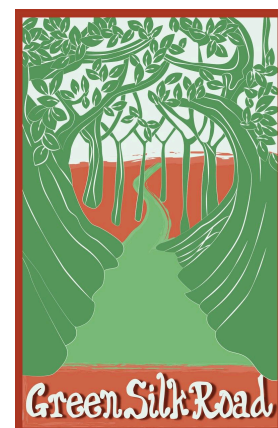


# 2024 Green Silk Road summer school

- What if those of us who question the status quo and see the fundamental impossibility of business as usual, would be able to experience alternative ways of meeting human needs across various bioregions in Eurasia?
- What if those of us taking action could gather insights from peers, integrate them and use them to improve work in our own communities?
- What if the Green Silk Road was a school?
- What if travelling merged with learning to become travellearning?



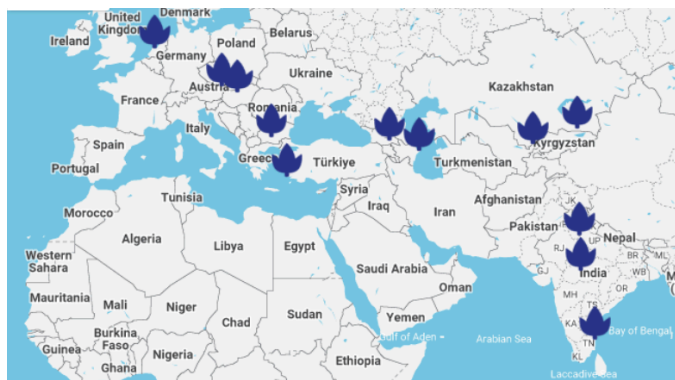
## Green Silk Road (GSR)

The GSR (<https://www.thegreensilkroad.com/>) started in the international intentional community called Auroville, India in 2017 where residents wondered about ways to combine their inter-continental lifestyles with responses to the current ecological crisis. Could travel be designed in ways that not only cause less harm (eg: carbon emissions, political polarisation, extractivism and “othering”), but also contribute in a positive sense? Ideas included:

- sharing the Auroville experience of **reforestation** with those caring for degraded landscapes in Eurasia;
- supporting place based communities **resisting social and ecological violence**;
- **connecting alternatives** with each other in a peer-to-peer web of solidarity;
- imagining a planet-friendly version of **inter-regional relations** -inspired by the rich heritage of the ancient Silk Roads, where goods and services as well as innovations and wisdom traditions spread across borders;
- and last but not least offering systematic **learning pathways** for those travelling along the Green Silk Road. If travel is a great way to learn, why not include the journey towards educational programs in the program itself?

## Ecoversity and Global Tapestry of Alternatives

Forests have been sites of learning in many regions in Asia and Europe. Indic wisdom traditions include the *Aranyakas*: vedic scriptures born from the inquiry of sages (700 BCE) living in wild ecosystems. Druid teachers in Europe used forests as sacred sanctuaries of learning. And across Anatolia, Sufis did the same. When developing our learning programs, the GSR takes inspiration from this heritage and aims to **reimagine forest based education** for our times. Because forests are under threat, this requires significant restoration and regeneration.



Luckily enough there are plenty of local and regional initiatives doing just that. So we don't

need to start from scratch. The term [ecoversity](#) has been used to describe higher education programs that use their environment as a source for inspiration and inquiry. We proudly associate ourselves with this movement. As this quest crosses state borders we need an international network to map and grow local responses. The [Global Tapestry of Alternatives](#) offers such a web of co-inquiry, co-resistance and co-responding. GSR learning sites are spread across Eurasia, woven together by common inquiries and by travellearners and facilitators who act as cross-pollinators, sharing insights and experiences between places and disciplines. GSR summer schools are part of a long term education program that will develop and share research together with practitioners, scholars and artists.

## Program Content

This year the GSR summer school -a 10 day residential program at a regeneration site in Romania called [Provision](#). Program dates are July 22-31. The learning starts the moment participants leave their house so it includes travel to the site and back.



Topics we will explore during the program include

- Understanding **collapse** and system breakdown. What do we need to relinquish from the current dominant models?
  - Academic references include: collapsology, polycrisis, metacrisis, deep adaptation, ...
- Lessons from **on the ground alternatives**, what worked? What didn't? Why?
  - Academic references include: prefigurative communities, transition studies, social entrepreneurship, commons, solidarity economy, ...
- **Transformation** and metamorphosis. How does system change happen? Which frameworks help us keep the larger picture in mind while busy with the nitty gritty of day to day operations?
  - Academic references: systems thinking, societal change, pluriverse, ...
- Relating with the **more than human** world. What approaches help us tap into the wealth of interspecies wisdom? And how do we weave this practice into our organisational work?
  - Academic references: environmental humanities, interspecies governance, deep ecology...
- **Skills** and support systems. It's important to learn how to grow food, build shelter and heal each other when mainstream structures collapse. However, a single individual cannot master all. So how to set up effective mutual aid models without too much hassle?

The GSR approach to learning aims to involve all of ourselves: head, heart and hands. Just like travelling to the site, the act of living together on site is as much part of the curriculum as the reading and writing.

As overall flow we propose the spiral pattern from the Work That Reconnects (see <http://www.zendialogue.ca/work-that-reconnects.html> ), starting with gratitude, then honouring the mess we are in, seeing with new eyes and going forth.

## Just Transformations and the 5 Petal Flower

Our collective quest for alternatives converges under the banner of “just transformation” and we propose to borrow its framing as an overall sense-making skeleton. As described in the GTA publication on this topic:

*“The challenge for overcoming violence and injustice in its different forms (direct, structural, cultural/epistemic/cognitive) and therefore for achieving conflict transformation is to generate strategies to impact on these three areas in which power is concentrated:*

- 1) institutions, legal and economic frameworks,*
- 2) people and their networks, and*
- 3) discourses, narratives, knowledge and ways of seeing the world.”*

The GSR was born into an Indian family of civil society organisations held together by the [Vikalp Sangam](#) (Confluence of Alternatives), who speak of the following five dimensions/spheres of alternative transformation as petals of a flower. It is proposed that alternatives are built on the following interrelated, interlocking dimensions/spheres, seen as an integrated whole.

1. **Ecological integrity** and resilience, which includes the conservation of the rest of nature (ecosystems, species, functions, cycles) and its resilience, and respect for ecological limits at various levels, local to global.
2. **Social well-being and justice**, including lives that are fulfilling and satisfactory physically, socially, culturally and spiritually; where there is equity between communities and individuals in socio-economic and political entitlements, benefits, rights and responsibilities; where there is communal and ethnic harmony.
3. **Direct and delegated democracy**, where decision-making starts at the smallest unit of human settlement, in which every human has the right, capacity and opportunity to take part, and builds up from this unit to larger levels of governance; and where decision-making is not simply on a ‘one person one vote’ basis but respectful of the needs and rights of those currently deprived, e.g. some minorities.
4. **Economic democracy**, in which local communities and individuals (including producers and consumers, often combined into one as ‘prosumers’) have control over the means of production, distribution, exchange and markets; where localization is a key principle, and larger trade and exchange is built on it.
5. **Cultural diversity** and knowledge democracy, in which pluralism of ways of living, ideas and ideologies are respected, and where the generation, transmission and use of knowledge (traditional/modern, including science and technology) are accessible to all.

## Methods

We will learn using all our faculties: embodied experiential activities, individual and collective reflection, creativity and play.

We will start by getting to know each other and the site, creating a safe space to be vulnerable and curious. Then we will explore the various strands of inquiry - starting with overall system break-down, the ways modernity has crept into our own beings, then moving to inspiring stories of alternatives, illustrated by visiting local initiatives as well as the stories brought by other participants. Finally we contribute our creativity to this ongoing quest for a more beautiful world. All the while we co-create our own collective rituals and practices, prefiguring at a small scale what it means to re-invent society.

## Creative research

This refers to an approach integrating inquiry and the creative process - it's not the study of art, or the art of studying, but the combination of investigation and creation. As we probe into the questions mentioned above, we participate in the act of uncovering patterns and visibilising connections -an act that we can invite others into as well, making it public.

## Participants

The program is open to youth of all ages. We encourage people from a diverse range of backgrounds to apply, because diversity will make the learning experience richer and deeper. Some who are enrolled in formal Universities may look for official accreditation which is something we are working on. We will offer at the least a certificate, and depending on administrative protocols we might be able to offer ECTS.

## Team

We have a GSR team, a local team and a scientific committee.

- The GSR team includes
  - [Dr Omid Hashemi](#) - theatre department Paris 8 University, France
  - [Gijs Spoor](#) - systems change practitioner and Ashoka fellow, India
  - Cyprien Jeanjean - political science scholar, France
  - Hameem Mohammad - educationist, India
  - [Alex Jensen](#) - localisation campaigner, India and USA
- The local team includes
  - [Lars Veraart](#) - veterinarian and co-founder Provision
  - [Robyn Bors](#) - non violent communication teacher and co-founder Provision
  - [Attila Szocs](#) -
  - ...
- The scientific committee includes
  - Dr [Begum Ozkaynak](#) - Department of Economics Boğaziçi University, Istanbul
  - Dr [Suryamayi Clarence-Smith](#) - lecturer American University of Paris, Auroville
  - [Cansu Gurkaya](#) - PhD student, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris
  - [Emilia Lewartowska](#) - PhD student, [International Development Research Group](#)
  - [Social Dynamics and Change](#) Roskilde University Denmark

Some of the place based projects we will learn from include:

- [Alpa](#) - an initiative to support smallholder agroecological farming through a land bank
- [EcoRuralis](#) - national association of agroecological peasant farmers campaigning for access to seeds, traditional knowledge, land, social and economic justice. They have 20,000 members and are part of the international network [La Via Campesina](#).
- Local shepherds, stewarding grazing lands on the edge of the Apuseni forest.
- ...

## Travel

Incorporating travel to the venue is an essential part of GSR programs. We plan to support people in the process of finding projects along the way between their residence and the venue in western

Romania. After we close applications on May 23, we share our network of place based initiatives in Europe and the Middle East and we offer training on how to combine travel with social change work. Here we share experiences of the green silk road from 2018 till 2023 including how to work with schools and student groups of different ages. How to exchange skills for accommodation and the different ways a traveller can add value to a place based initiative.

As the summer school program is scheduled for the end of July, depending on the distance participants may need one or two or three weeks to reach. Those who live further away can also meet up with those who live closer by and they can continue to travel together.

Whether participants want to follow a similar process after the summer school is up to them.

## Advocacy

For the post-program activities one possibility is an advocacy campaign based on different roles that participants fulfil in society. Some might be artists, others, activists or scholars, or farmers. And each will get a chance to design a part that they can play in the Green Silk Road advocacy agenda leading up to the COP29 in Azerbaijan in November 2024.



For this we plan to partner with other civil society organisations and again use travel as part of the program. We are looking for a well established organisation that has a pavilion at the COP and we propose to exhibit insights from the green silk road travellers on the way to the COP.

Depending on the interest of the summer school participants, we can endorse other existing manifestos or create one ourselves.

Interested? Write to us at  
[thegreensilkroad@gmail.com](mailto:thegreensilkroad@gmail.com)