What is an alternative in Crianzas Mutuas Colombia?

Crianzas Mutuas Colombia (CMC) describe both the process of weaving diverse transformative alternatives in several regions of the Colombian southwest, and the resulting tapestry of alternatives. In CMC, the aim of the alternatives is to transform the logic of exclusion and social and ecological death produced by manifold forms of exploitation, commodification, homogenization of ways of knowing and being, and the annihilation of life, or 
terricidio. We focus on alternatives that fulfill the following interrelated criteria: 1) they are rooted in territories and critical traditions; this is what we call 
ancestralidad and re-existencia ("sub/alter(n)-nativities"); 2) primacy is given to the production and reproduction of the common; and 3) through the daily practices, they encourage the regeneration of life from the perspective of radical interdependence among everything that exists, or “relationality”.

Alternatives transform hegemonic structures by questioning all hierarchies that subordinate life and marginalize large numbers of people, based on the potentialities of each territory and the specific ways in which such territories have been impacted by violence. One of the main objectives of an alternative is to contribute to heal and reconstitute the web of life; this process involves the Earth as an agent of transformation, the historical reparation of peoples, and the regeneration of economies, food sovereignty, and the recognition of the importance of non-modern knowledges. Given the persistent coloniality of knowledge and being, alternatives arise when they are designed autonomously by people. This means that alternatives must consider ways of communicating that are not based only on text; they give importance to the use of videos, paintings, music, etc., and encourage the use of non-colonial languages.

Alternatives, finally, are rooted in a territory, and transform themselves based on the specific problems people must address at a given time, according to the tools they have at their disposal. This leads us to highlight that alternative actualize ancestral traditions ("ancestralidad"), through what we call sub-alter(n)ativities and re-existence. This can take place in rural or urban spaces. What follows is a very brief explanation of these main principles.

**Ancestrality, re-existence, and sub-alter(n)ativities**

We focus primarily on alternatives that rely on ancestrality, meaning the memories and practices that have been used by people to resist extreme violence, dispossession, political exclusion, racialization, and social death connected with the experiences of colonization, slavery, destruction of landscapes, deforestation and devastation of other natural ecosystems, and, in general, the dehumanization and the destruction of the weave of life. Dehumanization within the colonial/capitalist/patriarchal system impacts the weave of life, for it implies the creation of a kind of human being that gets used to treat everything around him as an object or a commodity, including nature that becomes mere “resources”. This kind of subjectivity is at the basis of extractivist projects. But ancestralidad goes beyond resistance to enable situated ontological practices of making life autonomously. Alternatives are grounded on what is emerging in the present and that enables people to imagine better futures, including resistance to dispossession. The concept of re-existencias highlights the double dimension of ancestralidad: resistance against the capitalist/modern and patriarchal/racist project of devastation, and the daily practices invented by communities, out of their long-standing cosmovisions, to
resist and decenter hegemonic logics, in order to remain, while changing. *Sub/alter(n)activities* are similarly understood as the new births that are rooted in ancestral traditions. It denotes the resurgence of new worlds out of ancient worlds (indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant worlds), and the emergence of newer worlds out of the practices of resistance and re-existence by women, youth, environmentalists, and marginalized urban groups. While the terms “subaltern” and “alternatives” are well-established, the term “nativities” refers to the *plural births* and re/emergences by subaltern groups aimed at re-affirming a politics of life free of subordination.

*The production of the common*

Our notion of alternatives implies *collective thinking and doing as the very basis of the production of a community*\(^1\). Community necessitates the creation of the commons through the daily weaving of relations through rooted and creative practices. The commons entail the material and symbolic production and regeneration of life and the reappropriation of what is socially produced. It is through the practical and daily satisfaction of those things that are necessary to regenerate life that a community may exist, resist, and re-exist. In CMC, the production of the common is fostered through physical and virtual encounters, collaborative writing, and initiatives that seek to satisfy true needs (like food sovereignty, direct political participation, spirituality, health and healing processes, harvesting water, peasant markets, seed exchange, self-recognition, epistemic justice, etc.).

The commons require *alternative economies*, conceived as activities aimed at the regeneration of life and the satisfaction of the real needs of both human and non-human entities, through care, relationality, and reciprocity; these are not based on instrumental rationality or the capitalist market, but on the Earth. The production of the common(s) is for a *distributed and rooted politics* that encourages the autonomous creation of relations between humans, and between humans and non-humans (visible and invisible ones), ensuring the right of all to actively participate in decision making processes. A non-bureaucratic, horizontal, and polycentric politics, rooted in a living territory, is essential for a true alternative. However, each center of decision must seek to relate horizontally to other centers. In doing so, alternative politics undo patriarchal hierarchies and proposes alternative non-state political paths.

*Relationality*

The third characteristic of transformative alternatives in CMC is radical relationality. Relationality refers to the ineluctable interdependence of everything that exist. In daily life, we act as if entities (objects, people, actions, institutions) have intrinsic existence. This is an illusion because everything is the product of intricate networks of interdependence. There is no isolated, fully autonomous “I” or self. The foundation of reality is inter-being, or inter-

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\(^1\) Latin-American authors, inspired in the histories and struggles of indigenous peoples and in biology, explain that the capacity to build communities is co-extensive to life as a whole. This is so because the formation of biotic communities requires ways of organization based on relationships of reciprocity, mutuality, cooperation and exchange between their members and between the members of one species and others. The singularity of human communities is that we are “obliged” to create, actualize or modify the specific form that a given humanity community should take. In other words, the singularity of human communities lies in their politicity. This is why what a community is is not already given, but it is something that has to be “produced” thorough daily practices.
existence. Western modernity has been built on the premise of the intrinsic existence of things, and on an ontology of separation between humans and nonhumans, mind and body, observer and observed, and so forth. But nothing could be further from reality. Territorialized peoples have always lived with the awareness of interdependence, of life taking place within a living cosmos, in its permanent fluidity. Many other groups (from environmentalists to feminist and spiritual activists) are coming to this realization that relationality, not separation, is the genuine foundation of life. Coming into this awareness changes everything we believe and do. Interdependence makes visible entire domains of life that were obscured by the focus on capital and the State, including ancestrality and the common.

Some commonalities:

1) We convene processes that we have known for a while, weaving them in a non-violent way, learning to walk the path together with others, and based on the self-determination of peoples.

2) We weave through encounters, conversations, and seminars that encourage the intersection between academia, re-existence activisms (activismos de las re-existencias), daily resistances, ancestral philosophical practices, arts, and sciences at the service of caring for life.

3) Confronted by macro-projects that enact a necropolitics (understood as the power to dictate who lives/dies and how) we focus on the emergence of sub-alter(n)ativities –new births rooted in ancient traditions that weave life in place.

4) They have a clear awareness of the radical interdependence between humans and the rest of life.

5) We focus on projects that absolutely reject hierarchies that invalidate others, including racisms, sexisms, elitisms, exploitation, and annihilations of life, and which foster non-patriarchal/racist, non-state, and non-liberal social relations.

6) Each weaver is engaged in several processes and weaves according to her/his/their own possibilities. From here comes the proposal of the warp and weft, or tapestry. Through their practices they transgress and transform the norms imposed by dominant structures.

7) They are processes (and not “academic projects”) carried out in life’s defense in everyday life.

8) They involve transgressive and creative practices.

9) They encourage collective thinking and future envisioning and thinking instead of individual thinking. CMC relies on collective research and action that are a far cry from objectifying academic research and conceptual methodologies.

10) Weavers create and make life based on the following criteria: beauty, rigor, honesty, responsibility, joy, and care. Their objective is to heal the web of life by touching souls; their aim is to repair/heal historical debts. They arise through the dialogue with peoples and must return to peoples/territories.

Some concrete radical alternatives:

There are three main processes within CMC: 1) the Centro de Estudios Independientes-Editorial color Tierra (Center for Independent Studies-Color Tierra Press); 2) the Tejido de Colectivos UNITIERRA Manizales y Suroccidente Colombiano (UNITIERRA Tapestry of Collectives of Manizales and the
Color Tierra is an independent publisher that encourages books that are collectively written by communities, peoples, and persons focused on the reparation of historical debts and the end of impunity. These books articulate arts and practical knowledges (see [https://tejidodecolectivosuniterra.com/libros/](https://tejidodecolectivosuniterra.com/libros/)). Some of our publications are: *Hacia el Buen Vivir-Ubuntu* (Towards Good life-Ubuntu); *Resistencias populares y campesinas, alternatives a la educación desde el Macizo colombiano. Por el cuidado del territorio, el agua y las semillas* (Popular and Peasant Resistances, Alternatives to Education from the Colombian Massif. For the Care of Land, Water and Seeds); and *Autonomía, Cine y Re-existencias* (Autonomy, Cinema and Re-existences).

The *Tejido de Colectivos UNITIERRA Manizales y Suroccidente Colombiano* promotes the re-connection of rural and urban worlds. This initiative takes place in the “belly of the city”, i.e. at Manizales Gallery, a space where people from different backgrounds converge to exchange and trade food. Every Wednesday, they gather to share their experiences resisting capitalism. Some collectives organize urban gardens, others are made up of artisans, indigenous peoples, women heads of households, and academics. All work on alternatives based on ancestral traditions (see [https://tejidodecolectivosuniterra.com/](https://tejidodecolectivosuniterra.com/)).

Finally, *Tejinando Sentipensares, Pluriversidades de a Pie y en Movimiento* seeks to build relationships between ancestral peoples and universities (mainly indigenous and peasant universities), and to enrich each process through mutual learning. Particularly, we have been working on the defense of the Ancestral Territory of the Black Line of the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa (Santa Marta) in the face of extractivism. Some of the universities that have participated in the process are: *Universidad Popular de los Pueblos* (Popular University of Peoples), Misak University, *Universidad de la Resistencia de San José de Apartadó* (University of Resistance of San José de Apartadó), *Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos* (Intercultural University of Peoples), Environmental Committee of Tolima, Agroecological Peasant Schools from the Eje Cafetero, *Universidad Autónoma Intercultural Indígena del Cauca* (Autonomous Intercultural Indigenous University of Cauca), Center for Peasant Education, *Movimiento Alternativo de Inclusión Social* (Alternative Movement for Social Inclusion), *Universidad Sin Fronteras* (University without Borders), *Pluriversidad del Río* (Pluriversity of the River), and *Universidad de la Tierra Manizales y Suroccidente Colombiano* (University of the Earth of Manizales and the Colombian Southwest).

Together with these processes, some of our weavers use art to collectively build territorial peace in urban areas. For instance, Elba Mercedes Palacios, an Afro-Colombian activist, has used theater to reconstruct the memories and narratives of black families in the racialized territory of the city of Cali. Black women play a central role in this process, for they have created resilient practices in their daily struggle against racialized and uneven territories.