

Biocultural Regionalism

Envisioning Regions of Justice, Peace, and Sustainability
(with special focus on South Asia)

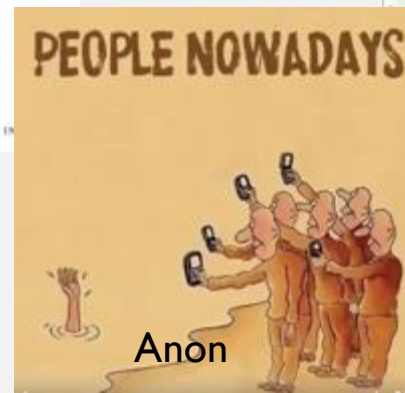
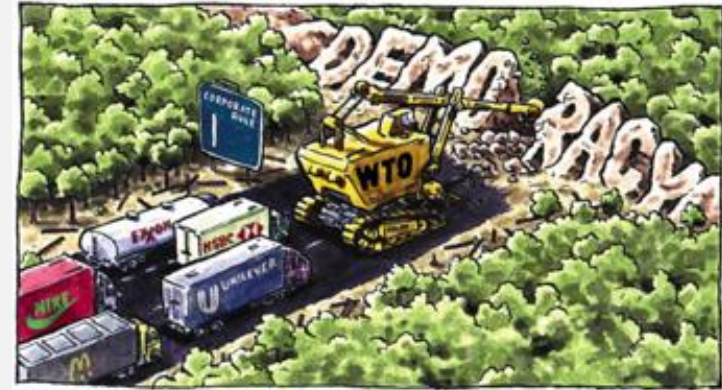


Ashish Kothari

Kalpavriksh / Vikalp Sangam / Global Tapestry of Alternatives

MULTIPLE, INTERSECTING CRISES

- **Ecological:** biodiversity, climate, pollution
- **Socio-economic:** inequality, deprivation
- **Political:** conflicts, authoritarianism
- **Cultural:** colonisation & homogenization of knowledge, art, faiths, cuisines, languages
- **Personal:** depression, meaninglessness, alienation from roots/place/space



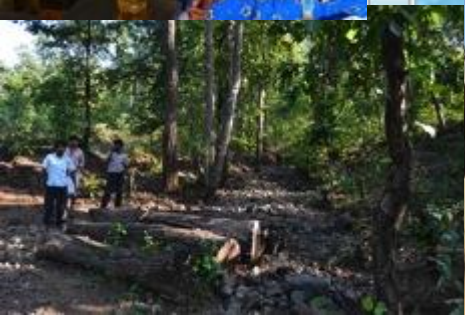
Resistance ...

(to capitalism, state domination, patriarchy,
colonialism anthropocentrism, etc)

...diverse ways of being, doing, acting,
dreaming, knowing

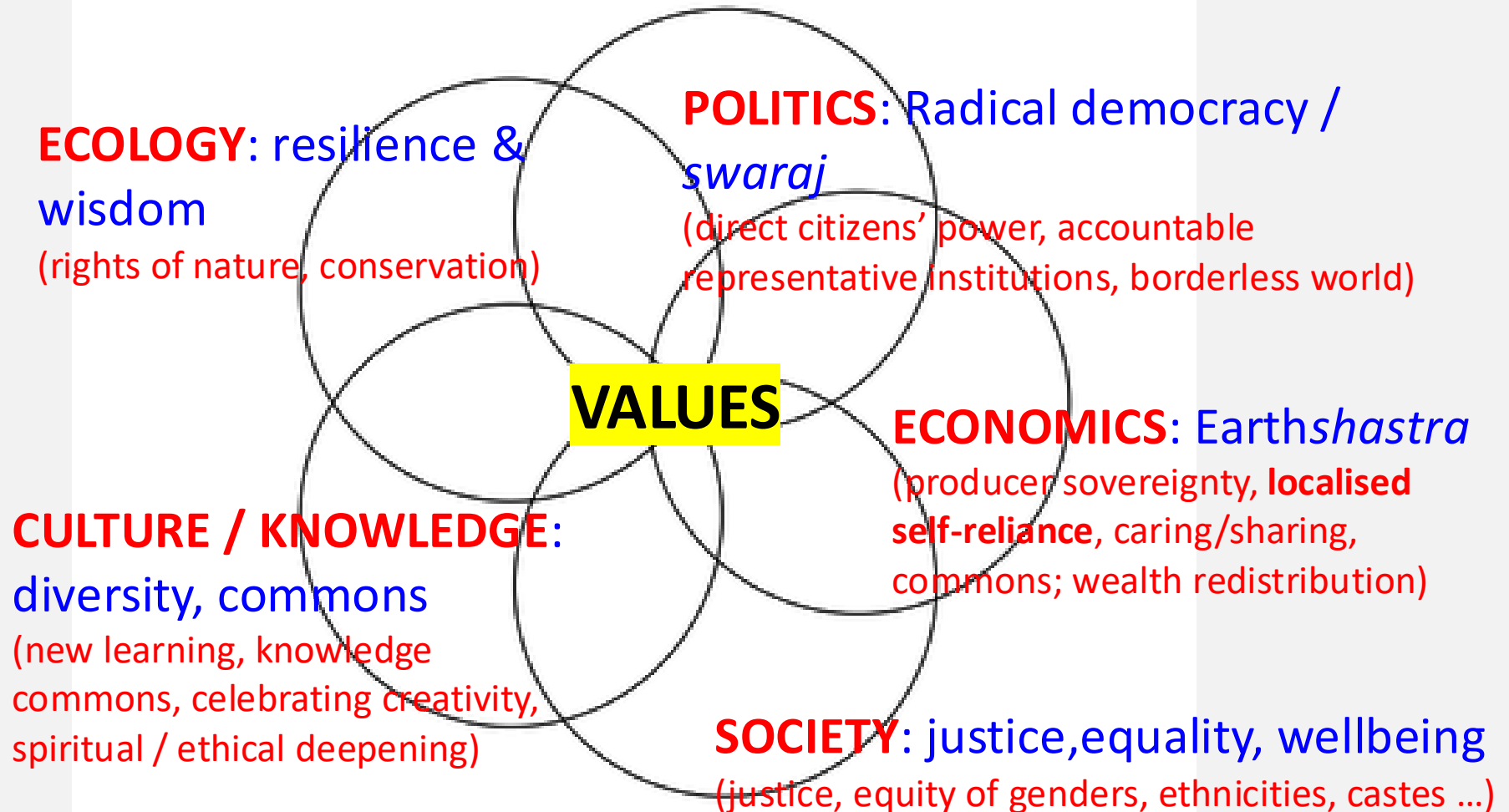


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Flower of Transformation

Towards Justice, Equity, Sustainability



Values & principles of transformative alternatives

- Diversity and pluralism (of ideas, knowledge, ecologies, economies, ideologies, politics, cultures...)
- Self-reliance for basic needs (*swavalamban*)
- Self-governance / autonomy (*swashasan* / *swaraj*)
- Cooperation, collectivity, solidarity, commons, conviviality
- Rights with responsibilities of meaningful participation
- Dignity & creativity of labour (*shram*)
- Qualitative pursuit of happiness
- Equity / justice / inclusion (*sarvodaya*)
- Simplicity / sufficiency / enoughness (*aparigraha*)
- Rights of nature / respect for all life forms
- Non-violence, peace, harmony (*ahimsa*)
- Reciprocity and interconnectedness
- Fun!



WORLDVIEWS THAT CELEBRATE LIFE!

Putting the 5 spheres together:

Bioregionalism as an intersectional approach ...

Global South concepts of bioregionalism (*ilaka, anchal, desh, nadu* ...) – not copied from global North

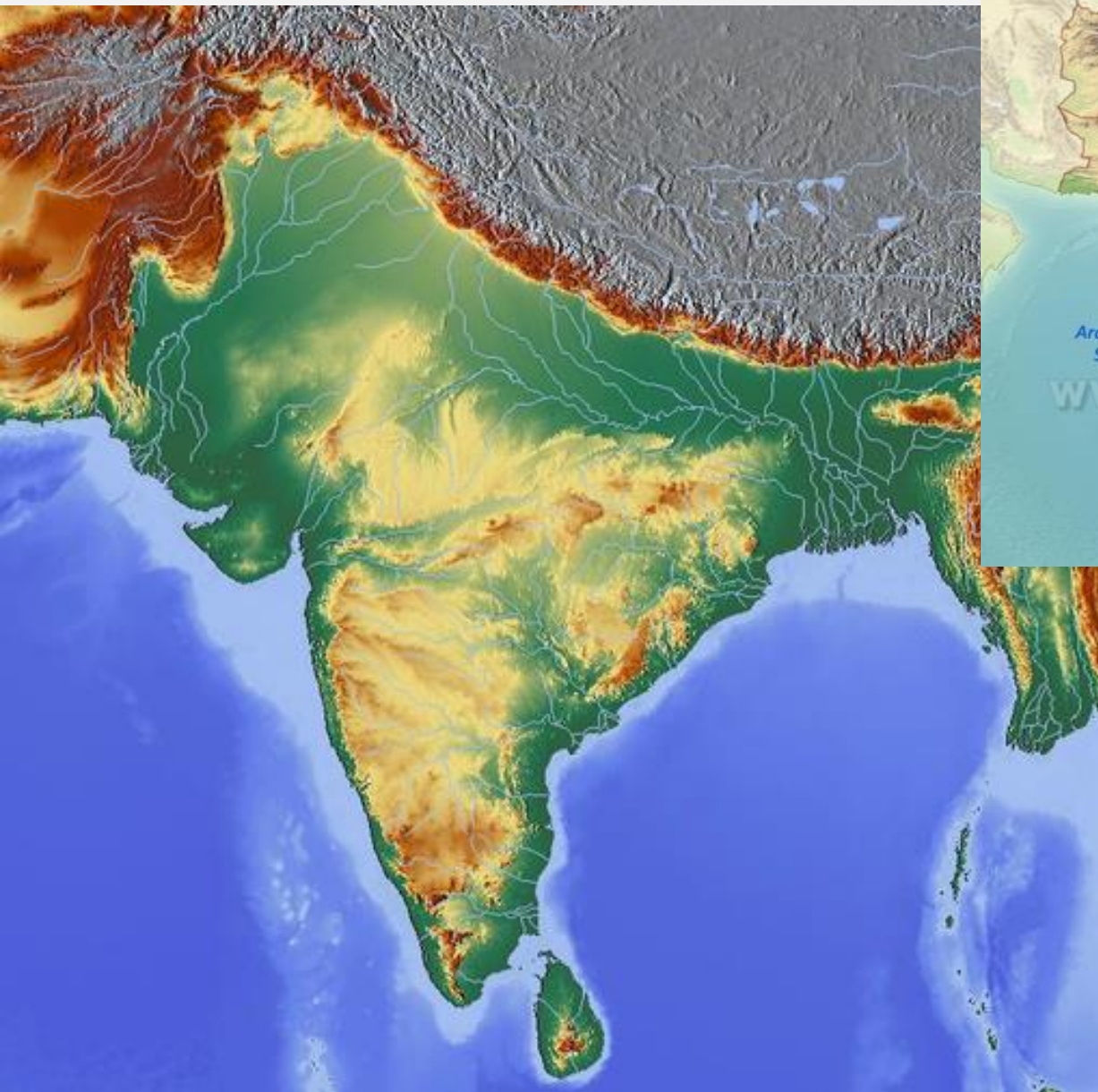
Re-imagining governance, understanding & respecting natural-cultural-economic flows **beyond nation-state boundaries**





South Asia from a nation-state perspective: recipe for conflict



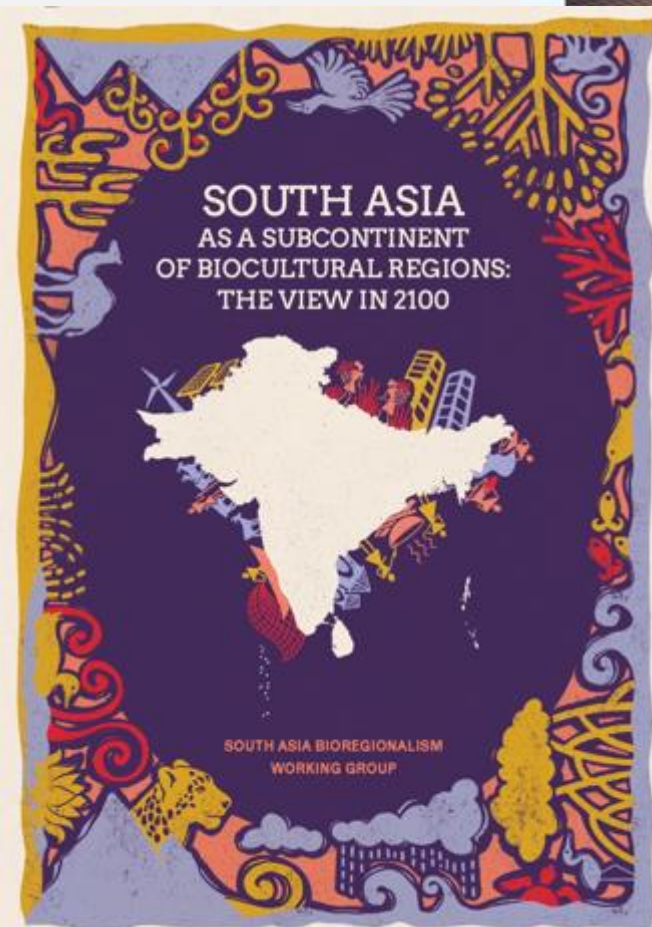
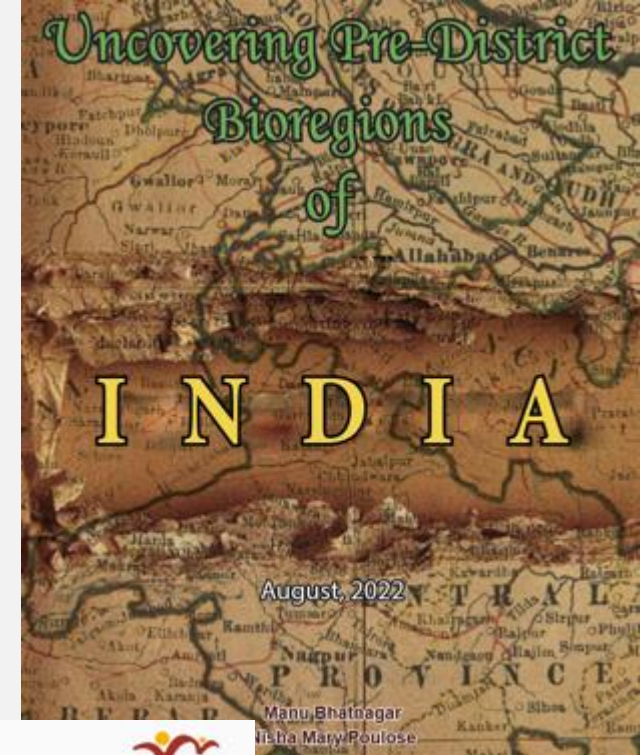
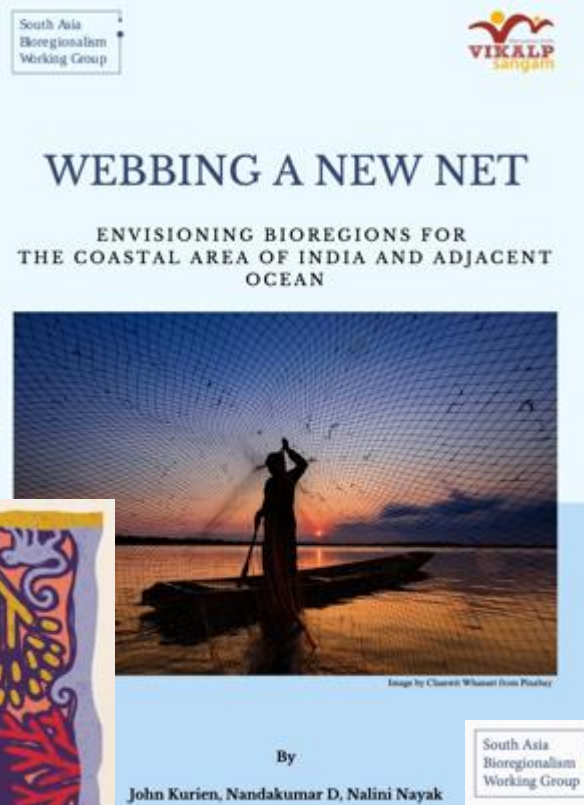


Envisioning an
alternative
regionalism across
South Asia - linking
nature, cultures,
local economies



A hand-drawn banner for the South Asia BioRegionalists Working Group. The banner features the text "SOUTH ASIA BioRegionalists WORKING GROUP" in colorful, stylized letters. The background is decorated with various drawings including a tree, a river, a bird, a snake, a butterfly, and a person. The banner is held up by people, and a hand is visible in the bottom right corner.

South Asia
Bioregionalism
Working Group
2019 onwards –
dialogues,
publications,
outreach, visioning



Multi-hazard Mapping of

The Teesta River Basin



BIOCULTURAL VISION FOR SOUTH ASIA

– BY 2100 ...

- **Porous boundaries, enabling free movement of wildlife, nomadic pastoralists/fishers, and traders**
- **Boundary areas governed as 'peace sanctuaries', by Indigenous peoples / local communities**
- **Civilisational identities replacing hyper-nationalist ones**
- **Dismantling of dams / diversions on rivers, enabling free flow**
- **Small-scale traders and nomadic communities as messengers, story-tellers, and news-givers across landscapes**

GOVERNANCE OF BIOCULTURAL REGIONS

- **Village/town level direct or radical democracy (swaraj)** – consensus-based, equal voice for all, informed decision-making through **assemblies**
- **Federations** of villages/towns over bioculture-regional scale for **coordination** of larger scale operations – river basin assemblies, maritime region confederations, etc
- **Accountability** of larger-scale institutions through regular rotation of representatives, **reporting** back, right to **recall**, periodic **re-education** in principles of democracy, **transparency** of budgets

EARTHY GOVERNANCE: beyond rights of nature

- **Earthy governance:** decision-making with nature as participant
- Aligning with rhythms of nature
- All species as kin – our responsibility as co-travellers



EGO



NATURE

What would it take to put this vision into action?

- **Build on memory of & continued human connections – nomads, economic exchange, territories of life**
- **Understand, provide space for nature's memory, agency and continued connections – rivers, animal migration, gene/seed flows**
- **People-to-people dialogue across borders (esp. youth)**
- **Public pressure on governments to enter into dialogue, attempt transboundary cooperation**
- **Enabling radical democracy and economic self-sufficiency / localisation on ground**

Vikalp Sangams (Alternatives Confluences)

- practical collaborations, bottom-up visioning (since 2014)
- focus on India, now expanding to South Asia



Global Tapestry of Alternatives

A group of people, mostly men, are standing in a line on a rocky shore, holding hands. They are facing away from the camera, looking out over a body of water. The sun is setting in the background, creating a warm, golden glow. The water is calm, reflecting the light from the sun. The sky is a mix of blue and orange. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

Confluences of resistance and alternatives across the world

Sharing/exchanges/collaborations

Collective visioning of a just world ... and how to get there!

<https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org>

Contacts

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Websites:

<https://vikalpsangam.org/south-asia-bioregionalism-working-group/>

www.vikalpsangam.org

<https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org>

<https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org>

GLOBAL TAPESTRY of
ALTERNATIVES

