



RESILIENCE

in the Face of COVID-19

Volume 02

of the series

Weaving Solidarity and Hope - Beyond Pandemics and Lockdowns

GLOBAL TAPESTRY of
ALTERNATIVES

Contributors to this series

The contributions to this series are a result of collaborations with inspiring peoples and networks from various regions that the Global Tapestry of Alternatives has been connected with (GTA). The first volume has contributions from Africa, Latin America, South and South-east Asia, Central America, and the Pacific. The decision to include these was based on active collaborators who were available to contribute to the series on a short notice as we do realise that such groups are active everywhere. Additionally, we wanted to bring forth stories from the Global South and regions that are under-represented in the corridors of power. These series have been produced with mutual respect, care and deep solidarity. We are truly grateful to all the contributors for sowing the seeds of future envisioning.

Currently, this series is being published using what is a colonial language for much of the world, i.e. English. We do, however, feel that regional languages are an important tool for the dissemination of these stories. Hence, we intend to translate these stories in multiple languages and would urge you as readers to offer to translate these stories in your own mother tongue, in case you can and would like to.

Our request to the readers is to also see this collection as a work in progress and engage with it as a long term process of cultivating inspiration to create better societies that are already being created. We need to weave at every level efforts challenging patriarchal or masculinist, capitalist, racist, casteist, and anthropocentric forces, and advance the continuation and continuous reconstruction of a pluriversal world in which many worlds can be embraced.

This particular report has been a long time in the making and we acknowledge that some of the community responses may have changed since this material was first collected.

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Global Tapestry of Alternatives **is an initiative seeking to create solidarity networks and strategic alliances amongst all these alternatives on local, regional and global levels.** It locates itself in or helps initiate interactions among alternatives. It operates through varied and light structures, defined in each space, that are horizontal, democratic, inclusive and non-centralized, using diverse local languages and other ways of communication.

For more information please see: <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/introduction>

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Introduction

The viral infection that is coronavirus disease (COVID-19) brought a myriad of challenges for the world's population. People previously wrote stories about a disease outbreak that would turn the world on its head. We saw the first versions with HIV, SARS and H1N1 but the last two years brought a lot of the fiction to life. Everyday life was changed for people in all parts of the world whether directly through loss of lives and loved ones or indirectly through the economic costs that spread far and wide.

In the face of the pandemic, countries closed borders and nationalism was rife. Vaccine apartheid and the dominance of pharmaceutical companies meant that access to vaccines was out of reach for many people. At a national level, governments made decisions about lock-downs and restrictions that led to livelihoods of ordinary people being threatened. Whilst some countries offered aid and support to their citizens, COVID-19 showed us how limited this was and continues to be.

Alternatives coming from the grassroots has been critical to helping people through the hardship brought on by the pandemic. Some of these alternatives were established before the pandemic whilst others came about as a result of the pandemic. In all cases, pandemic solidarity has shown us the resilience that exists in our communities and the importance of local agency, capacity and knowledge in times of crisis.

This is the second volume of a collection of various narratives from around the world based on collaborative writing. Together with the first volume, they provide us multifaceted expressions of resistance to dominant forms of oppression—to defend local ways of life, strengthen local autonomy, and reconstruct societies. These examples show that COVID-19 and the problems it has highlighted in society (all of which have been around for much longer, of course, but are more sharply visible now) have solutions—already demonstrated by communities, initiatives and civil society. They give important lessons and pathways for just, equitable, and ecologically resilient futures.

In the brief presentation of the resilience cases that follow, the Global Tapestry of Alternatives has tried to highlight how alternatives that focus on solidarity, care, sustainable living, connection between culture and nature, and sovereignty can allow people to survive and thrive during crises. We share these stories as a way to learn from each other but also to promote solidarity networks and strategic alliances amongst all these alternatives on local, regional and global levels.

1

Cargonomia, Budapest: Resilience Through Cooperation and Creativity During COVID-19

📍 **Geo-localisation:** Budapest, Hungary

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Photo courtesy: Cargonomia



Cargonomia and the COVID-19 pandemic

Cargonomia is a community-based, experimental degrowth cooperative that offers home delivery – via cargo bicycle – of organic and locally- produced vegetable boxes to customers in and around Budapest, Hungary. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic this past spring, Budapest residents initially panicked about access to food and the need for resilient local food systems became increasingly apparent. These residents immediately turned to Cargonomia to respond to this need; in the first few weeks of the pandemic, Cargonomia experienced a sudden increase in demand for its weekly vegetable boxes, with orders more than doubling in some weeks compared to pre-pandemic times.

Notably, when the pandemic catalyzed the increase in food prices for Hungarian consumers – due in part to the disruption of foreign markets and shortage of seasonal labour in March and April, and compounded by ongoing environmental effects such as drought and animal pandemics, as well as the inflation of the Hungarian Forint – Cargonomia’s prices never increased. And when the pandemic made food less accessible whereby social distancing restrictions limited people’s

mobility, Cargonomia was able to provide a convenient delivery service, via cargo bikes, that is both reliable and low carbon.

Cargonomia's resilience during the pandemic

Cargonomia emerged in May 2015 through the convergence of three independent, pre-existing organizations in Budapest: Zsámboki Biokert, a small-scale organic vegetable farm and education center; Kantaa, a bike messenger and delivery company; and Cyclonomia, a DIY bicycle repair community cooperative. Through the partnerships between these organizations, who cooperate together within a degrowth economic framework, customers can order a vegetable box every week from Zsámboki's weekly vegetable box system, Kantaa's bike messengers deliver the orders by cargo bike within a 30-kilometer radius of Budapest, and Cyclonomia helps with building and maintaining the bikes. These organizations rent and co-finance a space together for Cargonomia's operations, which also serves as a dynamic space for the cargo bike community to rent and trade cargo bikes, and an open space for community activities and workshops, and for the community to gather and socialize.

The partnerships within Cargonomia have been fundamental to Cargonomia's resiliency both before and during the pandemic. Cargonomia was founded by a group of friends who, over a few years, decided to combine their resources from their own initiatives, thus avoiding investing any money and keeping their costs low. Orsolya Lazányi, who is part of the Cargonomia team, explained in an interview for the *Cooperative Journal* that "The main resource is cooperation... For the cargo bikes, spaces, and through the network of Cargonomia we have access to a lot of things for free or based on solidarity and reciprocity, not based on money". Through cooperation, Cargonomia is not dependent on making a fixed income every month and can thus continue its activities regardless of cracks in the global capitalist economy.

Photo courtesy: Vincent Liegey



Being resourceful and thinking creatively also helped Zsámboki manage the swell in orders at the start of the pandemic which brought new administrative and infrastructural challenges. When I spoke with Logan Strenchock, one of Cargonomia's co-founders and who works with Zsámboki, about these challenges, he discussed how the farm had to rethink their process of preparing vegetable boxes to be more strategic and efficient. Preparing orders of over 100 boxes per week required better planning and thinking ahead, and Zsámboki had to start the process of preparing the orders at least a day before the orders had to be packed, instead of the day of. Further, managing the higher volume of orders required new infrastructure which Zsámboki did not have the capacity to build. Instead, they had to improvise and build the necessary parts by converting the infrastructure they already had at low-cost.

The relationships between Zsámboki and other small-scale farms is also notable when thinking about Cargonomia's resilience. For instance, as a small-scale farm, Zsámboki cannot always produce sufficient quantities of staple goods such as potatoes and onions, to meet increasing demands. This is generally a challenge for small-scale producers, as is the challenge of distributing their products locally, so many small organic producers sell to foreign markets instead. To overcome the challenge of meeting local demand, Zsámboki collaborates with local partners whom they know well and whom they can buy from and trade organic vegetables with. Working in a network of producers enables consistent, attractive box offers while helping to ease the burden of distributing their products. As Logan explains,

“*It's a much better strategy to work together instead of competing individually – which is still very rare, especially in the traditional, highly competitive food market”.*

Further, the connection between the city and countryside, or between city residents with their rural producers is an important principle for Zsámboki, and one that has helped Cargonomia stay resilient during the pandemic. When I spoke with Logan Strenchock and Vincent Liegey, two of Cargonomia's co-founders, they emphasized the importance of this connection for boosting morale on the farm. Pre-pandemic times, volunteers came to the farm every week, and the farmers were able to meet with their customers at farmers' markets in Budapest, which helped establish strong personal connections between city residents and Zsámboki. When Hungary went into lockdown, however, the volunteers couldn't come to the farm anymore, and the farmers' markets shut down. Yet because of Zsámboki's pre-established connection between the farm and the city, Cargonomia experienced an increase in interest in local community groups and cafés in Budapest who wanted to help distribute vegetable boxes by establishing box distribution sites in their neighbourhoods and at their cafés. These new partnerships not only helped Zsámboki deal with the challenge of the farmers' markets closing, but also helped the cafés maintain traffic when they couldn't operate as normally with the restrictions.

Lessons learnt

While the pandemic illuminated the need for resilient, local food systems, Cargonomia teaches us the importance of cooperative relationships and creativity for these food systems to thrive. Through cooperation and being creative, Cargonomia shows

us what is possible when experimenting within a degrowth economic framework, without investing money and by drawing on initiatives, resources, and relationships that already exist.

Cargonomia hopes that the shift that encouraged people to engage with and support their local food systems during the pandemic, which has been sustained throughout the summer, can endure beyond the pandemic. Hopefully the shift can be part of a greater movement that helps to increase the number of producers of organic and locally-produced fruits and vegetables, as well as access to these fruits and vegetables.

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2

Responses from the Kurdish Women's Movement

📍 **Geo-localisation:** North and East Syria

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Photo courtesy: Jineology Academy



Brief description

Is it possible to live autonomously without a centralised government? To have gender equality, cooperative economy, and practice direct democracy, as well as ecological thinking? This reality has arisen in one of the most unlikely of places. Namely, in a region characterised by war, and the violent interventions of Turkey, Russia, and the USA. In this hostile environment, Rojava — officially known as *The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria* — has nonetheless been transformed into an “anarchist-feminist autonomous region that is the antithesis to everything around it” (ecologise.in). Home to a section of the Kurds — one of the Indigenous groups of the Mesopotamia plains whose long sought desire for their own homeland has been constantly quashed — Rojava has played an important role in the Kurdish struggle.

Despite being the smallest part of Kurdistan — a geo-cultural territory encompassing southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, and northern Syria — Rojava now serves as a site of revolution and liberation against, and from, dominant states and capitalist modernity. These revolutionary beginnings can be traced back to 1979

with the arrival of the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) and its founder Abdullah Öcalan, a Kurdish activist, writer, and political theorist (imprisoned by Turkey since 1999). Indeed, Öcalan has been especially important for the revolution, as his ideas laid the foundation on which the liberation movements (both general and the branch focusing on women's liberation) are built. Based on a 2020 webinar with Dilar Dirik (GTA, 2020) one of the Kurdish Women's Movement's experts and activists, the text below will explore how Rojava and its associated movements (primarily the Kurdish Women's Movement) were able to establish resilience prior to, and during, the COVID-19 pandemic. To conclude, some of the main learnings will be compiled.

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-COVID)

The Kurdish Freedom Movement (an umbrella term encompassing a plethora of Kurdish organisations) has long sought alternatives beyond the nation-state system, and has recognised the impact of this system on society and the environment. This includes the erasure of other ways of knowing (Indigenous cosmologies), conflict between ethnic and religious communities, and the ecological crisis. Hence, the pillars of this movement being *radical democracy, ecology, and women's liberation*, as taken from Öcalan's writings. Indeed, it is these pillars and their associated practices that helped to establish community resilience prior to COVID-19.

Beginning with the first pillar: Rojava's political system is based on *democratic confederalism*. The principles hereby being autonomy, direct democracy, environmentalism, multiculturalism, feminism, self-defence, self-governance, and a shared economy. This has enabled the movement to learn how to self-organise and establish practices whereby power and control is distributed. As Dirik highlights in the webinar,

“ this has created spaces in which “people have a way of directly becoming political agents, and political subjects themselves”.

This is further fostered by the movement's political structure. Comprised of communes, assemblies, interrelated congress-like structures, horizontal and direct decision-making mechanisms were clearly defined prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst the second pillar has been more difficult to fulfill owing to the continued control of the means of production and nature by dominant nation-states, the Kurdish people have nonetheless tried to practice less destructive and more regenerative ways of living. This includes the practice of commoning whereby access to land, water, and electricity becomes more equal. Communities in the region have also seen the growth of cooperative farming and river cleaning initiatives. All of these help strengthen resilience if a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, were to arise. Thirdly, the emphasis on feminist perspectives and the effort put into the liberation of women has meant that continued focus has been placed on alternative practices to hegemonic thinking and capitalist modernity. As briefly alluded to, this is reflected in political life and governance structures. Hence, the Kurdish Freedom Movement continues the collective process of building a more ecological life – culturally, politically, socially, economically.



Finally, the importance of leadership must not be underestimated when looking at resilience established prior to the pandemic. Indeed, the role of Öcalan has been of paramount significance. As the founder and primary theorist of the movement, Öcalan has had a very formative influence on its development. Particularly through his writings in which prompts are made to imagining a different modernity. One which does not feed into further colonisation, industrialisation, ecocide, and the systemic violence of women, amongst other things. Öcalan's ideas continue to hold the movement together and allow for cohesion to persist.

How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

There are many ways in which resilience was maintained during the pandemic. One of these includes the fact that the Kurdish Freedom Movement and other associated movements such as the Kurdish Women's Movement, were well accustomed to self-organisation. This stems from the political structures in place as control and power does not lie in the hands of a small elite, but is distributed amongst groups to allow for greater autonomy. In addition, the movement did not have much choice but to learn how to self-organise due to limited aid and resources given from outside. As a result, people knew how to respond to the crisis and were also able to build a COVID-19 hospital.

Furthermore, people were aware of the implications of a lockdown and what this entails: "we know what a lockdown is because we have experienced it, because of the wars imposed by the Turkish army, we know what it means to survive under these conditions". Solidarity initiatives to support vulnerable families and committees to ensure that the communities are doing well were therefore quickly established. Furthermore, a campaign was initiated by the women's movement against domestic violence as it was shown that this had increased as a direct result of the pandemic. The campaign also highlighted the exploitation of women's labour and continued social reproduction keeping inequality alive. Aside from the political culture of self-organisation and the prior experience of lockdown — both of which meant the people were more aware of how to respond — strong foundations and leadership also helped ensure that the movement did not falter, and community solidarity persisted.

Lessons learnt

Whilst there is much to learn from the Kurdish Freedom Movement about alternatives to capitalist modernity, only a few lessons about ways in which resilience can be developed will be outlined. The first being the power of self-organisation (often despite the dominant system) as people realise they are not just passive subjects, but rather active participants in society able to directly engage in political processes. As Dirik says, one way this could be done is by “turning communities into agents and giving them the platform to self-organise”. Whilst this is dependent on size and context, amongst other things, it does seem useful to know that communities would be able to respond quicker were a crisis to unfold. Dirik also notes that another learning has been

“ *the need to find ways of struggling together through building alliances among networks and groups*”

This goes one step further than solidarity as the aim would be to establish platforms for co-creation and collaboration. Finally, the aforementioned role of good leadership seems an important component to carry forward. One that does not mirror hegemonic thinking but takes into consideration the need to restore an ecological, economic, social, and political balance.

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3

Indigenous Self-determination and Coping with COVID-19 in Bolivia

📍 **Geo-localisation:** Lomerío, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

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Photo courtesy: Iokiñe Rodríguez



Brief description

The new political constitution in 2009 marked a historical event in Bolivian history with the foundation of the Plurinational State and the recognition of the collective rights and autonomy for the 36 indigenous nations in Bolivia. The idea of the Plurinational State is the recognition of the diversity of cultures, institutions, civilizations, and languages that exist within the country as opposed to the process of homogenization led by the colonial state. The construction and implementation of indigenous autonomy is the mechanism that gives meaning to the pluralist approach, thereby enabling the process of decolonisation. As for self-determination, this is the right of all peoples to define their own ways of life and political, economic, social, and cultural development.

The indigenous people of the territory of Lomerío in Bolivia have been at the forefront for indigenous self-determination in their long struggle for freedom. They were the first territory to declare their political will to assert territorial-based indigenous autonomy.

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-covid)

The Indigenous Union of Indigenous Communities of Lomerío (CICOL) consist of 29 communities, with ancestors coming from different indigenous groups. When the cattle ranches were being expanded by colonial settlers in the 1800s and indigenous people were treated as property, many fled and found refuge in the forests now comprising Lomerío. For this reason, many different languages are spoken in the territory. The main language being the Monkoxi language *Besiro*. During the rubber boom, Indigenous people were forced into slavery again. The 1953 agrarian reform did not recognize Indigenous communal land: it only re-distributed individual plots of land, which made the Indigenous communities subordinated to the ranch-owners. It was not until the creation of trade unions and other unions that the oppression started to cease. In the 1980s the Indigenous movements from the lowlands joined forces in defence of their territory and for the recognition of their rights. CICOL was founded in 1982 as a response to the desire for freedom and collective cultural acknowledgement. Since 2006 – after a long process of restructuring – an area of 259 000 hectares of communal land has been legally owned and managed by the 29 communities of Indigenous people of Lomerío, whose legal and legitimate representative is the board of directors of the CICOL organisation. They manage their natural resources, run a forestry project, and are building Indigenous autonomy within their territory.

More than 10 years have passed since Lomerío was given territorial-based autonomy but the Indigenous government in Lomerío has not yet been constituted. Legal obstacles and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures halter the Indigenous autonomy process. The new management of the Plurinational State is being built with old tools. Indeed, there is an ignorance towards the Indigenous reality. The bureaucracy and legal formality give continuity to the colonialist vision and the old logic of power management, thereby denying the procedures and norms of the Indigenous peoples based on their own cultural vision. The Indigenous people of Lomerío are still under the public administration system but they seek to make the transition from municipal government to an autonomous Indigenous government within the framework of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Photo courtesy: lokiñe Rodriguez





Despite the slow progress of the new institutional framework, Lomerío is demonstrating that it is possible to establish a framework on its own basis. They are continuing to advance and fight for their rights until Indigenous autonomy has been fully realized. This includes furthering their own political and legal systems, as well as vision of development and community economy based on respect for spiritual values and principles. All of this is with the aim of *Nuxianká Uxia Nosibóriki* which expresses the idea and dream of living in freedom and the desire to live well which represents the indigenous cosmovision.

How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic reached the territory of Lomerío and 20 people died, they were able to control further spread of the virus thanks to their organisational structure. Entrances to their territories were blocked and the delivery of biomedical equipment carefully coordinated. In addition, traditional medicines and community care values and relations were revived. Monkoxi leaders Elmar Masay and Maria Chore share that the crisis has made them appreciate their culture once again: the traditional medicines, their families and the community work. They have a variety of plants used for medicine with both preparative and curative characteristics that are essential for them to live well. During the lockdown, they have been cultivating the soil to feed themselves. Families have reunited when youths have returned from the cities to help out with community work in cultivating, fishing and hunting.

Lessons learnt

Having a pre-existing and well established organizational structure, practicing autonomy within their territory and being rooted in shared cultural values and practices are all factors that have helped the Indigenous communities of Lomerío cope with COVID-19. However, to be able to better cope with future crises, the lockdown has also shown that they need to be self-reliant when it comes to food production. Something which they currently are not. Hence, autonomy, economic self-reliance, and food sovereignty are still in need of more attention.

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4

Social Economy and the Commons in Portugal

Geo-localisation: Lisbon, Portugal

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Photo courtesy: Tortuga



Brief description

Social solidarity economy is a comprehensive concept referring to economic practices that serve as alternatives to the capitalist economic system and to the commodification and exploitation of all spheres of life including basic human needs. As opposed to capitalism, these alternatives often involve “community ownership, democratic non-hierarchical and consensual decision-making, as well as mutual cooperation and embeddedness in a local social and ecological context... Profits and self-interest tend to remain secondary to larger concerns such as equity and solidarity, right to a dignified livelihood and ecological integrity”. One of these practices are the commons. Commons are, according to De Angelis (2019), social systems that are formed by three basic and interconnected elements: a commonwealth, a community of commoners, and a praxis of commoning, that is of doing in common: a social process based on participatory and democratic principles.

The commons movement is growing in Europe and elsewhere. Commons-based solutions that were seen as utopian or unrealistic before Corona are now gaining attention and are being implemented on different levels in society. Here, two social centers in Lisbon, Portugal, will serve as examples of how commoning and a social solidarity economy has helped in times of the COVID-19 crisis.

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-covid)

Disgraca and RDA69 are two autonomous/anarchist social centers in Lisbon that have existed for five and ten years respectively. The two centers share the same political foundation and are built around the same values and principles. They both have social kitchens where they are serving food for a low or no price, and they are organizing social events such as rock concerts, art exhibitions, book clubs, movie screenings, and more, where people can come together and meet.

RDA 69 was created as a common space to organize politically, to meet and discuss common interests, an anti-authoritarian political space that promotes other forms of political participation than the traditional ones. It has been an important meeting point for various movements in the city.

The centers are promoting the decommodification of basic human needs. They want to provide a material autonomy as well as a cultural one. In this regard they are offering services, but they do not call it that. You will for example have to wash your own dishes when you're done eating. RDA 69 presents itself not as a bar or a restaurant. Rather, these spaces are about community building and sharing, liberation and empowerment, the celebration of food and flavors, and of conviviality which is social transformation rooted in interdependence and the turning of individuals into collectives. With everyone's participation, it is possible to have a space that can be a bar, library, restaurant, association, cinema, school – all of this or none of this – at the same time.

Photo courtesy: Regueirão dos Anjos





Disgraca wants to deconstruct the shame and social stigma associated with access to social kitchens: of not being able to care for oneself and the usual top-down relationships associated with charity. The running of the social kitchens at Disgraca and RDA 69 is built on trust in people's ability to show solidarity and empathy with other people. The centers do not communicate that the food is for people who cannot afford to buy it themselves. Instead they trust that people can self-regulate and put themselves in other people's position by not taking resources from those who might need it more. This commons-based approach is grounded in an ethics of love to self and others based on a shared humanity, and an understanding of everyone's capacity to contribute to the whole.

How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

When the pandemic hit and many people lost their job and income, the access to food and social kitchens became even more important than they were before. More people have been seen in the food lines in Lisbon. RDA 69 moved its social kitchen out to the streets to meet the crisis and to offer food for anyone who wants to come and especially for those in need.

Sara from Disgraca tells how during the national lockdown, after some days, the social inequalities got even more visible and they got to know that there were homeless people starving on the streets.

“ So, we decided to use our experience cooking meals to start a solidarity kitchen to create a mutual aid network in the community. The project had two stations on the entrance of the space, one to collect donations of foodstuff, and another to distribute all the free meals

by take away. There was also a team distributing meals on the streets by bike or car. For three months we could clearly experience that when different people get together and organize themselves to react towards adversities, what comes from it has an impact that is powerful”

Another important aspect of the social centers during COVID-19 is that they are providing spaces of conviviality – of coming together as a collective – something that has been under threat in times of social distancing and isolation. Disgraca has been inviting people to come over at their door to socialize, while still maintaining the physical distancing, to discuss the transition into the new normal and to encourage participation in that transition. On their Facebook page, they are inviting people to come and discuss neighborhood relationships, the rebuilding of their neighborhood communities, mutual support and relationships based on solidarity. They recognize that the pandemic is making visible products of decades of capitalism and state repression and exploitation: the intense social alienation, economic poverty and lack of real solutions to care for each other’s needs on a daily basis. They want to restore trust and community bonds and together think of how communities can help each other overcome difficulties without leaderships and hierarchies, which they assert is fundamental to build a more just world.

There has been a multiplication of initiatives based on commoning and social care during the pandemic. These initiatives are not limited to civil society. State actors are adopting strategies that used to be a characteristic of autonomous and anarchist groups. One example is employees at Lisbon municipality who are calling the elders just to chat and check on how they are doing, asking them if they need help with anything.

Lessons learnt

Crisis can serve as an opportunity as it can help us see the strengths that we already had but once were undervalued. It can show the urgency of taking on and scaling up already existing practices. This is being shown by the examples above and the fact that more and more actors are taking on commons-based strategies to ensure basic human needs. The development of a social economy and a culture that is based on seeing to other people’s needs, putting oneself in other people’s position, showing solidarity and working together creates strong and resilient communities.

There are many initiatives that see the link between commoning and resilience and want to turn this into systemic change. One of these initiatives is the Social and Solidarity Economy Action Plan promoted by the Catalan Solidarity Economy Network. The aim is to make cities, towns and villages more resilient, not only to pandemics but to social and environmental crises, through the localization of supply chains and promotion of cooperative structures.

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5

Food Sovereignty in El Parque de la Papa - Potato Park, Peru

📍 **Geo-localisation:** Pisac, Peru

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Photo courtesy: Alejandro Argumedo



Brief description

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many peripheral, rural communities in Peru have been unequally impacted by the spread of the virus. Not only losing community members but also access to basic amenities such as healthcare and food. Indeed, for some this is only an exacerbation of prior struggles and inequalities. Yet there are burgeoning examples of people and places who have managed to build resilience, enabling them

to continue flourishing (although the challenges should not be overlooked). One such example is *El Parque de la Papa* (from hereon referred to as the Potato Park).

Situated an hour away from Cusco, Peru, the park constitutes 15,000 hectares of communally managed land high in the Andes and comprises 6 Quechua communities totalling 6000 residents. It is also the origin of the potato and serves as a Biocultural Heritage Territory (BCHT)¹. The Potato Park is therefore a striking example of community-led conservation of biological and cultural diversity. The communities practice in-situ (onsite) conservation, maintain an indigenous environmental ethic, and ensure ownership of the 1360+ potato varieties:

“ We are the owners of the potatoes [...] We are the ones keeping the varieties and who know how to use them”
(GTA, 2020)

These factors, amongst others, have allowed the people of the Potato Park to become resilient, and subsequently overcome the pandemic.

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-covid)

Despite the size of both the territory and the communities, the people of the Potato Park have been able to create a sense of unity, allowing them to manage the land collectively. Key to this have been their shared principles and cosmologies. This includes the holistic worldview as expressed in the *ayllu* system. The communities believe that the *runa ayllu* (humans and domesticated species), the *sallka ayllu* (wild and semi-domesticated species), and the *auki ayllu* (the sacred and the ancestors) must be in balance. At the center of this vision is *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), provider of food and livelihoods, as described by one of the community members in a GTA webinar (GTA, 2020). When all are in balance, it is thought that *sumaq causay* (also known as *buen vivir*) can be achieved. This is an “alternative to improve well-being, living conditions, rights, livelihoods and the environment” as well as being

Photo courtesy: Alejandro Argumedo



¹ Biocultural heritage, as a concept, has evolved in response to traditional knowledge policies that have tended only to protect the intellectual component of knowledge systems, and not the equally crucial biological, cultural and landscape components. It reflects indigenous communities' holistic worldview, where everything is interdependent and interconnected (International Institute for Environment and Development, IIED).



an ecological approach practiced by the whole community in their governance and organisation structures. Having shared values and objectives has undoubtedly helped the communities know how to live with the land and one another. This has enabled greater resilience.

Closely connected to the above is the importance placed on solidarity and reciprocity. The former serves as the currency for connection and manifests itself in the respect shown towards the mountains, *pachamama*, the people, and in the sharing of crops. As well as in collective resistance against the dominant system – white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. There is also a reciprocal relationship between the *ayllus*. Thus the work of the community is not only the work of humans, but also of the mountains, the earth, and the sacred. Any activity is therefore informed by these values, as has been the case since pre-Inca times. This includes farming practices and the use of traditional knowledge. Solidarity and reciprocity have therefore helped to uphold a sense of togetherness and balance within changing environments, both natural and built.

The use of, and continued research on, traditional knowledge has also contributed to community resilience. As was affirmed during the fourth learning exchange of the *International Network of Mountain Indigenous Peoples* (INMIP): despite living in a globalised world, traditional knowledge has been very important to the success and well-being of indigenous communities. In this way, they have been able to maintain the integrity of their biocultural traditions and fragile ecosystems. Furthermore, this knowledge fosters the reciprocal relationship between people and the environment through holistic conservation and has been nurtured for centuries. An understanding of local food systems is thus deeply rooted and can be applied, as well as adapted, to changing conditions. Indeed, with over 1360 potato varieties already being used for food, fuel, fodder and medicines, many of the communities' activities focus on diversifying the vegetable's uses.

Finally, the communities have established microenterprises. These are economic collectives with specialised foci such as handicrafts, weaving, and pottery that strive for the sustainable use of biological resources. All proceeds of the enterprises go to

the community and/or the often marginalised. Any activity is therefore done for the maintenance of the land and for the benefit of the communities' livelihoods, not for profit.

How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

The communities' cosmology and holistic vision of the world has been one way of staying resilient during the pandemic — caution should be taken so as not to appropriate or misinterpret this. Indeed, with their deep respect for the land, they have been asking for help from the mountain protectors. This is likely to have given them continued strength in overcoming the pandemic. Furthermore, the response to the current crisis has been communal and collective. Here, the principles of solidarity and reciprocity have been key. As has the desire to keep the *ayllu* system in balance. All food has been shared, families have received support, and all responsibilities have been equally distributed.

It is important to note that these principles have been extended to the wider community. When people on the streets of Cusco did not have access to food, community members — primarily women — went to hand out potatoes and other crops. Not out of philanthropy or charity, but rather in accordance with their cosmology. As was mentioned by one of these women, the only way to overcome a crisis is through solidarity. Finally, many have been reminded that living on the land comes with the possibility of being self-sufficient and of having food, something which is less easily achieved in urban areas.

Lessons learnt

The biggest lesson learnt is arguably the importance of solidarity and reciprocity, as well as the irreplaceable value of having shared values, principles, and strong organisational, and social structures in place. For these reasons, the communities have been able to engage in the distribution of food and responsibilities, and shown support for one another and the wider community. Having a communal fund whereby those most in need could be supported also helped in carrying out these activities. In other words, the strength of their community organising has enabled them to respond as a *people*. In addition, the prior repatriation, reproduction, and redistribution of seeds meant that food systems could be sustained to a greater degree, and resilience during the pandemic upheld. Here it is important to note that the resilience of these food systems stems from regenerative land management practices, specifically agroecology and the inclusion of traditional knowledge. The health of the land and the people is hereby put at the fore.

Finally, the Potato Park case has served as a reminder of the need to focus on reproduction; to think about future generations and the regeneration of the land. This is in contrast to production; the search for profit. It also shows the importance of not imposing external *solutions*, but rather respecting knowledge that has allowed communities to co-exist within their environment since their beginnings.

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6

Indigenous rights and ecological care at Snowchange Cooperative

📍 **Geo-localisation:** The Circumpolar North
(HQ in Selkie, Finland)

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Photo courtesy: Snowchange Cooperative



Brief description

Snowchange Cooperative is a self-described network of local and indigenous cultures, an ecological project, and a powerful scientific organization. Founded in 2000 and headquartered in Selkie, North Karelia, Finland, Snowchange is engaged in myriad environmental justice-oriented endeavors with a specific focus on the endemic cultural-historical idiosyncrasies of non-globalized, communal relation-based ecological governance (Mustonen, 2017). Snowchange Cooperative's activities include traditional knowledge and culture preservation; winter seining and other traditional fishery operation; ecological restoration of previously extractive industry-based sites ("Rewilding"); and the connection and coordination of indigenous communities across the globe, from the circumpolar North to Australia and Aotearoa. These communities work together in climate change science, traditional knowledge preservation, and collaborative governance (Snowchange Cooperative, 2020; ICCA 2020). The pressures put on global economic and material-supply-chain systems by the current COVID-19 pandemic have only further stressed the need for autonomous, self-reliant communities and ecologies such as those championed by Snowchange Cooperative.

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-covid)

The community resilience leading up to the founding of Snowchange is part of a ten-thousand year cultural process stretching back to prehistory (GTA, 2020). Self-sustenance, autonomy, and local-traditional/indigenous uses of land form the basis of Finnish and Sámi heritage—of course, these principles are also at the forefront of environmental justice discourse (Mustonen, 2017). The fishing communities that form the core of Snowchange have long been food-autonomous for their basic nutritional needs, thus minimizing dependence on unstable globalized food systems. Food security—and by extension, food sovereignty—has consistently shown itself to be central to notions of socio-ecological sustainability (Patel, 2009; Patel, 2012; McMichael, 2012). Moreover, the autonomous food security of rural, circumpolar fishing communities is inextricably tied to their specific cultural-historical relations to nature and endemic systems of ecological governance, which echo back to more broad ideas of self-governance on the whole.

It is this autonomy that characterizes the resilience of the circumpolar north and the communities with which Snowchange Cooperative is involved. With Finnish state-sponsored environmental policy largely ignoring the histories and needs of these communities in favor of “development” and extractive industries such as logging and peat mining (Mustonen, 2017; SBS, 2020), these communities have learned to value and prioritize small-scale, localized systems of sustenance and socio-environmental governance. In this realm, Snowchange Cooperative works to connect these communities with each other so as to form a more united, effective body with which to engage state governments. Further, Snowchange also sponsors apprenticeship programs that train young fishermen, preserve traditional knowledge, and make rural community life more attractive (Snowchange, 2020).

Photo courtesy: Eero Murtomäki, Snowchange Cooperative





How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

The autonomy of Snowchange Cooperative's fishing communities has helped to curb the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, market demand for these communities' fish plummeted, and thus they are facing financial pressures on top of annual fishing seasons continuously made shorter and shorter by the effects of climate change. However, these communities' low dependence on mobile and globalized society has kept them better able to maintain community self-sustenance, and thus weather not only the COVID-19 pandemic, but any kind of crisis-induced lockdown or economic standstill.

Snowchange's rewilding work, undertaken in small teams in rural "wilderness" areas as it is, was largely unaffected by the pandemic. However, mobility impediments into Norwegian and Russian sites were encountered due to the closing of state borders.

Lessons learnt

The global pandemic has served to highlight the pitfalls and shortcomings of the modernity and efficiency-oriented world. The current global situation is, as Tero Mustonen put it, "aligned with the continuing onslaught on biodiversity and ecosystem health", and thus serves to reiterate the need to prioritize traditional and indigenous nature relations – and, consequently, the need to for formal recognition of communal land rights grounded in those relations. For Tero, the pandemic ultimately raises several questions: How can communities respond to stress autonomously? What is the distance between lived reality and formal power? As Snowchange Cooperative's work shows, autonomous communities removed from the socioeconomic core are

better able to respond to the pressures of power and history through their self-governance and self-sufficiency—something for all of us to consider as we move forward through the COVID-19 pandemic.

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7

Food Sovereignty in South Africa

📍 Geo-localisation: South Africa

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Photo courtesy: South African Food Sovereignty Campaign



Brief description

The hunger crisis is not new in South Africa as a result of a globalized food system and extensive drought related to climate change; but it has worsened even more with the pandemic. Many people express their concern that there are more deaths caused by hunger rather than by COVID-19. The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) calls for a food sovereignty response to the crisis: a democratically organised food system controlled by small-scale food producers, consumers and society. It is a system that affirms the right to food, water and a healthy environment through

the co-governance of soil, land, water, biodiversity and knowledge commons. These commons-based resources are being managed in a life-giving manner based on agroecology and an ethics of care.

The SAFSC emerged in 2015 as a national campaigning platform to facilitate a loose convergence of organizations championing food sovereignty in South Africa.

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-covid)

There is a tradition of independent and radical social movements in South Africa. Vishwas Satgar describes two cycles of resistance in the post-apartheid era. The SAFSC is part of the second one, alongside the Right to Know campaign, the One Million Climate Jobs campaign and struggles against corruption, in defence of democracy, climate justice and food sovereignty. The SAFSC “represents an attempt to build a new popular imagination, activist capacity, and actual pathways for an alternative: a food sovereignty system. This is fundamentally about systemic change led from below by small-scale food producers, consumers, and citizens”.

The SAFSC works with capacity building for transformative activism. The aim is to create resilience by giving rise to new forms of subaltern power while at the same time pushing back the power of corporations who currently dominate the food system. The new forms of subaltern power can be divided into four different but overlapping categories:

- symbolic power which is about the values, principles, visions and practices that an ideal represents;
- direct power which involves methods to create awareness about food sovereignty among the public;
- movement power which involves bringing together different actors and networks to create a broad activist base and space for convergence; and
- structural power which is about building pathways from below, how people can meet their needs through food sovereignty practices including seed saving, agroecology, water management, local food markets and so on – and scaling up these alternatives.

How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

The struggles that existed before the lockdown have been taken into the lockdown followed by questions like “how do we find our positioning?”, “how do we find our terrain?” and “what tools do we use?” SAFSC have been repurposing their platforms to fit the new situation. Pre-existing food relief efforts in a number of communities have been scaled up and commons of knowledge and activist tools are being shared freely on the internet. In the midst of crisis, they are building food sovereignty pathways from below just like before but to a larger degree, and they are creating local alliances based on solidarity.

Another initiative that has emerged from the pandemic is the C19 People’s Coalitions: a call for solidarity in South Africa during the crisis (GTA, 2020). Civic organisations,



trade unions, organisations of informal workers, faith-based organisations, and communities are recognizing the huge inequalities in the country and the need to safeguard those who are the most vulnerable. More than 310 organisations have endorsed the coalition of which the SAFSC is one. Together, they are organising food distribution through networks of activists and neighbourhood structures that are emerging. New forms of localized food production and food distribution systems are being developed through the collaboration with small scale farmers and collaborations within and between communities.

Moreover, the SAFSC has used their platform to call for a people's pantry: in-store peoples' pantries as collection sites and solidarity buying during the pandemic for those who cannot afford to buy food themselves (<https://www.safsc.org.za/peoples-pantry-petition-and-call-for-solidarity-buying/>). Consumers can donate to these initiatives and it is suggested that the food can be distributed through the military and police who, instead of being oppressive to the people, can keep the peace by distributing solidarity goods. They have developed a food commons map at their website where people can map household gardens, community gardens, communal kitchens and other food relief initiatives (<https://www.safsc.org.za/food-commons-map/>). There is also a mapping initiative of water stressed communities. The data emerging is being used to put pressure on the government to provide immediate relief to communities in need of water.

Lessons learnt

Shocks like a pandemic like this one shows the extreme vulnerability of the globalized food system. Industrial agriculture is destroying fragile eco-systems putting societies at risk. There is also the link between the virus and the destabilization of wildlife, and there is an increased risk that we will have more pandemics coming from corporate controlled food systems in the future. Finally, climate change is also creating an increased risk for future shocks. Large parts of South Africa's corporate-controlled food system collapsed during the drought and more is expected to come.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to start building a new localized food system. This is already happening in South Africa and other parts in the world. South Africa has been in the grip of global finance for a long time forgetting its democratic commitments to its people. Advancing food sovereignty alternatives that are based on agroecology, solidarity economy, democratic control and the commons, and producing food for need rather than food for profit, will mean that everybody can eat.

There was a degree of mobilization and vibrancy within the civil society even before the pandemic hit but merely on a local level. The pandemic reawakened the social movements and brought back the organisational skills on a national level in a way that have not been seen in many years. The COVID-19 mobilizations has meant an incredible breakthrough in human solidarity and cooperative structures and the understanding that we are one humanity. This, together with the movement power and structural power that has gained momentum with the mobilizations, is something that we need to take with us in the battle for the future and for climate justice.

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8

Cooperation Jackson, community solidarity and mutual aid

📍 **Geo-localisation:** Jackson, Mississippi, United States of America

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🌐 **Contact:**
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Photo courtesy: Cooperation Jackson



Brief description

Cooperation Jackson is a network of worker cooperatives and solidarity economy institutions, like the Fannie Lou Hamer Community Land Trust, based in Jackson, Mississippi. Jackson is the Capital of Mississippi. It is over 80% Black, with the overwhelming majority of the Black population being low wage, underemployed, or unemployed workers.

Cooperation Jackson has three interrelated and interconnected green cooperatives at the core of our cooperative federation. These are 1) Freedom Farms, an urban farming cooperative, 2) the Green Team, a landscaping, organic waste gathering and composting cooperative, and 3) the Community Production Cooperative, which is a small scale manufacturing production, specializing in digital fabrication.

Freedom Farms is an urban farming worker-owned cooperative, based in West Jackson. Freedom Farms currently produces on 2 acres of land in the Fannie Lou Hamer Community Land Trust, held by Cooperation Jackson. Freedom Farms specializes in organic vegetables and fruits, and is expanding into fish via aquaponics. Freedom Farm's produce is primarily being sold in local restaurants and grocery stores and consumed locally.

The Green Team is a yard care and composting worker-owned cooperative. It focuses on gathering and processing organic yard waste into compost to keep it from the landfill and water drainage systems. It also gathers organic materials from grocery stores and restaurants and turns this organic waste into compost that is sold to gardeners, farmers and hardware and home supply stores.

The Community Production Cooperative is a small scale manufacturing cooperative. It utilizes various digital fabrication tools and techniques, including 3D printers, mill machines, etc., to produce a range of products from personal protective equipment, to toys, to t-shirts.

We are also currently developing three additional Cooperatives. 1) A recycling and composting cooperative, called Zero Waste of Jackson, 2) a hauling and trucking cooperative, called Starline Transportation Cooperative, and 3) a community grocery store, called the People's Grocery, which will be located at the Ida B. Wells Plaza.

To address the anti-Black systems of oppression that define our context, Cooperation Jackson's operating strategy and program is intended to accomplish *four fundamental ends*: 1) to place the ownership and control over the primary means of production directly in the hands of the Black working class of Jackson, 2) to build and advance the development of the ecologically regenerative forces of production in Jackson, Mississippi, 3) to democratically transform the political economy of the city of Jackson, and 4) to advance the aims and objectives of the Jackson-Kush Plan, which are to attain self-determination for people of African descent and the radical, democratic transformation of the state of Mississippi.

In response to the Trump administration's failure to protect workers during the pandemic, Cooperation Jackson initiated the People's Strike (Cooperation Jackson,c 2020; Madeson, 2020). The People's Strike is "a united front of radical Black, Brown, Indigenous and allied resistance groups" (Cooperation Jackson,a 2020) who mobilized their collective labor by striking on May Day 2020, and on the first day of every month, demanding the American state and corporations to put people over profit (Cooperation Jackson,b 2020).

Among Cooperation Jackson's list of demands are to protect all frontline workers, protect vulnerable communities such as Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian communities, freeze payments including rent and utilities, cancel student debt, and institute universal basic income (Cooperation Jackson,b 2020). Millions participated in the first strike on May 1, 2020, signifying the start of a critical movement whereby an unprecedented coalition of essential federal workers from Amazon, Whole Foods, FedEx, and Walmart walked out during their lunch break to demand better health and safety conditions (ReelNews, 2020).

Process that led to the community being resilient (Pre-COVID)

Cooperation Jackson is the realization of a vision decades in the making. Their roots lie deep within the struggle for democratic rights, economic justice, self-determination, particularly for Afrikan people in the Deep South, and dignity for all workers. Cooperation Jackson's basic theory of change is centered on the position that organizing and empowering the structurally under and unemployed sectors of

the working class, particularly from Black and Latino communities, to build worker organized and owned cooperatives will be a catalyst for the democratization of our economy and society overall. Cooperation Jackson has developed out of the [Jackson-Kush Plan](#) and has the starting point that the struggles have historical roots and that self-determination and economic democracy cannot be left in the hands of the capitalist state. Cooperation Jackson was thus well-placed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis since a mutual support system had already been put in place

Cooperation Jackson operates with 13 principles that have been maintained through the pandemic:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership	8. Self-Management
2. Democratic Member Control	9. Pay Solidarity
3. Sovereignty of Labor	10. Internal Cooperation
4. Autonomy and Independence	11. External Cooperation
5. Instrumental and Subordinated Character of Capital	12. Education, Training and Information
6. Members' Economic Participation	13. Social Transformation
7. Universal Nature	

The Kuwasi Balagoon Center is the coordinating base for Cooperation Jackson, its overall operations and administrative offices. The primary function of the Balagoon Center is to host the various cooperative development activities of the organization including, community orientation meetings, general membership meetings, working group meetings, trainings and skill shares. The emerging network includes Freedom Farms Cooperative, the Green Team Landscaping Coop and the Community Production Cooperative. In addition to these cooperatives, the Fannie Lou Hamer Community Land Trust has been established with over 30 properties in the surrounding area of our Balagoon Center. Additionally there is the Dambala House division of the Community Production Center which will become the MakerSpace portion of the Center.

How resilience that was established has helped during the pandemic

Cooperation Jackson's resilience program is based on concrete experience. More than anything, Cooperation Jackson's program was based on the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Mississippi on August 29, 2005 and devastated nearly all of the states of the Gulf Coast region, with major damage inflicted upon the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The Hurricane and flood waters killed over 2,500 people and displaced over 2 million. However, the most heart wrenching dimension of this catastrophe was the intentional neglect



of the government in its response to millions of people who were displaced and harmed by the Hurricane. As much of the world witnessed, the US government left thousands of distressed Black people to die in New Orleans in the days and weeks following the Hurricane. What the founders of Hurricane Katrina learned from this experience was that a) we could not rely upon the US government for any critical support, and b) that we are on our own. It is on the basis of this experience that we developed our “Build and Fight” program and strategy.

COVID crisis action

Building on this experience and program, Cooperation Jackson has employed a range of programs and tactics to meet the moment of the crisis of the pandemic over the past two years. Some of these included:

- Mutual Aid: We started providing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), canned goods, and water, primarily to the homeless members of our community, as these are the most vulnerable and without adequate access to health care given its fixation on profit in the US. We started these efforts in March 2020 and they continue until the present.
- Worker Rights Defense: In addition to the launch of People’s Strike, we supported local organizing drives in our community during the height of the pandemic,

including protecting the rights of migrant workers on various farms and factories in central Mississippi, and supporting the organizing campaigns of Nissan and Amazon workers in Mississippi and Alabama.

- Rental Rights: Renters in Jackson started being targeted very early in the pandemic, despite the moratoriums that were instituted by the feds in the spring of 2020. We started engaging in various forms of renters rights education and defense work starting May 2020. We expanded this work into a formal campaign and alliance in the summer of 2020, and we started engaging in formal Rental Assistance Fairs in the fall of 2020 that lasted throughout 2021.
- The Jackson Emergency Response and Mutual Aid Network: We started this Network in the Spring of 2021 to fully operationalize all of the crisis response work we begin in 2020. It consists of training and developing response committees on a neighborhood level throughout the city of Jackson. The work is steadily expanding as the city is confronting the effects of climate change on a more open and consistent basis.

Lessons learnt

Cooperation Jackson, through the People's Strike, recognizes that things won't, nor should they, go back to 'normal' after the pandemic, because 'normal' was never normal to begin with. Instead, Cooperation Jackson strives to build a socialist transition from below, "to carve an alternative, which is based upon democratizing the overall economy, deepening the democratization of society, moving towards more direct means of governance and direct participation, and building on all the various practices of the social and solidarity economy" (Global Tapestry of Alternatives; GTA, 2020).

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