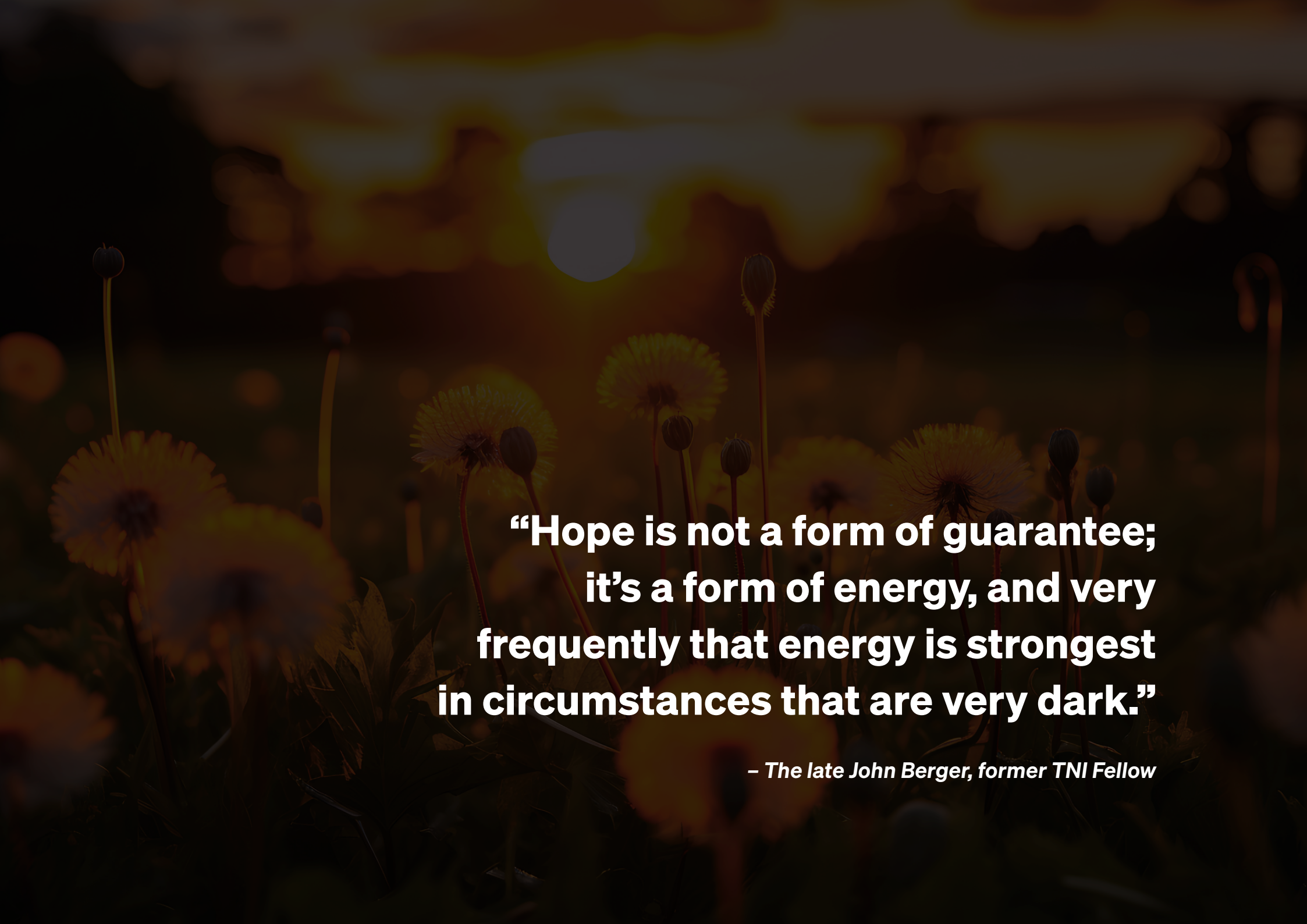


2021–2025

Strategic Plan

A photograph of a field of dandelions at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The dandelions are in various stages of bloom, with some showing their characteristic white seed heads. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

**“Hope is not a form of guarantee;
it’s a form of energy, and very
frequently that energy is strongest
in circumstances that are very dark.”**

– The late John Berger, former TNI Fellow

Foreword

This strategy document presents the Transnational Institute's vision of the direction the Institute intends to pursue programmatically and organisationally over the next five years.

For nearly 50 years, TNI has worked at the nexus of research, activism, and advocacy. We have built an organisation that has stood the test of time, and are immensely proud of what we have been able to achieve and the reputation we have earned.

TNI believes a different world is possible, and that successful social movements are critical to bringing about enduring change hence the focus of our mission on serving as a knowledge resource for movements. We identified three key conditions for success of movements: an incisive analysis of what is wrong with the current system, and clear ideas for what to do about it; communicating these ideas popularly such that they have high impact by inspiring broad-based social support that can transform political power. In effect, these are the overarching goals we have set for ourselves for the next five years.

We have drafted our five-year strategy for achieving these goals in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic and at a critical juncture – both for the struggles that TNI supports, and for our organisation. In so doing, we consulted extensively with all stakeholders

within TNI, as well as with allies and funders, as to the priority directions for TNI in light of our sense of the current threats and opportunities, as well as perceptions of our strengths and weaknesses as an organisation.

Our vision of “an equitable, democratic and peaceful world in which all life may flourish” was reconfirmed, as was our mission to serve as a knowledge resource for social movements. With respect to the latter, two complementary characterisations of TNI crystallised: as a source of knowledge for advocacy, and as a think tank for social movements. To a large extent, this mirrors the role of our programmes, which primarily produce knowledge for advocacy, and the role of our Knowledge Hub unit through which we hope to connect the dots across our programmes, increase our capacity to see the big picture and think ahead.

Our context analysis focused mainly on widespread concern about the climate crisis, the bankruptcy of neoliberalism exposed during the pandemic, and the extent of institutionalised corporate power whereby profit is protected over social and environmental well-being. We saw a window of opportunity to grow our social movements by channelling popular discontent towards inspiring visions of what could be a better system, and concrete proposals for getting there. We also saw the urgency of doing so as a counter-force to what was on offer from rightwing populists and authoritarians. This will see us investing more in the development and popularisation of bold and feasible propositions that can serve as the markers of a pathway to systemic transformation, even as we continue to expose what is wrong with the current system.

Thematically, we will focus our work on corporate power, just transitions and collective security, with a feminist and intersectional lens applied wherever possible.

Internally, the next five years will be a period of consolidation and regeneration, geared for equipping TNI to meet the challenges and opportunities of the shifting international political context. We have set two major goals – to strengthen our capacity to play the think tank role for movements, and to address the institutional challenges that have accompanied TNI's recent growth. We are fortunate to have secured a major five-year grant, which we can leverage with other funders to enable us to meet our ambitions.

In 2024, TNI will mark half a century as a unique space for the interface of activists and activist-scholars. We hope to be around for another half century to serve and transnationally connect up the progressive social movements of contemporary times. This plan helps us clarify our priorities to do just this.

– *Fiona Dove, Executive Director*

Our process

Every five years, TNI takes stock of its achievements and lessons learned, assesses the context for our work, and develops a new five-year strategic plan to guide the organisation.

We began this latest process in June 2019 when we convened a strategic meeting with our fellows, staff, research consultants, board members and some key external analysts. The agenda reflected how we were seeing the external context at the time. Issues covered included the shifting world order, China's globalisation, the advent of surveillance capitalism, prospects of a new financial crisis, worsening environmental breakdown, increasing restrictions on people's right to move, and new agents of change emerging from social uprisings across the world. We also discussed ideas for what TNI should be doing or doing more of. This included using a more explicit feminist lens, and supporting more political economy schools.

This was followed by a staff retreat in September 2019, where we undertook a SWOT exercise, assessed what we had achieved over the previous five years, and how to bring greater focus and overall coherence to TNI's programme.

Then In 2020, in the midst of the Covid pandemic, we brought in consultants to assist us with an elaborate process. They undertook an extensive survey involving 160 people, and conducted indepth interviews with a sample of 38 people representative of all the categories surveyed.

All this provided a rich tapestry of feedback and ideas for the next phase of the process, which involved 40 hours of online workshops with TNI teams and Board members.

This document is a synthesis of the consensus that emerged on the overarching organisational and programmatic goals for the next five years. As with all such efforts, the process was perhaps even more important than the outcome, providing ample opportunity for everyone to be involved in co-creating the direction and priorities of the Institute, getting to know each other and different aspects of the Institute better.

The next steps will be developing the operational plans for implementation, which provide the basis for monitoring and reflecting on our progress over the next five years. Of course, the world is never a static place, so we will also continue to reflect on the changing context and adjust course as necessary.

Analysing the context

Bankruptcy of Neoliberalism

As COVID-19 broke in 2020, we knew that the pandemic impacted on a world already in crisis. Many existing inequities would be amplified, with the most vulnerable people, particularly in the Global South, being disproportionately impacted. The pandemic laid bare the bankruptcy of neoliberalism. It exposed the catastrophic fallout of decades of privatisation of essential services, such as health, water, education, and care services, which left people at the mercy of profiteers during the pandemic. It evoked widespread moral repugnance at international legal provisions that protect the profits of mega-corporations over the lives of millions of people. This includes, for example, intellectual property rights which allow big pharmaceutical companies to monopolise vaccine technologies even in the face of a global pandemic of this magnitude. The crisis made clear that there are goods and services that must be placed outside the laws of the market, as they are the cornerstones of healthy and resilient societies. This provides an opportunity for inspiring a stronger movement around a vision of a more people-centred and caring system.

Climate Justice

Pre-pandemic, humanity was already facing an increasingly grave crisis with respect to our relationships with nature. Zoonotic diseases, like COVID-19, are one manifestation of that, caused by ever greater incursions into natural habitats. Another

is climate change. Decades of greenhouse gas emissions and destructive environmental practices have driven ecosystems to a breaking point, and threaten to trigger catastrophic global heating. The pace of this is alarming, making climate the top threat for young people everywhere. Meanwhile, the gap between what science demands – to rethink the destructive system and to confront the vested interests that uphold it – and what politicians are willing and able to do continues to widen. Neoliberalism has seen widespread privatisation of energy production, transmission and distribution leaving society with few means to direct the transition. Further, governments face potentially enormous costs if they do try to take decisive action in the public interest. The ‘regulation chill’ produced by Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms, included in thousands of trade & investment treaties, is both real and a cover behind which neoliberal governments can hide. The only ‘solutions’ on the table are those that are firmly market-based and which further the same economic growth paradigm responsible for much of the problem. Again, it is the most vulnerable people, particularly in the Global South, who are disproportionally impacted – both by the effects of the climate and environmental crises, as well as many of the ostensible solutions. In response, new inter-sectional movements are emerging united under the banner of a Just Transition, and sharing the same vision of a more people-centred and caring system.

Corporate Power

Corporate power is the cornerstone of this failed system. In the era of neoliberal globalisation, states have deemed corporations, rather than labour, to be the main creator of wealth and economic growth. As such, states have granted corporations exemptions from regulations and laws, facilitated their international competitiveness through free trade agreements, protected their investments through ISDS clauses in investment treaties, and have sought to attract corporations through a race to the bottom on standards and taxes. What were once public assets have been sold off, and turned over to corporations and the market too. In sum, corporations have been given rights to pursue profit that trump the democratic rights of people, including the right to live on a sustainable planet. Indeed, corporate power has been so successfully normalised that corporations are now taking the lead on global governance through convening so-called multistakeholder forums.

Big Tech

The dominant corporations seen as the major sources of global economic growth have long been in fossil fuels and finance. In recent years, however, we have been seeing the growth of Big Tech, largely based in the USA or China. This includes platform monopolies, like Google, Amazon, Tencent and Alibaba, which use the internet and artificial intelligence (AI) to accumulate data as capital. This new data capitalism is developing very fast with profound implications. Yet, similar to the gap in global rule-setting on transnational corporation's human rights obligations, there are no binding international regulations governing cross-border data flows, which has facilitated rampant data extractivism. Indeed, the

COVID-19 pandemic provided a golden opportunity for data accumulation by Big Tech with, for example, track and trace systems, online schools and work, home deliveries.

Many global corporations, which saw labour processes and production processes disrupted severely during the pandemic, are looking to digitisation as part of new strategies for autonomous supply chains. This includes greater automation of labour, and using AI to predict supply and demand, as well as more diversified supply sources. Where production, storage and distribution takes place in the world is being reconfigured. It is estimated that by 2025, over 30% of global economic activity will be mediated by platform companies. Digitisation will impact hugely on labour. In manufacturing, for example, it is probable that within the next 15–25 years over 40 per cent of the global workforce will lose their jobs in AI-led disruption, with this being more like 60% in developing countries. And it will require vast amounts of electricity. By 2030, the network data devices of the intelligence economy are expected to be consuming about one-fifth of global electricity. Other implications include increased surveillance of workers and citizens, and military applications.

While corporate power should not be understated, it is not impregnable. As the late Ursula K. LeGuin famously said, **“We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.”** There are increasing signs of cracks in the system. There is growing public awareness that neoliberal, globalised capitalism is not only deeply unjust but fast destroying life on this planet. The privileging of corporations over citizens by the state belies the promise of democratic rights and the state serving as guarantor for the public interest. A global survey shows that there has been

a dramatic drop since 2002 in the proportion of people who believe that the state is run in the public interest. Ultimately, the biggest weakness of corporations and the states that facilitate their interests is that they do not and cannot provide answers that will address the systemic crises we face.

Populist and Authoritarian forces

This weakness does not, however, necessarily translate into victories for progressive movements. While a strong anti-capitalist stance is discernible in many of the protests we have witnessed over recent years, the populist (far) right has also successfully captured some of the popular dissatisfaction, focusing it on tropes about foreigners, feminists, do-gooders and ‘the elite’. In this post-truth age of social media, there has been plenty of scope for amplifying misinformation and conspiracy theories too, reinforcing people’s pre-existing prejudices and polarising public debate. A number of populist right-wing leaders have ridden to power on the back of this, such as in India, the Philippines, Brazil, the USA, Russia, Turkey, Hungary and Brexit UK. We are seeing a worldwide slide towards autocracy becoming the norm, and with that, less rights, more repression, less space for progressive organising.

Hope as energy

We remain firm believers in the power of social movements to shift the political balance of forces, and in so doing, to change the course of history. Today is a time of incredible ferment, which presents both a threat and an opportunity. The urgent challenge for progressive movements is to offer hope that a better world is possible – a clear vision and feasible propositions that are able to capture popular imagination,

and for which more and more people will be prepared to fight. As the late TNI Fellow and writer John Berger said, **“Hope is not a form of guarantee; it’s a form of energy, and very frequently that energy is strongest in circumstances that are very dark.”**

There is a growing progressive consensus, increasingly viewed through a feminist and intersectional lens, centred on public provisioning, decent work and dignified livelihoods, community solidarity, care and the realisation of rights within these, prioritising human and planetary wellbeing. The alternative paradigm we seek is not yet fully formed, but many intellectual and political spaces are emerging, bringing together scholars and activists to envisage the systems we want and need. TNI aspires to be one such space. We are conscious there is a real hunger among progressive movements for conceptual frameworks that can unite them and concrete propositions that can constitute transformative pathways to better futures. TNI is well placed to help fulfil this need.

To do this, we need to pivot to a focus on alternatives, even as we must continue to expose the system as it is. We have to go beyond critique, to mapping transformative pathways that can constitute a coherent programme for change, accompanied by viable, feasible and desirable policies and instruments.

TNI's capacity to respond

Within this context, organisations like TNI, which operate at the nexus of research, activism and policy making, have a critical role to play. Our capacity to do so was validated in the consultations that we undertook, internally and externally.

The Institute has existed for nearly 50 years and over the decades has earned widespread respect and trust. We have a wide network of activist-scholars to draw on, as well as the expertise and social movement connections of our own teams. We are considered to produce high quality research, which constitutes useful, applicable knowledge for social movements and is regarded as a reliable source for the media and policymakers.

In our consultations for this Strategic Plan, there was clear agreement on TNI's role as a producer of knowledge for advocacy and as a think tank for progressive movements. 68% of respondents saw TNI as an important player among many highly engaged civil society organisations. Positive external perceptions of TNI's value-added, which are the strengths we can build on, included:

- our global perspective
- our non-sectarian/non-dogmatic style
- being uniquely able to combine high quality research with convening, organising and advocacy
- our connecting role between scholars and activists, and across struggles/movements
- being connected to struggles and good at amplifying the voices of affected communities
- being able to quickly demystify complex issues and produce knowledge that is useable and understandable
- being 'early adopters' in taking up path-breaking issues and able to play a catalytic role in creating spaces for collaboration among anti-systemic movements

Building on success

TNI has booked a number of tangible successes over the past five years, on which we intend to build and from which we can learn.

In the last five years, TNI produced 692 publications in 9 languages, and attracted nearly 135,000 people to events we (co)organised. TNI was also part of dialogues with policy makers from 32 countries and in up to 15 inter-governmental organisations. Media citations reached at least 65 million readers, our website attracted nearly 6 million visitors, and scholarly citations of the work of our staff and fellows increased by 304%. By the end of 2020, TNI could show significant contribution to high impact on some decisive issues. Examples include:

- the regulation of TNCs is back on the international agenda – a UN treaty for binding regulations for transnational corporations in respect of human rights started to become a reality as formal negotiations began. TNI has played a crucial role in building the social movement campaign which fought for this and won.
- TNI has been instrumental in putting investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) onto the public agenda in the past decade. We have helped spawn a whole new field of critical scholarly endeavour, seen protests against ISDS on every continent, and put the issue on the climate justice agenda by showing the threat the system poses for transitions away from fossil fuels.
- As privatisation fails, a growing international movement is choosing to redefine public ownership

for the 21st century. TNI has played a catalytic role in building this movement, and supporting its efforts to advance proposals for achieving democratic, effective, and universally accessible public services.

- TNI can claim much credit for major shifts in the global drugs policy arena, which has resulted in vast numbers of people being freed from criminalisation, and many released from prisons. Epitomising this shift was the adoption of a human rights-based UN Common Position on drug policy, and the historic vote at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which finally recognised the medical value of cannabis.
- We produced reframings in the field of collective security, which became important activist references. This included an alternative to harmful and racist ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ policies; new ways of looking at anti-racist organising, centering activism; and challenging prevailing mainstream NGO discourses on “shrinking space for civil society”. Here, we showed the extent to which it was, in fact, activist dissent that was being criminalised and by the same forces that had hollowed out democracy in favour of corporations and private interests. TNI has also led the way in Europe in exposing how corporations are shaping border and migration policies.
- In Myanmar, TNI has contributed significantly to a remarkable process of building unity among different ethnic communities in their quest for a just peace, helping them to develop progressive policy on key questions such as land and natural resource rights, gender, drugs and foreign investment.

Internally, over the past five years, we invested a lot of energy in organisational development. We strove to become a learning organisation, serious about our strategies and reflecting on and learning from our successes and failures. We took external communications to new levels, including making better use of social media possibilities. We professionalised and modernised our financial administration, and diversified our funding base, including putting in place the infrastructure necessary to solicit donations. We almost doubled our staff complement from 2016, grew our Myanmar-based team from 3 to 11 people, and nearly tripled the number of regular freelancers contracted by our other programmes.

Organisational Challenges

In the process of the consultation we undertook for this Strategic Plan, there was also much convergence – internally and externally – on some of the organisational challenges TNI might address, notably:

- TNI is mainly good at critique – focus more on propositions for alternatives
- TNI has too many programmes – focus on the biggest struggles and opportunities to reframe debates
- TNI tends to ‘preach to the converted’ – try to reach newer and bigger audiences

As a result of this feedback and our own analysis of what the political context demands, we will pivot towards proposition, even as we continue to expose what is wrong with the system.

We will work towards the integration of our existing projects within a reduced number of programmes. In so doing, we will try to prioritise better, achieve greater common purpose and more collective impact with the resources we have.

Key to this is the role of persuasive communications and learning how to achieve communications-led impact. We will reverse the logic of publishing research and then thinking how to promote it. Instead, from the outset, we will strategise backwards from the impact we want our research to have. This will not only help to make our programmatic work more impactful, but can also help us reach beyond “the choir”, and thereby contribute to growing the social support base of social movements with whom we work on advocacy.

We will formalise the creation of our Knowledge Hub. This is to be the home of a renewed and expanded international fellowship. Its purpose is to enhance our capacity to connect the dots across our programmes, provide the bigger conceptual and analytical frame within which the Institute as a whole works, and to think further down the line. The Knowledge Hub will also house our Futures Labs to explore critical new issues, and flagship institutional projects such as State of Power.

On internal organisation, staff expressed being highly motivated and treated well at TNI, with opportunities to grow and develop. They also experience TNI as a diverse and inclusive organisation., and are generally happy with the culture and modus operandi.

The growth in the number of people working for TNI over the past five years has brought with it institutional opportunities as well as challenges. The opportunities have include increased capacity, more diverse and younger staff joining TNI, and more geographically dispersed programme team members working for TNI on a freelance basis who bring new perspectives, skills and networks into TNI. The challenges have included better induction of new staff and regular consultants on institutional structures, roles, responsibilities, authorities and decision-making processes, which is a priority for TNI to address.

Our strategy

Against the context as we saw it evolving in 2019/2020, with an eye on threats and opportunities, as well as the assessment of our internal strengths and the weaknesses we will address to enable us to respond well, we have developed the following strategy. It is summarised here to be read at a glance. It presents our vision; mission; values and general theory of change; as well as the overarching organisational goals to which all our programmatic work will contribute; the objectives for the thematic priorities around which we have agreed to organise our work for the next five years; and internal goals for the priority organisational challenges we have agreed must be addressed. An operational plan will be developed to flesh out how we will achieve these objectives.

Vision

Our vision is of an equitable, democratic and peaceful world in which all life may flourish.

Mission

Our mission is to serve as a knowledge resource for progressive social movements.

Values

TNI is a value-driven and inclusive organisation that provides a collaborative space where we practice and promote social justice, and value each other as human and intellectual beings who operate with integrity and respect.

At TNI, the core values we share and uphold in our organisational practice and workplace are:

Equality

TNI believes in the equality of all people. We reject all forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia. We value diversity in our organisation.

Democracy

TNI believes that the people are sovereign in any society, and have equal rights to meaningfully determine how society is governed and resources are shared.

Justice

We believe a just society is one that shares the benefits and burdens equitably, promotes the well-being of all and allows people to pursue their common good. We stand in solidarity with those who suffer injustice – with the oppressed, exploited and marginalised people of the world.

Cooperation

TNI believes in mutually respectful, horizontal relationships of cooperation.

Care

TNI believes in the collective responsibility to care for each other and for our ecosystems such that we can regenerate and flourish.

Independence

TNI believes in the importance of critical, independent and progressive thought consistent with the above values. We welcome a plurality of views as helping us to sharpen our thinking, and are not aligned with any particular political party or ideological tendency.

Overall Organisational Goals

GOAL 1

Construct

Well-researched proposals meaningfully contribute to viable pathways for transformative change.

GOAL 2

Communicate

Narratives popularising proposals for transformative pathways prove high impact.

GOAL 3

Catalyse

Strong, united and intersectional social movements constitute a growing counter-power advocating for transformative pathways.

Programmatic Goals

OBJECTIVE 1

To expose and challenge the global architecture of wealth extraction and corporate power.

OBJECTIVE 2

To develop, connect up and popularise concrete proposals for just transitions to better systems that put the basic needs of human beings and the regeneration of ecosystems and territories at the centre.

OBJECTIVE 3

To expose the militarisation and securitisation of public policy, and to advocate for democratic and just proposals for collective security.

CROSS-CUTTING

Across these objectives – and associated projects – a feminist and intersectional lens will be adopted. In this way, we will centre how working people, women, rural communities, those discriminated against are subject to multiple forms of dispossession and marginalisation, and develop alternatives aimed at overcoming this.

Theory of Change

Our general theory of change is that ...

IF... TNI and its social movement allies can define the public debate to be catalysed and the target audiences to whom key messages will be communicated,

THEN... TNI can conduct rigorous and collaborative research that produces knowledge and proposals that support that intervention

AND IF... TNI is able to share the knowledge and proposals with progressive forces in a cooperative, informative, timely and mutually empowering manner,

THEN ... progressive forces will be empowered to strengthen their argumentation and their public messaging,

AND THEN, these ideas will find greater voice in the public sphere (within the media, among intellectuals and cultural forces), more people will know about the issues and proposals to address them, and narratives and eventually norms will shift,

AND THEN, social support for the ideas will grow, and the ranks of social movements will swell,

AND THEN... politicians will see opportunity to grow their own electoral base by shifting their policy positions accordingly

AND THEN... the policy process will be democratised, feasible proposals welcomed, and eventually strategic reforms may be implemented,

SUCH THAT... key building blocks are achieved that constitute transformative pathways to a more equitable, democratic and peaceful world in which all life may flourish.

AND THIS... will then inspire more people to defend this progress, and push for further change in this direction, which will see the theory of change repeated until the change proves systemic and irreversible.

Overarching Organisational Goals

TNI has set three overarching goals to which all TNI's work will contribute, regardless of the thematic focus:

Construct Transformative Proposals

As part of the urgent effort to inspire public hope and confidence that there are answers as to how to get the world to a better place, TNI will be prioritising propositional work over the next five years. This includes looking for those 'non-reformist' reforms that could pry open the space for the next building blocks towards the common vision that unites the intersectional movements within which TNI works. The propositions should be specific, evidence-based, well elaborated, and demonstrably feasible. They could draw on existing ideas or be original contributions that TNI could put "into movement".

What success looks like:

- Progressive social movements co-own and promote transformative proposals that:
 - are radical, tackling the root causes of injustice
 - reflect the values, interests and aspirations of those most affected
 - are built across sectors/movements and through dialogue and exchange
 - are focused, evidence-based, pragmatic and well articulated
 - are translated into feasible policy proposals
- Political parties take up transformative proposals in their party programmes.

- Local, national and/or international policy and decision-makers consider proposals as viable and take steps to adopt and/or implement these proposal(s).
- Using TNI's analysis, key spokespeople denounce neoliberal/authoritarian/militaristic responses to the key contemporary crises, and there is vigorous public opposition to attempts to deepen corporate control and authoritarianism or perpetuate destructive business-as-usual.

What TNI will do:

- TNI will work with (pre-existing and new) movement activists and activist scholars to co-develop viable, feasible proposals that have the potential to transform structural power.
- TNI will engage visionary thinkers and create diverse/inclusive communities of thought and practice to inform proposals.
- TNI will act as a hub to facilitate exchanges on alternatives and strategies to achieve them.
- TNI will analyse the threats to and opportunities for proposals
- TNI will build on its successful policy dialogues, linking policy makers, politicians and movements to move forward on proposals.

Communicate narratives for high-impact

High impact narratives are needed to popularise transformative proposals such that they win sufficient popular support to crack existing hegemonic thinking. To do so, diverse new (mass) audiences around the world need to be reached through popular formats and language.

What success looks like

- New allies, beyond existing supportive audiences, draw on the narratives and framings advanced by TNI.
- Cultural influencers and thought leaders use TNI's narratives in their work (e.g. in music, art, painting, fiction, theatre, multimedia, comedy).
- Activists from existing and new progressive social movements allies use the narratives to popularise proposals on different platforms.
- Journalists actively seek out TNI as a reliable source, frame their reporting based on our narratives, and help to disseminate our proposals.

What TNI will do:

- TNI will sharpen our communications and messaging to be more impactful, including more effective framing and storytelling, using diverse forms of knowledge including traditional and indigenous knowledge, and making more effective use of numbers and statistics.
- TNI, together with our allies, will develop high-impact narratives by learning from what has worked in the past and experimenting with new means of communication.
- TNI will seek to engage targeted, specialised, influential audiences, including outside the Global North and traditional centers of power and influence.
- TNI will amplify the cultural impact of our narratives through partnerships with artists.
- TNI will expand our on-the-ground partnerships (including with local media) to translate TNI's work for specific contexts.

Catalyse strong, united and intersectional movements

In our theory of change, progressive social movements play a catalytic role in bringing about systemic change. They expand the base of the counter-power needed to shift the balance of forces in favour of alternatives to the dominant paradigm. For this, stronger and more united movements are needed. TNI can play a key role in connecting movements, people and ideas in line with our vision and mission.

What success looks like:

- Bigger & stronger: the progressive social movements we work with inspire and mobilise ever larger populations.
- More visible: the voices, needs, and perspectives of progressive social movement actors are more visible in public discourse.
- More secure: movements have the freedom, skills, resources and rights necessary to conduct advocacy without fear of repression.
- More networked: progressive movements are more closely networked across geographies and sectors, cross-pollinating, exchanging knowledge and strategies, and building shared internationalist agendas for joint action.
- More visionary/transformative: progressive social movements articulate shared positive visions and proposals that speak to transformation of peoples' material reality.

What TNI will do:

- TNI will continue to play an embedded role within the key (pre-existing and newer) progressive social movements relevant to the themes TNI works on, keeping an ear to the ground, demonstrating solidarity wherever possible and amplifying the demands of the movements.
- TNI will help build broad coalitions of movements responding to our key themes, helping to build bridges across sectors and geographies.
- TNI will identify critical moments and issues “ripe” for convergence, and will support movements to develop framings that illuminate common struggles, encourage mutual solidarity and facilitate convergences.
- TNI will engage in respectful dialogue within movements, avoiding sectarianism, embracing different perspectives and knowledges, and aiming to build cross-movement solidarities.
- TNI will pull in new thinkers and connect them with movements beyond those with which we have traditionally engaged.

Programmatic Goals

Arising from our analysis of the context, recommendations of the allies we consulted, and building on TNI's strengths, TNI has set three programmatic goals for the coming five years.

CROSS-CUTTING

Across these objectives – and associated projects – a feminist and intersectional lens will be adopted. In this way, we will centre how working people, women, rural communities, those discriminated against are subject to multiple forms of dispossession and marginalisation, repression and

incarceration, and develop alternatives aimed at overcoming this. For our work in Myanmar, we will draw on as much as possible and appropriate, given the particular circumstances there, from the work below.

OBJECTIVE 1

To expose and challenge the global architecture of wealth extraction and corporate power.

The extreme concentration of wealth and power in corporations is a major obstacle to achieving the future we want. Measured by revenue, 71 out of the 100 biggest economies in the world are, in fact, transnational corporations (TNCs). These corporations shape the global political economy, and are constantly seeking to expand markets, secure resources and eliminate competition in the pursuit of profit. Sights are currently set on the digital economy and it can be expected that the opportunities presented by demands for an energy transition will be next. In 2020, 65% of the top 20 companies by market capitalisation were based in the United States, shadowed by Chinese companies at 15% – both primarily in tech and finance. This marks a shift from dominance by

fossil fuel companies and finance, though Saudi oil company Aramco stands as number 1 in the ranking.

The rules, or rather lack of them, for neoliberal globalisation have largely been made in service of such mega-corporations. This includes agreements at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), in bilateral or multilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and International Investment Agreements (IIAs). The enshrining of rights for foreign corporations in such agreements constitute key pillars of the architecture of corporate power. This includes the now notorious Investor-State Dispute Settlement clauses.

Abolish ISDS

Nearly 60 years ago, primarily as a mechanism to protect colonial investments in the decolonisation process, investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) was invented. This allows foreign investors to sue states in private arbitration courts for lost future profits when states enact (often in the public interest) new regulations. ISDS clauses are contained in around 3,300 investment treaties, and come with “zombie” provisions whereby the provisions of the treaties stand for years even after a state formally withdraws. It has proven a lynchpin in the architecture of corporate power.

The past two decades have seen a whole legal industry mushroom up around ISDS touting for business opportunities, and consequently a huge spike in the number of cases brought by corporations. Together with monumental legal costs, awards in favour of corporations can amount to extraordinary sums payable from public coffers. For poorer nations, this comes on top of pre-existing fiscal burdens such as debt repayments, and further reduces the resources available for addressing social inequities or climate challenges. Fear of such cases also inhibits states’ willingness to regulate in the public interest, leaving corporations to act with impunity. With the accelerated efforts to effect an energy transition, big mining companies have been using (the threat of) ISDS claims, lately particularly under the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT), to discourage governments from banning oil-drilling, coal mining, or other measures aimed at phasing-out dirty energy. While the ECT has so far been used mainly by the fossil fuel industry to undermine an energy transition, it can be anticipated that it will also be used as a weapon by the mining industry to challenge any attempt at regulating the future extraction of transition minerals. This will negatively

impact some Southern countries that might want to ensure they retain control over their natural resources and change the terms of investment and trade.

Resource sovereignty

Present renewable technologies rely on mining certain key minerals and metals and in far greater quantities than ever before. Wind and solar farms also dramatically increase competition for the surface area of the Earth. While it is clear that fossil fuels are immensely harmful, and that both land and resources will be required for a transition to new sources of energy, the challenge is how to ensure that southern countries and global hinterlands are not mere sites of extraction, land grabbing, and other forms of dispossession but instead participate actively in the energy transition, and benefit from it. The majority world should not be expected again to pay the price for the development of the richer parts of the world. Nor should marginalized rural communities and their territories – where these injustices are further magnified – again be sacrificed in the name of a national development which does not centre their needs. The core problem is that the energy transition is taking place within the same extractivist economic logic and the same structures of (corporate and elite) power at global and national levels as the fossil-fuelled economy. Any just energy transition must address pre-existing inequalities, and must seek to transform the whole energy system and not only alternative sources of energy to fuel the same destructive model of accumulation. This requires us to ask energy for what and for whom.

Taming Big Tech

Meanwhile, a flurry of new digital chapters are being negotiated through FTAs, and in 2019 intent to begin negotiations on e-commerce at the WTO was announced. Till recently, Big Tech has been allowed unfettered freedom to design, implement and exploit social media, advertising, e-commerce and digital services. Fast-paced advances in technology exacerbated inequality globally, and made it hard for regulators to keep pace. With the rise of digital services, a few major platforms have accumulated enormous monopoly power, seeing a surge in wealth for technologically advanced countries, without corresponding prosperity elsewhere. Meanwhile, as with all TNCs, Big Tech has been making good use of trade agreements to protect its interests. The golden standard for them was that of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which also gives them ISDS cover. With the introduction of data privacy laws from 2018 and subsequent competition rules in the EU and USA, Big Tech has invested significantly in lobbying for digital chapters in a myriad of agreements, which would help them avoid taxes and restrictions, including on cross-border data flows. Any countries that haven't nailed down their own laws before entering negotiations may find their hands tied by binding FTAs.

International Treaty to regulate TNCs

While transnational corporations (TNCs) have been allowed to set their own voluntary standards at global level for all kinds of areas of public policy, and also enjoy substantial legal rights secured through trade and investment agreements, their human rights obligations, are less clear and much more difficult to enforce. Given the power of TNCs in today's

globalised world, the expectation that domestic law would be sufficient to impose human rights-related obligations and to hold TNCs accountable for abuses is simply unrealistic. TNCs can easily use the most favourable jurisdiction to fend off responsibility and to shift this, instead, to their subsidiaries and suppliers (in the same way, they do for tax obligations). Long supply chains make it extremely difficult to establish responsibility and hold accountable those in the highest position of command in such chains. States hosting powerful TNCs often lack the capacity to act against them or do not take action for fear of losing foreign investment or having to face ISDS suits. TNCs' home states do not take action either, to avoid placing them at a competitive disadvantage. Victims of corporate abuses, therefore, face huge obstacles both in accessing justice and in obtaining redress. For this reason, the process at the UN Human Rights Council to negotiate an internationally legally binding Treaty to regulate the activities of Transnational Corporations remains crucially important for assuring an end to corporate impunity.

The trojan horse of 'multistakeholder' global governance

Meanwhile, since the United Nations and the World Economic Forum signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2019, we have seen the UN outsourcing distribution of vaccines to poorer countries during COVID to a 'multistakeholder' body set up and run by Big Pharma, if funded by governments, and then giving Big Food the job of convening the World Food Systems Summit planned for 2021. Marketed as inclusive, and 'multistakeholder', this is a trojan horse for greater capture of global public policy making by TNCs. It is a model developed over the past two decades by industry-led initiatives to set

voluntary standards for responsible business conduct, driven by self-interest, and geared for avoiding state regulation and obligations to protect affected communities.

Our focus in the next five years will be on these issues, and proposals for how to dismantle the system of corporate power, break the monopolies of TNCs, and envisage what a fairer global economic order and more democratic system of global governance might look like.

OBJECTIVE 2

To develop, connect up and popularise concrete proposals for just transitions to better systems that put the basic needs of human beings and the regeneration of ecosystems and territories at the centre.

Just Transition

Humanity is facing a grave crisis in our relationships with nature: decades of greenhouse gas emissions and destructive environmental practices have driven ecosystems to a breaking point and threaten to trigger catastrophic global heating. It is not too late, however, to implement radical changes that re-orient our societies and economies towards sustaining both human and non-human life, regenerating ecosystems and territories, and recognising the fundamental rights of all people. Increasingly, this transformation – which includes an urgent transition to renewable energy systems – is discussed under the framework of “just transition”.

As defined by labour and environmental movements, a just transition is one which puts the rights and needs of workers and their communities at the centre of change. It ensures that those most affected by the climate crisis, as well as by our energy system (including front line communities and workers in fossil fuel industries) do not bear the brunt of the costs of the transition. Just transition offers a framework for thinking through the transformation of our economy and society. This includes our systems for producing, distributing, and using energy, food, land and labour, on which TNI will focus.

A just transition stands opposed to visions of a ‘green capitalism’ that amounts to techno-fixes to sustain the status quo, notably the extractivist relationship to the environment and labour (including reproductive labour). It is a response to the climate crisis aimed at protecting the few at the expense of the many. TNI will build on its many years of work with rural and urban communities around the world to collectively craft visions of ecologically and socially just futures, and pathways towards them.

Building Feminist Economies

As well as a climate and environmental crisis, we also face a systemic economic crisis that has deepened inequality and precarity worldwide and bolstered carceral and militaristic solutions to insecurity. A feminist lens can help to re-orient discussions around the economy towards how it can serve as means to sustain and regenerate life and dignity, rather than maximising profit and insecurity. This theme will integrate a ‘just transition’ approach but also deepen and widen its focus to develop visions of economies that put peoples’ rights and needs at the centre, with a special focus on people traditionally marginalised or excluded from decision-making spaces.

This will include building on our work of revaluing and revitalising public services and public investment and deepening democratic control, as well as our work defending equitable and democratic access to land, territories, oceans and resources. TNI will seize the moment post-COVID to advocate for proposals for a future that is public, integrating food sovereignty and decent rural livelihoods, including for producers of illicit crops. We will challenge the idea that economic growth is the only way out of the crisis, fighting for a future that redistributes wealth and power.

We will deepen our work to emphasise care as a central priority for the economy. The climate and environmental crisis, the Covid-19 crisis and the anticipated debt crisis have all exposed a deep ‘crisis of care’ within our societies: many of the roles, tasks and resources essential to the continued survival of our planet and our societies are treated as expendable. The burden of this work is currently carried predominantly by women. TNI will put this, often invisibilised, work at the heart of our vision of a new economy that seeks to sustain, protect, and nourish people, communities and ecosystems.

Our visions of feminist economies will also include new proposals to address digitalisation and the role of data in shaping our lives, societies, and economies, articulating visions of data as a collective good – including through concepts like “digital sovereignty” and “data commons”.

TNI’s deep and broad networks around extractivism, agrarian and environmental justice, oceans and small-scale fisheries, energy and energy democracy, public services, transformative cities, land and resource struggles, and rural livelihoods put us in a unique position to strengthen alliances between diverse social movements, to facilitate the development of inspiring

shared visions and proposals towards their achievement, and to build the social and political power necessary for this.

In the next five years, we will focus on:

- A new vision of universal public goods; democratic food & energy systems; and just and democratic access to land and other resources.
- Visions of alternative economies/societies that maximise collective autonomy and put the flourishing of communities & regeneration of ecosystems at the centre. These alternatives are grounded in food sovereignty, environmental justice, decent livelihoods, energy democracy, just and democratic access to land, resources as well as essential goods and services, and ecological regeneration.
- A new vision of law & regulation (including drug law) that builds the rights of the most marginalised people rather than “criminalising poverty”, and creates new possibilities for regenerative livelihoods.

OBJECTIVE 3

To expose the militarisation and securitisation of public policy, and to advocate for democratic and just proposals for collective safety.

Our world has never been more militarised. Global military spending is at a record high of almost US\$2 trillion. For many decades we have been living in a permanent state of war which has taken various forms from the most recent high-intensity warfare in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq, to low-intensity pacification through policing, surveillance, and even more covertly through our global finance system and other such systems of control. Nowhere has the trend towards security and militarism been more evident than in the securitisation of border and migration policies.

Governments around the world increasingly advocate militarism as an adequate and necessary response to political, social and economic challenges be that drugs, violent extremism, refugees, the Covid-19 pandemic, social protests or the consequences of climate change.

At the core of securitised and militarised policies are those who benefit from them, namely the private security industry and arms trade companies. Far from being passive actors, these companies have increasingly presented themselves as security experts and have been front and centre in shaping these policies through their lobbying efforts and participation in policy advisory boards. They later reap the benefits and further entrench the securitised approach.

War on Drugs

The war on drugs has led to widespread human rights violations, racial injustice, criminalisation of whole communities, and overcrowded prisons, but has never managed to reduce the illegal drugs market or organised crime. Some countries are now beginning to realise that legalisation and not criminalisation is the way forward.

War on Terror

Similarly, the War on Terror, far from reducing sporadic violent acts and stemming the growth of violent armed groups, actually contributed to increased levels of violence and exacerbated the number of non-state armed groups and splinter groups. The recent return to power of the Taliban 20 years after the US – NATO invasion of Afghanistan underscores just how failed the War on Terror has been. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counter Terrorism found no evidence of any instances where Countering Violent Extremism policies had actually been instrumental in stopping violent acts. To the contrary, her office found that they likely had contributed to exacerbating a climate in which violent acts were more likely to occur because they eroded community relations, and the support and solidarity structures, that were found to actually be mitigating factors in reducing the risk of violence.

Suppression of dissent

States cast a very wide net in the application of counter-terrorism policies. They focused initially on Muslims, while later also targeting environmental and climate activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and political dissenters.

Health as a threat

Advances in technology and digitalisation have enabled greater surveillance at unprecedented levels of entire societies. The Covid-19 global pandemic has been used as a pretext for the implementation and normalisation of digital identification systems and tracker applications and to further entrench the notion that we pose a threat to each other. Instead of prioritising public health through structures of care and solidarity, states approved emergency policing powers, sent the army on to the streets, invested in militarised responses to a health problem, while often leaving hospitals and healthcare staff exposed and unprotected.

Climate security

Most recently, with regard to the climate crisis, many states have manipulated the threat posed to the planet by framing it as a question of national security, thereby justifying militarised solutions, instead of addressing the root causes, including recognition of the not insignificant contribution of the military itself.

Borders and Migration

Nowhere has the trend towards security and militarism been more evident than in the securitisation of border and migration policies. The response has been to fortify, surveil, and militarise borders and wage a war against those on the move. The narrative, following 9/11 and subsequent Al Qaida attacks in Europe, was that the threat was external and to guarantee domestic security, borders needed to be fortified. This narrative was based on thin air but nevertheless physical, maritime and virtual walls went up, both around and

along routes to European and North America. Furthermore, border control was externalised to third countries severely impacting human patterns of movement, be they nomadic, for seasonal migration, more permanent migration in search of other life prospects, journeys of survival, or to seek asylum. The narrative around migration over the past two decades has increasingly framed migrants as a threat to state security.

We will focus on the need to de-securitise and de-militarise public policy, so that society does actually become safer. This would entail alternative security policies being guided by principles of care, solidarity, human rights, safety, collective well-being, democracy, and peace.