The Jus Semper Global Alliance

In Pursuit of the People and Planet Paradigm

Sustainable Human Development

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Surviving Collapse Through Social Transformation and Regeneration

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Climate change is a global phenomenon that adversely affects all biospheric systems and threatens the survival of many species, including our own. Global average temperatures have already increased 1.1°C since the pre-industrial period. The world is at risk of far exceeding a 1.5°C change, which scientists consider a critical threshold, if we do not cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero in the coming decades. Climate change is already affecting crop yields, social conflicts, weather events, and ocean acidification, to name a few of the latest calamities. Until recently, mitigation, directed toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions, has been the primary focus of most activist and scholarly efforts. However, because the climate will continue to warm even if we stay within the 1.5°C pathway, and given that the effects are already being extensively felt, more attention is now being given to transformational adaptation, or changing the ways in which we live in order to survive extreme weather events, mass species extinction, and resource depletion, among other threats.[1]

Cooperative Alamar, Cuba. Screenshot from the film Voices of Transition. By Nils Aguilar, CC BY-SA 3.0, Link.

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With this shift, it is necessary to ground our efforts in the radical imaginaries, or visionary futures, that emerge from the experiences of the most oppressed peoples, who have experienced systematised exploitation, devaluation, displacement, and violence. These visions must include the liberation of other species, ecosystems, and natural spaces as well.[2] Radical imaginaries are similar to what Erik Olin

[1] ↩ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (Geneva: Working Group II, IPCC, 2022).

[2] ↩ Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish, The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity (London: Zed, 2014).

Wright called real utopias, conceiving of and creating radically different kinds of institutions and social relations that combine ideals with the practical, to advance emancipatory goals.[3]

Through extensive fieldwork, I studied two small-scale community groups, el Organopónico and Asaŋga, both pseudonyms, that are attempting to live their visionary solutions to pressing ecological and social problems. Each group formed around its unique perspectives on surviving collapse, offering important insights regarding key components of radical sustainability rooted in social transformation and regeneration, which help produce more adaptive socioecological relations.[4]

El Organopónico is a twenty-seven-acre urban farm in Havana, Cuba, consisting of roughly two hundred cooperative members, who manage eleven areas, including livestock, fields, and a nursery, ensuring that each part contributes to another. Agroecological practices are used throughout the farm. Like many other urban farms in Cuba, el Organopónico arose out of a period of collapse, as an effort to create an ecological foundation for survival. In contrast, Asaŋga is an ecovillage, or an environmentally conscious intentional community, consisting of thirty members who live on one acre in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. Asaŋga's members see civilisation collapse as an obvious, near-term outcome of the environmental disruptions caused by Western civilisation's wholesale disregard for people and the planet.[5] They employ a variety of permaculture practices to maintain the soil, ranging from composting food scraps to fertilising gardens with chicken manure. Both communities work to mitigate and adapt to climate change in two ways: with egalitarian social organisation and regenerative farming techniques.[6] In this, they are actively creating radical socioecological relations necessary for long-term survival.

Modern Problems

Industrial farming—which includes monocropping, plowing, applying synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, and using heavy machinery—is both a contributor to climate change and endangered by it. Changing temperatures, droughts, floods, and soil degradation threaten crop yields. Agriculture itself produces nearly one-quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, and our global food system is responsible for 34 percent of total emissions.[7] A potential antidote to harmful monocultures is regenerative agriculture, of which both agroecology and permaculture are forms. Regenerative agriculture is a holistic and dynamic approach to farming that integrates social and ecological goals. This approach promotes biodiversity,

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[3] ↩ Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (New York: Verso, 2010).

[4] ↩ Christina Ergas, *Surviving Collapse: Building Community Toward Radical Sustainability* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 1, no. 1–2 (2018): 224–42.

[5] ↩ I think it is important to acknowledge Indigenous and diasporic orientations toward collapse as well. Apocalypse has already occurred for many and is currently affecting many more. The colonising forces of the West have massacred, enslaved, and exploited whole peoples and landscapes. Climate disasters disproportionately affect Indigenous communities and communities of color—in many cases the same communities torn apart by Western colonialism and imperialism—creating climate migrants in search of new homes. These trends will only worsen as temperatures rise. Indigenous scholar Kyle Whyte argues that the current climate crisis and its effects on Indigenous communities is a continuation of ongoing colonial violence. Activists, such as science-fiction writers Autumn Brown and adrienne maree brown, discuss the effects of Western colonial violence, displacement, and enslavement on the African diaspora and explore the opportunities and possibilities for diasporic communities that could emerge from Western civilisation Collapse.

[6] ↩ Christina Ergas and Matthew Clement, "Ecovillages, Restitution, and the Political-Economic Opportunity Structure: An Urban Case Study in Mitigating the Antagonism between Humans and Nature," *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 7–8 (2016):1195–1211; Christina Ergas, "Barriers to Sustainability: Gendered Divisions of Labor in Cuban Urban Agriculture," in *From Sustainable to Resilient Cities: Global Concerns and Urban Efforts*, vol. 14, ed. William G. Holt (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2014), 239–63; Christina Ergas, "Cuban Urban Agriculture as a Strategy for Food Sovereignty," *Monthly Review* 64, no. 10 (March 2013): 46–52; Christina Ergas, "A Model of Sustainable Living: Collective Identity in an Urban Ecovillage," *Organization and Environment* 23, no. 1 (2010): 32–54.

[7] ↩ Crippa et al., "Food Systems Are Responsible for a Third of Global Anthropogenic GHG Emissions," *Nature Food* 2 (2021):198–209.

advances ecosystem health, restores soil quality, and reduces consumption and waste while supporting thriving and equitable communities, with the goals of leaving land, water, and the climate in better conditions for future generations. Regenerative practices have proven to keep carbon dioxide in the ground, because untilled soils do not release carbon, and sequester greenhouse gases through plants intake of carbon dioxide. Regenerative practices also restore and maintain healthy, biodiverse soils that require fewer inputs, provide higher yields than soils of poorer quality, and produce more nutritious crops. Regenerative agriculture maintains soil biodiversity by minimising inputs that are potentially lethal to microorganisms, such as pesticides. Healthy soils are better equipped to retain moisture through droughts and prevent soil erosion through floods and other dramatic weather events; thus, healthy, biodiverse soils are more resilient.[8]

While regenerative farming may seem like an obvious strategy for climate adaptation and mitigation, egalitarian social organisation is of equal importance. Social inequalities affect vulnerable groups' access to life-altering decision-making and resources. Indeed, inequality commonly expresses itself as a hierarchical relationship wherein resources such as environmental goods, power, and wealth are unevenly distributed to those at the top of social hierarchies. Environmental risks and vulnerabilities are also unevenly distributed and disproportionately burden those with less power and status. A growing body of research has demonstrated that social divisions can lead to environmental degradation, which in turn exacerbates harm to vulnerable communities.[9] Specifically, racial residential segregation lengthens car commutes and vehicle miles traveled, and worsens overall air and water quality.[10] Increased income inequality is associated with greater biodiversity loss, resource consumption, waste generation, toxic emissions, water pollution, and lower survival rates of children under five.[11] In my own cross-national research, my colleagues and I have found that nations with lower women's political empowerment tend to have higher carbon dioxide emissions.

Additionally, inequality increases the amount of carbon dioxide emissions associated with human well-being.[12] Inequality not only leads to disparities in environmental exposures that disproportionately burden the disadvantaged, but inequality also leads to higher overall levels of exposure to health-damaging pollutants for everyone.[13] The converse bears out in the research as well. That is, nations with higher women's political participation and years of education tend to have lower greenhouse gas emissions, higher overall sustainability markers, and ratify more environmental treatises.[14] Research also shows that women who reside in communities with greater gender economic equality tend to promote

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[8] ↩ Miguel Altieri, "Agroecology, Small Farms, and Food Sovereignty," *Monthly Review* 61, no. 3 (July–August 2009): 102-113; "Miguel Altieri," Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, UC Berkeley, accessed May 24, 2022.

[9] ↩ Lara Cushing, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Madeline Wander, and Manuel Pastor, "The Haves, the Have-Nots, and the Health of Everyone: The Relationship between Social Inequality and Environmental Quality," *Annual Review Public Health* 36 (2015): 193–209; Christina Ergas and Richard York, "Women's Status and Carbon Dioxide Emissions: A Quantitative Cross-national Analysis," *Social Science Research* 41 (2012): 965–76; Julius McGee, Christina Ergas, and Matthew Clement, "Racing to Reduce Emissions: Assessing the Relationship between Race and Environmental Impacts from Transportation," *Sociology of Development* 4, no. 2 (2018): 217–36.

[10] ↩ Rachel Morello-Frosch and Bill M. Jesdale, "Separate and Unequal: Residential Segregation and Estimated Cancer Risks Associated with Ambient Air Toxics in U.S. Metropolitan Areas," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 114, no. 3 (2006): 386–93; Rachel Morello-Frosch and Russ Lopez, "The Riskscape and the Color Line: Examining the Role of Segregation in Environmental Health Disparities," *Environmental Resources* 102 (2006): 181–96.

[11] ↩ Cushing, Morello-Frosch, Wander, and Pastor, "The Haves, the Have-Nots, and the Health of Everyone"; Nazrul S. Islam, "Inequality and Environmental Sustainability" (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Working Paper No. 145).

[12] ↩ Ergas and York, "Women's Status and Carbon Dioxide Emissions"; Christina Ergas, Patrick Greiner, Julius McGee, and Matt Clement, "Does Gender Climate Influence Climate Change?: The Multidimensionality of Gender Equality and its Countervailing Effects on the Carbon Intensity of Well-Being," *Sustainability* 13, no. 7 (2021): 3956.

[13] ↩ Paul Mohai, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts, "Environmental Justice," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 34 (2009): 405–30.

[14] ↩ Christina Ergas, Laura McKinney, and Shannon Elizabeth Bell, "Intersectionality and the Environment," in *Handbook of Environmental Sociology*, ed. Beth Schaefer Caniglia et al. (Cham: Springer, 2021); Laura McKinney, "Gender, Democracy, Development, and Overshoot: A Cross-National Analysis," *Population and Environment* 36, no. 2 (2014): 193–218; Kari Norgaard and Richard York, "Gender Equality and State Environmentalism," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 4 (2015): 506–22.

development projects that benefit their community.[15] Collectively, these results indicate that when marginalised populations have access to education, political power, and monetary resources, overall environmental conditions improve.

Radical sustainability is absolutely necessary for survival. It is at once socio-ecologically transformative, in that it requires dismantling hierarchies toward total liberation, and regenerative, in that it involves healing and restoring the health of people and the planet. To delve further into the connections between social and ecological harm, scholars of environmental inequalities emphasise that all oppression is linked, whether related to plant, nonhuman animal, or human life. David Naguib Pellow explores these linkages to develop the concept of what he calls "total liberation," which "stems from a determination to understand and combat all forms of inequality and oppression." He puts forward a total liberation framework aimed at facilitating Earth and animal liberation movements based on: "an ethic of justice and anti-oppression inclusive of humans, non-human animals, and ecosystems" and anticapitalism. He identifies these linked axes of oppression as related to "the ways in which humans, nonhumans, and ecosystems intersect to produce hierarchies—privileges and disadvantages—within and across species and space that ultimately place each at great risk."[16]

Rather than attempting to maintain an exploitative system, we should be doing the work of making things better for people and the more-than-human world and leaving the earth in a healthier condition than we entered it for future generations.

Regeneration

Regeneration can be understood as a process of renewal, revival, or restoration, after injury or as a normal process. I use the term to differentiate it from restoration, which already has a specific ecological meaning. I also appreciate that it can be applied to the emotional, physical, or spiritual states of individuals, communities, and ecosystems. Ultimately, regeneration is about healing and restoring conditions that enable us all to thrive, especially communities and ecosystems most marginalised and exploited by the world system. I prefer promoting regeneration to resilience and sustainability because neither of the latter go far enough. Resilience refers to the ability of a system to absorb disruption and retain its function and structure, while sustainability is about maintaining the conditions necessary to support current and future generations. However, rather than attempting to maintain an exploitative system, we should be doing the work of making things better for people and the more-than-human world and leaving the earth in a healthier condition than we entered it for future generations. This requires healing and restoration, or regeneration, for both marginalised groups of people and the natural world.

Systemic forms of oppression cause community-wide mental and physical harm and thus require collective approaches to healing. Radical healing is part of a process that centers on the strengths and resilience of oppressed communities. First, it calls for developing a critical consciousness or awareness of systemic forms of oppression, then allowing this consciousness to inform action against institutionalised violence, and finally working proactively to prevent recurring trauma for the communities. Collective grieving and healing are also necessary for people fighting for climate justice, which requires both communicating trauma and active listening. While collective healing is crucial within communities

[15] ↩ Bina Agarwal, "'Bargaining' and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household," *Feminist Economics* 3, no. 1 (1997): 1–51; Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Vintage, 2009).

[16] ↩ Christina Ergas and Richard York, "A Plant by Any Other Name: …Foundations for Materialist Sociological Plant Studies," *Journal of Sociology*, May 18, 2021; David Naguib Pellow, *Total Liberation: The Power and Promise of Animal Rights and the Radical Earth Movement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 5–9.

Regenerative agricultural methods prioritise reciprocal relationships because the methods are holistic and emulate healthy ecosystems, finessing natural competition and cooperation between organisms to promote or stifle growth rather than trying to fight or control nature.

affected by institutionalised violence, action is needed beyond internal community work, as the effects of external factors will persist. This external work can be conceived of as a form of regenerative community care, whereby people share in the responsibilities of recognising systemic forms of oppression, educating others, and fighting against them. Regenerative agricultural practices help restore human and more-than-human relationships and reciprocity.

Regenerative Agriculture

Agriculture is a significant starting point for understanding humans' relationship to the more-than-human world, because humans have to eat to survive and agriculture is the primary way in which modern humans obtain food. Food cultivation is a tangible and direct interaction between humans and the earth. Regenerative agricultural methods prioritise reciprocal relationships because the methods are holistic and emulate healthy ecosystems, finessing natural competition and cooperation between organisms to promote or stifle growth rather than trying to fight or control nature. They also promote and maintain biodiversity as well as healthy and nutritious soils that require less water and other inputs and protect wildlife habitat. The two forms of regenerative agriculture include permaculture and agroecology. Asaṅga primarily utilises permaculture techniques. El Organopónico utilises agroecology. Both employ similar practices and have garnered international visibility.

Three main tenets—caring for the earth, caring for the people, and sharing the surplus—align with the transformative and regenerative components of a radical sustainability.

In the 1970s, two Australian naturalists, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, formally established permaculture, a method of growing that considers the natural ecosystem and the community. Holmgren has emphasised "people, their buildings and the ways they organise themselves are central to permaculture."[17] Disenchanted with industrial agriculture's unsustainable practices, Mollison and Holmgren borrowed ideas and techniques from the local knowledge and practices of Indigenous and traditional peoples, as well as the "do-nothing" farming methods of Japanese farmer and philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka. Permaculture's three main tenets—caring for the earth, caring for the people, and sharing the surplus—align with the transformative and regenerative components of a radical sustainability. Permaculture aims to care for the earth by emulating how healthy natural ecosystems function rather than trying to fight or control nature.

The goal of agroecology is to provide "the basic ecological principles for how to study, design, and manage sustainable agroecosystems that are both productive and natural resource conserving, and that are also culturally-sensitive, socially just and economically viable."

Miguel Altieri, a researcher of agroecology, has worked collaboratively with Cuban urban farmers to research and cultivate agroecology in the field. He defines the science of agroecology as "the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agricultural ecosystems." This approach attempts to promote above-ground ecosystem health as well as soil microorganisms to maintain biodiversity, as a means of stabilising crop pest populations, such as diseases, fungi, insects, nematodes, and weeds. Altieri explains that the goal of agroecology is to provide "the basic ecological principles for how to study, design, and manage sustainable agroecosystems that are

[17] ↩ David Holmgren, *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability* (Hepburn Springs, Victoria: Holmgren Design Services, 2004).

both productive and natural resource conserving, and that are also culturally-sensitive, socially just and economically viable." This form of agriculture borrows from Indigenous local traditions, knowledge, and forms of agriculture.[18]

Both Asaṅga and el Organopónico engaged in lateral forms of social organisation and regenerative agriculture, utilising similar agroecology and permaculture practices. I use these cases to illustrate that regeneration can take the form of the permaculture principles—care for the earth, care for the people, and sharing the surplus—as alternative models of development toward climate justice.

Care for the Earth

At Asaṅga, ecovillagers take land stewardship seriously and attempt to maintain soil fertility, preserve water, and reuse waste. They engage in permaculture and, to that end, compost food scraps, fertilise gardens with chicken manure, and employ polycultures and ecological pest management to avoid synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. In addition, they catch and use rainwater, reuse and upcycle scrap building materials, and build on site using natural building techniques, which avoid the use of toxic materials. They also filter and reuse gray water for their decorative fountain.

To avoid synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, the ecovillagers use techniques like polycultures—mimicking the diversity of natural ecosystems by simultaneously growing several different crops in the same place. For instance, they plant food crops with cover crops such as lentils, peas, beans, and soybeans that increase the soil's natural fertility, manage erosion, and help retain soil moisture. Asaṅga residents practice ecological pest management, in which they proactively prevent pests rather than attempt to eradicate them after they have arrived. One way they do this is through companion planting—growing food crops together with noncompetitive, pest-repelling plant species like marigold, mint, or sage. Asaṅga irrigates crops with captured rainwater and filters wastewater from low-impact activities like dishwashing or bathing for its decorative fountain in the village centre.

The urban farmers at el Organopónico use agroecological techniques that mimic ecosystem dynamics.

The urban farmers at el Organopónico share similar concerns and practices. They use agroecological techniques that mimic ecosystem dynamics, such as integrating animal-crop rotations, diversifying with polycultures, and taking advantage of insects' predator-prey relationships for biological pest control. The farm consists of eleven sectors that each work in relation to the others. Specifically, the farm has a livestock area where bulls are employed to transport heavy equipment, and their manure is saved to feed the worms at the vermiculture station. At the vermiculture station, worms living in large, shaded vats consume manure and expel their own waste or humus. Then the humus is combined with compost and rice shells to make soil and fertiliser for the seedlings. When the soil is ready, it is taken to the plant nursery where some of it is mixed into trays along with seeds, organic pesticides, and water for trays of tomatoes, lettuce, onions, garlic, guava, mint, and chamomile seedlings. The seedlings stay in the nursery until they grow large enough to be planted in the fields. Once out in the fields, they are tended to by farmers and scientists who manage pests. Pest management takes several forms, including intercropping plants, introducing natural predators, and making and applying organic pesticides. Nothing is wasted at the farm at el Organopónico; during harvest, even overly ripe crops are either turned into condiments or composted. The farmers also recycle potential waste by cleaning and reusing soda bottles for value-added products on the farm, such as tomato paste.

[18] ↩ Altieri, "Agroecology, Small Farms, and Food Sovereignty," 2; "Miguel Altieri."

Maricela occupies a high-prestige job at the urban farm as the scientist who manages insect populations. This job requires training and expertise in identifying beneficial and harmful insect, plant, and nematode populations as well as experimenting with bacteria cultures. She manages insect populations by introducing natural predators and by making and applying organic pesticides. She reminds me that she does not consider any insect a pest, because they all serve a function in nature. Some insects are merely more beneficial for the plants than others, and she cultivates beneficial ones, such as ladybugs, to release at times when there are infestations of white flies or aphids destroying the crops, for example. She also experiments with other forms of pest control, such as push-pull systems, intercropping companion plants that repel or attract pests away from crop plants. Specifically, intercropping plants, like marigold and sunflowers, attract or repel pests, minimising food-crop infestations. Maricela walks around the farm daily and examines the soil and many of the plant leaves and stems. She does this to observe plant diseases, insects, and weed populations and to collect plants and bugs to feed the insects she keeps in her lab. This attention to agricultural biodiversity is a significant component of agroecology. It is also a necessary aspect of environmental sustainability because it minimises disease and degradation. It is a way of listening to or hearing nature and tending to its needs in a place-oriented manner, which allows the land to heal.

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Care for the People

In order to sustain their cooperative labor, nourish community relationships, and maintain psychosocial integration, ecovillagers care for each other in varying ways. These include holding regular community meetings, consensus decision-making, sharing food, having community potlucks, practicing nonviolent communication, and holding dispute resolution sessions. Some ecovillagers also care for people by trade. A few individuals specialise in what they called integrative intimacy, which involves getting at the root causes of individuals' emotional disturbances and finding ways to reintegrate their wounded parts. Further, some ecovillagers practice a form of therapy and/or dispute resolution in which each participant takes turns fully expressing their emotions while the other person listens and is supportive.
During my regular follow-up visits to the community, I participated in a nonviolent communication reading group with three residents. As part of this group, we read Marshall Rosenberg's book on the subject and discussed how we might implement this communication style in our conversations with loved ones as well as with acquaintances. The book outlines a form of communication meant to de-escalate the tensest of disagreements by practicing active listening and compassion for the other person and asking a series of questions to discover their underlying unmet emotional needs.[19] When their needs are revealed, the pair can discuss whether or not they can do anything to meet them. Two women on the property who worked as integrative intimacy coaches were trained in nonviolent communication. This form of communication stressed active listening, which is necessary both for healing and more egalitarian forms of decision-making.

Social transformation involves large-scale social change that converts systems of inequities into nonhierarchical, equitable systems... Feminist activists and scholars have called the politics or ethic that should guide us the care ethic or love ethic.

[19] ↩ Marshall Rosenberg, Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer, 2005).

Transformation

Social transformation involves large-scale social change that converts systems of inequities into nonhierarchical, equitable systems. Part of this work is to transform our current abusive structures and narratives—such as legitimated state violence, disproportionate policing of communities of color, and narratives that seek to legitimate oppression—into narratives and structures of care. Feminist activists and scholars have called the politics or ethic that should guide us the care ethic or love ethic. Bell hooks asserted that "the underlying values of a culture and its ethics shape and inform the way we speak and act." She proposed we move toward a love ethic, because "awakening to love can happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination." Moreover, she writes, "embracing a love ethic means that we utilise the dimensions of love—'care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge'—in our everyday lives." Engaging in the ethic of care means that we attempt to leave things better than we found them. From the care ethic, we can begin to restore, revitalise, and regenerate local ecologies, and, eventually, the biosphere. But this ethic must first imbue our stories and larger cultural narrative with care. Turning our focus, then, toward reciprocity and mutual care is what we need to heal.[20]

An example of how to move toward reciprocity is by advancing community care. Nakita Valerio, a Canadian Muslim woman and community organiser, had a social media post go viral when she criticised individualist notions of self-help for struggling communities battling institutionalised forms of oppression. Rather than bubble baths and pedicures as remedies for emotional distress, community care involves others stepping up to help when individual community members are strained. Valerio notes that recognising systemic forms of oppression, such as racism, as a threat to public health and advancing community care has healing potential. Importantly, the point here is to care for the most vulnerable and in need in our communities to help each other heal.[21] Community care is an important feature of social transformation and regeneration. Part of community care work is allowing the space for healing from collective and individual traumas, especially as a result of oppressive narratives of abuse.

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The Social Act of Caring

The permaculture principle of caring for the people refers to making sure people can meet basic needs for healthy food and good homes. It also sets expectations for the ways communities organise themselves to make decisions, manage conflict, and achieve larger goals like providing education.

At Asaṅga, ecovillagers experiment with social structures aimed at maintaining permaculture. Specifically, at bimonthly meetings, they engage in a nonhierarchical and directly democratic form of decision-making. Residents together decide community issues, such as what to do with the geese on the property and where to store the compost. Consensus requires groups to come to solutions on which everyone in the group can agree. On some more contentious decisions, groups may decide to come to modified consensus when everyone cannot agree on one solution. This is a form of decision-making that ideally involves everyone in the process, allowing each member's voice to be heard and considering the needs of all group members. In practice, it does not always work out the way everyone would like, but it

[20] ↩ Bell hooks, All About Love: New Visions (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000), 87, 94; Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2013).

[21] ↩ Nakita Valerio, "This Viral Facebook Post Urges People to Rethink Self-Care," *Flare*, April 16, 2019.

is an attempt toward social equity and social cohesion. Ecovillagers also employ nonviolent communication and conflict resolution to maintain relationships within the community and retain members, with some working as intimacy coaches, nannies, and permaculture teachers.

El Organopónico is slightly more hierarchical than the ecovillage, with managers for each sector and a president. However, it is a cooperative, which means that members own the machinery, inputs, and produce, but the government owns the land and charges a subsidised rent. Members care for each other by adjusting caretakers' hours so they can walk small children to and from daycare or school; allowing time off for college courses; and feeding employees both breakfast and lunch for free. They hold monthly meetings where members learn about farm business and vote on different initiatives. Many farmers report enjoying their work because they recognise the good they are doing for the community. Specifically, two employees said "people need your work, and you know that you are helping others."

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Share the Surplus

Sharing surplus is a way of limiting consumption, such that people take what they need but not in excess. Ecovillagers share in many spaces. Community meetings are ceremonious potlucks where villagers share food from their gardens. One community member at Asaṅga regularly shares bread from a local bakery that gives away leftovers. Ecovillagers share tools, knowledge, and other resources. With the surrounding community, they share permaculture and natural building workshops. During my stay, I found most individuals to be quite generous with their time, ideas, and collaborative work ethic.

A way that farmers at el Organopónico share surplus is through wages. During my fieldwork, the farmers earned a decent wage by Cuban standards, and wages at the farm were capped and calculated based on years employed at the farm. Workers began at a minimum salary and earned a raise every five years. In times of surplus, profits were evenly distributed.

Land Access

Access to land is necessary for self-sufficient communities and food sovereignty. Western leaders have always known this, as evidenced by the deliberate and genocidal project of settler colonialism that continues to deprive Indigenous communities of access to the lands and resources necessary for their survival.[22] At el Organopónico, the Cuban government gave farmers free, and then, over time, subsidized, urban land access following their national crisis in the early 1990s. At Asaṅga, ecovillagers must pay rent to stay on the land, which limits how much energy they can devote to community relationships and permaculture. Land rent is a major barrier to self-sufficiency for many people the world over. As David Harvey argues, alienation from the means of production, displacement from the land, and population concentration in urban centers are interrelated characteristics of capitalism. Under capitalism, people are driven into urban areas and thereby deprived of access to the land. Harvey maintains, in particular, that landownership and rent are

Access to land is necessary for self-sufficient communities and food sovereignty... Under capitalism, people are driven into urban areas and thereby deprived of access to the land... the development of private property and land ownership should be seen as structural obstacles to climate mitigation and adaptation.

[22] ↩ Kari Norgaard, Ron Reed, and Carolina Van Horn, "A Continuing Legacy: Institutional Racism, Hunger, and Nutritional Justice on the Klamath," in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*, ed. Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2011).

two mechanisms that prevent self-sufficiency by impeding "labourers from going back to the land and so escaping from the clutches of capital."[23] This inability to go back to the land preserves peoples' dependency on businesses for meeting their basic needs. In addition, private property and rent discourage the dispersal of human populations beyond urban sprawl and the development of new farming communities. Charles H. Anderson helpfully articulates why there is a limit to the dispersal of the population under capitalism: "Decentralisation, outside of urban sprawl, is not profitable."[24] As such, the development of private property and land ownership should be seen as structural obstacles to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Conclusion

In practice, the transformation and regeneration necessary for a radical sustainability should center reciprocal relationships based on cooperation and care. It is prioritising these relationships that allows for nonhierarchical, safe, trusting, healthy, and thriving communities. These relationships are not just between humans, but importantly involve the human and more-than-human world. It is through a care ethic that listening, healing, sharing, and collectively engaging in decision-making can occur. The earth and oppressed peoples both need attention and care, such that they are heard and meaningfully a part of decision-making, and their needs are met. When we begin to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable among us is when we will see the most healing—the type of mitigation we need for our changing climate. Although my research focused on only two small communities, I believe they exemplify aspects of a radical sustainability, modelling ways to address the environmental and social challenges posed by the climate crisis.

In practice, the transformation and regeneration necessary for a radical sustainability should center reciprocal relationships based on cooperation and care.

Related links:

- The Jus Semper Global Alliance
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- John Bellamy Foster: "Notes on Exterminism" for the Twenty-First-Century Ecology and Peace Movement
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[23] ↩ David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 381–82.

[24] ↩ Charles H. Anderson, The Sociology of Survival: Social Problems of Growth (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1976), 190.

❖ **About Jus Semper:** The Jus Semper Global Alliance aims to contribute to achieving a sustainable ethos of social justice in the world, where all communities live in truly democratic environments that provide full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable living standards in accordance with human dignity. To accomplish this, it contributes to the liberalisation of the democratic institutions of society that have been captured by the owners of the market. With that purpose, it is devoted to research and analysis to provoke the awareness and critical thinking to generate ideas for a transformative vision to materialise the truly democratic and sustainable paradigm of People and Planet and NOT of the market.

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