

What Are Pluriversal Politics and Ontological Designing?

Interview with Arturo Escobar

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Abstract

What is *ontological design*, and how do we define *Pluriversal politics*? In this long interview, Arturo Escobar describes the fundamental shifts in contemporary social theory placing life at the center of his scholarly inquiry. He discusses the reappearance of the debate about *ontology* through the *ontological turn* in social theory. His statement involves the idea that every design action has implications for the making of life, the kinds of worlds we construct, and how life is produced. Escobar introduces the concept of *ontological design* and the connected vision of his *Pluriversal politics* as the emerging areas of critical design studies. These approaches challenge the extractivist ideology of the Global North and its impactful action, which originated the actual crisis of climate, energy, biodiversity, inequality, poverty, and of social and collective meaning linked to the western capitalistic, patriarchal, colonial, supremacist mode of existence that has been spreading throughout the world through globalization and development.

Keywords

Pluriverse
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SM I think that the thesis you developed in the book *Pluriversal Politics. The Real and the Possible* (2020) presents the idea of intervening on the development and growth model, not simply through traditional economic thought or a political science-based approach, but with a broader perspective that includes an anthropological discussion as well as a political debate. You probably also represent a challenge to a dominant culture, so how do you think your origin and the fact that you belong to a different tradition influenced, at least at the beginning of your career, your thinking so significantly? What, in your opinion, is the influence in Europe of fighting the dominant language structure of thought with your idea of pluriversality?

AE I came into the design scene relatively recently. About, I would say, twelve years ago, even if design was always, to some extent, in my background. So let me tell you a bit about my background by highlighting a series of disciplinary shifts. I first studied chemical engineering, and then completed a master's degree in food science, nutrition, and biochemistry. As a scientist and as an engineer, I became interested in the question of world hunger. That was in the late 1970s: hunger was exploding as a concern globally. I thought I could contribute to the solution to hunger through science and engineering. I soon realized that hunger was not a technological problem, but a social and political question. That took me into a second domain, related to what you call the relationship between social transformation and development, to the field of political economy, within which hunger was seen as an issue of distribution and the corporate control over food. It was also an issue of the marginalization of the poor, and those were questions for political economy. However, I was not satisfied with that answer, either, and to arrive at a more compelling approach required several additional epistemic shifts on my part.

The first shift took me from hunger to the political economy of hunger and then to the political economy of development. The second shift was closer to what you suggested in your question, which was arriving at a more significant or radical questioning of this idea of development, by which I mean the premise that Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Third World, as it was called, had to develop in the image of the West. I realized that the very concept of development operated as a

very effective means to produce and to control these countries in particular ways. Again, along the lines of capitalist growth, economic development, adopting the values of the West (i.e., rationality, individualism, economic mindedness), and so forth. This phase focused on the deconstruction of the discourse of development, a project that gained importance in the 1980s in social theory and in the social sciences because of the influence of post-structuralism, particularly of theorists such as Michel Foucault and critics such as Edward Said.

This second shift crystallized into proposing, with several others, the notions of “post-development” and “alternatives to development” (rather than development alternatives) as heuristics for a renewed theory and practice that departed from Eurocentric “development.” What we proposed is that we needed to get rid of ideology development altogether, to transcend it and go beyond it. One of the first questions was, how do we do that, not just in theory, but in practice? The “natural” answer to this question at the time was that social movements were the best space to do it because many of them resisted development. So, there was a third shift, from post-development to social movement: the study of social movements (particularly Afro-Colombian and environmental struggles) became central for me for many years and continues to be important today. Nevertheless, I kept thinking about the question of how we move beyond development and the hegemonic view of modernity, beyond this idea that the entire world, the entire Planet, has to become developed along the lines of the Western historical experience, especially in terms of capitalism, modern rationality, and so forth. This is when I came to design. Little by little, design began to emerge for me as a domain or a space for transforming not only development but the way we think about life, about the world, and what to do about it. The shift towards design has been my most recent shift, which is connected with a fundamental question about the politics of life. What do we want life to be? What do we want the human to be? What kind of human societies do we want?

Furthermore, of course, those questions have been intensified by the multifaceted crisis of climate, biodiversity, inequality, poverty, and meaning, all of which have heightened the question of what kind of world do we want? What kind of life do we want? What is life in the last instance? I think those are questions that a growing number of designers are working hard to address at present.

SM You call it an epistemic shift toward the idea of social movement, into action and then into design. I read your last book (*Pluriversal Politics. The Real and the Possible*) in which you talk about *ontological design*. What is the connection between your proposal and Herbert Simon's idea of *design as transforming situations*?

AE As I mentioned, one of the fundamental shifts that are occurring today in both social theory and social struggles is the concern with the fate of life, placing life at the center of what

we do and what we think. I think we, in the academy, lost sight of this crucial dimension of reality, which is the ontological dimension. What do we assume reality to be? What do we assume humans to be? The concern with *ontology* is coming back through what is called the *ontological turn* in social theory; here, ontology refers to those basic premises that different social groups have about reality, what exists, what it means for something or somebody to exist. That is our first point. The second point is that we are now realizing that everything that is designed has an ontological dimension. All design has implications for the making of life, the kinds of worlds we construct, and how life is produced. And there is a trend within critical design studies that is focused on this concept of ontological design. In the book *Designs for the Pluriverse*, I traced the genealogy of this concept, up to 2015, when most of the book was completed (the book was published in 2016 in Spanish and in 2018 in English) to the original formulation by Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores in their influential book *Understanding Computers and Cognition*¹. I eventually found that other groups were working on this idea, particularly Tony Fry, Anne-Marie Willis and Cameron Tonkinwise in Australia. The underlying explanation, for me, of why these approaches are emerging at present has to do with what above I called the multifaceted crisis of climate, energy, biodiversity inequality, poverty, and meaning. Indigenous peoples in Latin America have been calling this crisis a civilizational crisis for over three decades now. What they mean is that this is a crisis of a particular *mode of existence*, the western capitalistic, patriarchal, colonial, supremacist mode of existence that has been spreading throughout the world through globalization and development.

There are three concepts that I always emphasize in relation to this crisis: first, that it is a civilizational crisis; second, that it calls for civilizational transitions; we call them pluriversal transitions or transitions to the pluriverse, meaning transitions to a world that is made of many worlds, a world in which many worlds fit, as the Zapatistas put it, as opposed to the idea of a single world, a global village understood and based on a single set of principles and norms, namely those of the modern capitalistic societies. This also brings into play the ontological dimension and the deep meaning of ontological design, since there are many ways of making life and making worlds, and that is the same insight shared by *pluriversal politics*. We need to struggle to interrupt this project of fitting all worlds into one and instead foster the idea of the pluriversal world. The third principle is supposed to be new, but it is not new: it is the concept of *relationality* or *radical interdependence* as the real foundation of life. What do I mean by that, and why is it so important? On the one hand, one of the main arguments of *ontological politics* is that modern ontology, which emerged especially in European history with the Renaissance and was consolidated with capitalism and modernity and globalization, is a *dualist*

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Winograd, T., & Flores, F. (1986). *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design*. Ablex. Winograd is Professor Emeritus of Computer Science at Stanford University, while Flores was Finance Minister of Chile during the Allende regime, a Chilean Senator, and long-term expert in innovation and management in the San Francisco Bay Area. Let me add in passing that Flores, Winograd, design theorist Don Norman, philosopher Scott Rousee, and myself have been meeting once a week for about eight months now, to discuss the current state of technology and its impact on education, design, and politics.

ontology. It is an ontology that has, at its very foundation, the separation between humans and non-humans, humans and nature, between them and us, the West and the rest, the developed and the underdeveloped, subject and object, reason and emotion, theory and practice, the secular and the sacred, all of these dualisms are foundational to the modern way of doing and have produced amazing results in terms of science, technology and economic development. However, at the same time, we are now seeing the underside of the premise of *ontological dualism* in the climate crisis, the ecological crisis, and the social crisis. We have to shift from having the *ontology of separation* as the basis of existence to an *ontology of relatedness* and *interdependence* as the foundation of reality. Interdependence is that concept that suggests that everything is mutually constituted, that for anything to exist, everything else has to exist. There are many ways to explain that concept. Some people talk about co-emergence, meaning that everything in the universe is co-emerging with every one of our actions, including the actions of humans and non-humans, of plants and animals and spirits, and so forth. This is called dependent co-arising in Buddhism — everything co-arises in interdependence. The notions of self-organization, emergence and complexity in biology are part of this trend as well. Many peoples worldwide have historically lived closer to interdependence than according to the premises of separation. That is why relationality and interdependence are re-emerging strongly in both social theory and activist practice, and designers are increasingly paying attention to this insight. It is a new way of thinking, a new way that is old as well. In short, radical relationality is forcefully re-emerging as the fundament of life.

SM I was thinking, because you added perspective with this idea of calling it *ontological dualism*, of fighting ontological dualism. Furthermore, I was attracted by this perspective because you mentioned human nature. In my opinion, there is also this concept of post-humanism. I want to launch a slight provocation by taking into account Latour's perspective as well and involving the non-human and the inorganic in this transformation. I don't believe you mentioned technology. In this idea of development, does the difference lie not only in the social constructs or Foucault's position, but in the complex idea of what technology is? In reality, we face a forceful push from things that exist, and they could eventually just act because we talk a great deal about this algorithmic society. So, there is agency. My take is finally provoking you on this thing because there are other players in the game that are underrepresented in terms of political ontology. We start discussing the influence of this intangible but real world: technology is sometimes tangible and material, which adds another layer of complexity to your discourse. I studied with Maldonado, my line of thought followed Simondon, and the idea that there is possible autonomy in technological development, that technology can find an emergent scope on its own. This concept of interaction is interesting, in my opinion, because we are discussing the hypothesis that we are witnessing the growth of a galaxy of meanings in design.

We must therefore include these philosophical perspectives. Where is technology in all of that? Technology is humanity, in my opinion, there is no distinction.

AE This is a huge, crucial question. I think you are right that, in many of these debates, in *political ontology* and the fields dealing with the more-than-human and posthumanism, the question of technology has been sidelined. The question of the “non-human” is undoubtedly the centre of attention at present. However, the question of science and technology is becoming salient again. I would explain what I mean by that, but before getting to technology, let me comment on an approach to the question of humanism and transhumanism which I find very empowering right now, to understand where we are. I am talking about the work of Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter. I do not talk about her much in *Designs for the Pluriverse* and *Pluriversal politics* because I became newly aware of her work after I completed those books. One of the things that she says is that we are all trapped or contained within a *monohumanist* notion of the human, by which she means a notion of the human that is very much shaped by the European historical experience, what we would now call the Global North, which is the human as liberal, secular, western and bourgeois. That is how she characterizes it. It would take longer to explain her complex framework of the human, and her compelling “counter-humanism,” but I will give you a quick idea of what she means by monohumanism and how she reaches that conclusion. She traces the first phase of modern “Man” (which she calls Man1) to the Renaissance, when the scientific worldview began to generate a secular outlook on life, replacing Christian cosmology. This shift became consolidated with the emergence of the intersecting ideas about economy and biology, expressed primarily in Darwinian evolution and Adam Smith’s *Homo Economicus*, and how this articulation, which was based on a narrow reading of Darwin, fostered the notion of the human as competitive, individualistic, sometimes even as aggressive, what she calls a bio-economic notion of the human. With modernity, towards the end of the 18th century, the modern human, which she calls Man2, fully emerged. Karl Polanyi says something similar about how modern man fundamentally was born as economic man². Ever since, this single idea of the human has been influencing the entire world through colonialism, modernization, and globalization, and we have to understand that it is where we are at present. If we want to transition towards what Sylvia Wynter calls an *ecumenical notion of the human*, we have to consider the human as hybrid — biology as much as culture — and as multiple. If the human is multiple, then it follows that there are multiple possible new beginnings for the human to take place. So, this is why people usually see her work as *counter-humanism*, not another version of humanism, because humanism is still very much coded in Western terms, in the sense of Modern Man, the man that Foucault brilliantly deconstructed in *The Order of Things*.

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Polanyi, K. (1957).
The Great Transformation.
Beacon Press.

What I am trying to say is that there are approaches that, while related to it, differ from the posthumanism of modern social theory and Western liberalism. They also differ profoundly from the transhumanism of cutting-edge technology, with its emphasis on “the human beyond biology,” (as in Raymond Kurzweil’s well-known theory of technological singularity). Wynter’s counter-humanism is making us aware that there are multiple ways and historical experiences of the human and we must encourage this plurality of modes of thinking about the human. One final remark in this regard: there is a great Brazilian indigenous intellectual whose name is Ailton Krenak. He talks about becoming *ex-human*, in the sense of moving away from the idea of the secular, liberal human, which is so much about control, about separation, and removed from the sacred and the natural world. It is a very individualized notion of the human, so becoming *ex-human* appears as a distinct contribution within the field of concepts attempting to illuminate what might happen after the onto-episteme of Man finally dissolves³.

Finally, to arrive at technology: the question concerning technology today leads me immediately to the ever-important question of who is doing the cultural-political work of imagining the future(s)? Many people are trying to do that, of course, from many different perspectives. However, the ones that, in my view, are gaining the upper hand are the advocates of cutting-edge technologies such as nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, geoengineering, genomics, robotics and so forth who promise happiness and abundance, even life beyond biology, transcending the human body. Space travel is part of this as well, you know, the Bezos kind of approach. That is why it is so seductive. I refer to these imaginations of the future as *techno patriarchal imaginaries* because they are deeply patriarchal, besides being capitalistic of course. After all, they are about control and delinking from the body, from place, from the Earth. They are about living more and more technologically. The question becomes: is there still a chance to propose different imaginaries of technology and of life through technology? There are important thinkers whom we can draw upon to approach this issue, such as Simondon, whom you mentioned, and Stiegler, and an entire critical tradition that includes Jacques Ellul, Ivan Illich, and Marcuse, as well as the whole gamut of post-Heideggerian approaches, including the important work of Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui (let me add in passing that post-Heideggerian approaches are central to design theorists such as Tony Fry, Clive Dilnot, and Cameron Tonkin-wise). For instance, we can think about technology in terms of *conviviality*, which reverses the current situation in which humans are at the service of technology and the economy. It should be technology and economy at the service of the human. However, to arrive there, we also need a different notion of the human and society, one that is less dependent on this ontology of separation, which has been so damaging and influential and determining of social and economic life.

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See “Nuestra historia está entrelazada con la historia del mundo”. Interview with Ailton Krenak by Eduardo Gonçalves and Maurício Meirelles, *Revista Transas*, 2021. Accessed December 16, 2021. <https://www.revistatransas.com/2021/02/18/ailton-krenak-olympio/>

SM There are emerging attempts to transform and represent this underrepresented part, so both nature and technology. I think these experiments are based on Latour's work. Furthermore, there is an interesting experience titled *Parliament of Things*⁴, which imagines a kind of future utopia where there is a sort of parliament of species and a parliament of things, in which they could express themselves. If we accept this, if we are set to include all these voices in a pluriversal perspective, how could we enable them to speak? Again, is connecting this to political discourse about representing them conveying the purpose and the intent? In my opinion, this is a discussion of the starting point, because you mentioned Maturana and Varela. They were about life, the self-organization of life. What is life in reality? It is a reflection about what we think could be a living being or a living entity, that has its own purpose and could be considered smart, as we define ourselves. In other cases, the purpose again has dignity, but is probably different from that of humans. So, how could we connect this to things? Because I think that when you start defining life, if you try to hybridize it with, as you were saying, a transhumanist perspective or this kind of super-technological input, you are actually transforming a discourse as well, simply because you think beyond the limitation or threat to human and to natural life. The rules of the game are quite different. Some of life experience, for example death, is a limit to our idea of thinking about the world, but it helps us imagine the kind of society we wish to shape, so is it ontological? I doubt it. Apart from the fact that the protagonist of this evolution or transformation is clearly coming from the side you mentioned before, this is an individualistic turbo capitalistic world. How could we use this differently? How could we give this opportunity a political conscience within which we could act with what you call radical interdependence? It is a difficult question, I understand. One word that you did not underline was the idea of experimental. So how we could transform the intention to act into something that is an action: with an old word, the method we could use to do that. How could we set up experiments on that? How could we connect something, given that you noted how theory and practice are not divided? How could we transform your ideas into something that is also acting in the realm of practice?

AE There are so many angles on that question, so many important aspects of it. Let me go back to the start with the question about technology from a different perspective, by bringing into consideration the work of Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui. In a short piece, he ponders over the question: if there could be a Chinese robotics, how would it be? In what way would it be different from Western robotics⁵? What Yuk Hui is articulating is an alternative path to a Western approach to technology. He describes the contemporary moment in terms of the simultaneity of the triumph of modernity (largely through technology) and its meltdown. This conjuncture opens the way for multiple new beginnings for thought to take place, including multiple paths arising from different ontologies and cosmologies. Regarding China, he refers to these other paths as *Chinese cosmotechnics*, which would emerge out of Chinese relational world views. It is not about doing away with modern technologies, but about reorienting

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"The Parliament of Things is an open space. We at Partizan Publik started building the Parliament after an invitation of Bruno Latour in 1991, and are playing the role of clerk by bringing it to you. [...] The development of The Parliament of Things is funded by the Creative Industries Fund NL (Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie) and the BankGiro Loterij Fonds". <https://theparliamentofthings.org/>

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See Yuk Hui, "Singularity vs. Daoist Robots", *Noema (Berggruen Institute)*, July 19, 2020. Accessed December 16, 2021. <https://www.noemamag.com/singularity-vs-daoist-robots/>

them, significantly re-situating them within a different ontological constellation. It can produce different kinds of developments, different kinds of futures, above and beyond the futures that are being offered now. He develops these ideas fully in his most recent book, *Art and Cosmotechnics*⁶.

The second work that I find very interesting in this connection is the work of design theorist Clive Dilnot⁷. His newest work is all about the consolidation of the artificial as a new horizon for being, the artificial as totality. In his view, the artificial has become consolidated as the new horizon for being human. Indeed, humans have always made things, and artifice has always been part of the human from the get-go. However, with the new technologies, something new is happening: the artificial is replacing the natural organic as the whole foundation for being. Yuk-Hui says something very similar in his work. The next thing that Dilnot says is that we need to go through the artificial nevertheless to arrive at a different reality, a society that still retains the natural as an essential basis for existence, without denying the utmost centrality of technology. However, to do that, we have to move beyond modernity, because modernity is fundamentally about - and this is the Heideggerian argument - technological rationality, it's about calculation, objectification, and control.

I find those two different takes on technology very interesting. Concerning the *Parliament of Things*, I am not familiar with the project. However, both concepts are problematic to me. *Parliament*, connected with diplomacy, is inextricably tainted by the political history of the term. Regarding *Things*, I would say that they belong within an ontology of subjects and objects that are separate from each other, as if they had intrinsic existence in themselves. This is the foundation of dualism: the belief that entities have intrinsic existence in themselves independently from other entities and from the relations that constitute them. I wonder if the *Parliament of Things* is still not enmeshed within that ontology of subjects and objects confronting each other. This would have been an interesting conversation with László Barabási, whether he thinks that in the language of networks there is still a lingering Euclidean geometry or a geometry of pre-existing nodes that then connect through lines of connection and affect each other in this way. But the concept of relationality tries to do away with this idea of pre-existing entities, nodes, and lines of connection. There is actually a new set of metaphors arising to convey this idea, metaphors such as rhizome, for instance, mostly derived from biology, which also include meshworks (self-organizing networks), mycelia, and so forth. These novel metaphors of interdependence are essential for understanding the idea of the pluriverse, the pluriverse as the notion that the world and life are constantly changing processes, a flux of forms that is always transforming itself and always making connections that one can neither control nor plan for.

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Hui, Y. (2021). *Art and Cosmotechnics*. University of Minnesota Press.

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Dilnot, C. (2021). Designing in the World of the Naturalised Artificial. In T. Fry, & A. Nocek (Eds.), *Design in Crisis* (pp. 93-112). Routledge.

SM We are working to represent this new design galaxy, but we are also trying to establish a parallel side project called *design rhizome*. We want to use this metaphor of node and relations to represent knowledge. The *rhizome* is a network of definitions that seek to explore certain parts of design knowledge. While you were talking about the idea of overcoming a *bourgeois* view of the idea of politics, I was considering whether I must now shift this idea of Parliament into another dimension. You mentioned the idea of network. I was imagining that politics could be transformed into something that might be an analogy of a state of the system, so that one could imagine that what we call intentionality, in reality, is simply a configuration of a topology of nodes and relationships. Politics may be the result of the state of this rhizome: when you use a rhizome, you have a dense area, you have a connection, you have activation. So again, it is a kind of biological metaphor (like the metaphor of the brain) in which there is an action that depends on the area of the network that could be activated. The closest thing to your idea of *radical interdependence* is probably this connectivist model. If I could understand it and eventually use this interdependence for a purpose.

AE Yes, that would open the door for what you call an experimental attitude because, if life is about interdependence, we can think about politics in terms of moving through the rhizome, fostering different arrangements and rhizomic configurations of life. Then, the only possible attitude could be experimental because you have to make it as you go. I am trying to think of an example. This comes from Marisol de la Cadena, but it could be from many other situations. Certain social movements or peoples in Latin America defend a mountain or a lake or a river against mining, for example (against extractive operations that would destroy or impact the mountain or the river or the lake) on the basis that they are living entities. So, the mountain is alive, the river is alive, the lake is alive. What is most pertinent to emphasize here is that activists engage in these struggles by claiming that they (their human communities) are inseparable from the river, the mountain or the lake, they are one with them. They literally say: “we are the river, we are the lake; we do not exist if they don’t. If you destroy the mountain, you are destroying us.” Life, in that sense, is a sort of rhizomic relational way of being. One may summarize this by saying that concerning the mountain, there are three positions. The state, governments, and the corporations say the mountain is a piece of rock, it does not have life, it is inert, thus we can destroy it for the good of the nation, we can mine the gold, extract the coal, whatever it is, to bring about progress. And we must resettle people, whatever, and that is fine. The second position is the environmentalists’ position, for whom the mountain is an essential ecosystem because of biodiversity, forests and trees that need to be defended, and so forth. We could say that their struggle constitutes an alternative modernity. But still, the mountain and “nature” are separate from humans. And the third position, which is that of the local indigenous peasants — or black peoples in the Colombian rainforest that defend the river on the same grounds —

is the position of radical relationality or radical interdependence, that we are inseparable from the mountain, from the forest. According to this position, the whole is an enmeshment of relations. If this is the case, there is no one single place you can start in your struggle to defend the “mountain,” since any place is related to everything else. Wherever you start you will find multiple other relations along the way to engage with, which brings to the fore the experimental aspects of politics, which have implications for design as a praxis for healing the web of life.

I have been trying more recently to come up with a set of propositions about pluriversal designing. What does it mean in the context of place? Let me read just a few of the propositions. To design pluriversally means designing from and within a world of many worlds. Designing pluriversally implies designing relationally. It is based on the premise that life is constituted by the radical interdependence of everything that exists. The aim of designing pluriversally is to reconstitute, heal and care for the web of interrelations that make up the bodies, places and landscapes that we are and inhabit. Designing pluriversally contributes to the recomunalisation of social life and the relocalization of activities such as food, healing, learning, dwelling, livelihoods, and the economy. So we would have to develop a different practice of designing to heal and care for the web of interrelations that make up life. Does that make sense?

SM Yes, but how do you imagine that this could relate to actual practice? In your opinion, which is the strategy that leads from the current state of design to this kind of statement about the future of design? What is the process? I ask you, specifically, if it involves education, because, as you say, we are also committed to this idea of learning. I think that to move the discussion from an intellectual level towards the fact that you are actioned, we need to go through this and make other people learn this lesson.

AE Yes, in practice. Two things. It is already happening. People working on transitions usually say that these transitions are already occurring in so many different domains and activities concerning, you know, food, de-growth, commoning, all kinds of transition initiatives that re-integrate human activity with the Earth, including in the cities. Most transformative alternatives that groups on the ground are engaged in suggest that transitions are already happening, and they sometimes include designing practices. Fields that, to me, are critical are the fields of ecological design and bio-design. Many examples of ecologically-minded design move in-between conventional ways of doing things, alternative modernities, and transformative relational practices. However, people are pushing in the latter direction. More is happening than we realize in terms of transition designing, whether it is termed designing or not, because many of these things are not being done in the name of design. Some are however, such as the transition town movement, which involves strategies developed explicitly under the banner of design.

A second way to deal with the issue of practice or action is to think in terms of fundamental principles or axes for the strategies. I believe there are a number of such principles coming to the foreground. Let me mention the ones that in my view are most important. The first is that designing, and political strategies, have to contribute to the re-communalisation of social life. This means that, if globalization has been the process of dismantling or destroying everything that is communal and collective in order to create individuals that conceive of themselves as individuals in competitive markets and so forth, today, to heal and care for the web of life requires us to restore some degree of communal existence, so there is a need to re-communalise social life, to reconnect with one another, humans and non-humans. The second is the re-localization of activities such as food, energy, transportation, livelihoods. Not everything can be re-localised, but many things can, regaining autonomy over making life as opposed to outsourcing the making of life to corporations and governments. Whatever we can relocalize, we should, and design can do a lot in this respect. Again, local food, slow food, and food sovereignty movements are a paramount example. A lot of that is happening in the area of food. The third is to strengthen local autonomy, because, without a measure of local autonomy, the efforts at re-communalizing and relocalizing life will be reabsorbed into de-localizing, globalizing processes. The fourth principle is the simultaneous depatriarchalization, deracialization, and decolonization of societies, as Latin American feminists emphasize. The last, and essential, principle is the reintegration with the Earth. These principles do not constitute a blueprint. They must be experimented with on the ground, but they can serve as general criteria for rethinking design theory and practice.