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COMMENTARY FROM THE U.S. AGROECOLOGY SUMMIT 2023

A declaration of commitments toward agroecology pluralities: A critical gaze on the U.S. Agroecology Summit 2023

Agroecology Summit 'Outside Empire' Subgroup

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Introduction

The U.S. Agroecology Summit was held May 22–25, 2023, at the Elms Hotel in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. One of the first agroecology convenings of its kind, the summit was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and organized by researchers across prominent U.S. universities. The gathering brought together scholars, researchers, farmers, activists, and movement leaders to create a "roadmap for agroecological research in the U.S." This declaration, written, edited, and affirmed by us, the undersigned subgroup of summit participants, aims to archive and communicate the challenges we grappled with during and after this gathering while also advocating for an unwavering commitment toward agroecological pluralities.

Like all lands commonly known as the United States, the location for the convening, the Elms Hotel, is on stolen Indigenous land. The rolling hills of Northwest Missouri where the convening took place are the historical hunting, foraging, and fishing grounds, and farming areas of the region's original peoples, which include the Ioway, Missouria, Osage, Otoe, and Sac and Fox nations. Through a series of treaties in the 1800s, all tribes were forcibly and systematically removed from what became Missouri to make way for white European settlers. None of the aforementioned tribes currently have a land base in Missouri, nor are there any federally or state-recognized tribes remaining in the state. Approximately 50 miles to the west and across the Missouri River, the state of

Kansas is now home to the nearest federally recognized Tribal Nations: the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Prairie Band Potawatomie, and Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska. There was no representation from these tribes or any other local or regional Black, Indigenous, or communities of color in the summit's organizing committee. Subsequently, the summit's conceptual framings, design, and decision-making lacked grounding in the histories, ethics, and practices of local Indigenous and other regionally based frontline communities.

Early conference planning documents state, "A special focus is being given to ensuring and supporting the *participation* of leaders in the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) agroecology community [*sic*]. Diverse perspectives would be gathered into dialogue to debate, articulate, and prioritize needs and opportunities for research that can advance agroecology." Inviting "participation" from BIPOC, or frontline, communities after the fact, versus having representation in planning and co-designing from the onset, set the foundation in presumed normativities of the institutional culture of the all-academic, dominantly white planning team. Further, the lack of representation from local and regional frontline communities missed an opportunity for the summit to be representative of, and otherwise emerge from, the uniqueness of place, rather than creating the sensation of being dropped down on top of it. We acknowledge this type of placelessness as the default practice in many national convenings of all disciplines, and yet following the guidance of and adhering to protocols of local communities is presumed practice in many communities. This should become normalized in any discipline engaging in land-based work. Examples of this type of being situated in place already exist in our respective frontline communities, and they provide ways forward for the broader agroecology community to learn from.

Attunement and deference to histories of local/regional people and place from the inception of the summit design may have permitted grounding the research agenda objective of the summit in priorities of land-based communities, and in political reflections on the resistance and resilience of such communities' stewardship and practice. This entails acknowledging their resilience amidst the violent legacies of colonialism, genocide, U.S. Jim Crow segregation, and imperialism. It also requires transcending often-evoked anthropocentric notions such as "agri-food systems" to embrace the holistic ecosystem view of Indigenous bioregions that respect and protect more-than-human beings. Such considerations could have not only presenced the unique teachings of place, but also carefully alerted participants to the realities that Excelsior Springs is a "sundown community" that may have been, and indeed became, an unsafe space for participants of color—where threats through acts of vehicular aggression were experienced by several of the summit's participants of color. Situating all agroecological convenings amidst these stories of place facilitates necessary dialogue on the political ecological contexts in which communities in the global North face and resist oppression. It also enables a more sincere delineation of the challenges to working toward a multiplicity of thriving systems, a critical political economy on community sovereignty work that may not rely on industrial institutions or state actors for its reproduction.

Devoid of this spirit of place and people, the summit presented an epistemological dilemma for many participants who were not attuned to the white, settler-dominated academic frame shaping the convergence. And so this dilemma became more and more amplified with the reversions to an established status quo of academic conference engagement ingrained in dominant models of Western science—which reproduce a culture of dissociation from time and space, conforming to the affirmation of a Western worldview, a culture of whiteness, individuation, and established hierar-

chies. The latter reverberated most vividly by the centering of positivist modalities and its modus operandi. One clear example was the constant redirecting of focus back to the quest for developing research agendas and a roadmap for the USDA. Nonetheless, divergent epistemological perspectives at the Summit galvanized dissenting voices, who thereafter began to find each other and implement interventions toward other ways of knowing and other imaginaries.

Each intervention decentralized conversations by speaking with (and "standing with" as taught and conceptualized by Indigenous scholar Kim Tallbear) the praxes rooted in agrarian histories of diasporic land-based peoples, campesinos, Black and Indigenous communities, and their knowledge systems. The galvanized dissenting voices centered the experiences of community and Indigenous scholarship and inquiry, political mobilization, ceremony, anti-racist and anti-capitalism, feminist, worker movements, and anti-imperialist thought. Indeed, the summit became a microcosm of the tensions that represent the ongoing struggle in occupied Turtle Island "U.S." and around the world in the pursuit of agroecology.

While the U.S. Agroecology Summit had important intentions of convening and advancing agroecological knowledge, in telling ways it persisted in reproducing dominant epistemologies that are themselves enablers of U.S. hegemony and neoliberal capitalism. Beginning with the almost full exclusion of BIPOC and local/regional land-based community members from its organizing committee, there were some key missed opportunities to address these issues early on.

A day into the meeting, a major reflective and nervous silence was ignited. In response to the panel on trust-building in participatory research, the spontaneous candor of Jonny BearCub Stiffarm's questions echoed through the dome of the building: "How can we trust you!? How can we trust you!?, when you don't have spirit?" Her questions, largely left unanswered, hung in the air amidst what felt like hours of silence, directing focus to the sanitized proceedings of the summit, devoid of prayer and protocol, which, for many people, are integral ways of relating to each other and Mother Earth. This question and other interventions are often not considered—or even known—by (white) academic agroecologists. The summit, though well-intended, began as a microcosm of this dangerous omission, this colonialist default. Amidst this, the interventions and reminders we engaged served as crucial contributions to re-seed different possibilities for the future of agroecology movements, praxis, history, and community research emanating from historically discriminated peoples, particularly BIPOC communities and Native communities in the North.

It should be acknowledged that the Summit organizers made some pivots during the convening in response to provocations brought forward by many of the attendees undersigned in this declaration. The recalcitrant verticality in the participatory frame that organizers worked from made these pivots possible only through consistent pushback from participants who firmly reject the idea that Western scientific epistemologies should be universal starting points. These moments offered an occasional glimpse into what is possible when practices and ethics of place and peoples are followed, foregrounded, and engaged. And yet, without them being purposefully and carefully woven into the fabric of the convening design, they were largely felt as one-off moments rather than the assumed manifestations of a pluralistic agroecology movement in formation and contestation to the capitalist patriarchal order.

The horizon of food and agricultural movements led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and alongside broad agrarian histories, however, are largely in synergy, intentionally embedded

in historic processes of liberatory and regenerative work that re-mends the social and cultural fabrics of community. This re-embedding is emerging in balance with natural landscapes and waterways through our relation to our foods, medicines, sacred sites, place-based and cultural collective action institutions, and care-based economies. The synergies we refer to stem from cultures of these commons and relationships we recuperate from and strengthen while confronting the ongoing impacts of colonial legacies and industrial projects that harm lands, waterways, communities, bodies, and minds. It was inherent then that a spontaneous braiding of dissenters would emerge, at first from BIPOC communities and later integrating allies, spanning various positionalities, with the intent to bring forth different narratives of agroecology than those lauded by dominant forms of academia. This called on the collective of participants to transform the summit, just as the broader system itself needs to be transformed.

This declaration serves as a critical gaze on the U.S. Agroecology Summit, an archive of these events as experienced by many, and an invitation for new formations of agroecological pluralities and contestations. It forwards an opportunity to root agroecology's commitments in sync with and learn from the ongoing work of local communities, BIPOC and frontline farmers, tribal efforts, other ways of knowing, and the multiple agroecologies here in the North already building towards food autonomy, global movements for food sovereignty, LandBack, seed rematriation efforts, reparations, solidarity economies, and community self-determination and autonomy—without instrumentalizing. In what follows, we provide further context on the status of agroecology in the North, share details that highlight the relevant and important interventions that we undertook during the Summit, and offer values, principles, and practices, along with commitments for an agroecological present and future.

Recognition of Context

In North America, agroecology is often situated and cited as a Western scientific term, a scientific discipline that skews to a culture of whiteness and Western thought. Agroecology is often a discipline that imposes to convene, speak for, and direct agendas in its name, even when the scientific thinking leading to the emergence of agroecology in the West is less than 100 years old, while agrarian knowledge-based systems span more than 10,000 years, as evidenced in ancient agroecosystems and their cultural institutions: acequias, milpa, chakras, ayllus, chinampa, lo'i irrigated pond fields, oases, agroforestry, cultural burning, and rice in West Africa and the Asian continent, among other global agricultural heritage systems. These ancient systems and their stewards have been and continue to be violently interrupted through settler colonialism over the last 500 years, ongoing U.S. expansionism and imperialism over the last 250 years, genocide, slavery, segregation, and racism, as well as heightened extractive capitalist industrialization in all sectors, including food and agriculture over the last 70 years.

As a field, agroecology in the U.S. context has centered on dominant Western positivist knowledge systems to study and learn from campesino, Indigenous, Afro-indigenous, communities of color, and values-aligned small-scale and subsistence farmers. In this context, agroecology's principles and vision systematized local and Indigenous knowledge systems by an "objective narrator, a scientist." The foodways and land-based knowledge, ways of Indigenous, Black, campesinos, communities of color, and other land-based communities reflect inherent holistic, integrated, and traditional sustainable practices in their ancestral land stewardship ethics. These ethics continue to be the foundation for the technologies, knowledges, cultural and place-based institutions, and movements

that are already arising from these practices. The failure to acknowledge this, along with the ongoing dismissal that research itself can and is practiced by non-academic knowledge seekers, keepers, and scholars not only reifies white supremacy and elitism but also renders ineffective the vision of otherwise promising mobilizing forces against the imposed capitalist agri-food systems. Similarly, agroecology—rendered as an academic discipline—has not effectively engaged the discrepancies that can exist between "researchers" and researched peoples, or clearly articulated the range of epistemological diversity (and resulting sciences) that exist among the multitude of BIPOC community foodways. Positioning oneself among a multiplicity of experiences and roles is paramount to achieving the movement's aims.

While globally many agroecology efforts affirm a commitment to a political movement toward food sovereignty that centers epistemological diversity through "dialogues of knowledges," historically in the U.S., agroecological research focused on agronomic practices merging ecological principles to research methods as a technological approach. This approach to research neglects community needs, knowledge, and relationships while supporting mainly white male or Western researchers who then become the de facto narrators in systematizing practices and knowledge of rural peasant, campesino, Afro-Indigenous, small-scale ecological farmers, and Indigenous communities globally. In this way, the depoliticization of agroecology from the intersectionality of political and economic social contexts has left only technical evidence to address the impacts of the green revolution, the growth of mega agriculture, and declining ecosystem wellbeing. This invisibilizes—to the scientist and public—the more comprehensively critical work of agroecological praxis, relationality, and movement in the U.S. itself.

As an organizing term, however, agroecology has been politically integrated by BIPOC, working-class communities, youth, and land stewards, who often embed their communities' ethics alongside other emancipatory praxis in agroecology. Much of this work connects explicitly to traditional foodways of BIPOC and diasporic communities, rematriation, the food/farm and labor justice movement, and nonbinary decolonial life projects. It centers praxes that regenerate traditional knowledge-based systems of land stewardship and propels them toward community food autonomy, sovereignty, and for, white small-scale farmers and allies, toward active solidarity, alignment, self-examination, repair, and redistribution as we all work toward broader food-sovereignty movement goals and agroecology pluralities. Agroecology takes root and expands, often without state or institutionally affiliated goals as its impetus, while simultaneously recuperating the importance of understanding and finding the cultural and spiritual meaning of the holistic biophysical. This is part of the multitude and plural bioregional, agri-food movement and scholarship that is often not self-identified as agroecology—but is nonetheless living beyond its principles—that many of us are a part of today.

Archiving from the Margins: Summary of the Summit Proceedings

At the outset, the U.S. Agroecology Summit convened selected participants to "co-create a research roadmap for the USA that would be used to inform priorities for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) future of agroecology research in the USA." The summit sought "to elevate agroecology in the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) portfolio and increase the quality and quantity of public funding available for agroecology research."

The proposal for dialogue and the defining of the future of research through a roadmap, however, draws on multiple presumptions and unidirectionality, imposing a unilinear temporality.

Amidst the timely attention to agroecology's momentum and the admirable intention of co-creating, the metaphor of the roadmap, however, drew concern—as indicative of a modernist, linear vision of 'progress.' Agroecology entails extricating from ongoing colonial experiences of land and territory that are mediated and dominated by asphalt, automobiles, and guardrails. The roadmap metaphor precludes the agroecological multiplicity of interweaving, multispecies pathways. Instead, agroecology's flourishing entails recovering precolonial, anticolonial, and decolonial movements of thought and action, not merely progressing 'forward.'

A different consensus emerged from BIPOC and ally communities at the summit: that the labor of visioning, dreaming, actualizing, and cultivating agroecological transformations toward food sovereignty in occupied Turtle Island is, will be, and has always been Indigenous, Black female, femme-led, cosmologically informed, spiritually grounded, epistemologically and ontologically diverse, authentically collaborative, movement-oriented, and accountable and committed to and with frontline communities. In short, agroecological transformations are necessarily outside the concept of the U.S., outside the tools and institutions of empire, while also acknowledging that these institutions hold massive resources that need to be rerouted for reparative support to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, immigrant, global majority, worker, and agroecological movements. This reparative process requires deep acknowledgment of historical oppression and the will for justice. Coming to terms with this past and present for the state necessitates an unequivocal legislative mandate, such as within the farm bill or other legislation governing NIFA that valorizes and prioritizes the need for non-academic Indigenous scholars and their organizations and eliminates bureaucratic barriers that impede access for marginalized communities. The purpose of an agroecology convergence could be to share resources to grow such changes, address together systemic historical impacts and movements, recover and adapt, and multiply the practices of doing the everyday praxis of agroecology.

Dr. Ivette Perfecto laid out a key point that even as Indigenous and Black-led agroecological movements and margins need to be documented, celebrated, and expanded, so too does agroecology necessitate dismantling the enabling forces propping up the corporate-dominant agro-industrial mainstream, with its toxic neo-plantations of non-food—forcibly occupying 70% of agricultural land and even more in the U.S. What enables ecocidal industrial agriculture? empire. colonialism. racial capitalism. neoliberalism. extractivism. patriarchy. global food regimes. green-washing through ecological capitalism. whiteness and white supremacy—the racialized, gendered "feeding the world" lie that props up industry.

While the enabling forces that uphold systems of corporate consolidation and oppression must be dismantled and countered, the formations of new systems of reference from a plurality of visions, experiences, and epistemologies must also be created and supported, as Dr. Devon Peña, Rowen White, Deb Echo Hawk, and Jonny BearCub Stiffarm, among others, highlighted during the Summit.

Below, we include polemic interventions by BIPOC and allies, who claimed a necessary pause and diversion from the fast production train toward a research agenda. We have listed their interventions, reflections, and learnings. Whether organized or spontaneous throughout the gathering, they opened dialogue and helped break away from modes of supremacism and parochialism, recentering agroecological pluralities, much of which inspired the subsequent values, principles, practices, and commitments that ensue in this document and that ground ongoing dialogue and action.

Interventions and Interrogations; Key Learnings from Organized and Spontaneous Offerings Throughout the U.S. Agroecology Summit

- **Precipitating a crisis for capitalism.** "A cornerstone of science is peer review, one of the problems with capitalist and colonial sciences is who gets to know things, and who counts as peers? The idea of a better agroecology is a process of mobilizing more peers and ideally around a table on rematriated land, not just with Western scientists, workers, and more-than-human beings. If we have proper peer review, hopefully we get to ask a different question, what do we in the U.S. owe the world? As agroecologists, we may feel powerless, but we are in a country that is immensely wealthy through imperialism and colonialism, and we owe people stuff. Could this be the question? Whose labor goes into the land? How do we precipitate a crisis for capitalism?" —*Learnings from Raj Patel, introductory presentation*
- **Mutual respect, shared governance, and community wisdom.** "In a healthy and functioning community, there is a role for everyone. Once this is acknowledged, all actions should embody the mutual respect for different skills, strengths, and ways of knowing. We still have a way to go to productively engage the formal academic world, funders, and those who are advantaged within current social structures with communities that have more traditionally been viewed only as outliers and objects of study. The acknowledgment that these communities exist and have wisdom and knowledge of their own to share is a welcome development, but putting this into action is still an intention that needs improvement. For example, greater consultation and shared decision-making in advance will help these gatherings be more successful in the future." —*Post-summit reflection offered by Ricardo Salvador*
- **Epistemic diversity.** "Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a neoliberal identity track. We don't want a piece of the same carcinogenic pie. What is significant to our movement is the need for and protection of epistemic diversity. It is also vital to recognize how agroecology is happening right here, in the North, led by Indigenous communities, small farmers, urban farmers, and BIPOC communities." —*Offered by Devon Peña, intervention*
- **On spirituality, ceremony, and respect.** "How can we trust you? How can we trust you, when you don't have no spirituality, when you don't pray before the meeting starts to ask that all be encouraged and comfortable to speak their minds and with their heart in place?" —*Offered by Jonny BearCub Stiffarm, intervention*
- "We must actively engage in dialogue across tensions in narratives and interpretations of the U.S. Agroecology Summit and agroecology in the North more broadly. Further, we center the question of what positions and solidarities will be shared and extended to each other as we form part of the global movement of agroecology?*"* — *Offered by the Declaration Writing Cluster of the 'Outside Empire' Subgroup, intervention*
- **Creative knowledge production.** Zines and other mediums of popular education are crucial methodologies of building community legitimacy through community knowledge. —*Learnings from Ryan Tenney, intervention*
- **Growing from liberation to hope.** Remembering Indigenous agriculture/agroecology farming pathways of our ancestors and their hope for our good future. George Washington Carver and our elders were revisited. As well as Lola Hampton and Frank Pinder's legacies and the seeding of the first Lola Hampton-Frank Pinder Center for Agroecology at Florida Agricul-

tural and Mechanical University, an 1890 land-grant institution, a contestation to the plantation economy, and mindset to deliberate actions and pathways that enable wellbeing, change, resources, and empower our communities. —*Offered by Jennifer Taylor, presentation*

- **What about labor?** How will agroecology address agricultural labor issues in the U.S.? What is labor justice in agroecology? —*Learnings from Lorette Picciano, intervention*

Values, Principles, and Practices

We recognize:

1. **Agroecology as BIPOC relationality.** BIPOC communities come from land-based communities with long agrarian cultural histories that have knowledge seekers, keepers, and creators, who built entire societies and whose knowledge bases emerged from collective communalities and relationality. Agroecological research for us is community-based (relational) and aligns with place-based research priorities.
2. **Deep history. Indigenous/BIPOC agroecological knowledge.** We are coming into a long history of agroecological and food sovereignty movements that braid with the struggles of defending Mother Earth, resisting exploitation as workers transforming the labor system, and making subsistence livelihoods persist and thrive even outside of capital.
3. **Epistemic diversity through leadership of BIPOC communities.** Although there is an acknowledgment of agroecology as a science, movement, and practice, the field within the U.S. has primarily been dominated by scientists and the white, Anglo-heteropatriarchal processes of academia. When academic researchers do not engage actively in practice and movement, they constrain agroecology and perpetuate hierarchies of knowledge and their dominance. To systematize the knowledge and practice of Indigenous communities and movements cannot be enough to call agroecology a movement, as this is to reproduce a view of communities only as outliers and subjects of study.
4. **Epistemic diversity.** The recognition of traditional ecological knowledge, BIPOC wisdom, farmer practices, and non-academic scholarship is not sufficient if a sustained hierarchy in participation and decision-making persists, preventing a broad array of ways of knowing from sharing in decision-making.
5. **Pluralities.** In a plural system of complementing diverse knowledge, diversity is inherent and needed.
6. **Grounded theory.** Research is a tool rather than an end, and we recognize that theory also emerges from praxis.
7. **Interrupting domination and coloniality through community-based research.** The U.S. exerts dominance, arrogance, and supremacy over most of the rest of the world and over the 'territories' and tribal nations 'within' subjugated by settler colonial national border(s). Agroecological research must be wary of and actively work to interrupt this regime of domination and coloniality.
8. **Beyond positivism to critical realism.** Western scientific objectivity and positivism continue to be dominant as supported by U.S. hegemony and often set the agenda and the relationships

of power. Agroecology in the North then must go beyond academic research as molded by positivist values (e.g., the subject/object dichotomy) and embrace methods that are focused on a critical place-based and community-led collaborative research process that centers local, situated knowledge.

9. **Demilitarizing agri-food systems through community-based research.** We live in a moment in history of increased militarization, policing, and detention of our communities locally and globally. This is a time of vast warmongering and corporate weaponry profiteering, more recently wielded against Gaza in Palestine and on many other Indigenous, Pacific Islander, African, Asian, and Arab peoples with genocidal force. In this context, food and water are weaponized, and wars of starvation and lethal dehydration are waged. We, therefore, call for research practices that strengthen the capacity of BIPOC communities and allies to resist the weaponizing of food as a tool of empire through research that is designed to identify and challenge the dominant paradigm.
10. **Community-based asset-building research.** There is a tendency to default to creating relationships based on dependency (e.g., philanthrocapitalism). To conduct research, we abide by community-based asset-building strategies to build social wealth and assist our communities to move toward a relational or solidarity economy based on mutual aid and cooperative labor as central organizing principles of agroecological research.
11. **A movement vernacular.** The dominant sectors of academia and community-based facets of the movement speak different languages and are not entirely in alignment. Indigenous communities are reclaiming tribal names, place names, and other words. The same is true of our agroecological vernaculars, which are very place-specific and reflect deep histories of attachment to homelands. We embrace a language of agroecological research that respects and uses place-based vernaculars.
12. **Liberation in agroecology as a communal praxis.** The struggle toward food sovereignty, autonomy, and food justice are interconnected with other's struggles against oppression. The making of agroecology pluralities is possible when the struggle against oppression of others is understood as our own struggle.
13. **From individualized experts to collective discourse.** There is a system in academia that fixates on the individual to create sole founders and sole experts, a structural tendency from the white and capitalist gaze supported through citational hegemonies. It is in this way that intellectual extractivism and colonialism persist. Our vision for agroecological research insists on a collaborative, community-led practice that contributes to the resurgence of emic (as opposed to etic) truth claims grounded in our collective discourse as BIPOC communities and organizations.
14. **Cultural and ceremonial meaning and practice.** Cultural and spiritual meaning and practice are necessary as part of being a node within the web of life. Our vision for agroecological research recognizes, values, and integrates the cultural and ceremonial cosmologies of our communities as an ethical grounding for the research process and methods used to advance food sovereignty and autonomy.

In the spirit of going beyond recognition of the *values, principles,* and *practices* presented above, we offer a list of the following:

Commitments

We Commit To:

Relationality. The building of long-term relationships and mutual recognition of the commons and communities of practitioners. Going at the speed of trust and devoting time and space for relationship-building. Having careful consideration of social community relationships prior to involving ourselves as academic researchers. Having open and supportive ongoing dialogues with emergent responsiveness, reciprocally cultivating relationships, which includes building allyship, solidarity, and making the struggles of others our own. Looking and listening to allies through partaking and integrating exchanges, and through dialogues of knowledges *(diálogo de saberes*). We commit to bridging the isolation and individuation through continued learning and building with and by frontline communities so as to continue imagining new transformations that include being open to future examinations of agroecology. Support the intersectionality of coinciding movements to agrarian communities and farmers, for example Black Lives Matter (BLM), environmental justice movement, economic justice, abolition, Indigenous sovereignty, labor justice movement, LandBack, and rematriation.

Dialogue of knowledges. Convene diversity of knowledges, practices, and ways of living life through creative social innovation that reincorporate dialogues of knowledges and alternate expressions. Create spaces of insertion/dialogue/plurality in all our work and movement spaces as a way to strive for epistemic diversity and the decentering of academic research so that guiding frames for inquiry, and relationship building, are not monocultures of understanding the world.

Deprivatize knowledge. Redefine research to uphold traditional and local knowledges of seekers, keepers, and creators while recognizing their processes and resulting praxis as collective practice, not to accumulate them as a collection or to be made inaccessible. Work toward creating alternative and community-based review, publishing, and knowledge storage processes with mixed academic and practitioner communities. Decommodify knowledge through the centering of research on land and its stewards, often stewards as a collective, and do so without imposing our own limitations of funding, institutionality, or unilateral decision-making. Seeking and upholding accountable, non-extractive, and respectful research.

Building networks towards transformation. We commit to building mixed academic and practitioner networks as a way to build and leverage alternative metrics of success. Alternative metrics can be used within and outside academic institutions to protect and foster communities of practice. These co-designed and multifunctional metrics can provide researchers and frontline communities and practitioners the tools to work in solidarity with each other, collaborating horizontally, and amplifying independence, agency, and autonomy for practitioners, farmers, and frontline communities (for example, alternative peer review networks, changing requirements for tenure, supporting the creation of community-owned hubs of knowledge and data hubs that are community-governed).

BIPOC and Indigenous knowledge and data autonomy. Commit to upholding data autonomy principles of Indigenous, local BIPOC knowledge systems' stewards and scholars (oral traditions, practices, community scholarship, etc.). Work toward ending the dissociation of knowledge from communities in order to dismantle colonial naming of community knowledge or ideas through the citations or 'authorship' model. Commit to finding new forms of storytelling, knowledge documentation, and sharing as plural communities.

Horizontality, collective, and shared governance. Commit to horizontality and shared decision-making that involves co-authorship with community partners and shared governance over the long-term use of data, information, and publications. Similarly, we commit to convening collective and participatory spaces. Work toward mutual learning as mentorship through intergenerational dialogue, community member to community member, *campesino a campesino*, researcher to researcher, and mixed spaces of dialogue. Broader convenings and shared decision-making, not universalizing a single narrative or homogenizing perspectives and experiences across diverse communities.

Movement building. Build coalitions and alliances. Support and co-build a community organizing base to develop organizing infrastructure that can strengthen the agroecological and food autonomy/sovereignty political movement in the North (with the invitation of communities). Recuperate the social-political history of BIPOC and Indigenous narratives on the stewardship of lands as well as the political history of agroecological movements globally for food sovereignty and against the agro-industrial development/colonial schemes. Interrupting, disrupting, and ending agro-corporate and transnational agro-industry control in the North and globally. Identifying ways to respectfully complement autonomy and sovereignty efforts with research and projects.

Multispecies connections and regenerate the web of life. Learning with and from the teachings of multispecies entities to see beyond humancentricity.

Dismantling and healing. Creating spaces for intracommunal conversations by and among BIPOC and frontline communities. Study, interrogate, and challenge structures such as racial capitalism, settler colonialism, patriarchy, imperialism, borders, and their nation-states to (re)create and recuperate life-affirming alternative structures. Counter the racism, classism, and coloniality in academia at large, and the neoliberalization of research and higher education institutions.

Appropriate technologies. Ensuring technology fosters the autonomy and empowerment of farmers and communities instead of causing replacement, dispossession, or dependence, while supporting innovations and technologies arising from BIPOC farmers and interconnected communities.

Elder wisdom and intergenerational connections. Respect the guidance of Elders and in other ways intentionally co-create intergenerational spaces for the co-production of knowledge.

Divesting from death and resourcing life. Work toward the divesting and diverting of resources and reparations of institutional assets from industrial capitalism and militarism. Leverage and prioritize funding for movement and Indigenous communities through project research, grants, and other mobilized resources. Co-create careful and mutually agreed-upon remuneration payments to collab-

orators and research participants and contributors, and work to formally integrate these in budgets. Be attentive to the consideration of community relationships and collective governance within movements and communities for the disbursement of funds and collaboration.

Fund and support processes aimed at reaching mutual agreements, identifying shared governance over information and research design, and allowing time for creative solutions to meet academic research requirements. This approach minimizes the imposition of these requirements onto partners and allies. For example, funding to support the creation of memoranda of understanding (MOUs), establishing processes for co-creating meaningful evaluations and reflections, and budgeting time and space for grassroots and partner movements. Hold institutions accountable and work with BIPOC and working-class communities toward creating mechanisms and structures in institutions for reparation and loss and damage. Repair and Redistribute by supporting LandBack and Rematriation. Repair comes with a re-commoning or returning to relational lifeways, repairing social, material, and psychological separations, a common experience for those of us in the diaspora who may have been uprooted from our lands or customary agriculture.

Solidarity and care economies. Support and integrate analysis, knowledge, and practice on co-creating solidarity economies, alternative supply networks in agroecology efforts, and center care in agroecology and in solidarity economic initiatives that include the decommodification of the commons (such as seeds and knowledge).

Conclusions: Toward Agroecology Pluralities

Raj Patel's introductory presentation highlighted that changes needed in our food systems, as with society, will not solely come from the production of evidence, but rather through crisis. As we write this declaration, we are amid a moment of civilizational shift and of institutional crises arising from both the contradictions of the system itself and the active anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and liberatory efforts to dismantle it. This necessitates that our multifaceted agroecological efforts consistently address the legacies of colonial, capitalist, patriarchal rule, and occupation in the northern territories now called the U.S., and to begin embodying the other worlds that are possible beyond the ruins of those oppressive systems.

Agroecology pluralities are and have been in movement in the North and emerging from communities in struggle, BIPOC communities of farmers, campesinos, land stewards, and fisherfolks whose livelihoods continue to be impacted by industrialization, green revolutions, information technology, and more recently by artificial intelligence (AI) technocratic corporations enmeshed within the U.S. economy. As a subgroup of the U.S. Agroecology Summit, our interrogations and interventions intend to support the reorientation of our gazes away from organized academic science's universalization of knowledge, narratives, and ethics in agroecology. These are invitations to work beyond the veneer of equity and inclusion in agroecological projects, steering clear of creating new epistemic private properties, and instead to recommit to a search for building together pluralities, new tools that convene broadly among all knowledge systems and movements, centering shared governance, and supporting decolonial and anti-capitalist life projects already underway in the North and globally.

We observed the possibilities of this shift, albeit not without agroecology's own crisis here in the North. In the microcosm of the summit, a day into the gathering, the hegemonic default to

dominate academic modes was apparent, and a much-needed pivot away from the oppressive hierarchical framework of democratic verticality proceeded, in a semblance of U.S. participatory democracy. Western paradigms, however, are actively decomposing and, in their decay, making way for optimistic possibilities of other worlds and other modes of relating, knowing, practicing, and existing. Moving forward, changes in practice and action must continue beyond this moment and become integral to the struggle toward many agroecologies. This involves sustained change through analyses of the past and present, as well as adherence to theoretical principles agroecology already upholds, namely 'dialogue of knowledges' and a grounding in social movement.

Given that the tendency of hegemonic academic modalities and theory too often leads to agroecological conceptual spaces, it is important that convenings of and for agroecology in Turtle Island ("U.S.") understand those practicing agroecology—for and with communities—as conveners themselves. The plurality of agroecology praxes and movements encompasses the spectrum of practice and theory of practitioners. Otherwise, academics risk conflation, appropriation, and expanding the culture of privatization. This is the case when we are erroneously trained to become agroecologists in the absence of seeds, land, or people. To keep praxis and practitioners centered is one exercise toward countering the academic tendency to say words but not do the work (to theorize with no practice); it is to resist being blinded from seeing the multitudes of ways of knowing and of understanding that science is not the only source of truth. Convergence in agroecology in the North cannot be without constant auto-examination.

We intend this document to contribute to the multiple conversations, convenings, and work in a myriad of spaces of knowledge and learning not exclusive to academies, to contribute to those efforts already working toward justice, mutual liberation, and the regeneration of foodways, lifeways, and community. It is a collection of experiences, ideas, and proposals of those undersigned and many others who contributed during the U.S. Agroecology Summit. Through a gathering at the summit, this collection was archived, and through virtual meetings after the summit and collective writing in an open and live document, they were edited, and through a subgroup of editors supporting as weavers they were integrated. Together we created an unfinished tapestry and are left with the questions: and you who is reading this? What do you say?

When we attend to the original injustices of the U.S. colonial project—confronting the desecration of life and its sacredness that results from white supremacy, patriarchy, genocide, and empire—and reckon with the impact of these mechanisms on each of us and our communities, what possibilities emerge for the expression and practice of agroecology pluralities in the North? How will we grow in communion and relation with the other branches of agroecologies within the tree of life and movements globally amid and beyond this civilizational crisis?

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