapping exercise (see next section).

	Community	Frame	Logics (or Archetypal Behavior)	Purpose & Potential
1	Community Land Trusts (CLT)	Collective ownership and management is how we find alternatives to the market.	The key coordinating logic in this community is that collective ownership may be employed in the redistribution of power. This community seeks social practices and structures that can address inequality vis-a-vis land stewardship.	This narrative community has been present for a while, and although it is not a significant cultural movement, it has established policies, practices and cultures that provide a viable alternative to privatized, neoliberal land ownership models.
2	Land Back	Indigenous Stewardship of the land is how we change culture & create a world where humans and ecosystems are safe.	The Land Back narrative community enacts the logic of reparation for stolen land within a decolonial critique. This community represents the archetypal decolonial position, as it relates to the legacy of imperialism and the current systemic inequalities.	Over the last three years, this movement has brought together a sizeable interest in decolonization as a liberatory and healing process - especially as it relates to the political and ecological crises of the transition.
3	Rights of Nature	Nature has sovereign rights.	This community enacts the logic of animism within the paradigm of law and policy. This community's archetypal behavior seeks to bring about structural changes within existing systems of human activity by granting the more-than-human world agency..	The purpose of this movement is to establish transitional infrastructures in the form of new life-affirming and life-centric social and political practices. This is a necessary and important part of the transition.
4	Communalidad	Indigenous cosmovision and stewardship is a lived praxis.	This narrative brings two distinct perspectives into a living-praxis framework: decolonial practices and Indigenous worldviews.	This is quite a small, localized community that is on the frontiers of epistemological and practical boundaries. It was born out of the Zapatista movement, but gained popularity through the Oaxaca commune in 2006 and is slowly spreading throughout Latin America.

5	Food Sovereignty	Land Sovereignty is how we protect life.	This community, like the CLT movement, is interested in new structures of ownership and management that facilitate access to food.	This community, although not a popular cultural movement (within the dominant discourse), has a widespread following in the global South. It also has the potential to bring attention to the critical issues at the heart of the commons movement. Food sovereignty is the core, uniting interest of the world's largest social movement, La Via Campesina.
6	Ecocidio	Nature is Life. Land is Life. Metaphor: Harming the land is akin to killing life.	This community has developed as a reaction to an increasing number of 'megaprojects'. The main goal here is to bring awareness to the ecological devastation of 'progress'.	The Ecocidio community, and similar movements, bring widespread attention to the devastation of "development". This is crucial, but does not necessarily offer alternatives.
7	Bioregionalism	We are the territory. The territory defines us.	The bioregional model offers many intriguing theoretical and philosophical ways to deal with the problem of nation states and ecological collapse. In this way it shifts the anthropocentric focus of nation states and their right to dominion over land.	This community has a lot of narrative potential, to reframe how we think of our relationship to all that is not human. However, as of yet, there is no clear movement with well-identified values and practices to offer sufficient practical measures to enact such a vision.

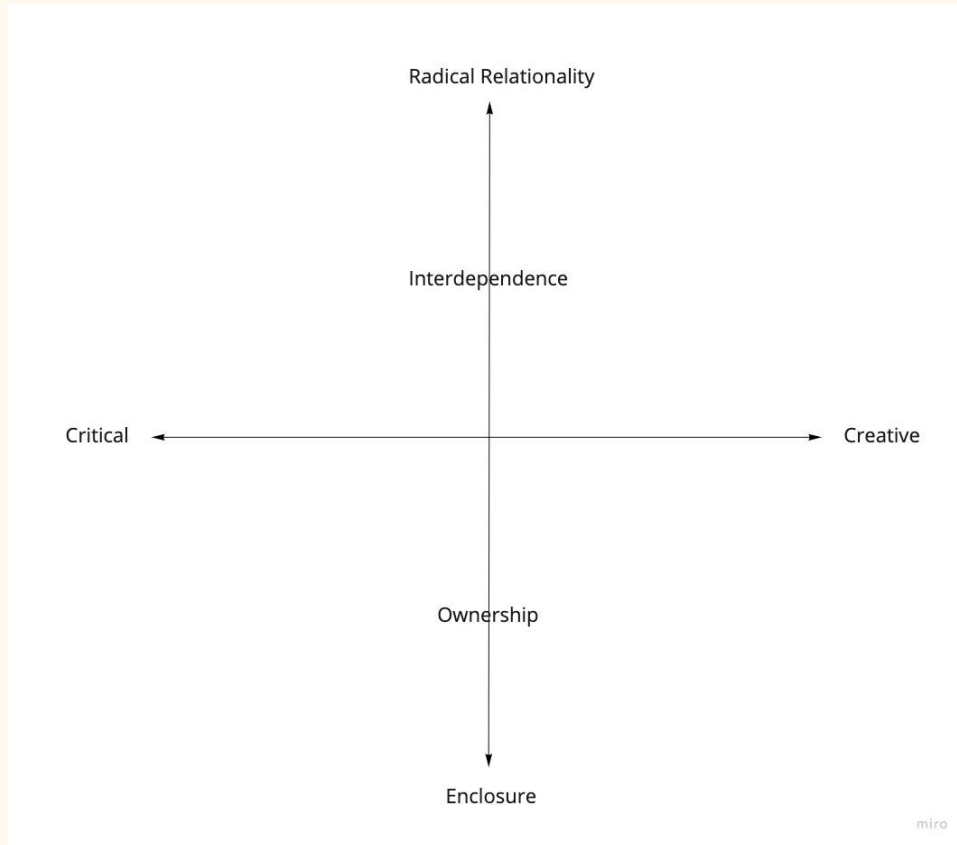
Mapping Narrative Communities

To conclude our analysis of the narrative space, we conduct a mapping to get a better understanding of a strategic direction i.e. towards which direction should we move the narrative space? What should be our narrative north star?

A mapping is a representation or modelization of the narrative space according to two axes upon which we then locate the communities.

To identify the axes, we recall that through our Point of View and our Analytical Framework in which we discussed four key dimensions that currently shape narrative spaces: ownership, management, stewardship and culture.

Given the communities we identified, their archetypes, purpose and potential, we can determine the key communities in the narrative space along two related spectrums.



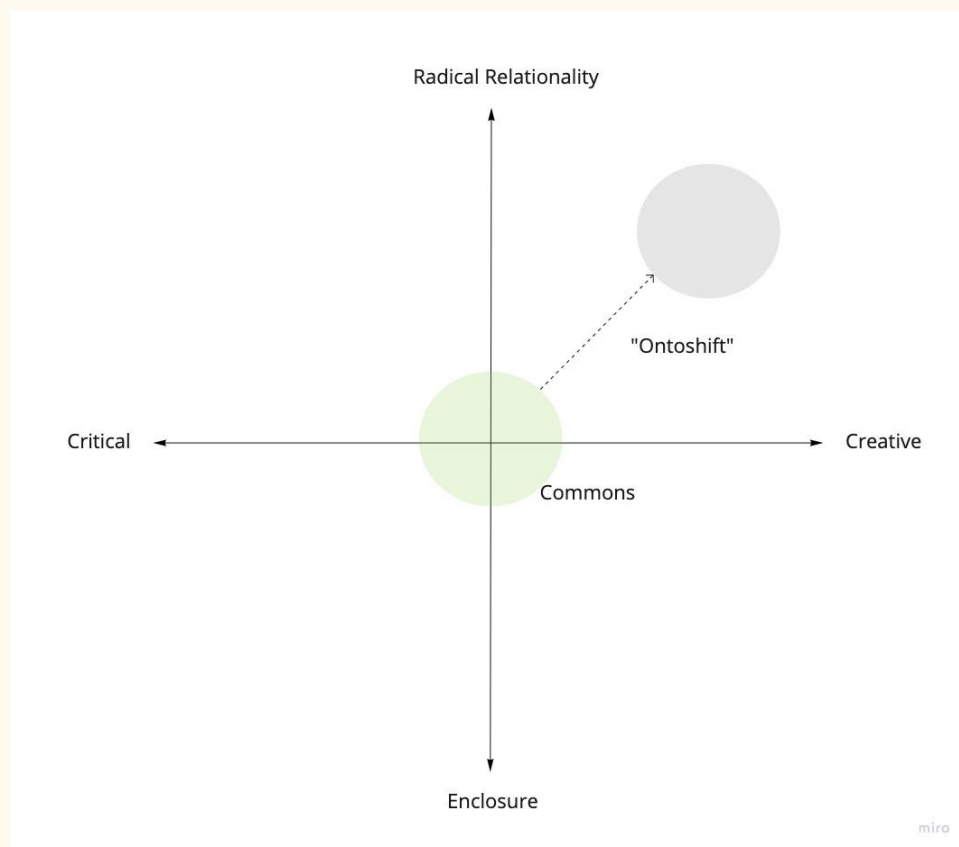
We can therefore begin to map the narrative space along these two axes, as seen in the above diagram. The first axis maps the epistemological disposition of the narrative community, from critical to creative. The second axis (Enclosure to Radical Relationality) maps the ontological model that the narrative community enacts, from privatized enclosures of life to models of deep interconnectivity.

We can describe these two axes in more detail, as follows:

1. The first axis aims to map how narrative communities collectively make sense of the world, and through this describe what purposes and goals are driving them. For example, a more 'critical' narrative community will place emphasis on critiques of the current system, as we see in communities 1,2,4,6 (CLTs, Land Back, Comunalidad, Ecocidio). On the other end of the spectrum, we will find narrative communities that are actively seeking alternatives to the system as we see in communities 1,3,5,7 for example (CLTs, Rights of Nature, Food Sovereignty, Bioregionalism).
2. This second axis describes how these narrative communities understand the world to exist. For example, models that put human interest at the center (anthropocentric models) will enact systems of oppression, extraction and inequality, reflected in the

‘enclosure’ and ‘ownership’ stations on this spectrum. From a growing awareness of the interdependent and further, co-constitutive nature of reality, we find models that enact systems of interdependence and radical relationality respectively.

Taking insight from Bollier and Helfrich’s assessment, that to fully understand the dynamics of the commons we have to make an ‘Ontoshift’, we need to reframe what we know about the world and how we act in it. Furthermore, as we have seen in our literature review, the baseline of the understanding of the commons is firmly rooted within the collective ownership and management models and is in need of a rejuvenation from this more radical perspective. The following map shows the required ontological and epistemological directive in this ‘Ontoshift’.

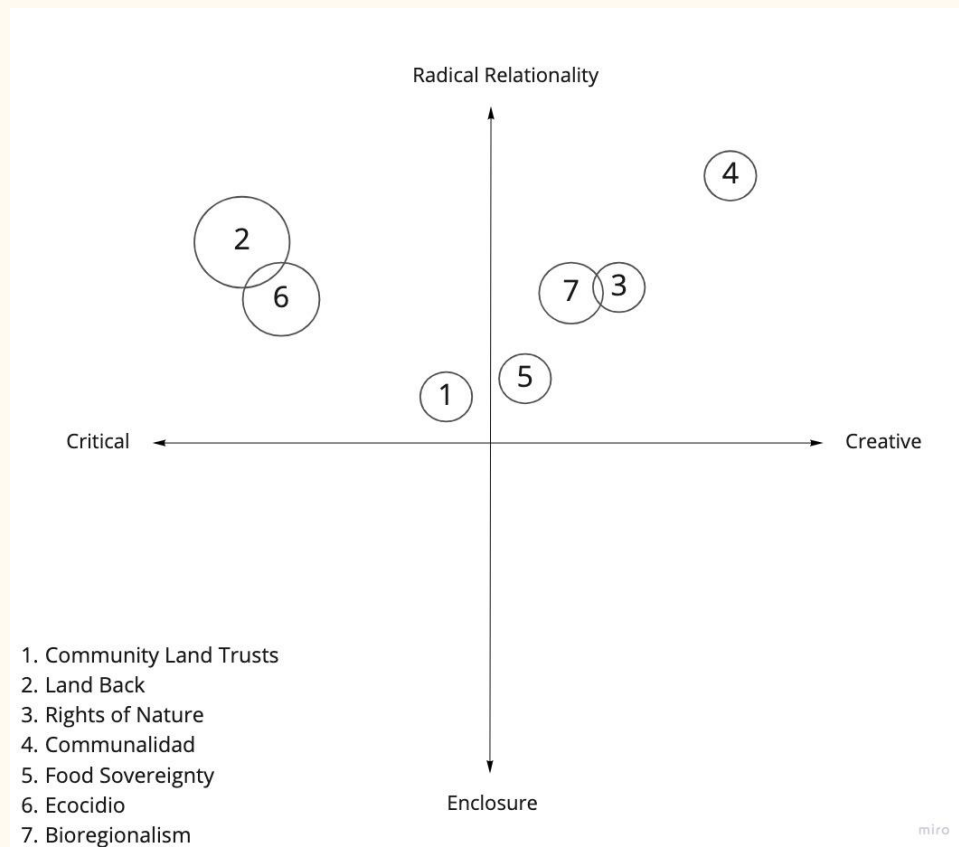


This map then shows our primary narrative objective, to bring about a shift in the ‘baseline’ of the Commons narrative landscape. Specifically we are seeking a shift along two dimensions:

- a developmental movement from critical perspectives towards creative alternatives to the dominant system.
- a systematic movement from anthropocentric models towards models of radical relationality.

These two trajectories within the narrative space then demarcate the key objectives of this narrative strategy. In the following section we will describe the primary and archetypal narrative communities within the space, and the potential vectors for narrative evolution.

In the mapping below, we have mapped the 7 key narrative communities identified through our listening process. The relative size of the circles describe the power of the community, while the position of the community relates to the two axes described above.



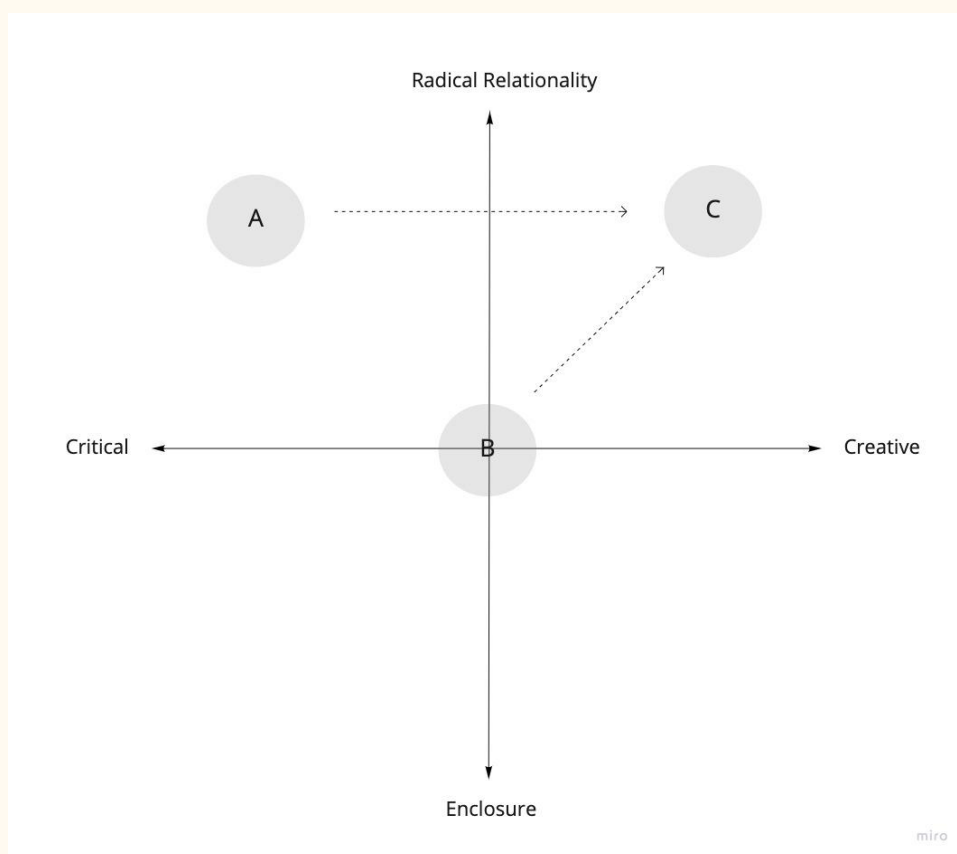
At first glance, there are a few key insights we can understand from this mapping of the narrative communities:

- First of all, while communities 1,2,4,6 (CLTs, Land Back, Comunalidad, Ecocidio) emerge from critical and political processes, pointing out breakdowns and crises within the current system, communities 1,3,5,7 (CLTs, Rights of Nature, Food Sovereignty, Bioregionalism) forefront structural approaches to inequality, climate collapse and food access
- Communities 2 and 6 (Land Back and Ecocidio) are critical narrative communities that bring attention to the interdependence of all life in the wake of the destructive force of anthropocentric cultural modes. These communities are making connections between the cultural operating system and the destruction of life, they

are also the most powerful communities in the narrative space and therefore represent the largest potential for change.

- Communities 1,3,5 and 7 (CLTs, Rights of Nature, Food Sovereignty and Bioregionalism) are seeking alternatives to the system through novel social, economic and cultural models. However these models are still rooted within models of 'collective ownership' (1: CLTs, 5: Food Sovereignty) and interdependence (3: Rights of Nature, 7: Bioregionalism). In this sense, communities 3 and 7 (Rights of Nature and Bioregionalism) are 'almost there' as it relates to our narrative objective and have a good potential to make the 'Ontoshift' we are seeking.
- Finally, community 4 (Communalidad), although a relatively small community in terms of power and attention, typifies the 'Ontoshift' within the narrative space. In addition it integrates the decolonial and critical imperative with the radical relationality paradigm.

Therefore we can generalize the potential energy within the narrative space through two potential vectors for narrative evolution - these are depicted in the mapping below.



The first vector (A to C) contains the largest potential for narrative change, yet the step from A to C is quite a large one from a cultural perspective. In this phase-shift, these critical communities begin actively seeking and implementing alternative systems that both address the original concern and develop new life-centered practices. Once again,

community 4 (Comunalidad) is an archetypal example of how this could occur. The second vector (B to C) is a movement from the logics of collective ownership and management towards models of deeper interconnectedness between community and land (bioregion).

Insights into the Narrative Space

To begin our reframing task, there are several critical distinctions we must make about the context of the commons:

1. The term “commons” and the conceptual, linguistic and logical underpinnings of the existent literature and discourse on the commons does not reflect the more radical position of the “Ontosfhiit”.³⁴
2. In addition to this, some of the most successful examples of ‘commoning’ emerge from and due to the climate, economic and political crises of our time, and do not necessarily use these terms. For example, the Transition Towns movement, the Zapatistas and other ‘autonomous zones’ and the CSA model are built on “commons” principles without identifying themselves as such.³⁵

³⁴ See the Literature Review section.

³⁵ Examples include: **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) examples:** CSA models link farmers and consumers directly, to share the harvest as well as the risks (like harvest failure) and costs associated with food production, based on mutual agreement. Read: European CSA Research Group (2016). Overview of CSA in Europe; or browse specific farms (e.g. in the USA, the UK): Zapatistas, Mexico: Zapatismo developed in Chiapas, 1994, but has spread across Central and South America, focusing on practices of horizontal governance, agro-ecological food sovereignty, etc. Read a short overview; or: Conant, J (201). What the Zapatistas can teach us about the climate crisis; Examples from La Via Campesina (the International Peasants Movement): See their website, browse key documents and watch videos. Read more: Imperial, M. (2019). New materialist feminist ecological practices: La via campesina and activist environmental work. *Social Sciences*, 8(8), 235; Oaxaca Commune and “Comunalidad”, Mexico: read an overview or longer pieces discussing its context, ideologies and potential: Martínez Lunda, J, (2010). Comunalidad as the Axis of Oaxacan Thought in Mexico. *New world of indigenous resistance: Noam Chomsky and voices from North, South, and Central America*. San Francisco: City Lights Book; Esteva, G (2012). *Hope from the Margins. The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State*. Amherst, MA: Levellers Press; Democratic Autonomy Project in the Kurdish autonomous canton of Rojava: an ecological society based on Democratic Confederation. Read more: Lau, A; Sirinathsingh, M, and Baran, E. (2016). A Kurdish response to climate change. *Open Democracy*; Aslan, A and Akbulut, B, (2019). *Democratic Economy in Kurdistan*. (pp.151-154) in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. Tulika Books, New Delhi; “Eco-Swaraj” examples in Rajasthan, India: A radical ecology democracy initiative of the Arvari River Parliament - 72 riverine villages attempt to achieve transitions towards bioregional vision of ecological units governed democratically by local communities. Read: Shrivastava, A (2019). *Prakritik Swaraj* (pp.283-286) and Kothari, A (2019). *Radical Ecological Democracy* (pp.289-292) both in: in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. Tulika Books, New Delhi; And listen: Kothari, A (2016). *Reflections from the South on Degrowth: Radical Ecological Democracy*. *Degrowth Movements; The Chikukwa project, Zimbabwe*: watch a documentary or read an overview: Leahy, T (2013). *The Chikukwa Permaculture project (Zimbabwe) – The Full Story*. Permaculture Research Institute; Transition towns (coordinated through the Transition Network): browse examples; read more: Maschkowski, G, et al (2016). *Dreaming of, Planning, Making and Celebrating the Transition that We Design Ourselves*. *Degrowth Movements*; Scott-Cato, M and Hillier, J (2011). *How Could We Study Climate-Related Social Innovation? Applying Deleuzian Philosophy to the Transition Towns*. Rochester, NY: 9; New Agriculture Movement based on “Nayakrishi”, Bangladesh: led by farmers, involving 300,000 diverse household ecological units. Mazhar, F (2019). *Nayakrishi Andolon* (pp.247-250). in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. Tulika Books, New Delhi.

3. This processual linkage between these crises and the emergence of localized, resilient, cooperative communities is crucial starting insight in our reframing task.
4. Then, as we have shown in the mapping above, the greatest potential energy within the narrative space lies in a phasic shift from a critical and interdependent position (A) to a creative and interdependent position (C).
5. It is important to note, that even though the narrative communities that typify political positions of the Left, this position is also consistent with any critical approach to “the system” regardless of political leaning. These critical, narrative communities bring attention to systemic breakdowns, the primary indicators of the transition. Moreover, these emerging communities provide the most potential energy for change within the narrative space.
6. Furthering this perspective, we can see a stepwise progression in narrative evolution within the narrative space that accords with the following:
 - a. A critical position as it pertains to anthropocentric models of ownership, governance and management.³⁶
 - b. The recognition of the adaptive capacity of models based on interdependence, to deal with the crises of the coming transitions.³⁷
 - c. The collective imagining of new systems, and the means to bring these into reality.³⁸

³⁶ See criticisms of the *epistemologies* (ways of knowing) that breed these anthropocentric models: de Sousa Santos, B. (2007) Another knowledge is possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies; de Sousa Santos, B. (2018). *The End of the Cognitive Empire*. Duke University Press. See criticisms of the effects of anthropocentric models: an overview from Culture Hack Labs; See the syllabus for the Transition Design Seminar in The School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University (specifically, their analysis of “wicked problems”); Hickel, J. (2020). Quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown: an equality-based attribution approach for carbon dioxide emissions in excess of the planetary boundary. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(9), e399-e404; Hickel, J., Sullivan, D., & Zoomkawala, H. (2021). Plunder in the post-colonial era: quantifying drain from the global south through unequal exchange, 1960–2018. *New Political Economy*, 26(6), 1030-1047.

³⁷ Recognition of the adaptive capacity of models based on interdependence: *Social movements and epistemologies from the Global South*: Escobar, A. (2019) Other Worlds are (Already) Possible. In *Social Movements: Transformative Shifts and Turning Points*. Routledge India, New Delhi. pp. 289-303; Le Grange, L. (2012). Ubuntu, ukama and the healing of nature, self and society. *Educational philosophy and theory*, 44(sup2), 56-67; Relational western ethics and schools of thought such as post-humanism and life-affirming ethics (Braidotti, R. (2013) *The Posthuman*, Polity; Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway*. Duke University Press; New Materialism (overview on Global Society Theory); Ecofeminism: Barca, S. (2020). *Forces of reproduction: Notes for a counter-hegemonic anthropocene*. Cambridge University Press; Gaia theory (recognising earth as animate): Latour, B. (2017). *Facing Gaia: Eight lectures on the new climatic regime*. John Wiley & Sons; Luisetti, F. (2017). *Decolonizing Gaia or, Why the Savages Shall Fear Bruno Latour's Political Animism*. 61-70; Indigenous ways of thinking/being: Culture Hack Labs (2021). *Indigenous Futures Report*; Banerjee, S. B., & Arjaliès, D. L. (2021). Celebrating the End of Enlightenment: Organization Theory in the Age of the Anthropocene and Gaia (and why neither is the solution to our ecological crisis). *Organization Theory*, 2(4); Also see scientific research confirming the positive role of Indigenous peoples and adaptive capacities of their models in biodiversity: *Forest Declaration Platform* (2022). Sink or Swim: How Indigenous or community lands can make or break nationally determined contributions; Garnett, S. T., et al. (2018). A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation. *Nature Sustainability*, 1(7), 369-374; Life-centric narratives in the narrative practitioner world: e.g. *Stories for life*; Culture Hack Labs.

³⁸ See the Transition Design Seminar in The School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University (specifically, classes on: designing for transitions; and designing systems interventions); See websites: Design Justice and Decolonising Design; Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy and the*

- d. In the final phase of this ‘narrative evolution’ trajectory is the enactment of ontological models of entanglement and co-arising as the lived praxis of community with Other and with one another.³⁹
7. Therefore we can see a developmental model of logics from critical logics, to declarative (inductive and deductive) logics, to modal (abductive logics); or from a focus on the past, to what is current and then to what could be possible (or already possible).
8. Through our deciphering of the key purposes and goals of the identified narrative communities, the term ‘land’ by itself is not a sufficient descriptor of the phenomena we are describing - rather, terms such as bioregion or territories of reclamation, reconciliation and reparation or places of cooperation towards collective goals may be more accurate.

Making of Worlds. Duke University Press. Durham, NC; Eco-positive design in Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary. Tulika Books, New Delhi (pp.169-172); Gibson Graham, J. K et al. (2021). Cultivating Community Economies: Tools for Building a Living World. Kathleen Courrier and James Speth (eds.) The New Systems Reader. Routledge, Abingdon. pp. 410-432; Birkeland, J (2019); Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need. MIT, Boston; Watson, J. (2020) Lo-Tek: Design by Radical Indigenism. Taschen, Cologne; Manzini, E. (2016). Design culture and dialogic design. Design Issues, 32(1), 52-59; Voto, G (2019) Coliving as a tool to meet Max Neef’s Fundamental Human Needs. Conscious coliving.

³⁹ As well as concrete examples of transformative practices of “commoning” based on radical relationality or entanglement in footnote 30 [check], see a variety of non-anthropocentric transformative practices in: Kothari, A and Salleh, A et al. (2019). Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary. Tulika Books, New Delhi – in particular, see chapters: Buen Vivir (pp.111-114); Commons (124-127); Comunalidad (130-133); Convivialism (pp.133-136); Kyosei. (pp. 226-228); Ubuntu (pp.323-326); Zapatista Autonomy (pp 335-339); Kothari, A., Demaria, F., & Acosta, A. (2014). Buen Vivir, degrowth and ecological Swaraj: Alternatives to sustainable development and the green economy. Development, 57(3), 362-375; Thackara, J. (2019). Bioregioning: Pathways to urban-rural reconnection. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 5(1), 15-28.

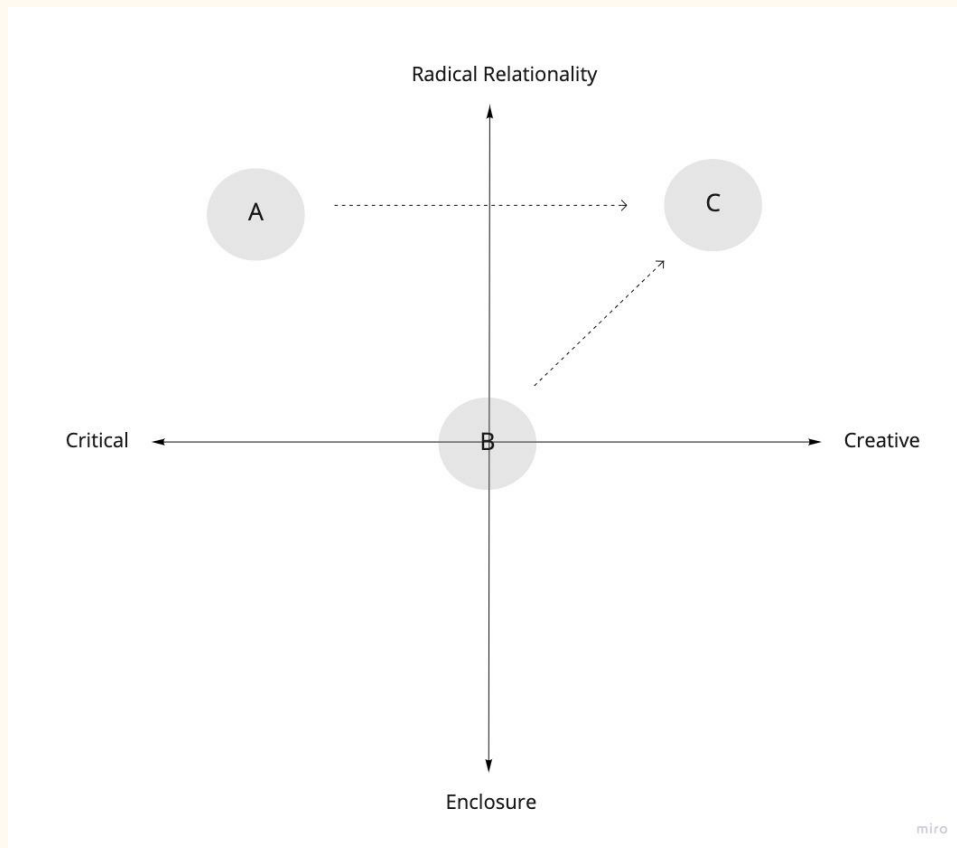
Narrative Reframe Zone

Now that we have defined the desired trajectory within the narrative space, we can begin to describe the potential reframes available to us. Due to the diversity of communities that we found, it became clear to us that we couldn't settle on just a singular frame but rather a 'zone of reframing'. This reframe zone, described below, identifies three 'reframe pathways' based on the narrative communities we found, operating in the domains of *decolonization*, *interdependence* and *radical relationality* respectively.

The overarching zone, *territories of transitions*, describes the collective spaces of lived praxis that have the potential to act as pathways to a post-anthropocentric reality. These territories are not only demarcations of land but living systems that are coordinated by a cultural disposition of interdependence, cooperation and reciprocity with all life.

Reframe Zone	From commons to <i>territories of transition</i> for cultural evolution.		
Domain	Decolonization	Interdependence	Radical Relationality
Core Metaphor	Reclaiming what was taken	We are all connected	The dance of life
Focus	Breakdown Urgency	System Design Planning	Lived-Praxis Emergence Embodiment
Logic	The most direct route to justice (social, economic and climate) is to return land back	Survival depends on high levels of cooperation.	Territories are living beings that we are a part of - we exist through reciprocal relationship and kinship.
Values	Reparations Reclamation Reconciliation	Reconciliation Relationality Reciprocity Resilience Regeneration	Regeneration Kinship Animism Thriving life Interbeing
Potential evolutionary frames	Land back to right relations.	Our liberation is entangled, our healing connected.	The territory is our body. Our bodies are the territory. We are the Earth healing itself. Territory is kin.
Communities of interest	Land back Ecocidio Land defenders	Rights of Nature Community Land Trusts Food sovereignty Regenerative ag Agroforestry CSAs	Communalidad Bioregionalism Indigenous communities

The key purpose of this table is to articulate the potential evolutionary pathways that are most relevant at this time. As we have shown in our analysis we can see two principle trajectories for phasic change in the narrative space (see *Mapping Narrative Communities* section), as is shown again in the mapping below.



If we recall the first potential shift (A to C), is a shift from a critical position to a creative position on the mapping. Communities at point A, emphasizing critical positions, would begin their reframing strategy within the domain of ‘decolonization’ as described above. For example movements that emphasize reclamation of land as part of an overarching movement could begin to emphasize the ‘right relation’ aspect , e.g. “Land Back to Right Relation”. In contrast the second shift (B to C) is a shift from a position of ‘collective management, cooperation and awareness of interdependence’ to a more radical understanding of living systems (C). Finally we find many communities already moving towards the position of point C, emphasizing the interwoven nature of living territories.

The following describes in more depth each domain.

Decolonization - “Land Back to Right Relations”

The ethics of right relationship

To be in right relation provides a corrective to the individualistic emphasis and radiates outwards to focus on the quality of our relationships with others and the more-than-human world. It emphasizes reciprocity and the responsibility to repair the relationships when they are out of integrity. David Abrams in his book *Spell of the Sensuous* says, "There is no truth, there is only the quality of relationships," pointing to the potency and latent possibility that is inherent in our interconnectedness. Everything exists in relationship. When we are in right relation, we can transcend the binary of us-versus-them that roots in resent, anger and violence to return to a state of unity.

Reconciliation

Forgiveness breaks ancestral and karmic debts liberating stagnancy and conditioned patterns that span generations. How may we transmute the poison of victimhood into the medicine of reconciliation? What do relational and ritual reparations look like between communities that are descendants of enslavement/indigenous genocide/displacement and descendants of enslavers and colonizers that accrued wealth through that harm? How do we grieve together and heal together?

Interdependence - "Our healing is bound together and our liberation entangled"

Colonized people, colonize people

The cycle of violence and oppression continues to perpetuate if it is not healed. The system isn't broken, it was designed this way and it hurts us all. The cycle of the victim and perpetrator can keep us dead locked into a repeating pattern of violence and entropy. The indigenous believed that the European colonizers had a sickness of the mind that caused them to consume, dominate, control and destroy life. They called this the disease of cannibalism, *Wetiko*. The colonizers and those that were colonized - their healing is bound together and their liberation entangled.

The spirit of the gift

To be interdependent is to understand the connection between all things. As we care and enrich that which sustains us, we are equally cared for and enriched. In a culture in which we extend the generosity of the gift, we are met in return with the gift of reciprocity.

"In the presence of a gift, gratitude is the intuitive first response...Gratitude is the thread that connects us in a deep relationship, simultaneously physical and spiritual, as our bodies are fed and spirits nourished by the sense of belonging... If our first response is gratitude, then our second is reciprocity: to give a gift in return." Robin Wall Kimmerer

Radical Relationality - “The territory is our body”

Our bodies are our territories

We cannot disentangle the dispossession of land from the dispossession of people and culture. They are inextricably linked. When we begin to heal our relationship to land, to liberate land from ownership, possession, extraction and abuse we begin to heal the trauma that lives in the bodies of those who belong to land. We belong to the land, the land does not belong to us.

“In the midst of this extermination, we, Indigenous women, make melody of the struggle, while we recover land stolen from us, we insist on celebrating our existence. We sow hope, because we, ourselves, are the very Earth healing itself. Territory is more than just the environment, territory is our whole lives. Our body is the territory and the territory is our body. We should be thinking beyond politics, and think about how we can re-enchant the world again. Awaken our senses. The challenge is to reforest our hearts.” - Celia Xakriaba

TERRITORIES OF TRANSITION

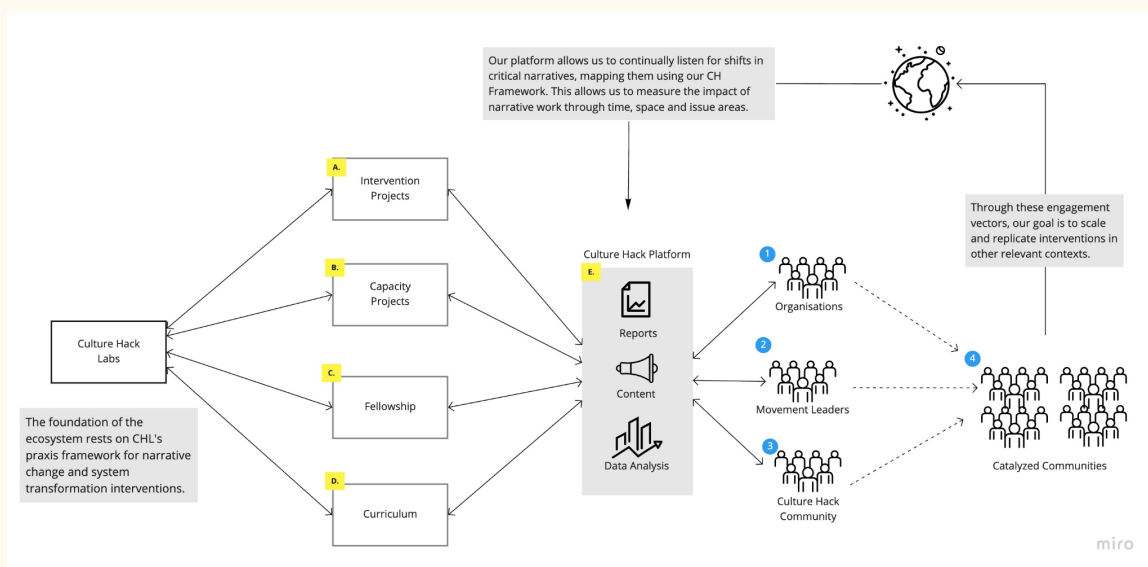
THE **TERRITORY**
IS **OUR**
BODY



Proposed Engagement Strategy

The above analysis of narrative communities and the potentials for narrative evolution within the space, brings forth some insights regarding our engagement strategy.

1. Given the diverse range of narrative communities within the narrative space, an engagement strategy would necessitate bringing together key representatives of these movements.
2. The narrative reframe zone allows a framework for sense making within the narrative space, providing pathways to rethink and reframe towards new horizons for thinking about land and the commons.
3. CHL's theory of change aims to create cultural change through the engagement with 'catalytic communities', which in this case relate to the identified narrative communities on our mapping. *See Appendix A for more information about the Culture Hack Ecosystem*



Therefore our proposal for an engagement strategy is to bring together 10-15 of the most important community organizers, communicators and strategists in the narrative space, for a 3-6 month learning journey. We will use the identified narrative communities as a guide for the selection of these participants. The goal of this learning journey will be to work with these participants and share our research, but also work within their contexts to surface and intervene in their own particular issue areas. Through this engagement we hope to create a new capacity within the interrelated communities for collaboration, and a new collective purpose, language and framework for change.

Rethinking The Commons as an Evolutionary Capacity

As we describe this developmental process within the narrative space, it is clear that we are describing a critical evolutionary process. David Sloan Wilson⁴⁰ grounds ‘cultural evolution’ within the larger context of evolutionary science. Wilson shows how symbolic thought is a key driver in major evolutionary transitions (MET)⁴¹, and more importantly how different this capacity is to mere associative learning. In this manner Wilson describes cultural evolution as the leading edge of biological evolution:

“Once the capacity for symbolic thought evolved, it became a full-blown inheritance system that operates alongside genetic evolution. Every one of us is a collection of genes, called our genotype, that influences nearly everything that can be measured about us, called our phenotype. Every one of us is also a collection of symbols—let’s call it our symbotype—that also influences nearly everything that can be measured about us—the very same phenotype. Our symbotypes and genotypes interact with each other, both during our lifetimes and over multigenerational time. For example, a course in meditation, which alters your state of mind, upregulates or down-regulates a substantial fraction of your genes.”

To get a better grasp of this, and its impact on our understanding of the narrative space, we need to describe *major evolutionary transitions* (MET) and *multilevel selection* (MS) and their relationship to this capacity for symbolic thought. Wilson (2021) points to this relationship by stating that even though we share 99% of our genes with chimpanzees there is a night and day difference in the level of cooperation, and that the capacity for symbolic thought is the apex of this cooperative capacity that differentiates humans. More specifically, he indicates that it was ‘social control’ or the ‘down regulation’ of individual behavior for the greater benefit of the group, that was the defining aspect of the human evolutionary trajectory. This is a cultural process, meaning that higher levels of cooperation are possible due to the development of cultural forms that coordinate human activity around specific values, norms and ethical imperatives.

Delving a little deeper here into this capacity for cultural evolution, we can define major evolutionary transitions as the emergence of new wholes⁴² due to novel capacities of cooperation between parts. This conception of evolution grounded in cooperation, was first described by Lynn Margulis (1970) then later formalized by Szathmáty and Maynard Smith

⁴⁰ *Reintroducing Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to Modern Evolutionary Science* (2021)

⁴¹ Maynard Smith, John; Szathmáty, Eörs (1995). *The Major Transitions in Evolution*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press; Margulis, L., 1970. *Origin of Eukaryotic Cells*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

⁴² In this instance, the term ‘wholes’ refers to novel forms, as they relate to new forms of life but also new cultures and social practices,

(1995), and truly transforms the evolutionary principle from imperatives of individual fitness to that of collective fitness. This in turn relates to multilevel selection theory⁴³, another well established evolutionary theory that emphasizes cooperation as the key evolutionary mechanism. It assumes that within any population of evolving individuals there are smaller groups in which social interactions occur. Moreover, within each of these groups natural selection favors the strategies that maximize the fitness of individuals relative to other members of the same group (Wilson, et al., 2013) - the metric here is 'relative fitness' not absolute fitness.

In their paper *Generalizing the core design principles for the efficacy of groups*, Wilson, Ostrom and Cox (2013)⁴⁴, employ this principle of relative fitness in understanding the commons from an evolutionary perspective. Building on Ostrom's eight design principles, they develop the following principles as an integration of the evolutionary principles in MLS:

- 1) **Clearly defined boundaries.** All examples of major evolutionary transitions involve groups with clear boundaries, such as the cell walls and nests for eusocial insects...ancestral human social interactions were typically conducted in small groups whose membership (e.g. those present), objectives (e.g. hunting, gathering, raiding and migrating), and their actions were obvious to everyone.
- 2) **Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs.** When costs and benefits are not proportional, some members of the group benefit at the expense of others (within-group selection) and group-level selection must be correspondingly strong for group-level adaptations to evolve. When costs and benefits are proportional, then selection differentials within the group are eliminated and between-group selection is unopposed. In general, the more proportionality is established within groups, the stronger between-group selection will be, relative to within-group selection.
- 3) **Collective-choice arrangements.** Consensus decision-making provides a safeguard against decisions imposed by some members of the group at the expense of others, since group members will not agree to arrangements that place them at a disadvantage.
- 4) **Monitoring.** Earlier we stated that within-group selection is suppressed only by virtue of an arsenal of mechanisms that keep it under control. Monitoring is an essential part of the arsenal.
- 5) **Graduated sanctions.** One reason that we are a highly group-selected species is because group members can impose extreme costs on miscreants at low cost to themselves.

⁴³ Okasha, S., 2006. *Evolution and the Levels of Selection*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.; Wilson, D.S., Kniffin, K.M., 1999. Multilevel selection and the social transmission of behavior. *Human Nature* 10, 291–310; Wilson, D.S., Timmel, J., Miller, R.R., 2004. Cognitive cooperation: when the going gets tough, think as a group. *Human Nature* 15, 225–250.; Wilson, D.S., Wilson, E.O., 2007. Rethinking the theoretical foundation of sociobiology. *Quarterly Review of Biology* 82, 327–348. Wilson, E.O., Hölldobler, B., 2005. Eusociality: origin and consequences. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 102, 13367–13371

⁴⁴ Wilson, D.S., et al., *Generalizing the core design principles for the efficacy of groups*. *J. Econ. Behav. Organ.* (2013),

- 6) **Conflict resolution mechanisms.** As with proportional equivalence and collective-choice arrangements, fair conflict resolution mechanisms act as a safeguard against exploitation within groups.
- 7) **Minimal recognition of rights to organize.** This design principle only becomes relevant in large-scale societies composed of subgroups. For the vast stretch of our evolutionary history, all groups were small groups responsible for their own organization.
- 8) **For groups that are part of larger social systems, there must be appropriate coordination among relevant groups.** This design principle is also restricted to large-scale societies and can be best understood in terms of multilevel selection operating on a multi-tiered population structure.

Through this refined conception of the commons, as the locus for higher forms of cooperation and therefore spaces in which relative fitness can be maximized, we can begin to understand the commons through a new perspective. Rather than merely the collective management of common pool resources (as the commons is popularly conceived), the evolutionary cooperation model views the commons as the very locus from which evolutionary transitions may occur. This is a critical insight given the current meta-crisis we face as a civilization.

In conjunction to this, and within the major transition we are currently enmeshed within, this is also a political process. Peter Turchin⁴⁵ for example uses MLS to describe the rise and fall of empires. He shows how cultures, nations and empires form through the cooperation of groups of highly connected individuals that are united through a shared belief system or *telos*. However as self-serving strategies once again become dominant in these civilizations, inequalities arise that lead to collapse.

Through this, we can discern two principles as they pertain to this socio-political process. Firstly, the higher levels of cooperation necessary for transitions are brought about through a shared system of beliefs, a common culture that is codified in everyday practices. Secondly, the lifecycle of emerging novel cultural forms is reliant on their ability to maintain the capacity to serve individual interests relative to the whole i.e. the capacity to maintain the flourishing of individuals at every scale of the system⁴⁶⁴⁷. If this is not maintained, breakdowns occur, leading to a reformulation of the underlying belief systems, creating either new orienting logics or splintering of the group into smaller groups.

Perhaps one of the most important critiques of Turchin's work and indeed also Sloan et al. is they are fundamentally anthropocentric in their cosmology - even though both show the

⁴⁵ Turchin, P., 2005. War and Peace and War. Pi Press, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

⁴⁶ See Lance H. Gunderson and C.S. Holling, eds. (2002), Panarchy, especially chapter 2, "Resilience and Adaptive Cycles".

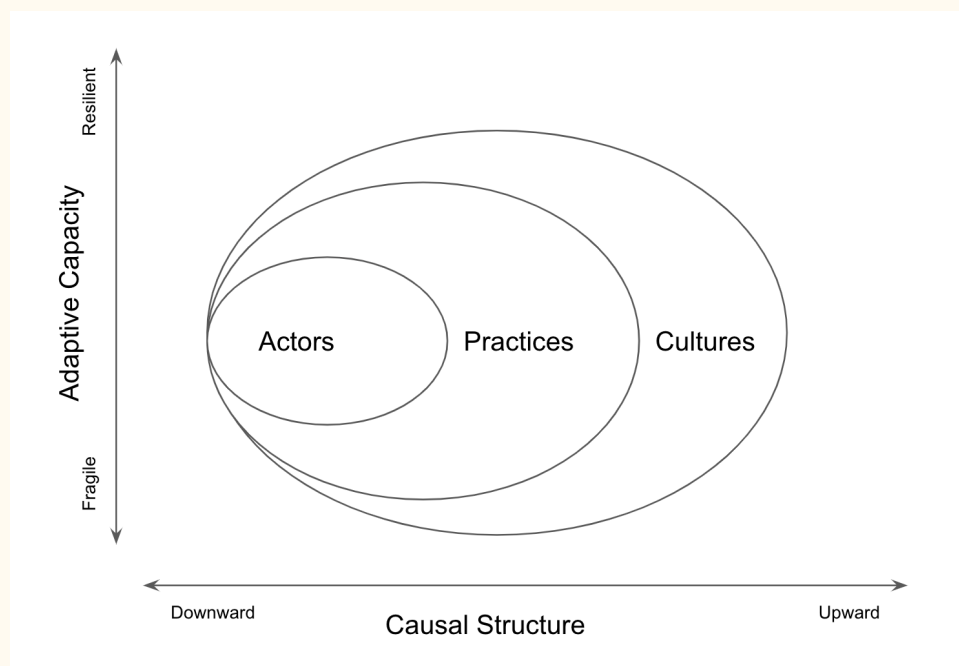
⁴⁷ For a detailed description of how Holling and Gunderson's Panarchy may be applied to the transition, see <https://leanlogic.online/glossary/wheel-of-life-the/>

relationship between cultures and cooperation, they remain neutral to the nature of these cultures as they pertain to interdependent evolutionary trajectories with the living world.

In our white paper, Culture and the Anthropocene we articulate a model of culture based on three dimensions - 1.the conception/definition of “Self”, 2. the conception/definition of “Other” and 3. the constructs that define the relationship between “Self” and “Other”. Furthermore, we can see that in more resilient cultures there is a far more integrated relationship between Self and Other, that is to say the constructs or orienting belief systems emphasize contingency and interdependence. Therefore the cultural aspects, those symbolic systems that circumscribe the domain of truth, are the highest level constraint determining the resilience of said system.

The Evolutionary Commons

Rethinking the evolutionary potential of the commons, we can start building a model that shows three key aspects: *actors*, *practices* and *cultures*.



1. **Actors:** This aspect describes all those individuals which make up the collective and who have agency. Importantly who and what are considered viable ‘actors’ within the system is largely determined by the cultural aspects of the system. For example in certain Indigenous cultural systems, the land, trees, rivers and other beings are all necessary and participating actors in the deep ecology of place and time.
2. **Practices:** Refers to the principles of cooperation between actors/individuals as they aim to maximize individual fitness as it pertains to the whole (relative fitness). Once again the basis of understanding of this relationship of part to whole, is

completely determined by the cultural modes and dispositions. Ostrom's eight principles are the archetypal example of this aspect as they relate to the everyday practices of cultivating and maintaining a shared purpose.

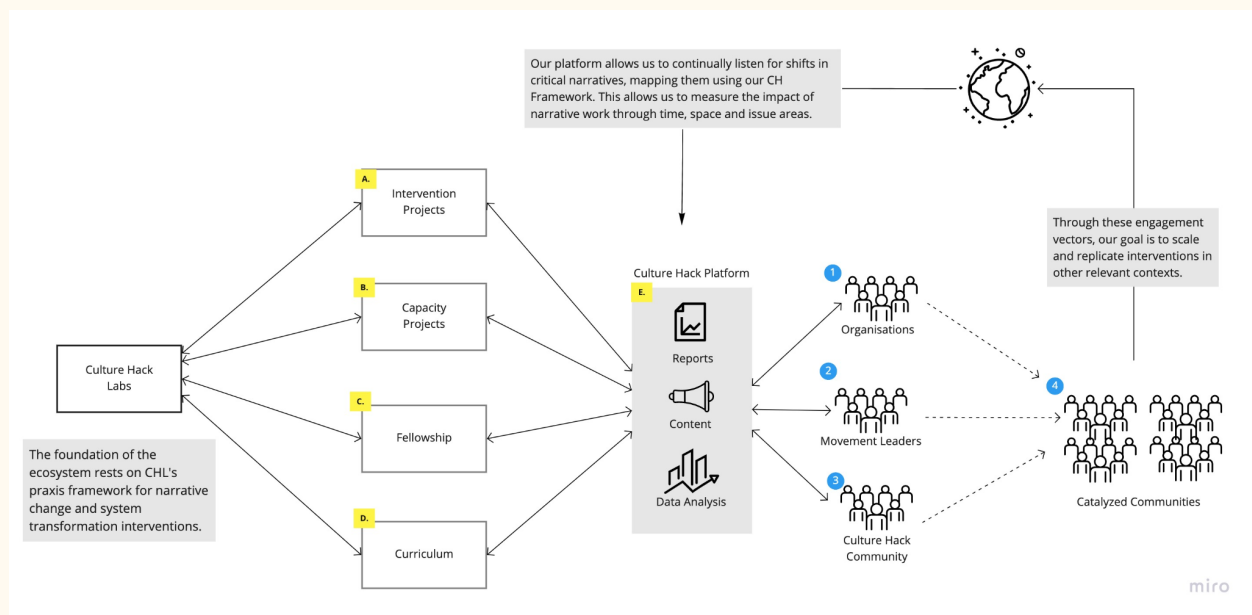
3. **Cultures:** This aspect describes the cultural system that coordinates the whole. In this model, we are specifically describing the relationship between what is considered as Self and what is considered to be Other.

In addition to this, there are two spectrums/dimensions within which we can better measure the evolutionary capacity of these systems. The **Adaptive Capacity** spectrum indicates that the system is within a continuum in which novelty and uncertainty exist, and that the system must continually adapt to. This adaptive capacity (whether the system is fragile or resilient), is wholly determined by the capacity to maintain the individual-to-whole relationships as it pertains to this metric of *relative fitness*. Secondly, the **Causal Structure** spectrum indicates that the emergent cooperative system is a result of the interaction of parts/actors (upward causative means), the mediating practices (coordination) of everyday life, and the normative forces of cultural systems (downward causative means). This model allows us to begin to think about the commons in a new way, a perspective from which we can evaluate both the adaptive/evolutionary capacity of the system; but also the degree to which culture impedes or supports evolution.

Appendix A: Culture Hack Ecosystem

The following diagram illustrates the Culture Hack ecosystem including the different capacities of Culture Hack Labs . This diagram demonstrates how we impact communities and change narrative landscapes through interventions within the dominant culture.

We have mapped out five capacities and four communities that create the foundations for this ecosystem.



Capacities:

A. Culture Hack Intervention Projects: CHL leads these projects providing landscape and data analysis, strategy, and execution for the full arc of the narrative intervention process.

B. Culture Hack Capacity Projects: CHL works with organizations and movements to develop narrative change capacities within organizations. This is done through a specific intervention, while training a team in the methods, tools and process of Culture Hack. This also provides access to a custom narrative dashboard and your own narrative data for your project.

C. Culture Hack Fellowship: The fellowship program invites leaders from social movements, civil society organizations and foundations to participate in a 6-12 month fellowship program. Through this process participants become part of the core CH community, learning the Culture Hack method through a supported community of practitioners who are leading narrative hacks on their respective issues areas.

D. *Culture Hack Curriculum*: Our curriculum is a free and open creative commons knowledge repository making the Culture Hack methodology accessible through a systematic introduction to our narrative approach.

E. *Culture Hack Platform*: The platform is a data analytics dashboard and publishing platform that develops actionable insights for culture and narrative change. The platform generates customized data reports for specific issue areas and syndicated reports available monthly via subscription.

Communities:

1. *Organizations*: The amalgam of CHL partner organizations that we engage through intervention projects, capacity projects and other partnerships.
2. *Movement Leaders*: Individual movement leaders who are selected and engaged through the CHL fellowship and our broader network, creating critical community amongst grassroots organizers and practitioners.
3. *Culture Hack Community*: A close-knit community-of-practice including journalists, activists and cultural catalysts that create and amplify content within interventions; subscribe to CHL publications; and utilize the curriculum.
4. *Catalyzed Communities*: These communities have been impacted and integrated into a CHL-related intervention that they form a part of. They are the growing network of culture hackers that influence others within their respective spheres and drive the scale and impact of interventions.