

Global Mapping of Next Economy Organizations and Their Discourse

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Abstract

This article presents a global mapping of *Next Economies* organizations and their discourse, based on a dataset of 318 institutions across multiple countries and regions. Recent scholarship stresses that overhauling prevailing economic systems is essential to confront today's interlinked global crises, with innovative approaches seeking to balance ecological integrity and human well-being (Kenter *et al.*, 2024). Discussions on the "new economy" increasingly emphasize restructuring philanthropy and governance to better respond to the polycrisis and to advance more equitable and sustainable pathways (Alliance Magazine, 2024). To conduct this analysis, we developed a coded dataset capturing institutional structures, geographic locations, discursive critiques, adoption of circular economy principles, alignment with alternative models, and focus areas. The dataset was then translated into a relational network on GraphCommons, where organizations serve as nodes connected by shared features such as country, alliances, critiques, and focus areas. Using network analysis enables the identification of clusters with common orientations and the exploration of relations between institutional characteristics and discourses.

Our findings highlight the ways in which *Next Economies* movements are emerging, revealing structural and thematic patterns in how *Next Economies* movements are globally distributed and conceptually aligned. The network approach provides insights into both the diversity and interconnectedness of these organizations, offering a foundation for comparative research and coalition-building. Ultimately, structuring these organizations within a global network contributes to a deeper understanding of the discursive and the structural landscape of the *Next Economies*.

2. Introduction

Background

The concept of the *Next Economies* emerged in response to rising critiques of the dominant global economic paradigm. For much of the last century, neoclassical economics has shaped discourse in research, policymaking, education, and public debate, establishing a highly influential narrative (Kenter *et al.*, 2025). This dominance has not only generated material wealth but has also reinforced structural inequalities and intensified ecological vulnerabilities. The consequences of this growth imperative are visible, escalating environmental pressures and widening social divides. Reliance on growth at all costs has exacerbated climate change, placed increasing pressure on biodiversity, and deepened the divide between global economic centres and local alternatives. In response, the post-

growth idea has proposed a shift in priorities, focusing not on GDP but on wellbeing within ecological boundaries. Post-growth thinking proposes shifting the focus away from GDP expansion and toward advancing human wellbeing, while ensuring that societies remain within ecological limits (Kallis *et al.*, 2025). However, without sufficient evidence that growth can be decoupled from ecological harm, many academics argue that this shift is no longer optional but inevitable. There is a lack of strong evidence for absolute decoupling; therefore, scholars contend that societies will ultimately need to move into a post-growth trajectory (Koch, 2025). This urgency reinforces today's overlapping crises of climate change and biodiversity collapse, both of which are tied to an economic system that doesn't prioritize sustainability. The Earth and living beings are threatened by the climate and biodiversity crises, both of which are directly linked to an economic ecosystem prioritizing profit maximization, highlighting the unsustainability of the current model and the necessity for alternatives (Gücüm & Özesmi, 2023). Without shifting from a profit-maximizing consumer economy toward an ecologically and socially just prosumer economy, civilization faces the risk of collapse within decades (Özesmi, 2019). The shift away from an extractive, resource-driven global economy toward one that values human rights and livelihoods could redefine global economics, offering reasons for optimism. Opportunities to prevent catastrophic levels of heating are being missed due to accelerating consumerism, the false seduction of dubious climate quick fixes, unverifiable "carbon offsets", exorbitant pollution levels, and growing economic disparity. Addressing the accelerating climate and biodiversity crises demands fundamental changes not only to economies and behaviours but also to the guiding values that shape them (Ripple *et al.*, 2024).

Against this depressing backdrop, prefigurative politics and proposals for *Next economies* operate a fundamentally different orientation to values and applications. Emerging "*Next Economy*" initiatives signal a paradigm shift, prioritizing stewardship, decentralization, interdependence, and regenerative practices in contrast to neoliberal emphases on market dominance, growth, and profit maximization (Waddell *et al.*, 2023). Closely related, the degrowth movement, as well as the prosumer economy, adds a sharper call for deliberate reductions in harmful production and consumption that remain within planetary limits. What distinguishes degrowth from other approaches is its call for a purposeful reduction of production and consumption, particularly in sectors with the heaviest environmental toll (Parrique, 2025). This recognition aligns with the search for systemic transformations, where critiques such as degrowth converge with broader debates on how capitalism itself may be reconceptualized. Capitalism itself must be continually rethought and troubled, since its environmental and social harms demonstrate that no single framework is sufficient, requiring pluralist engagement with alternatives (Kangas *et al.*, 2025)

The *Next Economies* represents both a critique and an alternative to this paradigm. On one level, it challenges the assumptions that bigger is always better, that maximizing profit is the primary goal of economic activity, and that growth is inherently desirable. These emerging imaginaries encourage a rethinking of humanity's role, framing people as interconnected with the natural world and promoting eco-social perspectives that center life and wellbeing (Waddock, 2024). These characteristics make the *Next Economies* best understood not as a single blueprint, but as an evolving ecosystem of ideas and institutions that collectively experiment with what comes after the dominant model. Organizing through post-growth values in contrast to the dominant economic system is not only possible, but essential to achieve sustainability (Robra *et al.*, 2025).

Organizations play a crucial role in this transition. Rather than functioning solely as passive recipients of policy, they actively produce and circulate discourses that shape solutions. Whether in the form of cooperatives empowering local resilience or think tanks promoting alternative indicators, these organizations help render visible the systemic shortcomings of the current paradigm while also advancing alternative visions. Their institutional form, scale of activity, and strategies provide valuable insights into how future changes are practiced in different contexts.

At the global scale, the importance of mapping such organizations and their discourses has never been greater. Economic crises, climate emergencies, and geopolitical instability reveal how interconnected societies are—and how inadequate traditional approaches can be in addressing today's challenges. Without a systematic mapping of organizations engaged in the *Next Economies*, it remains difficult to identify shared critiques and converging models. This lack of visibility constrains the development of policy frameworks that can effectively transcend national boundaries.

Study Objective

This study seeks to address the absence of a systemic, cross-national mapping of *Next Economies* organizations, which limits the ability to identify shared critiques, converging models, and policy frameworks that can operate beyond national boundaries. By assembling and coding a dataset of 318 organizations worldwide and translating it into a relational network using the Graphcommons platform, we aim to generate a large-scale, comparative map of *Next Economies* organizations worldwide and their discourse. Our objectives are:

- To create a complete map of *Next Economies* organizations that visualizes their geographic spread, structural characteristics, and discursive orientations.
- To examine how critiques of profit maximization, growth, and size are distributed globally; to assess the extent of advocacy for circular economy principles and alternative models; and to identify recurring structural and thematic patterns across different types of organizations.
- To analyse how organizations are connected through shared critiques, focus areas, alliances, and regions, and to find correlations between structural characteristics and discourse.

By situating these organizations in a global relational map, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the *Next Economies* as both a conceptual and practical movement. It provides a strong foundation for future research, policy design, and coalition-building, while also offering insights into the ways organizations collectively run and reconstruct economic systems.

3. Data and Methods

3.1 Dataset Overview

We have compiled a dataset of 318 organizations engaged with *Next Economies* ideas and practices. Each organization is a part of the analysis with the following variables:

- **Institutional structure** (NGO, cooperative, think tank, network, social enterprise)
- **Geographic location** (country, continent, region)
- **Discursive critique/s** (binary 0/1): profit maximization, company size, and growth-orientation
- **Advocacy of circular economy principles** (binary 0/1)
- **Alignment with alternative economic models** (binary 0/1; wellbeing, post-growth, degrowth, solidarity, prosumer, etc.)
- **Focus areas** (energy, labour, food, governance, biodiversity, justice, etc.)

3.2 Data Collection Process

We focused on publicly available materials: official organizational websites, institutional reports, and previous publications related. Where possible, collected data were cross-verified across sources. Organizations were included if they state critiques of the dominant economic paradigm and/or advocacy of alternatives (wellbeing, post-growth, degrowth, solidarity, prosumer, etc.). They must have an identifiable institutional form, and active or very recent activity was included. Purely commercial firms, inactive or defunct institutions, and organizations lacking publicly available documentation to code variables reliably were excluded. Following qualitative, exploratory designs, we used systematic text and document analysis to ensure reliability and transparency. Only publicly available information was used, and no human-subjects data were collected.

3.3 GraphCommons Network

We model the dataset as a relational network that links organizations to the key elements of their discourse and context. The graph is designed to contain one-to-one and many-to-many relationships so that common critiques, focus areas, and geographic locations are visible. Nodes represent organizations, critiques, focus areas, and alternative models; edges represent the relationships between them, such as an organization expressing a critique, being located in a country, or advocating a particular model or focus area. Network visualization is useful because it shows many kinds of connections that wouldn't be visible in simple tables or charts. It makes it easier to see patterns, such as groups of organizations that share similar ideas or geographic regions where similar approaches are common. By showing the data as a GraphCommons network graph, we can notice important factors that connect institutions, groups built around the same themes, and regional clusters. This helps us compare information at different levels while keeping the relationships and links clear. The coded dataset was imported into GraphCommons as a spreadsheet, with categories aligned to node and edge types to ensure comparability across organizations.

3.4 Analytics

Using the coded dataset (binary 0/1 for presence/absence items; categorical for structure and focus areas), we produce descriptive summaries of the variables collected from organizations' public materials. Binary codings are reported for critiques, advocacy for the circular economy, and alignment with alternative models. Distributions are summarized for institutional structure, location, and focus areas. All quantitative summaries rely only on information gained from organizations' websites,

reports, and publicly available data, coded within a predefined structure. Following the qualitative, document-based approach outlined in the methodology, organizational texts (websites, reports) are analysed to assign critique classifications and to record common orientations. Coding follows predefined criteria to avoid bias. Coding notes are maintained to document decisions and ensure transparency and replicability. To better understand relationships among data captured in the dataset, we use GraphCommons to generate interactive network maps from the spreadsheet import. Nodes represent organizations, critiques, focus areas, countries, and alternative models; edges represent the links that connect them, such as common critiques, geographic locations, or advocacy for specific models and focus areas. Visual inspection of these maps is used to see connections and identify common themes within the *Next Economy* ecosystem, completing the quantitative analysis and qualitative classifications. AI assistance supported the process through a custom GPT, built with 30 definitions, which analyzed organizational webpages to code critiques and advocacy positions (with the binary coding of 0/1) with short explanations, later manually verified for accuracy. Across all analytic steps, we apply the study's bias-reduction measures: building from diverse, credible sources; systematic coding using predefined criteria; transparent documentation of procedures; and cross-verification of key data points across multiple public sources—if possible—prior to inclusion in the dataset.

4. Results and Discussion

The global mapping of *Next Economies* organizations highlights both the diversity and connectedness of alternatives. The analysis of 318 organisations shows that while they are geographically diffused, operating in distinctly local and regional contexts, they are critically aligned through a shared discourse that challenges the core tenets of conventional economics – profit maximisation, growth and scale, as Figure 1 illustrates. This finding is consistent with research in ethnoeconomics which shows how indigenous and local practices embody long-standing modes of economic resilience and sustainability, offering essential lessons for future-oriented organizing, thus offering important lessons for future-oriented organising (Filho & Kuzmanović, 2024). Similarly, the study of prefigurative politics emphasizes how transformative projects experiment with desired futures in the present, positioning them not merely as resistance but as constructive alternatives (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020).

Bridging these concepts with our findings, organization studies conceptualise cooperatives, post-growth networks, and transition towns as forms of “prefigurative organizing,” where everyday practices enact the principles of an alternative economy (Schiller-Merkens, 2022). Our network results illustrate these insights in the clustering of organizations around critiques of profit maximization, growth, and size, which mirrors what academics identify as core critiques. Furthermore, case-based research on post-growth ethics further supports this by showing how organizations deliberately orient values and practices against dominant capitalist imperatives, even when such choices entail economic sacrifice (Robra et al., 2025). Ultimately, this shows that the Next Economies can be understood as a global conceptual movement, even without a unified global command structure.

Figure 2 displays the regional distribution of organisations and reveals a significant concentration of organisations in Europe, suggesting it may be a mature hub for the Next Economies, likely due to supportive policy environments and strong funding mechanisms. However, the substantial representation in the region of Asia and Africa indicates these are not merely Western concepts but are also articulated and practiced within diverse economic and cultural contexts, thereby

demonstrating that alternative economic models are not only predominantly a Global North phenomenon.

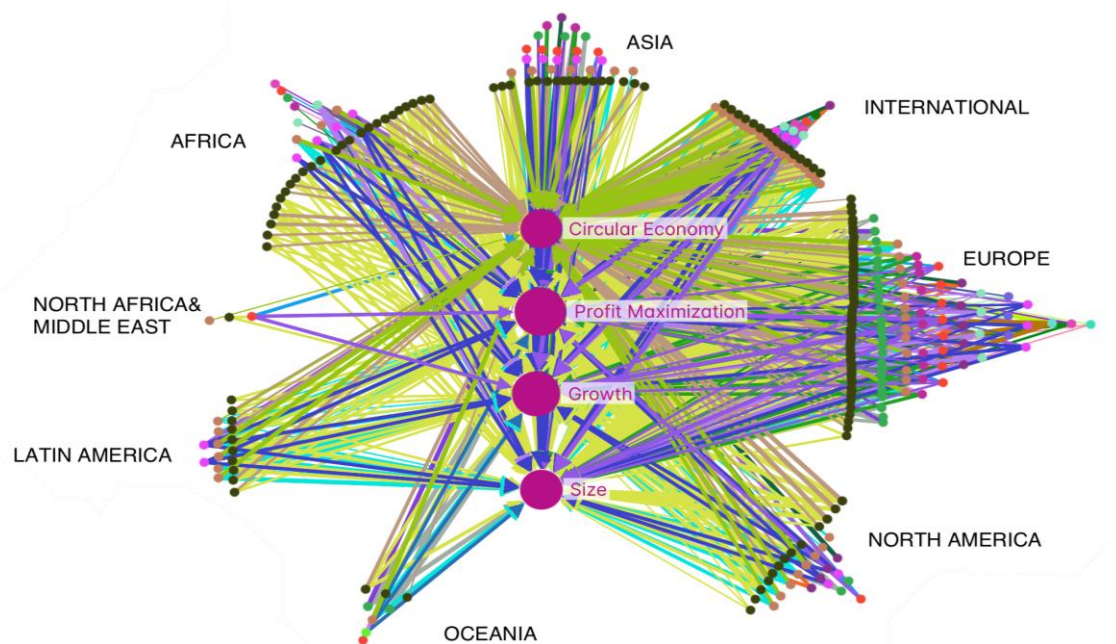


Figure 1: Global distribution of the organizations and their links to critiques (profit maximization, growth, size)

This geographic analysis is further nuanced by the subset of multi-regional organisations (operating in two or more regions). This is more commonly associated with formalised networks, alliances, and intermediary bodies whose core function is to connect and scale ideas across borders. This tendency is reflected in our findings - as Figure 3 shows, NGOs and non-profits dominate the institutional classification. This sector frequently operates across regions to secure funding, influence policy, and implement programs. For example, Oxfam operates in multiple regions to address poverty.

Moreover, the distribution of organisation types shows a pattern of the central role of civil actors shaping the discourse of Next Economies. Networks constitute the second largest category of organisation types where coalitions such as the Wellbeing Economy Alliance and World Fair Trade Organization (with other examples displayed in Table 1) integrate hundreds of organizations, proving that alliances are key drivers of coordination across regions, effectively weaving local initiatives into a coherent global field. This positions multi-regional networks as an important architecture for the relational map our study set out to create. This finding aligns with the organisational theory that frames such entities as “field catalysts” or intermediaries that create the infrastructure for collective identity and knowledge exchange. This directly addresses the core objective of identifying the structural and thematic patterns that enable a movement to operate beyond national boundaries. Essentially, multi-regional institutions and networks function as the relational architecture that transmits the critiques of profit, growth, and size and advocates for circular economy principles across continents, thereby making the Next Economies not just a collection of isolated alternatives, but a tangible and global interconnected system.

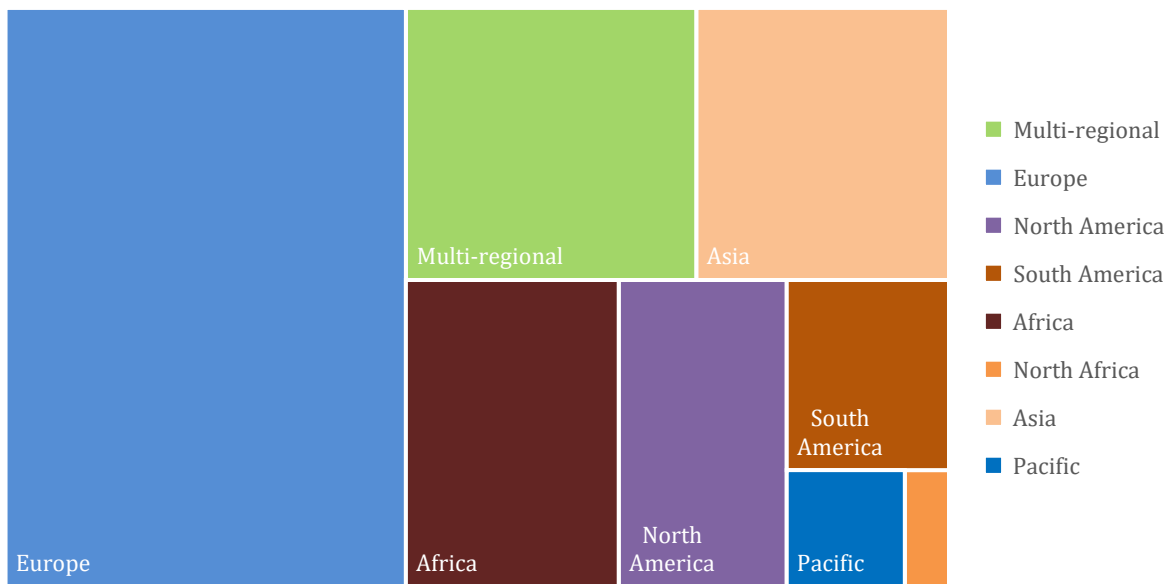


Figure 2: Distribution of organizations by operational region.

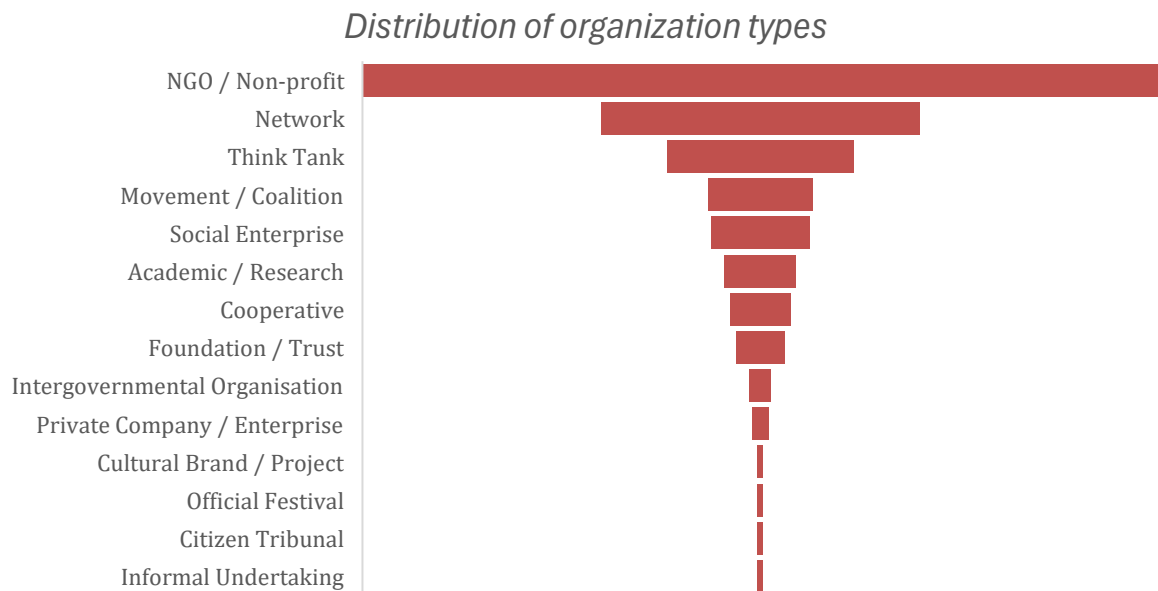


Figure 3: Distribution of organisation types

Alliance Network Coalition Name	Number of Members
Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)	48 organisations

<i>Business Declares</i>	<i>193 organisations&business</i>
<i>Catalyst Now</i>	<i>4204 organisations</i>
<i>ESAFF (Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum)</i>	<i>16 country</i>
<i>Global Tapestry of Alternatives</i>	<i>80 organisations</i>
<i>Green Economy Alliance</i>	<i>68 organisations</i>
<i>Groundswell International</i>	<i>16 partner organisations</i>
<i>Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA)</i>	<i>15 organisations</i>
<i>People & Planet First</i>	<i>68 partner organisations</i>
<i>Wellbeing Economy Alliance</i>	<i>350+organisation</i>
<i>World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO)</i>	<i>400+enterprises</i>

Table 1: Alliance Networks and Coalitions

This study also looks at the distribution of critiques amongst the analysed organisations, which reveals that 41.5% focus on profit maximisation, growth, size, and circular economy advocacy, as displayed in Figure 4. This illustrates that multi-critique organizations are the most likely to adopt both critiques and alternatives. In contrast, only 6.29% advocate a circular economy without adopting any critique.

We found that critiques of profit maximization, growth, and size tend to be together rather than stand alone, indicating that organizations perceive these dimensions as connected problems. This reveals that the discourse around Next Economies focuses on understanding that the dominant economic system is an interconnected syndrome of flaws rather than a collection of isolated issues. This finding aligns with the foundational critiques in heterodox economics, which argue that these elements form a self-reinforcing “iron triangle” of unsustainable capitalism [ref: small is beautiful, prosperity without growth]. The strong correlation between plural critique and advocacy for the circular economy further illustrates that for these stakeholders, systemic problems demand systemic alternatives and see the circular economy as a cornerstone of a post-growth paradigm.



Figure 4: Distribution of critique focus and circular economy advocacy.

NGOs, non-profits, and networks are the most likely to combine critiques with advocacy, where cooperatives and social enterprises often show alternatives while engaging in less critique. This highlights a contrast in the roles entities take within this discourse – those who articulate the “why” and those who demonstrate the “how.” This shows how different organisational forms contribute uniquely to the collective project of economic reconstruction. By assembling and analysing a dataset of over 300 organisations, we moved beyond isolated case studies to reveal Next Economies as a coherent, yet complex, global field.

Our findings combine around three core insights that directly fulfil the objectives of this research. Firstly, the Next Economies field can be characterised by a structure of distributed integration. Geographically, the movement is diffused with significant hubs in Europe but substantial and vital activity across the continent of Asia and Africa, thereby affirming that this discourse is not merely a Western-centric phenomenon. This geographic dispersion is integrated by a robust network of multi-regional organisations made up of alliances and global NGOs. These entities function as the relational architecture of the movement, creating the interconnections that link local actors into a global discourse. This finding directly achieves our objective to map and visualise Next Economies organisations, revealing an ecosystem where local embeddedness and global coordination are mutually reinforcing.

Secondly, the movement is unified by a shared, systemic critique that fuels its alternative vision, as our analysis demonstrates that profit maximisation, growth, and size are perceived as interconnected dimensions of a single problematic system. This is illustrated in our network map in Figure 1, where these critiques are central and co-occurring, forming the discursive nodes through which oppositional ideas travel across institutional forms and geographic locations. This plural critique is the primary driver of alternative advocacy. Organisations view systemic problems requiring systemic solutions – a core idea of the Next Economies.

Lastly, there is a distinct division of labour that emerges across the organisational types, which shapes a field that actively prefigures alternatives. Our data reveals a strategic specialisation where NGOs and networks act as the field's discursive architects that articulate the plural critiques and build advocacy coalitions. Meanwhile, cooperatives and social enterprises often serve as their practical demonstrators, prioritising the enactment of alternative models. This shows that Next Economies organisations do not simply oppose the dominant paradigm but also actively build alternative value systems through practice. Thus, they embody the principles of prefigurative politics and post-growth ethics in their daily operations.

6. Conclusion

By aligning with the literature on ethno-economics, prefigurative politics, post-growth values, and progressive organizing, our study lays a foundation for deeper research on the future.

This study mapped organizations engaged in Next Economies, identifying their structures, geographic distribution, critiques of the dominant paradigm, and advocacy of alternatives. The results show that organizations often combine critiques of profit maximization, growth, and size, and that these multi-critique actors are also most likely to embrace circular economy advocacy. Regional clustering is evident, yet global linkages demonstrate that Next Economies discourses are connected across contexts.

Our contribution lies in providing a large-scale comparative mapping of these organizations. By translating data into a relational network, we make visible the shared critiques and coalitions that define this field. This approach not only advances the study of alternative economic movements but also offers a model that integrates systematic coding, AI-assisted analysis, and network visualization.

Future research should expand the scope to include grassroots and less digitally visible institutions, apply deeper network analytics, and track discursive shifts over time. Ultimately, recognizing these organizations as interconnected experiments shows that Next Economies are not abstract ideals but evolving realities, offering pathways toward economies centered on ecological integrity and wellbeing.

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