



CONCEPT NOTE ON DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

Introduction

The purpose of this Concept Note is to provide a framework that can help ensure conceptual clarity for the internal discussions on how WoMin understands development alternatives, as well as for the on-going debate on alternatives in the context of the multiple crises facing African countries and their peoples, including most recently the COVID 19 pandemic. It is also meant to inform the upcoming process of developing an African Ecofeminist Just Development Alternatives Charter that WoMin is leading.

The Concept Note draws heavily on the various documents produced by WoMin, and builds on the outcomes of the processes that WoMin has initiated in relation to the theme of development alternatives. It starts with a short review of the historical background to what has been known as “alternative development”, “development alternatives” or ‘alternatives”, with a focus on women’s positioning and contributions to the emergence of alternative development proposals, including WoMin’s analysis and views.

The following section examines the key features of the new options that are meant to be a counter-current of thought to challenge the hegemonic orthodox development paradigm, and achieve transformations of the core logic of the capitalist development system. Climate justice and just transition are the major alternative concepts discussed in this section.

The closing section presents WoMin's political position, initiatives and support to the promotion of alternatives. It also highlights some of the present challenges and possibilities for the systemic alternatives coming forward, together with the systemic reforms required for building new values-based institutions and enabling democratic transformation from an ecofeminist perspective.

1. Historical background to the concept of Alternatives

1.1. The genesis of alternative development ¹

In the early 1970s, the mounting criticism of the economic emphasis of the development paradigm and narrowness of the linear economic development concepts had brought about new insights and concepts aiming at a shift away from the paradigm of economic growth in the development theoretical arena. In particular, the criticism questioned the belief that one discipline – economy – is able to address all the concerns of human societies, and the consequent neglect of a series of problematic subjects - political, social, cultural, environmental and ethical issues related to human well-being - that required new perspectives and critical contributions from different disciplines. Based on this standpoint, a number of unconventional development proposals and set of practices were crafted and gathered under the broad category of “Alternative Development”.

Some of the first contributions have been key to bringing onto the table for international debate issues closely related to human well-being such as the rapid changes to the natural environment, the limits to growth, the need for new global ethics and new economic order; and the questioning of the western ‘developed’ lifestyle. Over the course of the next four decades, a large number of diverse points of view and themes ranging from being moderately to openly contradictory of the main tenets of the development paradigm of economic growth has joined the set of Alternative Development proposals. These include namely inequality in access, use, and distribution of land, water or food; the promotion of democratic pluralism and citizen participation; the empowerment of vulnerable communities; along with explicit anti-capitalist schemes; communitarian initiatives; alternative consumption paths; and cultural critics.

¹ O. Castillo Ospina, 2017 - Alternative Development is no longer an alternative – Post-development could be. A. Escobar, 2018 – Farewell to Development – An interview with Arturo Escobar, GTI.

Specific alternative development concepts became widespread and integrated into the global development agenda from the 1990s to the 2010s, owing to the support of the global development and financial institutions including the World Bank, OECD, UNDP, European Commission, and the IISD, which strongly promoted development concepts such as participatory development, human development, gender and development, territorial development, integrated rural development, and sustainable development, to name just a few.

It appeared that this integration of the main alternative development concepts into the mainstream economic development paradigm led to cosmetic renovation of some of its logic, discourses and practices, without challenging and transforming its essence and structure. A typical illustration of this co-optation process by the mainstream development institutions is the Gender concept, which has been stripped progressively from its political essence as it became the bedrock of the Gender and Development theory and practices.

In the end, the very idea of 'alternative' has also been subject to criticism and spurred an on-going debate among intellectuals, practitioners and activists alike. In particular, there was a mounting resistance in the Global South against the prevailing definition of modernization in the Global North, based on a radical critique of the hegemonic capitalist development model which has been articulated by thinkers and activists such as Arturo Escobar in Latin America, and Samir Amin in Africa.

As these critics have underlined, at this point, the main challenge is to move from 'Alternative Development' to 'Alternatives to Development', which raises the central question about imagining new options and the kind of knowledge that is considered valid, and hence on the epistemological power of this knowledge in the definition of real alternatives to the hegemonic understanding of development concepts and practices.

The shift from alternative development to alternatives TO development / development alternatives requires a deeper understanding of the dominant ideology of development, and a deconstructing and redefining of its main assumptions. As an example, these include the assumption of "the individual as the central agent and beneficiary of development", through which "Western nations infused their ideology of development— including private property, secularism, and anthropocentrism—into traditional, communitarian ways of being" (Escobar, 2018).

Most importantly, moving from alternative development to alternatives TO development at this critical juncture must take into consideration climate change and the global ecological crisis, which ‘change everything’, as Naomi Klein put it. In this regard, the continued expansion of fossil fuel extraction, in the midst of the climate crisis, has engendered some of the most radical activism within grassroots communities affected by the extraction and dispossession perpetrated by carbon corporations, especially by African and indigenous women (Bassey 2012; Klein 2014). Calls to keep ‘oil in the ground, coal in the hole’ have been heard the world over, along with demands for climate justice and resistance against UN false solutions, carbon corporations and states promoting fossil economies.

1.2. Women’s experiences and feminist contributions

Feminist scholars and activists have been among the most vocal in providing a critical analysis of the effects of mainstream development policies, programmes and strategies from the vantage point of poor women in the so-called Third World. They claimed for “women’s voices to enter the definition of development and the making of policy choices”, and made a number of critical demands based on women’s lived experiences for fundamental change in development orientation, such as the breaking down of the patriarchal structures of women’s subordination; recognition of the centrality of women’s work to development processes; national liberation from colonial and neo-colonial domination and national self-reliance, at least in basic requirements such as food and energy sources, education, health care and water provision; and greater control over the activities of multinational corporations (DAWN, 1987)².

Members of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) network from the Global South “challenged the assumption that the problem was simply that women did not participate enough in an otherwise “benevolent” process of development and growth. The movement rejected the narrow definition of progress as being economic growth and contended that consumerism and indebtedness are key factors in the crises that have aggravated the living standards of women in the South. It also criticised the over-exploitation of women through being “integrated into development” and used to offset the public spending cuts demanded by the North as part of structural adjustment.”³

² S. Gita and C. Grown, 1987 – Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions – Third World Women’s Perspectives.

³file:///C:/Users/Zo/OneDrive%20%20Womin%20Alliance%20Trust/Documents/Development%20alternatives/beyonddevelopment_critiques.pdf

DAWN women also criticised the systematic contempt for traditional institutions and attitudes in “underdeveloped” countries as a form of continuing colonialism manifested by development policies.

Post-colonial feminists of the 1990s denounced the Northern ethnocentric trend to homogenise the concept of “Third World women” as one group of development beneficiaries, which implies that the only development possible is that of the “First World”, thereby hiding all experiences of resistance, considering them marginal (Portolés, 2004). To counter this trend, feminist solidarity based on the recognition of cultural differences is proposed as a source of transformation (Mohanty).

For other post-colonial feminists, development is the next stage of the civilising mission of imperialism in the neocolonial period (Spivak, 1999). Their critique of the world neoliberal economic system underlines that “developing countries are united not only by the common link of extensive environmental destruction, but also by the complicity between those who hold local power - and try to carry out “development” - and the forces of global capital”⁴. They denounce the colonial and patriarchal systems of domination underpinning the control over reproduction in the poor countries, which makes the poor women of the South responsible for the exhaustion of world resources, thereby diverting attention from the consequences of overconsumerism in the North, and providing development with a justification for “aid”.

The ecofeminist writer Maria Mies also contends that “a woman’s body has become the third colony, additional to colonised states and subjected nature”, while for Vandana Shiva “development” is in fact a Western colonisation strategy, rooted in domination over women and nature”⁵. According to those ecofeminist thinkers who have played a central role for discerning the way towards alternatives to development, women’s concept and lived practice of ‘development’ emphasise sustainability, dignity and well-being of people and the planet, and are in direct contradiction with hegemonic ideas about development.

Echoing these ecofeminist insights in the contemporary period, African feminist activists in Africa ‘are of the view that many of the development perspectives of African states arise from the dominant discourse, policies and programmes of multilateral bodies and financial institutions such as the development banks, all substantively influenced by powerful transnational corporations” (WoMin 2017). Reiterating feminist concerns raised since the end of the 1980s, they underline

⁴ Ditto

⁵ Ditto

“the dangers that arise when corporates and states collude with the elite in local communities to undermine community struggles for development sovereignty, that is their rights to pursue their own ideas about development” (WoMin 2017).

1.3. WoMin’s analysis and views

Through different fora and processes since its creation in 2013, WoMin has provided its analysis of the core nature of the problem with development, including an examination of extractivism and its consequences. WoMin contends that Africa and other parts of the global South are subject to another round of deepening colonisation as corporations and their host governments in the Global North and parts of the Global South chase the untapped and highly profitable frontiers of Africa’s mineral and natural wealth. This new era of natural resource colonisation is presented as the opportunity for Africa’s Rising by multilateral and intergovernmental bodies.

This gives impetus to what WoMin calls an extractivist development model (or extractivism), which sees economies of poor countries subject to the logic of large scale extraction, with no value addition, of usually non-renewable natural resources under highly unequal and exploitative conditions. This is just another link in the chain of perpetual colonisation and exploitation of Africa and its peoples. Mining and the extractives economy in Africa (and elsewhere in the developing world) is a definitive expression of imperialist exploitation of the periphery for the benefit of the centre – the triad of North America, Europe and Japan. Capital in the BRICS block has, in the past two decades, begun to play a similar role in the extractives economy in Africa but they are located differently in the global order and some of the ‘benefits’ of accumulation are therefore distributed back to the centre.

WoMin argues that mining and the extractivist economy is violent – whole local ecosystems in water bodies, forests and land are destroyed, communities are forcibly removed and their livelihoods destroyed, and the labour of workers and women is violently exploited. Geographic areas subject to extractives activities are militarised (occupied by the state military) and/or securitised (where private security companies ‘mimic’ the state military) to repress resistance and guarantee the social conditions necessary for extraction to continue unhindered. In this process, communities are subjected to threat and intimidation, as well as physical violence, including assassinations. Activists defending land, rivers, forests and the oceans are among the most at risk in the world today. In 2017 alone, 207 environmental defenders were killed – the deadliest year to date.

WoMin locates the multiple crises – economic, social, ecological and climate crises facing Africa and its people in this extractivist development system founded on production for profit which places nature in service of the minority of the world's people. This extractivist development system meets patriarchy which subjects women to extreme exploitation of their labour and bodies, and often to sexualised violence. From the Niger Delta to the oil fields of Uganda to the diamond fields of Marange, Zimbabwe – women from affected communities endure sexualised violence, sexual harassment, threats of rape and rape by the military and private security.

Crises arise from mining and other extractives activities in three main ways:

Firstly, through the **exploitation of cheap labour** in territories subject to the logic of extractivism. While there is a high level of automation occurring in the mining sector in some parts of the developed world, mining is motored by cheap labour throughout the global South. Workers are paid low wages, work in extremely dangerous conditions and have a high risk of falling ill after years or decades of exposure to dust and chemicals. See [silicosis settlement](#). Migrancy undermines how labour is organised for subsistence food production in rural sending areas, and ill health amongst mineworkers drains the family fiscus and makes new demands on the unpaid labour of women and girl children.

Secondly, through **dispossession of the peasantry and the working classes** of land, water, forests, fisheries and minerals with no or minimal compensation. This dispossession always entails violence, lies, corruption and co-optation of local elites like traditional leaders. Dispossession also occurs through the polluting effects of mining activities, such as a polluted water body or river which dispossesses communities of their ability to use this water for household consumption or food production. This is a central contributor to the crisis of social reproduction. Capitalists expropriate “so many of the fruits” of women’s labours that the reproduction of labour power at household level is undertaken with increasing difficulty and challenge. Federici (2009) talks about world regions marked for “near-zero-reproduction” because they are believed to be redundant or inappropriate to the requirements of capital.

Social reproduction - “Processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the labouring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis. It involves the provision of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety and health care, along with the development and transmission of knowledge, social values and cultural practices, and involves a range of different kinds of work – mental, manual and emotional – aimed at providing the historically and socially,

as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation.” (Laslett and Brenner, 2006)

Thirdly, through the **externalised social and ecological costs** of an extractivist mode of production. These costs are borne at the site of extraction through the pollution of water, air and soil; along the transportation chain through pollution and the high carbon emissions of pipelines, the trucking industry, and the freight sector; as well as through processing and beneficiation which consume large quantities of energy and water. Ecosocialists speak of capitalism as an ‘economy of unpaid costs’ with nature treated as a free or cheap input or ‘sink’ for costs of production and unpaid labour as the absorber of costs and the rehabilitation of damaged nature.

Women in peasant and working-class communities carry the double burden of oppression arising from their location in the periphery of the world, which is subject to ongoing neo-colonial capitalist exploitation, and by patriarchy which serves the interests of capital and all men. However, women are at the epicentre of resistance to dispossessions of their land, water, forests and way of life and in this defence are proposing the necessary development alternatives that are needed to stave off the worst of the coming catastrophe and adapt to a world radically transformed by a changed climate.

2. What are Development Alternatives ?

New ways for human societies to produce, access, use and distribute goods and services have been envisaged over the last few decades, however, certain fundamental features of the dominant development system have not changed : global inequality remains severe, both between and within nations, while environmental devastation and human dislocation, driven by political as well as ecological factors, continue to worsen. These critical issues provide clear evidence of the urgent need for genuinely transformative ways to construct the intellectual and political post-development project, and to imagine the elements of alternative post-capitalist visions and frameworks.

2.1. Core Elements of Development Alternatives

A concrete vision of the world and society based on core values and principles⁶

⁶ See J. Corck, n.d., The Climate Crisis and a ‘Just Transition’ in South Africa: An Eco-Feminist-Socialist Perspective.

The divorce with capitalist concepts is an obvious starting point that recalls the socialist principles of collective ownership and democratic control of production. While an alternative vision takes cognisance of the history of socialism whereby “productivist methods, both in industry and agriculture, were imposed by totalitarian means while ecologists were marginalised or eliminated” (Lowy 2006: 296), the ‘reclaiming’ of this alternative vision “redefines the path and goal of socialism within an ecological and democratic framework”⁷ that is also ethical and feminist, and anchored in relations of reciprocity, cooperation and solidarity emerging from the new social formations at the grassroots level (Cock 2018). Moreover, such relations pertain to an alternative conception of nature that emphasises respect, cooperation, sharing and an acknowledgment that humans exist as part of an ecological community.

An alternative vision of the world and society must build on core values and principles standing in contrast with neoliberal values of materialism, individualism, economic growth and efficiency, and having the required transformative capacity. Such core values and principles include :

- satisfaction of people’s needs, including women’s caring and provisioning needs for social reproduction, together with social justice and equality;
- social and localized ownership and control of productive resources;
- a non-Western style and more participatory form of democracy;
- commitment to collective empowerment rather than individual advancement;
- confidence in the capacity of both men and women to reflect and work together to create a more just and equal world;
- supporting the co-operative social forms involving relations of mutual sharing, support, reciprocity and cooperation.
- rethinking economic growth and extractivism in light of the destructive damages to the earth’s ecosystems.

The ideas and concepts that can bind progressive anti-capitalist and feminist movements together across sectors and borders are also potential alternatives. Key among these are climate justice and the just transition.

Climate justice⁸

⁷ Belem Ecosocialist Declaration, 2007

⁸ WoMin 2019 - If another world is possible, who is doing the imagining? Building an ecofeminist development alternative in a time of deep systemic crisis.



WoMin's work centres the looming climate and ecological catastrophe in Africa, its links to extractivist development and its gendered impacts. In 2015, WoMin began convening gatherings of activists of different organisations in the region, calling for building 'popular alliances against Big Coal' and a new form of development 'that recognises and supports the work of care and reproduction' (WoMin 2015: 2). It pointed out that women's cheap and often unpaid labour subsidises the profits of polluting coal corporations.

Together with climate and environmental justice organisations, WoMin has criticised the climate negotiations and the false technological and market-based solutions being proposed ahead of the needed commitments to stop fossil fuels extraction and energy generation; radically reshape production; and put in place the systems necessary for circular economies enabling the very necessary recycling and reuse of materials.

WoMin supports climate justice as the way to address the crises in so far as it demands that the unjust capitalist system be dismantled to take care of the planet and provide reparations and redress for historical violations. Climate justice also starts to propose ways in which the climate debt can be paid, including the idea of a basic income grant which deals with future joblessness. The expanding movement for climate justice and a just transition has also brought to the fore systemic alternatives - in response to the interconnected crises of the earth system, food system, energy system, economic system, etc. - such as food sovereignty, climate jobs, public transport, socially owned renewable energy, basic income grants, rights of nature, 'living well', ubuntu, commoning (of water, land, cyberspace), zero waste, solidarity economies among others.

But WoMin is concerned that the climate justice concept and movement has generally failed to respond to the interests of workers, who stand to lose their jobs and livelihoods in the fossil fuels, industrial agriculture and other carbon emitting sectors, and does not deeply address the relationship between patriarchy and climate injustice. Therefore, WoMin considers that it is our task to bring women's voices and alternatives into the climate justice organising.

This is because women's views and perspectives on the problems confronting us and their possible solutions, as well as their often-undervalued innovations, have an important role to play in showing the way towards people's solutions to the climate crisis. At the same time, women have confronted the prevailing way of thinking with holistic alternatives that can help to build a genuinely transformative vision for a just transition based on sustainability of life.

Building a just transition from an ecofeminist perspective

The concept of just transition is frequently reduced to decarbonisation, that is to a set of technical issues centred on moving away from fossil fuels as our main source of energy, reducing carbon emissions and creating a new energy regime in order to address the climate crisis (Cock 2015). But the just transition is about more than just the climate crisis and the carbon emissions, because the ecological crisis is broader than a climate crisis, and is intersecting with many other systemic crises.

Focusing exclusively on emissions risks overlooking the many different forms of extraction that are causing environmental disasters, destroying both decent livelihoods and healthy ecosystems, undermining peoples' rights, and perpetuating inequality and the oppression of women. Also, treating climate change as the only issue endorses the false technological and market-based solutions that deepen other forms of environmental and social crisis in the name of addressing climate change.

Just transition is not about an industrialist blind rush to “green” or “clean” energies

A just transition is mindful of the threats involved in replacing fossil fuel-based energy with renewable energy, because this will not involve a significant reduction in energy production and overconsumption by the minority of urban and industrialised cities dwellers. Instead, this will bring about the exponential expansion of mining of a wide variety of rare earth metals and other minerals in the global South, mostly including cobalt, nickel, lithium, aluminum, and silver. For example, the World Bank predicts a growth of more than 900% in global demand of lithium between 2017 and 2050, while the demand for cobalt is anticipated to increase nearly six-fold over the same period⁹. The exploitation of such unconventional minerals, which often occur in remote and biodiverse sites, comes with massive environmental and social costs, as evidenced in the case of the DRC where their extraction fuels the violation of human rights, pollutes the environment, and destroys biodiversity and wildlife¹⁰.

⁹<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/07/18/clean-energy-transition-will-increase-demand-for-minerals-says-new-world-bank-report>

<https://bigthink.com/technology-innovation/renewable-energy-dirty-mining>

¹⁰<https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/viewpoint/a-green-transition-or-an-expansion-of-extraction/>

Instead, a just transition is a holistic process that involves a fundamental re-thinking of the kind of relationship with nature that can sustain our livelihoods and both human and non-human life in the long term. It is a structural transformation of an economic system that is built on the plundering of resources and the exploitation of people, to one that is structured to supporting care and regeneration of territories, and upholding people's rights and dignity.

Feminist movements have exposed the roots of our destructive relationship with nature and the way of thinking that emphasises patriarchal views of 'power over' our environment. Indigenous communities around the world are engaged in ongoing struggles to protect their ways of life from capitalist expansion, and to defend a vision of an alternative relationship to nature. Traditional rural communities around the world are fighting for their food sovereignty and struggling for agrarian reforms that would allow them to practice livelihoods that don't depend on energy intensive industrial systems. These struggles offer important examples of possible systemic alternatives. The knowledge and practices of indigenous and peasant women, and other traditional communities must therefore be seen as a critical source of knowledge and one key building block towards a just transition.

Just transition is a class and a gender issue

A just transition also involves a re-thinking of our relationship with each other, and the need to recognise the many mutually reinforcing structural oppressions at play in our energy and economic systems, and the unequal distribution of their costs and benefits between and within countries. We must acknowledge the different historical and political situations in different countries, and pay attention to new and emerging geopolitical dynamics, including the risk that the fossil-driven conflicts of the 20th and early 21st centuries may be replaced by the scramble for rare minerals in Africa and elsewhere - or by water politics and conflicts -, leading to similar violent processes of dispossession, exploitation, resource wars, and militarisation.

A just transition is about equity and redistribution. In this regard, some important dimensions of the alternatives such as food sovereignty, commoning, post growth/ zero growth, zero consumption, circular economies (reuse/recycle) are very particular to the developed world and the wealthy/middle classes in the developed and the developing world. This brings us to the idea of the Global South and North, along with the notion about historical responsibility for ecological and

social damages, in a context where there are so many poor and dispossessed peoples in the traditional Global North and elites in the traditional Global South. In particular, the lack of energy access for many of the world's poorest people is just one dimension of a much broader set of inequities and injustices linked with the systemic causes of the climate crisis.

In order to address this issue, “the rapid transformation of the energy system within the timeframe for 1.5°C requires reframing energy as a public good, and for a global plan to build energy alternatives. A people-owned decentralised energy system remains the only viable option that can meet energy demands whilst also addressing energy poverty, both in the global North and South. Democratic ownership models are an essential part of the new energy systems needed.”¹¹ Moreover, ecofeminist activists and researchers need to imagine and promote new post-extractivist options in the Global South and post-growth options in the Global North based on greater equity and justice in the global redistribution of wealth, energy access and resource consumption to establish an ecological and social balance (Acosta, 2017).

The patriarchal power structures that sustain the capitalist fossil fuel economy have systematically excluded women and their views and exploited their bodies. Even as their insights and perspectives on the issues about a just transition have often been suppressed, women are at the forefront of resistances, defending their rights and taking the lead in developing proposals for a just transition. If the energy transition is allowed to continue along the patriarchal, elitist, extractive, technology-focused path imposed by the capitalist fossil fuel economy, the transition could be used as an excuse to perpetuate gendered injustices and epistemicide¹², whilst a rich repository of possible systemic alternatives proposed by women would be ignored.

Just transition is an anti-racist and anti-violence framework

Racist ideologies and practices sustain historical and persisting patterns of inequality at both global and national level. Racialised and poor peoples disproportionately bear the social and environmental costs of the climate crisis, from poor black to indigenous and peasant frontline communities in countries of

¹¹ https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/Post-Extractivist_Transition_WEB_0.pdf

¹² EPISTEMICIDE is the systemic destruction of knowledge systems. This has occurred on a massive scale as an integral part of the violence and imposition of European colonialism.

the global South which are systematically exploited by the neo-colonial and patriarchal extractivist system.

In the era of the climate crisis, these dynamics become even more visible in the resurgence of 'environmental racism,' in the form of racist migration policies that aim to block the flight of climate refugees from the so-called 'sacrifice zones' of modern capitalism. Racist dynamics can easily be reproduced in a 'green' energy economy driven by TNCs that dispossess peoples of their lands and resources, overexploit nature and women's labour, and divert the profits to a wealthy minority in the Global North while poor and racialised communities in the Global South shoulder the social and environmental costs. The racist elements of the current economic system must be a core target of the struggle of the movement for a just transition.

Militarisation and securitisation of extractives sites and war are well known strategies employed by the centre to repress resistance and to guarantee exclusive access to these scarce natural resources in the periphery. And as scarcity increases – in the context of a growing ecological crisis, climate change, and an ever-increasing world population – controls that are increasingly violent will become more commonplace. Already, activists defending land, rivers, forests and the oceans are among the most at risk in the world today. In 2017 alone, 207 environmental defenders were killed – the deadliest year to date (WoMin 2018). Therefore, tackling violence and repression cannot be divorced from addressing urgent environmental questions, and from the struggle for a just transition which must amplify demands to ensure context-specific protection measures for environmental and human rights defenders and social leaders being threatened and killed for their opposition to extractivist projects.

Peoples' power and organising from below

In many places, there is a growing trend towards authoritarian or right-wing governments that are undermining the rights of communities and people on the frontlines of struggles. Such environmental and resource struggles are generally intertwined with broader attacks on democracy and people's rights. In such a context, a just transition is about a democracy that protects people's civil and political rights and freedoms, as well as basic economic, social and cultural rights such as land rights, rights to food and water; etc.

A just transition draws on concepts like energy democracy and energy sovereignty to promote a vision of a world where people have access to and control over the resources they need to lead dignified lives, and have a political role in making

decisions about how those resources are used, and by whom. Peoples' control over their natural resources, utilities, public services, and governments, as well as regulatory measures to control corporate power, are critical.

Building peoples' power from below is a core element of the just transition agenda. The challenge to power at the centre of a just transition is a commitment to ensuring the equitable participation of all people in governing the use of energy and other resources; and, to transforming decision-making and accountability about access to and control over natural resources; resource use; public services and infrastructure, and other key issues in a participatory and democratic way. People who have been most marginalised and exploited by the current development system should co-determine the pathways towards a just transition, and play a central role in decision making and agenda setting. This includes women in working-class, indigenous and other racialised groups, who must be provided space in the just transition arena to articulate their vision and alternatives in the defence of their lands and lives.

2.2. Ecofeminist structural development alternatives

From the start, WoMin has committed to supporting development alternatives that are eco-feminist, post-extractivist and transformative. Since its launch in October 2013, WoMin has been addressing the question of 'post-extractivist women-centred progressive and ecologically responsive African alternatives to destructive extractivism.'¹³ In 2016, a regional dialogue *Beyond Extractives: Deepening African Feminist Development Alternatives* advanced these efforts. In 2017 and 2018, considerable capacity had been invested in researching the renewable energy landscape in Africa, both at the level of governance and civil society, and building the partnerships and capacity to start to build out just renewable energy alternatives which will meet the needs and interests of the majority of African women.

WoMin and its allies are crafting, in alliance and in solidarity, a concept and practice of Ecofeminism which is rooted in the African context. Ecofeminist theory has been a source of understanding for WoMin's work, but most importantly, it is women activists on the ground who have been the lodestar guiding WoMin's thinking and political strategies. In WoMin's years of work to support women's resistances to the violent encroachments of mining, oil and gas extraction and large-scale infrastructure, including mega-energy projects, WoMin can testify to

¹³ See WoMin's 5 year strategy - see WoMin website

the bravery and resoluteness with which African women and their communities have defended their land, water, homes and their very right to exist.

In this defence, women are protecting their seeds, their autonomy, their forms of production, their community relations, and very importantly their interdependent relationship with nature without which they would not survive. In their defence lies women's proposition for just development. They are saying NO to the deeply destructive extractivist model of development, and YES to the REAL and living alternatives in the ways they produce food, conserve and steward natural resources, and take care of their families and communities (WoMin 2020). Some of the alternatives WoMin and its allies have been discussing and proposing are¹⁴:

- food sovereignty through an agro-ecological low input model of agriculture;
- people's sovereignty over their own development, through the concept of consent for women in the global South, which gives credence and space to lived development alternatives at the local level;
- energy sovereignty through decentralized collective forms of renewable energy under the control of communities and women specifically, and an end to the extraction and burning of all fossil fuels;
- small-scale low impact forms of extraction, under collective forms of ownership, subject to local and regional priorities;
- participatory inclusive democracy at all levels of decision-making which recognizes women's central role in development, their different needs and the requirement for full and ongoing consent by affected communities and women in particular;
- respect and support for systems in which resources are 'owned' and managed by collectives and groups, and the active expansion of common properties as a critical part of the fight against privatization and financialisation; and
- degrowth and a rapid transition to a low consumption lifestyle on the part of the rich and middle classes in the traditional global North and South.

Women's social struggles across the Global South also propose alternative activities for the local economy, such as: new environmental laws (biodiversity defence, protection of territories, creation of natural reserves and parks, support to productive activities and of sustainable livelihood (family agriculture and fishing, community tourism, craftsmanship, etc), creation of cooperatives, respect to cultures and traditional ways of life, protection for indigenous territories communities, etc.

¹⁴ Women Building Power: exploring our initial ideas about an African ecofeminist approach to campaigning. Discussion document

Is there a place for extractives in WoMin's concept of a development alternative / alternative to development?

The relationship between a just transition and the extraction of minerals, and linking extraction to recycling and reuse – the circular economy – are critical questions for WoMin to explore and answer in its work. Many organisations engaged in the climate and ecological justice and just transition movements are firmly opposed to all forms of extractives, even artisanal mining.

The basic position WoMin has adopted is that we are not against all forms of extractives – along with the post-extractivist positioning, and reflecting the reality of the many hundreds of millions of Africans dependent on artisanal mining. We have held the view that an extractive sector that is established as a need by democratic national states acting for the genuine 'common good'; which serves local and regional economies, where local communities give consent and have full benefit and socialised control; and which are central to local livelihoods should be supported. The planned research and position paper on artisanal mining will be a good starting point for answering the above questions, which require further analysis.

WoMin holds the analysis that as African women, the reproductive workers, lead blockades of large-scale destructive development projects, they are defending a living alternative and proposing a different future. The resistance is based on their own endogenous concept and practice of development centred upon protection of the commons of land, water, forest, and air; on a way of producing which is in harmony with nature upon which life rests; on a collective solidarity and sharing between peoples; and a genuine deep custodianship of the earth for other species and future generations based on world views that do not place people 'above' nature but instead see human beings as an integral part of nature, existing in an interdependent relationship. And so, the alternatives capitalist patriarchy asserts does not exist are alive and well in many African communities to be built on further and supported.

Exploring different scales of ecofeminist alternatives – from the micro to the meso and the macro levels

Many rich alternatives already exist at the micro and meso levels in the ways in which peasant farmers, women and indigenous people produce, exchange, care-take and regenerate our natural resources; nurture our families and communities; cooperate in our communities, etc. Our task is to document, make visible, affirm and support these existing alternatives. Some of these alternatives will need to be extended through learning from exchanges, collaborations with

scientists and researchers, and our own innovations. Other alternatives will need to be imagined and, where possible, tried out in practice.

Many of these alternatives were taken from Africa, such as the solidarity economy and collective solutions to labour and resources like seeds and money, and must be recognised and built on. Chief among these are the critical alternatives based on “the African worldview and philosophy known as Ubuntu in Southern Africa” (Terreblanche, 2018: 168) which is largely practised across sub-Saharan Africa (Chuwa 2014). As an African ethical paradigm, ubuntu is not compatible with capitalist relations (Caromba 2014), private property (Van Norren 2014) and pervasive inequality (Cornell & Van Marle 2015), and demands an activism of solidarity and decolonisation in the face of what Vishwas Satgar terms an ‘imperial ecocide’ (Satgar, 2018). Ubuntu’s ecological ethics has generated ‘the radical notion of post-extractivism, that is, leaving behind for future generations the fossil fuels and minerals that drive destructive capitalist accumulation and its crises, notably climate change” (Terreblanche, 2018: 169).

As happened in Latin America with other proposals adopting some of the positions and cosmovisions of indigenous peoples, including the rights of nature and the worldview of ‘buen vivir’ ‘(a Spanish word that refers to a good life based on a social and ecological expanded vision)’¹⁵, there is certainly a significant African archive of endogenous ideas, practices and political concepts that lie in tradition as well as in anti-colonial struggles and post-colonial transformations from which we should draw inspiration and guidance. In addition to Ubuntu, these include indigenous knowledge systems; communal tenure/indigenous land rights; social labour cooperation; along with African socialist experiments such as Nyerere’s Ujamaa programme; and, Pan-Africanism as it has been articulated in the Lagos Plan of Action.

WoMin argues that the majority of women in Africa, who carry the burden of the climate and ecological crisis and who have paradoxically contributed the least to the problem, are practicing and proposing, in their resistance, a development alternative which all humanity must respect and echo if we and the planet are to survive. Thus, WoMin and its allies will engage in building an African Charter process with women in communities, people’s organisations and movements. In answering the question ‘what is the world you want?’ or ‘what do women in your community want from development’, women would be empowered to lead the construction of the content of the Charter and articulate a radical statement of a different world they are struggling for.

¹⁵ E.Gudynas, n.d. Debates on development and its alternatives in Latin America: a brief heterodox guide, p.35.

In parallel with the African Women Charter building process, WoMin will also build on lessons learned from women's organising in times of crisis to identify and advocate for systemic and/or structural reforms that are needed to achieve meaningful, sustainable and equitable change towards ecofeminist and just development alternatives. Some of these systemic/structural reforms have already emerged in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic, which has exposed deep structural problems and the crisis of the essential social services, especially healthcare systems, stemming from extractivist patriarchal capitalism that continues to eviscerate African States and their ability to serve and protect their citizens.

At the macro level, we believe that systemic reforms to expand the role of the State and reorient its relations with people are key to taking us in the direction of the system change and transformative politics needed to make public policies work for all African peoples, and to ensure that African States "put forth the value of every human being regardless of status, over and beyond any logic of profit-making, domination or power capture."¹⁶

Such systemic reforms include among others agrarian reforms to ensure respect for customary and indigenous land rights, and restore lands dispossessed through colonial and neocolonial land-grabs; legal reforms to ensure access to water as a fundamental right, and to prioritise water for domestic and agricultural use over extractive and industrial activities; regulatory reforms to devolve the responsibility for the management of subsoil resources to regional, local and/or customary governance structures; and, policy reforms to promote non-extractivist economies, diversify economic activity and the public revenue base¹⁷.

3. Next steps – elements of the proposed roadmap

The work ahead involves several activities in the short and longer term.

In the short term, our internal discussion on this concept note will serve to support WoMin staff to think through what we mean by development alternatives and construct appropriate approaches, methods and tools for dialogues and visioning processes with women, including the development of local plans. After

¹⁶ Excerpt from the Open Letter from African intellectuals to leaders over COVID-19

¹⁷ https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/Post-Extractivist_Transition_WEB_0.pdf

our internal discussion, this thought piece about what we mean by 'ecofeminist development alternatives' will also be discussed with close allies.

In parallel with the preparations for the planned Charter Building process, the matters/questions to explore further in another iteration include

- the relationship between a just transition and the extraction of minerals ;
- linking extraction to recycling and reuse – the circular economy –.

Research will be undertaken into the existing literature and oral tradition on African development experiments and proposals to answer the central question *'Is there an 'African' alternative to development?'*

A knowledge management system will be established to document the research findings, along with a repository of stories, photos, videos, maps, narratives, lists of demands etc. which will inform the charter building as an ongoing process of construction.

The identified African alternatives to the dominant development model and its narrative will be acknowledged and celebrated through conferences with like-minded academics and an African forum of movements and solidarity organisations; a book; and, a programme of learning and solidarity exchanges that involves a wide process of dialogue and exchange with women from across the region on the findings of the research in order to make collective imagining and contributions to an African development alternative from a feminist perspective.

A methodology, approaches and tools will be developed and piloted for documenting alternative local practices and experiments; dialogue with women and their communities; Charter building; local organising; visioning and building alternative development plans and living local alternatives to support livelihoods.

We also need to identify other formations we should ally with, and develop platforms for convergence between eco-socialists, eco-feminists, indigenous peoples, social movements, non-capitalist social experiments and other peripheral groups, especially in the global South.

In the longer term, we will focus on building a conceptual framework for an Ecofeminist cost benefit analysis of extractives projects and mobilise appropriate institutions, including at least one University, to buy in this work



An ecofeminist impact assessment in one campaign site will also be undertaken, using the Sendou project impact assessment framework with an adjusted frame and indicators.