# Calibrating our vital compass: Unlearning colonial habits of being in everyday life

This article introduces the work of the arts/research collective Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures (GTDF – see decolonialfutures.net). GTDF focuses on enabling healthier possibilities of (co)existence that are viable, but are unthinkable/unimaginable within our dominant frames of reference. This article presents the decolonial perspective that grounds the work of the GTDF collective, proposes a framework and study guide for a decolonial pedagogy "*otherwise*" and offers two examples of gesturing practices that can recalibrate our vital compass towards the interruption of colonial habits of being: the social cartography "The house modernity built" and the "In Earth's CARE" itinerant curriculum.

**Keywords:** decolonial horizons; decolonization; otherwise pedagogy; itinerant curriculum; vital compass

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Facing the magnitude of the task of enabling a world without colonial relations requires more than a change of narratives, convictions or protocols. It requires an interruption of harmful desires hidden behind promises of entitlements and securities that people hold on to, particularly when they are afraid of pain, loss and scarcity. In order to take us to the point where we really want to exist differently, we need pedagogies that can take us to the edge of what is intelligible to us, that can help us to de-center, disarm, discern and disinvest in harmful practices and desires. Sitting at that edge, we can look differently at what has sustained us so far, notice the ways in which these things prevent us from 'being' differently, and, perhaps, accept an invitation towards what, right now, may seem impossible. The arts/research collective Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures (GTDF) is one amongst many initiatives researching pedagogies that could support us in the process of interrupting patterns that reproduce colonial habits and desires that prevent us from "growing up" and showing up differently in the world.

The GTDF collective (decolonialfutures.net) serves as a working space where researchers, artists, educators, students, social justice and environmental activists and ancestral/Indigenous knowledge keepers collaborate to create and engage research, artistic, pedagogical and visual mapping experiments in education. A cluster of Indigenous communities in Brazil and Peru is also part of the collective through the network "In Earth's CARE", which is focused on experiential land-based learning and ecologically grounded forms of (un-coded) spirituality. The work of the collective brings together concerns related to racism, colonialism, unsustainability, biodiversity loss, climate change, economic instability, mental health crises, and intensifications of social and ecological violence. GTDF proposes analyses and pedagogies that aim to enable healthier possibilities of (co)existence that are

viable, but are unthinkable/unimaginable within our dominant cognitive, affective and relational modern-colonial frames of reference.

We start this article by introducing a few characteristics of the decolonial perspective adopted in the GTDF initiative. In the next section, we present the educational argument for a decolonial pedagogy “OTHERWISE” and outline the features of a plan of study that has been proposed by GTDF. In the last section we present a social cartography and the outline of an itinerant curriculum that have been created by the collective.

## An unorthodox decolonial perspective

Decolonization and decoloniality have come to mean many different things in different contexts, and, although this is to be expected, Indigenous scholars have taken issue with certain uses of the term, especially when decolonization is dissociated from Indigenous struggles (see for example Tuck and Yang, 2012). In any case, it is important to ask questions about what assumptions, politics, and theories of change inform the analysis of colonization and the invocation and desire for decoloniality and decolonization in each context of use. The decolonial perspective adopted in the GTDF collective is informed by postcolonial, decolonial, critical race and abolitionist studies (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Byrd, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Gaztambide -Fernandez, 2012; Hunt, 2014; Silva, 2007; Simpson, 2011; Sousa, 2007; Spivak, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012). However, most importantly, this decolonial perspective is also inspired by analyses and practices of resilience and wellbeing of groups engaged in high-intensity struggle, particularly the Indigenous communities who are part of the In Earth’s CARE network.

These Indigenous analyses and practices affirm that our current global problems are not fundamentally related to a lack of knowledge or will, but to an inherently violent and unsustainable modern-colonial habit of being that works like a neurochemical addiction and that cannot be interrupted by the intellect alone. This decolonial perspective sees the subjugation of people and the occupation of lands as symptoms of a deeper collective trauma – the trauma of separability (the perceived separation of humans from the land-metabolism, the cosmos, each other, and their own intrinsic value) (Andreotti, 2019; Ahenakew, 2019; Alexander, 2005; Donald, forthcoming). As Ahenakew (2019) notes,

The metaphysics of separability turns (all of) us into objects. It is important to

remember how this trauma works through history, first by turning the land and other non-human beings into property, then by turning certain people into property, and then by turning everyone into “human capital” or *homo-economicus* for exchange-value markets, as Dwayne Donald asserts. (pp. 56-57)

Starting from this analysis, the GTDF decolonial perspective emphasizes that colonialism underwrites the conditions of our current existence and therefore decolonization and decoloniality cannot be an event or a formula. Unlearning colonial habits of being while we depend on colonial structures and institutions for survival is a complex, multi-faceted, life-long and life-wide practice that is inherently contradictory and offers no reassurances. That is why the title of the collective frames the collective work as “gestures” (rather than demands, manifestos or prescriptions) that point to horizons of hope and existence beyond the modern-colonial imaginary we have been socialized into. Standing within a global colonial imaginary, we cannot know in advance what a decolonized world might look, feel, smell, taste like. Instead of looking for an idealized or romantic replacement for the existing system/imaginary, this initiative invites us to face the storm of the violences and unsustainability of different facets of colonialism within and around us, without searching for heroic protagonism, purity or innocence.

In this sense, the practice of gesturing towards decolonial futures is a movement or dance that attempts to connect the individual, communal, metabolic and nonmaterial layers of existence (Andreotti, 2016). This practice places emphasis on the relationship between cognitive, affective and relational human capacities, as well as the role of the unconscious in blocking and/or enabling possibilities for different forms of co-existence to emerge in the eye of the perfect storm of the unprecedented global challenges that we will need to face together. We have noted that, on the one hand, very often the development of cognitive capacities is emphasized at the expense of the affective and relational capacities when engaging around issues of de/colonization and preparation for facing global challenges. As Shotwell (2016) notes, a common way to understand the endurance of colonial systems and relations is to assume “a kind of benign ignorance – people just haven’t been taught the facts of the situation, and so they can’t be held responsible for not understanding how race, poverty, and more, are present in their lives. If this were the problem, just giving people more and better information would correct their knowledge problem” (p. 38). On the other hand, we have also observed that people can have a strong intellectual critique of colonialism, but this does not necessarily result in a shift in how they respond and relate to themselves, to other

beings, and to the world. In particular, we note resistance to change when this requires giving up a presumed entitlement, sense of authority, or sense of security.

Therefore GTDF proposes that the problem of colonialism is not just one of ignorance that can be solved with more information or by shifting people's thinking; rather, it is also a "habit-of-being" problem (Shotwell, 2016), which means we have enduring investments in the continuity of the colonial system, even if those investments aren't always conscious and even as we fight for a revolution. Similar to the idea of political grace put forward by Darder (2011; 2016; Rehberg, 2012), this gesturing practice works through the layered complexities and ambivalences of human experience and calls for an interruption of addictive patterns of consumption, certainty and control that sustain the infantilization of humanity and reinforce ego-driven aspirations for the 4 Ws : the (last) word, the (separation) wall, the (protective) weapon and the (pre-emptive) war. However, this gesturing dance of political grace mobilizes spiritual oneness as something originating from a land-consciousness beyond human apprehension (and anthropomorphic symbolism). In this sense, love is not communal (centered on humanity), but metabolic (centered on the planet/cosmos as a living and intelligent metabolism that contains us).

Using a non-Western form of psychoanalysis [1] to acknowledge the role of the unconscious in the reproduction of a harmful and unsustainable modern/colonial habit-of-being, the collective highlights four denials that restrict our capacities to address today's many unprecedented challenges, including:

- the denial of systemic, historical and ongoing violence and of complicity in harm (the fact that our comforts, securities and enjoyments are subsidized by expropriation and exploitation somewhere else);
- the denial of the limits of the planet and of the unsustainability of modernity-coloniality (the fact that the earth-metabolism cannot sustain exponential growth, consumption, extraction, exploitation and expropriation);
- the denial of entanglement (our insistence in seeing ourselves as separate from each other and the land, rather than "entangled" within a living wider metabolism that is bio-intelligent); and,
- the denial of the magnitude and the complexity of the problems we need to face together (the tendency to look for simplistic solutions that make us feel and look good and that may address symptoms, but not the root causes of our collective predicament)

The collective has developed pedagogical tools that invite people to "dig deeper"

(to connect dots in their analyses of the bigger picture) and “relate wider” (to expand their capacity for accountable response-ability). In other words, to develop ways of living that engage with, rather than deny, systemic violence, our entanglements and complicity in harm, the limits of the planet, our entanglement with the Earth-metabolism, and the massive challenges ahead of us. These pedagogical tools aim to create spaces for difficult conversations about systemic complicities in violence and unsustainability, without relationships falling apart. These tools were designed to work intra-subjectively (internally), inter-subjectively (socially) and meta-subjectively (the bigger picture of our existence). They engage with and try to expand possibilities in and through the intellect, the imagination, and the neurobiological systems of sensing, feeling and responding that make up our individual and collective bodies. This pedagogy mobilizes disillusionment as a productive force that can help people find balance-in-movement in the eye of a storm: between “hospicing” ways of knowing and being that are dying (within and outside of ourselves), and assisting the “midwifery” of forms of co-existence and political possibilities that are still undefined, and are potentially (but not necessarily) wiser, with “radical tenderness”.

The research component of the GTDF collective attempts to creatively translate and amplify insights from communities of high intensity struggle that are setting their horizons of hope:

- beyond modern forms of social-economy (e.g. capitalism, socialism and anarchism)
- beyond nation states and borders as mediators of relations
- beyond separation between “man” and nature (anthropocentrism, patriarchy and separability)
- beyond a single rationality and story of progress, development and evolution and other totalizing forms of knowledge production
- beyond social mobility as the purpose of life
- beyond consumption (of goods, knowledge, relationships, experiences and critique) as a mode of relating to the world

The pedagogical and artistic inquiries of the GTDF collective have been animated by questions such as:

- What restricts what is possible for us to sense, understand, articulate, want and imagine? How has the modern-colonial conditioning trapped us in conceptualizations of (and relationships with) language, knowledge, agency,

autonomy, identity, criticality, art, sexuality, earth, time, space, and self…that restrict our horizons and what we consider to be possible / intelligible?
- What educational processes can override our neurological programming (our fears, attachments, compensations, projections, traumas, etc.), activate a visceral sense of entanglement, responsibility, humility, generosity, sanity (in ways not dependent on will or intellectual choices), and open up possibilities/worlds that are viable, but unimaginable or inarticulable within our inherited frames of reference?
- What, beyond convictions, can offer an antidote to indifference? What can engender a stream of connections and a sense of care and commitment towards integrative wellbeing that overrides self-interest and is not dependent on meaning, knowledge, identity or understanding?
- How can we engage and be taught by different systems of knowledge and being (including those that are and that are not part of modernity-coloniality), struggles and attempts to create alternatives, (a) cutely aware of their gifts, limitations, and contradictions, as well as our own (mis)interpretations, projections, idealizations, and appropriations?

## An OTHERWISE pedagogy and study plan

The GTDF experiential and experimental pedagogy encompasses exercises involving the intellect, the imagination, the body and the land. Creative social cartographies are used to support people as they “dig deeper” into the complexities and paradoxes of collective challenges: to connect dots and to rationally explore the limits of (a single form of) rationality. A set of affective, embodied and land-based exercises called “radical tenderness” [2] support participants as they “relate wider”: to develop the stamina for the difficulties of this work and to tap into exiled capacities (cognitive, affective and relational capacities actively number by modernity-coloniality) that can support wellbeing and the “composting of individual and collective shit” together.

Most educational approaches that emphasize global social and ecological challenges focus on a “soft reform” approach to the existing system: they advocate for environmental awareness, empathy and citizen participation in the current socio-economic system. Some educational approaches go further in their critique of the current socio-economic system, wanting people to develop motivation and capacity for “radical reform” with the inclusion of marginalized people and perspectives into the existing system, as long as they agree to the same “forward” of individual social mobility supporting national economic growth. Both soft and

radical reform approaches uphold the imaginary of expansion of the current system. The GTDF collective proposes an approach to education that brings together concerns related to systemic, historical and ongoing violence with concerns related to the unsustainability of our current system. This approach focuses on deepening our learning about the current system's limits and harmful tendencies as we dis-invest from its continuity, while working within it and enabling different possibilities of existence and politics *otherwise* to *emerge as we learn to "be" (grow up/show up) differently* together. This we define as "beyond reform".

The word "OTHERWISE" is used to mark the gesture towards "beyond reform", as an invitation to sit at the limits of the imagination. Therefore, Otherwise is not a normative gesture: the aim is not to convince people that the otherwise approach is the best way forward or what should be adopted in all educational contexts. In line with Paraskeva's concept of an itinerant curriculum theory, otherwise is a placeholder for an invitation to interrupt attempts to construct a single totalizing and hegemony-seeking epistemological platform and as a reminder of what could be viable and yet unthinkable beyond the modern-colonial grammar (Paraskeva, 2016; see also Ahenakew 2016; Santos 2007).

Table 1 articulates assumptions and directions of the "OTHERWISE possibility" in relation to cognitive, motivational, and affective dimensions of un/learning, as well as its implied theory of change and orientations of hope.

**Table 1: Gesturing towards an OTHERWISE possibility**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cognitive focus** | developing capacity to face and embrace complexities, uncertainty, paradoxes and internal contradictions without becoming irritated, overwhelmed, anxious or depressed; connecting dots in the bigger picture in relation to the roots and effects of material and relational poverty; understanding how we are complicit in harm; rationally exploring the limits of a single rationality and of single stories of progress, development and evolution<br>**(self-reflexive multi-layered reasoning)** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Motivational focus** | developing stamina to engage with difficult issues and conversations without relationships falling apart and without turning to harmful kinds of hope for redemption; tapping exiled capacities to expand possibilities for: trust, collective strength, developing familiarity with being in/with the uncomfortable, the unknown, the unknowable, the unexpected, “composting shit” together, and tuning into different modes of accessing personal and collective joy<br>**(possibility of relating differently through radical tenderness)** |
| **Affective focus** | interrupting patterns of consumption and other neurobiological addictions related to fears, (in)securities, anxieties and perceived entitlements at individual and collective levels; finding balance-in-movement at the “eye of the storm”; staying at the edge and “with the trouble”; nurturing humility, generosity, compassion, patience and response-ability “before will” (not dependent on choice, convictions or convenience); holding the hand of pain without despair<br>**(tapping metabolic intelligence and composting shit)** |
| **Theory of change** | the current system’s dependence on exponential growth fuelled by over-consumption is violent, unsustainable and unfixable; when the limits of the planet and of the system itself are reached in different contexts at different times we will be forced to figure out how to be, to relate, to imagine, to grow up, to show up, and to work together differently; although we cannot predict with certainty or plan for this time, we can prepare for taking up this challenge collectively<br>**(attempting to extend the glide and soften the crash)** |
| **Hope** | we will learn from the recurrent mistakes that our current habit of being reproduces (especially in relation to separability) and, when the time comes, there will be a chance that a wiser way of being will emerge and that we will only make different mistakes in the future; disinvestment from the promises that are offered by the existing system at great cost, including the promise of hope for reform and continuity of that system<br>**(tapping the “adjacent possible”: possibilities that are viable, but unthinkable within our current frames)** |

(Adapted from Andreotti, et. al. 2019)

GTDF sessions or workshops often start with an invitation for people to calculate

their ecological footprint at www.footprintcalculator.org and their slavery footprint at slaveryfootprint.org. These calculators are limited in what they can do, but they give people an idea of how many planets we would need if everyone had the same patterns of consumption of the global aspiring middle class, and how many modern slaves are already necessary for people to sustain these patterns today. They offer a rough overview of the hidden costs of our lifestyles and of the scale of the problems we are facing in terms of the environmental destruction and human exploitation that are necessary to maintain our comforts, benefits, securities and enjoyments. They also point to the fact that the strategy of increasing growth and consumption as a way to address poverty and promote “prosperity” (as the promise of middle class for all) is deeply problematic if we take into account the limits of the planet and the multiple forms of violence required for this expansion.

GTDF offers a study plan (decolonialfutures.net/ gce) around the socially authorized denials described in the first part of this article. What we mean by a “socially authorized denial” is something that is proactively not talked about in formal education, in the media or in modern institutions. Formal education tends not to address the hidden violence and costs of the promises of the current system because it is not easy nor convenient to do so. Talking about it is uncomfortable and frustrating, it can prompt feelings of guilt, shame, anger that can lead to a backlash, it can make us look in the mirror and see something that we don’t want to see, and it can make us enjoy less the things that can be pleasurable if we don’t think about where they come from and at what and whose expense (DiAngelo, 2011; Mills, 2007; Shotwell, 2016; Taylor, 2014; Vimalassery, Pegues & Goldstein, 2016). Indeed, if given a choice, many people would choose to continue not to think about these things and to keep enjoying these pleasures and comforts uninterrupted. However, in the current state of affairs where these pleasures and comforts may be affecting the very possibility of the continuation of human life in the planet, we need to have the courage and honesty to face what we are collectively doing and the difficulties of imagining and doing something different – relating “otherwise”.

The study plan is structured around four sets of questions related to each denial:

**Denial of violence** : How is material prosperity here created by poverty somewhere else? How do poor (or rather, impoverished) countries and peoples subsidize our comforts, securities and pleasures? How do we benefit from exploitation, expropriation and destitution? How are we complicit in harm? Why don’t people talk about this? Why can’t governments stop this?

**Denial of the limits of the planet:** How are we consuming the planet and making it un-inhabitable? Why do people deny that the current patterns of ecological destruction, consumption and exploitation are unsustainable? How long do we have left? How even the awareness of imminent threats gets to be transformed into other forms of denial, distraction and potentially violence? How are we going to face the end of the world as we know it together?

**Denial of entanglement:** Why do we see ourselves as separate from the Earth and from each other? Where does this come from? What are the consequences of thinking and feeling this separation? How does this sense of separation infantilize us? How could ancestral and Indigenous knowledges and practices inspire us to grow up? How does greed work and how could it be interrupted?

**Denial of the magnitude and difficulty of the challenges ahead:** How has formal education set us in the direction of individualistic metropolitan consumerism? How do we prepare to face the global challenges and crises ahead of us? How can we unlearn harmful ways of thinking, feeling, doing, relating, knowing and being? What will it take for us to wake up and do the difficult and uncomfortable work that needs to be done when many people just want to feel good, to look good and have a good time? When will this work be most needed? How do we develop the capacity to willingly let go of the kind of world (life/style) that sustained and provided for all of our privileges and comforts so far?

The plan of study starts from the assumption that part of us knows already that we are in a huge mess, but because we do not know what to do or how to sit with this knowledge, we evade it. We prefer to avoid “connecting the dots” out of a fear that we will be overwhelmed with information, anxiety, hopelessness and grief. However, unless we find a way to face this “collective shit” together, learn to compost it collaboratively, and transform it into new soil for something else to grow from, we will drown in it collectively.

The “otherwise” approach proposed by GTDF is not about “saving the planet” (the Earth will be fine without us) or even about “saving ourselves”. It is about recalibrating our vital compass that sets us in a direction of collective health and well being where we feel connected (beyond “thinking” we are) with and part of the living metabolism that the planet is (within an even greater whole). This is the first step towards re-activating the exiled neurobiological capacities that have been numbed by our perceived separation from the whole. This recalibration can re-activate the sensibility that makes us feel that, since we are part of everything, any

form of violence towards the whole affects all of us. In turn, this sensibility compels us to exercise a form of visceral responsibility towards everything.

The GTDF notion of “visceral responsibility” differs from mainstream notions of responsibility, which are derived from free will/choice, and which presume our separation from one another. This latter notion of responsibility is conditional, meaning that one only takes responsibility when it is rationally calculated to be in one’s self-interest, convenient, or otherwise desirable. By contrast, visceral responsibility is a form of responsibility “before will” (Spivak, 2004; Andreotti, 2008) meaning that it is a sense of responsibility felt in an embodied way when our sense of entanglement is unnumbed. The otherwise approach and related study plan of the GTDF seek to recalibrate our vital compass, and reactive both our exiled capacities and our sense of visceral responsibility.

The questions and resources in the study plan were selected for their educational usefulness and online accessibility primarily for people in the “global North” or the “north of the South” who have been socialized within modern-colonial schooling and institutions. Thus, we emphasize that they are not meant to be universal or suitable for all possible audiences. In this study plan, people are asked to engage with the resources with both their heart and critical eyes open: to explore what each resource is trying to offer, consider the limitations of this offer, consider the limitations of their own interpretations and expectations, and exercise both critical thinking and intellectual generosity towards the offer. The invitation is to interrupt our socialized tendency to relate to the world through consumption and projection, in order to open the possibility of relating to the world as an encounter (of the world and ourselves within it). Within the current system, we are encouraged to relate the world as a supermarket of endless options of products, experiences, relationships and identity-brands for our enjoyment and self-actualization: we are consuming the world and ourselves in it. In order to interrupt this pattern, we need practices of attention, intention and attunement with the wider living metabolism we are part of; and to do so in a way that can cultivate genuine humility, generosity, compassion, patience and responsibility, which also involves un-numbing to and changing our relationship with the pain of the metabolism itself (see Ahenakew, 2019).

## Social cartographies and itinerant curriculum

Often when one seeks to identify and interrupt recurrent social patterns, the expectation is that one will offer not only a critique, but also a prescription for subsequent action – that is, a clear path from a single understanding of ‘here’ to a

predetermined ‘there.’ By offering social cartographies, we take a different approach that emphasizes not just alternative thinking, but alternative thinking about alternatives (Santos, 2007). Inspired by the work of Rolland Paulston (2000, 2009), we approach social cartographies as provisional depictions of different perspectives on shared problems of concern, addressing the theoretical orientations and philosophical assumptions of these perspectives, including where they derive from, what they enable, and what they foreclose (Andreotti, Stein, Pashby & Nicholson, 2016). This approach, which is more pedagogical than prescriptive, recognizes that existing strategies for addressing global justice and social change are inadequate to the task of preparing us to face these uncertain times. Beyond the particular challenges of our conjuncture, the desire for guaranteed alternatives is rooted in a desire for intellectual certainty upon which modern/colonial ideas of ontological security are premised (Stein, Hunt, Suša, & Andreotti, 2017). It is precisely this set of linked desires that rationalize the reproduction of harmful relations, asserting a series of partitions and security measures rooted in fantasies of separation, autonomy, and control. Thus, rather than provide a model or checklist for transformation, or a clearly defined way out of the ‘wicked problems’ that characterize the present, these cartographies serve as open invitations to explore the limits, intersections, tensions, nuances, convergences, and divergences between and within different imaginaries.

From our experience, these cartographies can have a very interesting effect on our relationship with knowledge and the expectations we place upon knowledge production. When used educationally, they challenge learned modern/colonial desires for consensus, coherence, neutrality, and quick resolutions. In contexts where social imaginaries are marked by the search for certainty and control, they can facilitate deep learning processes and invite curiosity, reflexivity, openness, and the expansion of sensibilities as we engage with other possibilities. Engagements with social cartographies (both visual and poetic cartographies) have resulted in the creation of affective mappings, new or revised vocabularies, deepened analyses, and dialogues that can breach cognitive and emotional lockdowns, change the terms of conversations, and open communities up to new horizons of possibility (Andreotti et al., 2015).

By refraining from simply replacing one set of intellectual certainties with another, we suggest that these cartographies intervene at the layer of epistemological challenges, which emphasizes thinking differently and attending to ethical and political questions and responsibilities. The cartographies also gesture toward the

limits of existing ontological possibilities, by emphasizing the imperative to be and relate differently to ourselves, each other, and the planet, without prescribing how. Particularly for those accustomed to operating at the methodological layer, or the layer of doing that emphasizes changes to practice, this can be a powerful interruption of 'business-as-usual' (see Andreotti et al, 2018).

The social cartography and itinerant curriculum that we present in this section speak directly to the theme of this special issue as the pedagogy of every day life. The social cartography "The House Modernity Built" seeks to illustrate the basis of current modern-colonial structures of existence, and thus serves as one way of diagnosing current crises and their multiple, overlapping dimensions. Having offered this diagnosis of current crises, the In Earth's CARE itinerant curriculum is presented as a framework global justice education that emphasizes the integration and entanglement of different dimensions of justice, including ecological, affective, relational, cognitive, and economic dimensions. These pedagogical tools were created by a collective of educational practitioners who come from diverse locations, both geographically and in relation to the challenges and crises they are confronting.

## The HOUSE modernity built

Responses to contemporary global crises vary according to different analyses of existing and ideal roles played by economic growth, consumption, technology, wealth, governance, and national borders. One way of mapping these debates is to establish a distinction between those who think that our current economic, social, and environmental systems are defensible (i.e. they are sustainable and ethical) and can be: 1) improved with more of the same, or 2) fixed with better policies; and those who believe the systems are not defensible (i.e. they are unsustainable and unethical), and suggest that either: 3) we need and can immediately create new systems; or 4) that genuinely new systems will only be possible once the old systems have become impossible. Each perspective presents different ideas for what pedagogy should entail, for example, in alignment with the four possible analyses presented immediately above: 1) entrepreneurship and innovation for market expansion; 2) more effective citizen participation and expanded trust in representational democracy in order to create better policies towards more inclusive, equitable, and greener economic growth; 3) degrowth, community autonomy, energy self-sufficiency, food sovereignty and solidarity economies; or, 4) palliative care for a dignified death for the old system and assistance with the

gestation and birth of new, potentially wiser systems.

We have created a cartography that maps and analyses 3 and 4, and that opens the possibility for attendant responses, which we describe through the metaphor of ‘the house modernity built’ (Stein et al., 2017). Through this cartography, we consider why the structure of this house appears increasingly shaky, and also why, despite this shakiness, many people continue to cling to its blueprints. In order to address how this relates to the modern/colonial system’s basic elements, we consider each element in turn: a foundation of anthropocentric separability; two carrying walls of universalist, Enlightenment rationalism, and modern nation-states; and a roof of global capitalism.

The house modernity built, first and foremost, institutes a foundational set of categories that are not just epistemological (related to knowing), but ontological (related to being, which cannot be reduced to knowing), which enable certain possibilities for existence, and foreclose others. These categories presume that living beings are autonomous, and that relationships between them are premised on naturally occurring differences in intrinsic value. In particular, separations are presumed between humans and the earth/ “nature”/ other-than human-beings. These distinctions are further arranged in a hierarchical relationship premised on human domination/ownership, as well as separations and between humans and other humans. Separations occur through the creation of racial and gender categories and the institution of hierarchical relations premised on white and male supremacy, and other forms of normativity. These categories and their interrelations are instituted and reproduced through the production, transmission, and materialization of Enlightenment knowledge (a load-bearing wall) within its attendant educational institutions, in which there is one universally relevant truth and moral code that qualifies and empowers people to describe, predict, and control the world to engineer their future. It is presumed that any flaws can be addressed through internal critique to ensure that human understanding progresses toward greater perfection, certainty, objectivity, and mastery. Meanwhile, this knowledge system enacts the erasure of other value systems and ways of knowing and the suppression of epistemic uncertainties and contradictions.

Politically, the house is made up of the nation-state (another load-bearing wall), which promises to maintain order to secure sovereignty by policing its boundaries and ensuring advantages for its citizens. The state guarantees property rights, and operationalizes categories and hierarchies of humanity (e.g. citizen/non-citizen; deserving/undeserving) that are instituted through the house’s epistemological and

ontological categories (i.e. its foundation). Although some states grant their citizens some power over how they are governed, the law-instituting and law-maintaining violence of the state is rationalized by the need to ensure safety and protect property, including by deploying the police, military, and border police if deemed necessary. Increasingly it has become clearer that nation-states will tend to choose the protection of global capital over the well-being of (even their own) people; and/or it is assumed that deferring to the demands of global capital is the best or even the only way to ensure people's well-being. The current condition of this wall clearly indicates the limits of representational democracy, and the limits of possibilities for political action that are premised on institutionalized processes, policies, and practices.

Economically, this house is premised on a regime of perpetual capital accumulation (the roof), which exploits human labor, expropriates lands and lives through processes of slavery and colonization, and treats other-than-human beings as natural resources to be extracted, all for the creation of profit for a very few. These profits are then protected through the laws and policing of the wall of the nation-state. This economic system invites the investment of even those that it exploits, through its promises of social mobility, economic growth, and self-expression and realization through consumption. However, today these promises appear increasingly shaky given slowing economic growth, under- and precarious employment, growing wealth inequality, and the increasing inaccessibility of affordable food, shelter, clean water, and even air. Further, more people are making connections between capitalism's imperative for endless economic growth, and the (dramatically unevenly distributed) realities of global climate change.

Viewed together, it has become increasingly difficult to deny that the foundations of the house show serious cracks, and leaks and blocked sewage pipes proliferate on its lower floors. At the same time, the house still offers one of the most stable forms of shelter, largely because of the instabilities that its operations have caused elsewhere. As noted at the beginning of this section, the increasingly shaky house has been interpreted in different ways. However, these interpretations generally either assert that the underlying structure of the house is sturdy and just needs renovations (whether major or minor), or that the house is ethically indefensible and unsustainable, and thus, it is necessary to build new forms of shelter, whether immediately or when the house starts to crumble on its own.

Part of the necessary work is therefore to learn to become comfortable with the unknown depth of the challenges that we face, and with the inevitable uncertainties

involved in transformation. We must develop the stamina for addressing complex problems without a predefined end point, and for experimenting (responsibly) with different possibilities when opportunities arise. This, in turn, requires that we disinvest from our attachments to viewing ourselves as heroic, problem-solving protagonists and leaders who have the answers to the world's problems, and instead investing in the integrity of a collective, horizontal (messy) process of transformation. This is why the affective dimension of this work must accompany the cognitive one.

## The In EARTH's CARE itinerant curriculum

Building on Paraskeva's work (2016), within GTDF an itinerant curriculum is defined by 4 "D's" (decenter, disarm, de-clutter, discern) that counter the 4 "W's" of modernity-coloniality (the word, the wall, the weapon and the war) mentioned before. An itinerant curriculum aims to decenter and disarm modern-colonial subjectivities, to de-clutter our over-codified existence in order to access exiled capacities (also referred to as neurogenesis, see Andreotti 2019) and to develop a form of discernment for a collective practice of composting individual and collective (historical, systemic and on-going) "shit" that is grounded on visceral responsibility and reverence for the sacred without projections and idealizations.

The In Earth's CARE itinerant curriculum combines five complementary approaches to transformative justice and wellbeing based on the 4 D's. The metaphor of mushrooms and mycelium is used to articulate how ecological and economic justice/wellbeing (mushrooms) are dependent on the mobilization of cognitive, affective and relational justice/wellbeing (healthy mycelium). The curriculum seeks to move beyond the search for universal models and problem-solving approaches towards preparing people to work together with and through the complexities, uncertainties, paradoxes, and complicities that characterize efforts to address unprecedented global challenges collaboratively today. The curriculum proposes a vision of deep transformational learning processes that combine practical doing (together), building of trust (in one another), deepening analyses (of self, systems, and social and ecological complexity), and dismantling walls (between peoples, knowledges, and cultures). In this vision, intellectual engagements, the arts, ethics, cosmovisions, the environment, and embodied practices are all understood as important conduits for un/learning. The curriculum invites people to: explore the contributions, paradoxes, and limits of their current problem-posing and problem-solving paradigms; engage experientially with alternative practices that challenge

the limits of their thinking and capabilities; and, contribute to the emergence of new paradigms of social change that open up not-yet-imaginable possibilities for co-existence in the future.

As envisaged by the In Earth's CARE network of Indigenous communities in Brazil and Peru, an itinerant curriculum for global justice engages participants in experiential learning that focuses on an alternative engagement with alternatives (Santos, 2007) to the dominant modern/colonial global imaginary, including alternative economies, alternative ways of relating to ecology, Southern epistemologies, and initiatives that highlight the importance of teachings from grassroots resistance and soil-centred movements, including Black, Indigenous, landless, peasant, and Quilombola struggles. There is an emphasis on the knowledge of women and the reduction of gender, racial, and sexual violence and of vulnerabilities produced by intersectional systems of oppression. The In Earth's Care curriculum proposes a set of dispositions for a pedagogy of everyday life organized around the five dimensions of transformative justice/wellbeing mentioned earlier [3].

*Cognitive justice/wellbeing*

- Deepening analyses of historical and systemic forms of violence
- Critically examining assumptions, desires and complicities in harm
- Thinking in multiple layers acknowledging tensions and paradoxes at the intersection of different histories, contexts and worldviews
- Responding in generative ways to teachings (knowledge exchange) that challenge one's self image
- Making space for and relating differently to the unknown and the unknowable

*Affective justice/wellbeing*

- Developing the capacity to be in discomfort and to accept uncertainty without feeling overwhelmed or irritated
- Learning to access the unconscious and to sit with internal complexities, paradoxes and contradictions
- Identifying and starting to compost individual and collective projections, attachments, traumas and insecurities
- Learning to interrupt intellectualizations in order to sense, relate and show up differently to oneself and to the world
- Processing emotions and accessing and releasing pain without narrative

framings

*Relational justice/wellbeing*

- Learning to form genuine relationships without idealizations (projections, instrumentalizations and romanticizations)
- Exploring different possibilities for being and relating not grounded on shared meaning, identity or conviction
- Feeling part of a wider metabolism (planet/land) and collective body (group/community)
- Experiencing the difficulties and complexities of ethical engagements and solidarity from a space of accountability
- Learning through difficult events with humility, compassion, generosity and patience

*Economic justice/wellbeing*

- Interrupting patterns of consumption (of knowledges, experiences and relationships) as a mode of relating to the world
- Decentering yourself and centering collective needs (doing what was needed rather than what one wants to do)
- Interrupting patterns of entitlement coming from social, economic and/or racial privilege
- Interrupting calculations (based on self-interest or utility maximization) in order to give and receive differently
- Learning to practice economies based on abundance, reciprocity and redistribution

*Ecological justice/wellbeing*

- Manifesting education from a space where humans are not separated from the land/planet
- Reflecting on the challenges of co-existence from different perspectives, including those of non-human beings
- Grappling with the complexities of addressing complicities in ecological harm
- Opening up possibilities for adjacent possibilities of thinking, relating and being
- Developing stamina and resiliency for the slow and challenging work that needs to be done in the long term

There is increasing consensus that contemporary times are and will be, for the foreseeable future, characterized by political, economic, and ecological uncertainty and instability; yet there exists a considerable diversity of critiques about the origins of these challenges, and thus, propositions about how we might address them. Often in moments of crisis, people look for solutions that are available within our existing system. Within the GTDF diagnosis, however, the existing system is itself the root of many contemporary problems. Thus, with these two pedagogical tools we have sought to indicate the limits of this system, without overdetermining what an alternative system might look like. These tools invite people to think 'with' rather than 'about' them, and seek to prompt the possibility of dynamic movement without directing people toward a particular end, in fact, presuming that there are multiple possible points of arrival, and subsequent moves.

## Conclusion: one metabolism, one team only

As we have noted throughout this article, the work of the GTDF collective proposes a non-prescriptive response to the challenges of the present that starts with our analysis about the violence of separation, and emphasizes the work of re-calibrating our vital compass, reactivating our exiled capacities, and un-numbing to our sense of visceral responsibility. While this path has certainly opened many previously unimagined (and unimaginable) opportunities for deep learning, it has also been fraught with many personal and collective challenges as we encounter ever more intricate layers of attachments, entitlements and projections that seem to constitute the very fabric of what we may call our normalized reality.

As we seek to recalibrate our rational and ethical compass towards collective balance and wellbeing (in its intra-, inter- and meta-subjective forms) and away from separation, consumption and individualism, we are learning more about how even the very idea of entanglement profoundly complexifies and troubles the deeply ingrained notions of self and other. In this approach there are no "good" and "bad" teams – we are one team only and we need to figure out how to address the dis-ease of the metabolism together, with assistance from and in tune with the metabolic bio-intelligence that the living planet embodies. To take this metaphor a step further, ultimately, we all embody both the disease and the many medicines needed to regenerate from and through it – as individuals, we are all insufficient and indispensable in the process of metabolic healing.

Being on "one team" with the disease and the medicines does not mean disavowing or bypassing our unevenly distributed social-political complicities, vulnerabilities

and responsibilities, which is sometimes how the idea of oneness is read by new age communities, or those who otherwise want “to feel entangled with the trees, the stars, and the squirrels, but not with pain, war, and guns” (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein in Ahenakew, 2019, p. 11). Such a response “belies a continued investment in unrestricted autonomy and innocence” (p. 11), i.e. a desire to transcend colonial violence without giving anything up (Jefferess, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). This denial of our continued investment and dependence on ongoing systemic violence can take (at least) two different forms.

In the first version, articulated in the image of entanglement with trees, stars and squirrels (but not pain, war and guns), oneness/non-duality is understood or interpreted as an absolution from political accountability (what some would call spiritual bypassing), thus reducing the ontological status of the layer of everyday embodied reality to a mere illusion with little or no consequence for what “really” matters. In the second, it is the increasing depth of critique (and/or political engagement) that can serve as a convenient vehicle for the upkeep of the image of personal innocence and purity (Shotwell, 2016). Given that an overwhelming majority of critical scholarship is based upon Enlightenment-based Cartesian rationality, the allure of the *cogito* lies in its false premise of having access (at least in theory) to a totalizing description of reality that can be engineered accordingly. Insisting on the primacy and supremacy of understanding before sensing, the Cartesian subjects (within ourselves) work constantly to undermine any efforts at re- membering the connection with the wider indefinable metabolism. These two pitfalls may appear quite different from one another, but they both can be (and often are) mobilized to prevent us from sensing deeper accountability and commitment to metabolic/collective justice, healing and well-being. The pedagogical experiments of the GTDF collective so far have taught us that if anything, learning about what it means to part of this world, is learning about how unavoidably we are entangled and complicit in all the beauty and the horror that our human existence manifests (see also Todd, 2008 for a critique of the idealization of humanity). They have also taught us that we have built up countless defenses that will prevent us from grasping and sensing the fullness of what this entails.

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## Notes

[1] Western psychoanalysis tends to associate the unconscious with the human body or human language/meaning. The non-western form of psychoanalysis adopted in the GTDF initiative locates the human unconscious in the living and intelligent land-metabolism.

[2] The fellowship “Engaged Dis-identifications” was a collaboration between performance artist Dani d’Emilia and Vanessa Andreotti that built on d’Emilia’s earlier work on radical tenderness to prioritize gestures of interruption of harmful colonial habits of being. See decolonialfuures.net/engageddisidentifications

[3] For examples of this curriculum in practice, see Ahenakew, 2019, chapter 4 and https://decolonialfutures.net/unbecoming-modernity/