



The

Regenerative

Institution

Toolkit

Colophon

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The Regenerative Institution Toolkit

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Introduction

If food is “the most evident vector of our connection to everything” (Solá 2025, 80) – the medium through which the world enters the body, becomes part of it, and transforms it in immediate and literal ways – art may operate similarly on a symbolic level. If food materialises our relation to the world, art can articulate and reimagine that relation. Art, too, is taken in: it mediates between inner and outer worlds and can shape us from within. In this sense, art can be understood as a form of nourishment.

Recognising art as a form of nourishment establishes a parallel between cultural production and food and land-based practices, positing art institutions as sites of metabolic exchange. In the words of Luigi Coppola (2025), co-founder of Casa delle Agriculture, “curating means changing the condition of the body”. Taking this parallel seriously shifts our understanding of institutions and leads us to ask how they can become more nourishing and life-supporting. This implies understanding nourishment not only as symbolic or affective enrichment, but as a material and ecological practice of sustaining, repairing, and redistributing the conditions that make collective life possible.

Connecting cultural institutions with ecologies of sustenance, this toolkit understands both as lenses through which to explore the material, symbolic, ecological, political, and affective dimensions of lived experience. Museums, cultural centres, and artistic platforms are living systems that absorb and transform resources and generate effects that extend beyond their walls. They shape, and are shaped by, the territories in which they are embedded. Institutions are thus reimaged as dynamic organisms and ecosystems where mutual transformation occurs through the encounter with and creative incorporation of otherness and diverse knowledges.

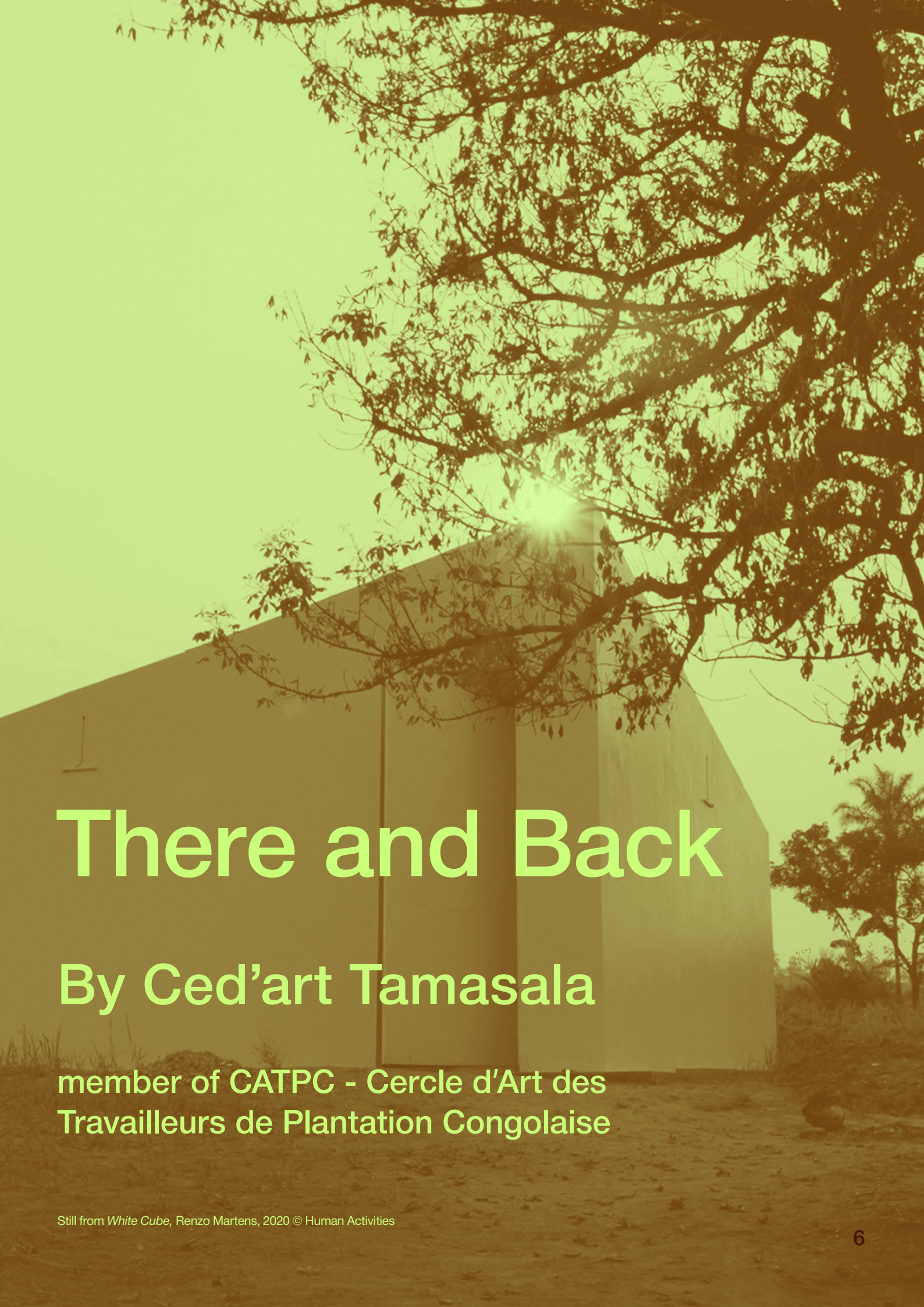
Understanding cultural institutions as metabolic systems, this toolkit aims to learn from initiatives that engage not only in art but also, centrally, in cultivation practices. Inspired by agricultural approaches, we ask how art institutions, like farming practices, can be regenerative. We borrow the definition of regenerative agriculture as “a kind of farming that produces food while improving the conditions for life and food production in the future” (Solá 2025, 40). How can art be produced and shared in ways that improve conditions for life and artistic production in the future?

This toolkit is addressed to art institutions – museums, cultural centres, residency programmes, and other organisations engaged in cultural production – seeking to rethink their relationship to the territories, communities, and ecosystems they inhabit. Rather than a prescriptive manual, it offers a set of provocations and practices that invite adaptation rather than replication. Drawing on initiatives that dissolve the boundaries between cultural production and the conditions of life, each contribution offers a different entry point into the argument: CATPC’s (Cercle d’Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise) transformation of extractive plantation histories into regenerative landscapes; Landra’s ecological and biological framework, which grounds the metabolic perspective in the logic of living systems; Casa delle Agricoltura’s long-term practice of *restanza*, where farming, art, and community organising form an interdependent system grounded in the commons; and Sakiya’s resistance to fragmentation through continuity and rootedness. These were chosen because, read together, they constitute a coherent argument and because each, in different ways, expands the understanding of what an institution can be by reconfiguring its relationship of care, interdependence, and belonging.

These practices share a commitment to long-term engagement, local and ecological embeddedness, collective stewardship, more-than-human collaboration, care as a structural principle, and the redistribution of resources, authorship, and knowledge across communities. Taken together, they invite us to imagine institutions as metabolic ecosystems rather than isolated structures or monocultures: sites of repair and regeneration, biodiverse food forests, and communal infrastructures for cultural, social, and ecological co-evolution.

Bibliography

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Coppola, Luigi. 2025. Interview by Jule Kurbjewweit. September 2025.



There and Back

By Ced'art Tamasala

member of CATPC - Cercle d'Art des
Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise



CATPC

CATPC – Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise is a collective of plantation workers based in Lusanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo), formerly Levertville, the first palm oil plantation established by Unilever in the Congo in 1911. Through the production and sale of critical art, CATPC generates resources to restore depleted plantation land: they have bought back nearly 400 hectares, where they develop regenerative agriculture, plant a sacred food forest, and build shared infrastructure for the benefit of their community. Their work proposes art as a means to rebuild autonomous, resilient communities and repair ecological and historical damage.



CATPC members (from left) Olele Mulela Mabamba, Huguette Kilembi, Mbuku Kimpala, Jeremie Mabilia, Jean Kawata, Irene Kanga, Ced'art Tamasala and Matthieu Kasiana, still from *White Cube*, Renzo Martens, 2020 © Human Activities

The multinational Unilever – a British–Dutch company owned by William Lever – received land concessions from the Belgian colonial government in 1911 for palm oil extraction in the Congo. From that moment on, the company cleared all natural forests to replace them with endless monocultures of oil palms. Our village, named Lusanga, became Leverville – the first plantation in the Congo – and the Huileries du Congo Belge (HCB) established a palm oil factory there. Over the years, this monoculture depleted our soil, rendering it barren and making agriculture impossible. In short, Unilever's extraction of palm oil in Lusanga devastated our people, our lands, and our history. Far removed from this reality in the Congo, the profits drawn from our lands contributed to the construction of numerous art institutions in the West.

Our community – that of CATPC, the Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise – is not the only one with such a history of exploitation linked to the art world. According to our research, there are many other plantation communities across the globe which, through their involuntary labour, gave life to art institutions and museums in the West. Indeed, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and the Van Abbemuseum were financed through plantations in Indonesia; the Tate Modern through plantations in the Caribbean; and the Lady Lever Art Gallery through plantations in the Solomon Islands and the Congo. The list goes on. For more than ten years, Unilever sponsored the commission programme *The Unilever Series* at Tate Modern.

Yet, despite the immense contribution of our plantation communities to art institutions, most of our communities are unaware of our role in building museums and cultural institutions. Moreover, these spaces have never made room for us. This disqualification to our detriment, on account of our status as plantation workers, is an injustice that must be denounced.

Only a selected minority is granted the privilege of entering these institutions and receiving what you call “nourishment”. What institutions offer as nourishment exists because our plantation communities have paid for it through the costly contribution of our sweat and our blood. Yet this “nourishment” remains inaccessible to our plantation communities, because the world of consumption confines us to what is expected of us: to supply products and to die slowly, in silence, in (almost) unpaid labour.

Our collective benefits from an unhealthy privilege: we have access to these institutions, while many other communities living in similar or worse conditions do not have this luxury.

So how can *all* plantation workers finally gain access to these institutions? The path taken by our collective offers a valuable direction to explore, as our shared experience has led us to a deep conviction: the privileges granted to an individual or to an exclusive minority must be shared with all and among our own – the excluded plantation communities across the world.

These unhealthy privileges, and access to funding from the art world, have enabled us to create our most important collective work: the sacred forest. The loss and disappearance of the forest and its biodiversity in Lusanga, following decades of monoculture, was a devastating blow to our communities. It is this void that we seek to fill through our art. With the income from the sale of our work, we have been able to buy back 395 hectares of land, on which we are collectively planting our sacred forest.

Post-Plantation, CATPC, Lusanga, 2017, photo: Leonard Pongo





Still from *White Cube*, Renzo Martens, 2020 © Human Activities

Planted on land once confiscated and overexploited by Unilever, this forest allows our land to heal and ensures food security for our communities. It functions as a natural and free supermarket for our community, where everyone has an equal right to harvest and gather whatever it offers: food, natural medicines, inspiration, connections, or plots of land on which to build a home or cultivate crops. Today, our joy is immense as we witness the return of plants and animals, as mushrooms and caterpillars reappear in this forest that we cultivate together, with and for our community. This unique and harmonious relationship with our land reconnects us with our ancestors and our history.

In addition, we have built our own museum in Lusanga, the White Cube, as well as a school, the Luyalu School, where we pass on our artistic, ecological, and ancestral knowledge to future generations of our community, who will take over and continue our collective work after us. Everything we gain access to through art institutions is redistributed in Lusanga. We work and share everything – from the land to the art, from the sacred forest to the harvests of the various products we cultivate together in a spirit of solidarity. We use the access to privilege that institutions offer us consciously and positively in order to act and create lasting impact in our home, in the ruins of the plantation in former Leverville.

Gradually, we are using this same point of access to build alliances with other plantation communities across the world, creating a gathering of plantation workers on a global scale. With this aim, together with my colleagues Matthieu Kasiama and Mbuku Kimpala, we established contact with and visited two plantation communities that had involuntarily financed the Van Abbemuseum and the Stedelijk Museum in the Netherlands. This journey was made possible only through our unhealthy privileges.

Our meetings and exchanges were of crucial importance for the future of our respective plantation communities. Together, we envisioned building a network of solidarity among us – communities living and working on plantations – to support one another, to share these privileges among ourselves, and to move forward together towards a future we think and build collectively. At the same time, we exchanged knowledge and experiences gathered through our collective paths, in a true spirit of sharing and friendship.

Still from CATPC on one of the plantations that funded the Stedelijk Museum, CATPC & Renzo Martens, 2024 © Human Activities





Still from *CATPC on one of the plantations that funded the Van Abbemuseum*,
CATPC & Renzo Martens, 2024 © Human Activities

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With careful measures in place, and through the responsible use of these privileges, we have been able to make our project work and continue advancing what we began eleven years ago. Our voluntary participation in systems that exclude our plantation communities has a primary aim: to open the door from within. We are convinced that these resources must be shared among all in order to cleanse them of the stain caused by the exclusion of our communities.

Our journey has taught us what institutions should not do: foster a form of dependency of plantation communities upon them. Rather, they should form alliances with our communities, working with us over the long term, with the aim of strengthening and structuring inclusive ecosystems for all our communities. In this way, institutions could engage in collective and lasting repair alongside these communities. To seek to decolonise without concrete, impactful, and sustainable action on the ground remains superficial and sterile.

Together – through collaborations on equal terms between art institutions and plantation communities that have financed them – we can move beyond the symbolic and achieve genuine repair with direct impact on our communities. This is our strongest recommendation to art institutions: exchange and sharing, grounded in trust, are the keys to establishing a true spirit of solidarity.

This is why art institutions should draw inspiration from our experience and journey and observe closely what we have achieved together with our partners in Lusanga, where monoculture destroyed our forests and our land, but where we are now restoring life through our collective effort and a shared will, expressed through conscious action in a spirit of solidarity that unites and drives us – “Luyalu”.



Palm seeds, source: Nature's Path



Institution as Forest

by Landra

Sara Rodrigues & Rodrigo B. Camacho

Still from the video of the exhibition *Habitat*,
Landra - Almada Municipal Gallery, 2025



Landra

Landra is a Portuguese artistic collective formed by Sara Rodrigues and Rodrigo B. Camacho, whose practice brings together fine arts, performance, permaculture, and soil microbiology. Based at Quinta do Carvalhal – Oak Grove Farm – in northern Portugal, they take their name from the local word for acorn: a seed of the perennial oak, and an emblem of the self-sufficiency, rootedness, and ecological abundance their work seeks to cultivate. At the intersection of art and analytical ecology, Landra asks how cultural institutions might become as regenerative, reciprocal, and deeply rooted as the living systems they inhabit.

Disclaimer

It is not fair that we compare ourselves to plants, fungi, or any other group of living beings, unfathomably big or small, far beyond our own place in the network of life. Things do not equate as they are not mirror images of one another.

At the same time, these comparisons can be very useful, provided that limitations and mistakes are foreseen as much as possible. Useful because, at the present time, human globalised societies lack what other social groups are notoriously good at.

Rather than imagining that forests are exempt from extracting and accumulating, we must try to understand how it is that they, as organic systems, do so in very different ways. Those are the ways from which we can learn.

We recognise that forests tend to hold healthy relationships with core existential yet widely problematised and stigmatised processes such as growth, territoriality, material extraction, and the need for building and managing reserves. In gross sum, we could consider these processes to be the pillars of a forest's economy; an economy that, unlike ours, is both efficient and sustainable. Additionally, the capacity that well-developed and healthy forests demonstrate in the way they deal with potential system failure and collapse should raise our interest, given that we are facing major globally disastrous events.

One should also take care not to assume that blindly copying complex biological systems will produce only desirable outcomes. Although we could rigorously compare ourselves to forests, basic differences between us are indeed insurmountable. First, we are much more dependent on plants, and on their work on this planet, than they are on us. They can photosynthesise sugars, which become the building blocks of their own bodies and of much of life. The ecosystemic cornerstone that is plant production ends up inevitably sustaining our own human bodies and societies. Plants derive this energy from the sun. We can't do this; neither can fungi or any other chlorophyll-less being. For this reason, it is unfair to treat the way plants build their ecosystems and economies as a model we can directly follow.

For instance, the degree of material accumulation which is so natural and necessary to biomes largely supported by plants – such as advanced forests all over the world – cannot ever be achieved and perhaps should never be attempted by animals. Since the energy sources available to us are far more finite and limited (than the sun is to plants), it is unwise to assume that the same economic structure could work for us, without major risks, faults, and failures.

Our focus will not be solely on plants but also on their companions and predecessors which create the networks of life in the soils from which forests emerge. These networks are especially long-lived, sophisticated, socially driven, and strategic. That is why these plants, their partners from other kingdoms, and the ecosystems these partnerships become dominant in, tend to show great levels of resilience and adaptability and are thus also sustainable in that they are transformative. It is within such a rich pool of qualities that we want to undertake an inspirational deep dive.

Still from the video *Landras*, Landra, 2022





Deep Into the Landscape workshop at CCOP, Landra, 2022, photo: Dinis Santos © Galeria Municipal do Porto

Proposals

Our proposals are addressed to any kind of institution, suggesting certain modifications that emulate forested ecosystems. Like forests, human institutions can become more interconnected, more intelligent, more efficient, more resilient, wealthier, better distributed.

For every practical proposal, an explanation of the ecological background will be given, in the hope that the comparisons will clarify what is valuable in forests that we might learn from.

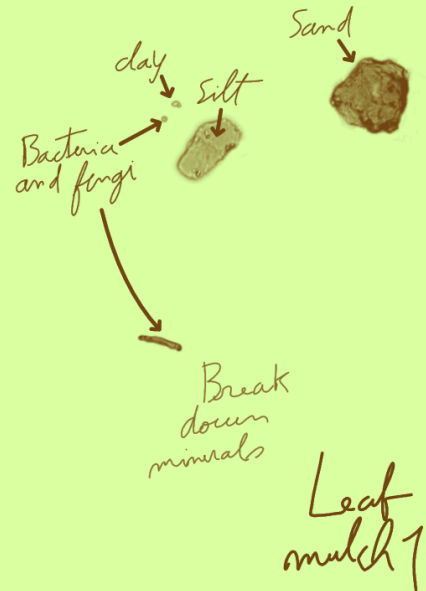
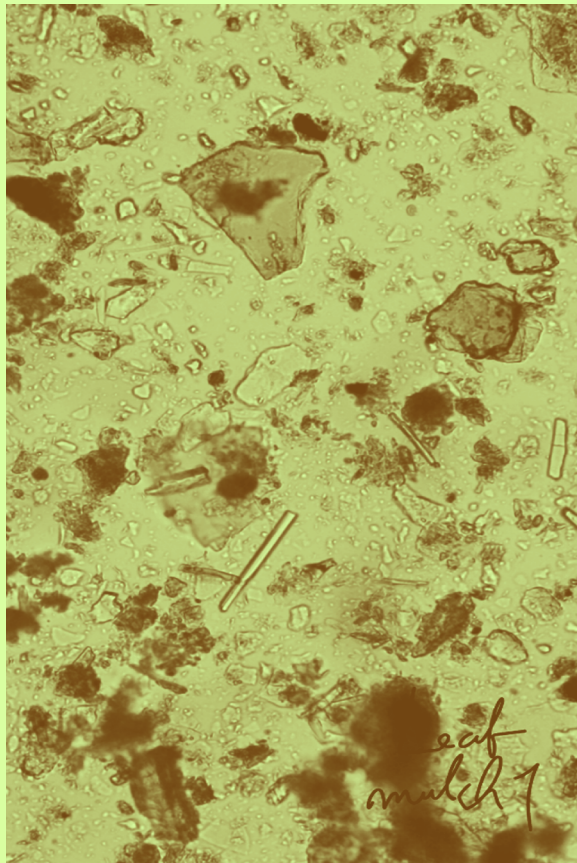
1: Towards a Perennial Food System

Conceptual change

A HOME MUST YIELD FOOD

This statement is not to be taken in the domestic sense, but considers that when something emerges from a given place, it somehow belongs to it. "Home" here could interchangeably mean "ecosystem", "biome", "habitat", or even "niche". That it must yield food is to consider that if it does not, the eater either migrates or dies. Since humans – mammal omnivores – need to eat in order to stay alive, any institution where humans are the main participants should not only make food available, but also produce it. It is important to bear in mind that this is not the exclusive fate of humans and their material lives, but the very condition for life to exist at all.

At the smallest scale, bacteria, the inventors of digestion, work their whole lives transforming the world around them into food. Unlike more recently evolved digestive systems like ours, where food enters the body to be digested in-house, bacteria digest things first when they are still outside. The consequence of this mode of feeding is that, within a growing group of bacteria, there is always a pool of solubilised nutrients being produced. You could call it a form of "communal digestion". Everyone feeds on what everyone digests. Bacteria produce food not just for themselves but for everyone in the vicinity. Home is made by everyone, exactly where everyone is. From the lowest levels of life on Earth, any larger and more complex layers of more numerous and diverse living beings will always replicate this first rule as the scale expands.



Group 1: Seeking Connection, Landra, 2024

FOOD IS MADE COMMUNALLY AVAILABLE

Food made communally available does not translate into direct friendship or kindness. Because certain bacterial species dislike the snugly presence of others, they release not only nutrient-making enzymes but also a vast array of antibiotics, glues, and extremely alkaline or acidic molecules, so as to inhibit, deter, impair, and sometimes even kill competing species of bacteria active in the same area.

There are times when competition is so intense that excessive antibiotics are produced, eventually leaching down with the rain and ending up accumulating in what is sometimes called the "death zone"! Think of an abandoned minefield and the dreadful effect it has on neighbouring inhabitants. At an institutional level, we must absolutely avoid this. Metabolism should not end up contradicting its basic life-giving functions.

METABOLISM SHOULD BE CONDUCTIVE TO MORE LIFE, NOT LESS

Plants soon come into the history of life to start solving this situation. In more or less direct relationships, plants and bacteria are bound to work together. Since bacteria are everywhere, plants must engage with them, as they showed up long after the great and lengthy bacterial overture. It can be said that conviviality has been attained successfully. Nearly all plants on this planet have managed to develop a primitive “digestive system”, whereby bacteria are first fed by plant roots, before they continue their solubilisation endeavours. Basically, plants offer nutrients to decomposers in return for this simple task which bacteria have been the prime champions at.

Plants secrete sugars and some simple amino acids, which bacteria will happily come after. Soon enough, the roots of plants (the “rhizosphere”) become packed with different species of bacteria, all working towards one main goal: to solubilise the entire world! Within this particular arrangement, bacteria fuelled by plants accomplish this digestion much faster and more intensely than they ever could by themselves.

KEEP COMPETITION TO A MINIMUM

Yet, no plant would ever be happy nestling its gentle rootlets into any kind of “death zone”, drenched in a pool of antibiotics and toxic chemicals. Therefore, in the rhizosphere, competition is kept to a minimum: as long as there is water and sun, there will be a constant plant-borne investment into the community of bacterial decomposers.

INVEST IN THE COMMUNITY AND INCREASE AUTONOMOUS PARTICIPATION

We must now recognise how valuable the role of plants is as they coordinate and augment economic activity whilst greatly reducing noise and dangerous waste. This is a decisive turning point in the history of life, for after the vegetal organisers appear, the smallest, haphazard cycles, and their uncontrollable consequences, give way to wider, longer, and more stable cycles, eventually moving towards more perennial systems.

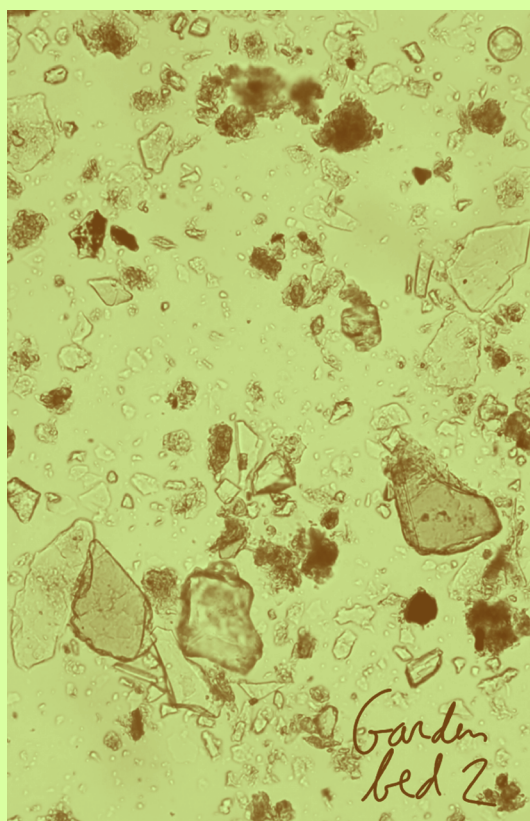
COORDINATORS SHOULD PROMOTE LONGER AND MORE STABLE CYCLES

Could your institution be more like a plant? Could it help systems become more perennial? That is, inherently more resourceful, sturdy, and sustainable?

Before any assertive and wishful “yes”, it is important to consider that there is a small caveat to this scheme. Bacteria are good at keeping things for themselves. They are remarkably efficient at making the world out there become their own bodies, and the bodies of their copies (once they have filled up their “bellies” enough), without having to release many waste products as they get on with life and multiply. Plants actually get little direct value out of the bacteria they diligently invest in, but this isn’t necessarily an act of altruism.

Once the proto-digestive infrastructure is ready and the bacterial party is set, the next visitors in line will be the hungry predators, that is, the ones that eat bacteria. Since there are so many bacteria around and in such diversity, the predators will also be many and of diverse tastes. Long story short: the protozoa, nematodes, and some arthropods will show up at the gates of the rhizosphere to prey on, consume, and digest the bacterial bodies which eventually will have to be excreted. It is indeed in the excrement of these bacterial predators that the plants will finally find the product they were actually searching for: an abundance of valuable solubilised nutrients, right by their roots, where they need those nutrients.

DIVERSITY INCREASES ABUNDANCE

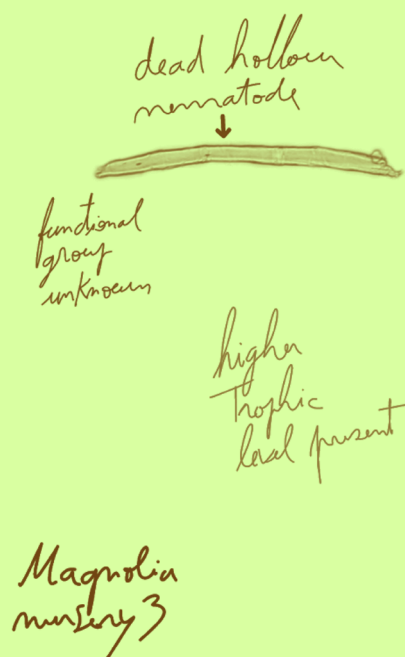
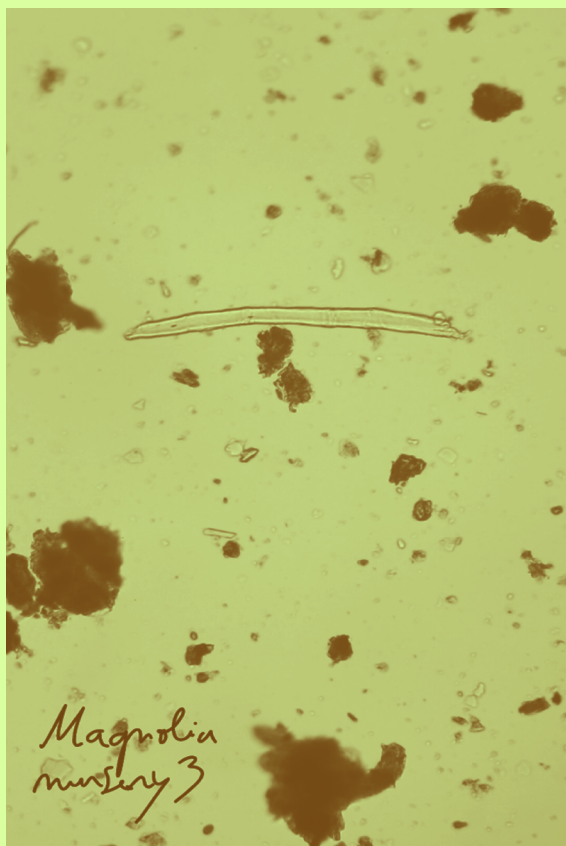


ATTRACT AND SUPPORT VISITORS TO SUSTAIN THE INSTITUTION

The comparative model at stake is made of a cycle in two moments. First, an institution invests in something which attracts visitors. Second, the visitors' presence helps sustain the institution. Although it sounds just obvious, one should keep in mind that the smallest direct and unconditional investments, which the tiniest and least productive plants make to the leanest soils they live on, never drops under 40% of their photosynthetic production. Gradually greater proportions (sometimes up to 80%) and bigger total amounts of plant production are to be expected as the natural succession of terrestrial biomes moves towards perennial systems with larger, more robust, and longer-lived species becoming more common.

INVEST BOLDLY IN THE LOCAL NETWORK

Reminding ourselves that the comparison between plants and us is unfair, two things should be recorded. First, the capacity to openly invest in local economic and cultural activity is a necessary component for an institution's presence in a given physical place. Second, these investments will be smaller or larger depending on the institution's size, power, and ambition. But the main conclusion is that minimum investments made by institutions to their locality should be much higher than we are used to.

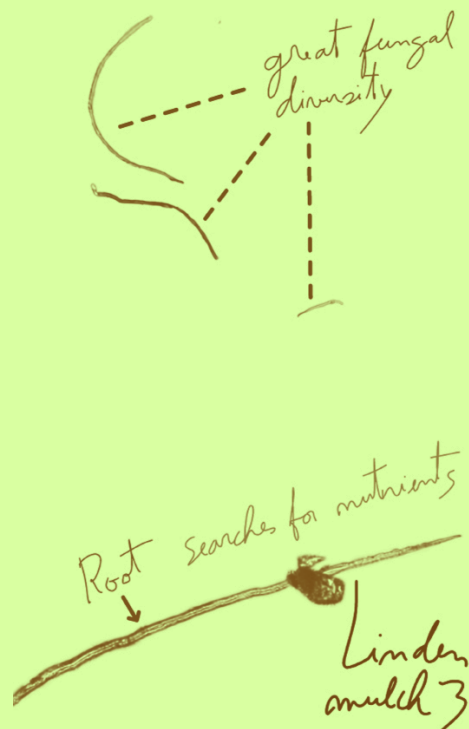
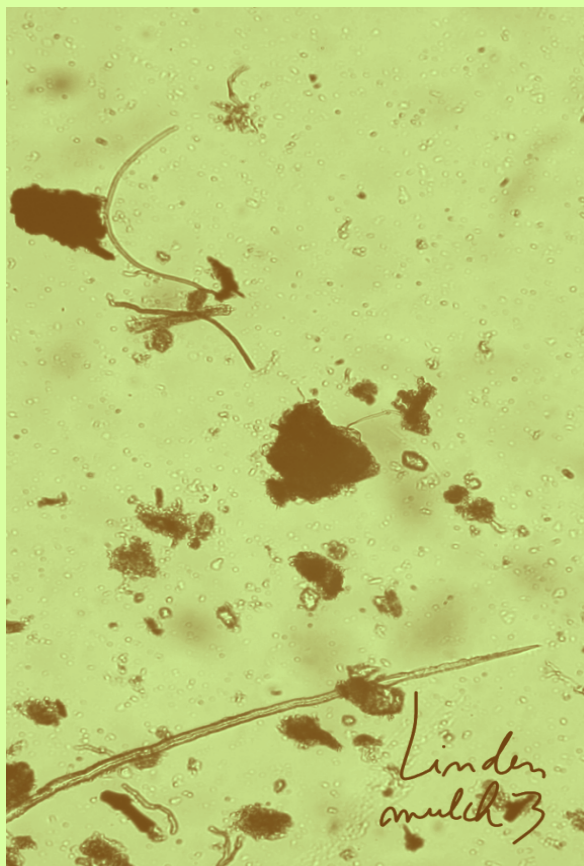


Now, even in the least sophisticated relationships between plants and other local agents, not only the invested amount but also its qualities can vary, directing the beneficiaries to more specific kinds of activities. The decision lies in what is useful or necessary to the institution at any given time: in summer, the heat is on and water needs to be found; in winter, the energy to keep things going must be rationed. Different types of investments will be needed. An emergency might also occur, in which case reserves must be accessed and, of course, replenished soon after.

INVESTMENTS MUST FOLLOW THE INSTITUTION'S CHANGING NEEDS

Investments and their predicted returns should be sensibly adapted to what is happening and to where the institution is going or wants to go.

Akin to the diversity of food sources made available through the root-feed (technically called exudates), which can attract a more or less diverse group of bacteria and even fungi into the guild of decomposers/digesters, several human-scale examples of this can be found. For instance, funding programmes can be issued where more or less selective processes are put in place to restrict or welcome a diversity of applicants.



Needless to say, the more diverse the guild being fed is, the more diverse the nutrients extracted from the soil will be. This will result in a more diverse group of predators showing up, and yet a richer collection of chemical forms in which all these “juices” become available right at the end of the cycle. Of course, for a larger and more interesting outcome, larger investments will have to be planned with!

In summary, plants feed the decomposers, which feed their predators, whose poop feeds plants. That is a home which yields food, and the cycle can keep going. This one, in particular, has been successfully going for about 400 million years, so we could say it’s a model to be confidently trusted in.

Much later in the history of life, many things have been added to the mix, and the principles sustaining these food-yielding homes have since become much more complex. But amidst everything that could be said, a couple extra conditions can be laid out.

Moving into our own scale – the scale of the world where large animals roam around and necessarily depend on the ecosystems they emerged from – we can look at what’s mandatory for certain complex animal communities to exist sustainably. Akin to the habitat of well-developed animal societies, a sustainable human institution should not need much direct or intentional work put into the endeavour of making food. Rather, it should be mostly made of food, as it is made of shelter. While migratory communities can better deal with fluctuations in food availability, the ecosystems sustaining more sedentary animals, like ourselves, tend to be based on well-developed perennial systems.

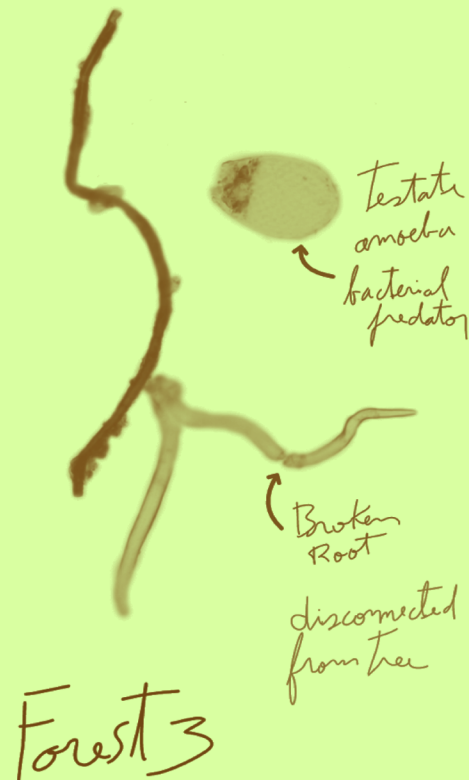
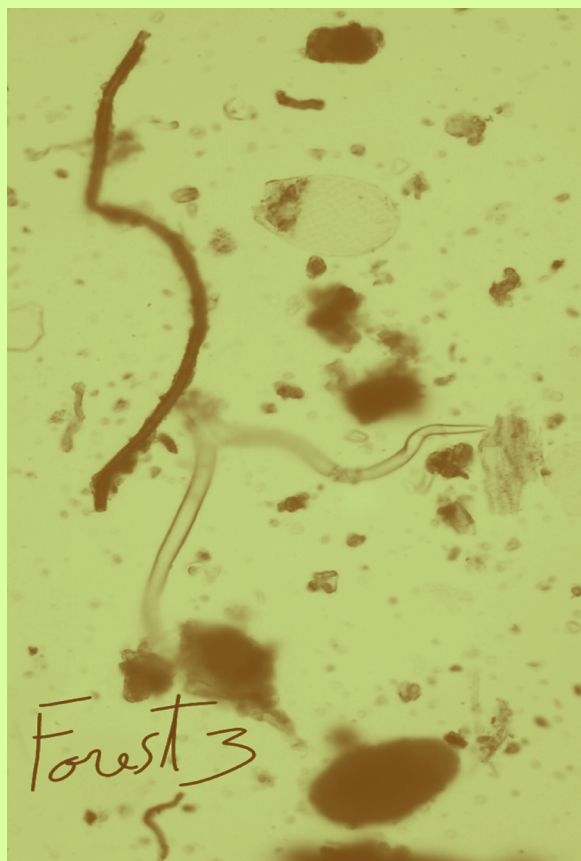
THERE SHOULD BE AS MUCH FOOD AS THERE IS SHELTER

Since human institutions tend to be entities of a stationary nature, we will focus on how a certain level of sedentarism can be maintained sustainably.

SEDENTARY ANIMAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE SUSTAINED BY PERENNIAL SYSTEMS

By perennial systems, we mean biodiverse collections of long-lived plants, their fungal partners, and a complete web of life filled with trophically interrelated microorganisms, along with some small, medium, and large animal species. To state the obvious, these kinds of systems are the opposites of the annual ones, which are ubiquitous in modern agriculture. On the monocultural fields all over the industrialised world, growing plants are often restricted to pioneer or early successional species forced to grow in ecologically underdeveloped conditions. Soils are commonly devoid of most beneficial life forms both at macro- and microscopic levels, so mainly bacteria are around along with their simplest short-cycle predators, but not much more than that.

A COMPLETE WEB OF LIFE IS MADE OF COMPLEX LONG-LIVED PARTNERSHIPS



Group 5: *Seeking Connection*, Landra, 2024

The main problem with obsessively employing this mode of food production at a global scale is that regardless of how "careful" the practices may be, they cannot be truly ecological. As terrestrial biomes evolve, develop, and mature, one thing keeps constant: soil is either kept or produced; organic matter accumulates dynamically over time, never the opposite. If a food production system exists which destroys soil, whether it is through chemical or physical means,

then it must be necessarily unsustainable. That's the case for most modern (even so-called organic) forms of agriculture, whose products most societies and their institutions depend on at a global scale. This must change. Short soil-destroying cycles must give way to longer soil-keeping or soil-producing ones.

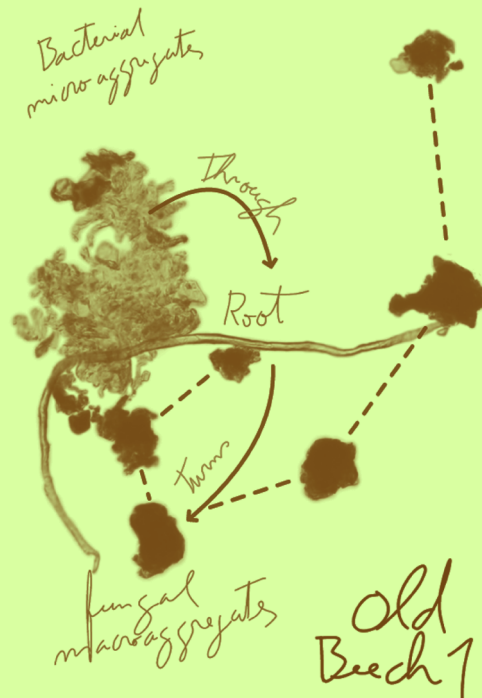
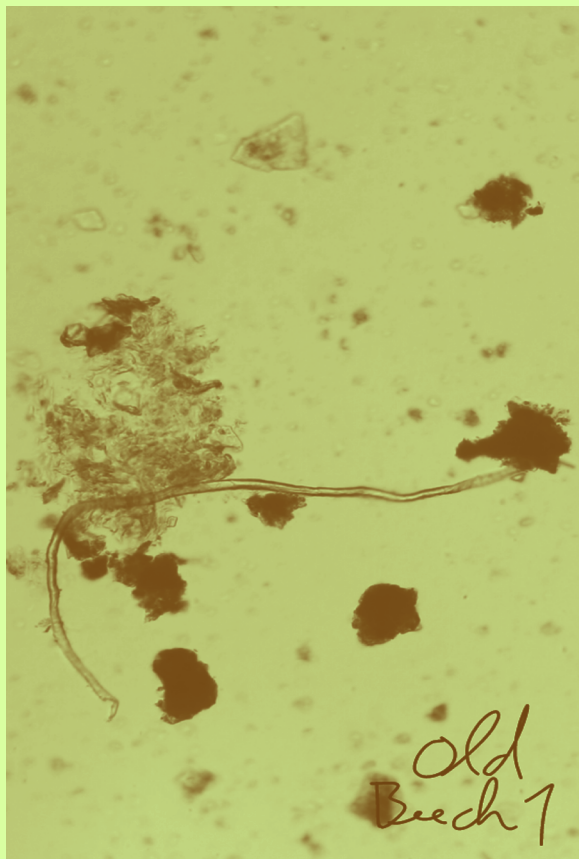
MATERIAL ACCUMULATION MUST BE DYNAMIC

Let us recall the three-phase system where simple plants, bacteria, and bacterial predators constitute the rudimentary forms of digestion and nutrient cycling; an archaic kind of organised economy. This is one of those short cycles. Although there is beauty in how light and gentle entities can be at a small scale, there is also much room for instability, for such simple systems have not yet achieved sufficient levels of complexity, interconnectivity, intelligence, and resilience. For instance, they lack buffers and reserves large enough in order to be able to deal with external stress and unexpected difficulties. So, in short-cycle living systems, the only mandatory need to fulfil is to recombine genes and to reproduce, before things get difficult and grim. Dealing only with what is absolutely necessary and then stopping all activities is the obvious choice. Local investments by plants are kept to a minimum (still around 40% of total production!), and abandoning the game is a common behaviour.

SHORT CYCLES PRODUCE SCARCITY AND INSTABILITY

HEALTHY AND DIVERSE COMMUNITIES WILL SHOW MORE AGGREGATION

In bare, lifeless dirt, gravity and rain (let alone the additional pressure from animals, machines, and buildings) will inevitably cause compaction. Now, a soil in which healthy and diverse communities of plants and bacteria live will show greater levels of aggregation. Bacterial microaggregates – pre-digested bits of organic and mineral materials – create spaces for water to move in and literally stick around. Air also finds its way into the improved texture, and thus oxygen levels will remain high enough to maintain the health of plant roots. These aggregates also work as small reserves, which plants and bacteria can rely on for short periods of time. For instance, every time there is a slight oscillation in predator-prey dynamics, nutrient cycling becomes disrupted and the availability of key elements may be too precarious. Reserves come into play here. Still, tiny reserves mean tiny reliability, so bacteria-based cycles are quite limited in many ways.



Group 6: *Seeking Connection*, Landra, 2024

That's why plants and fungi have co-evolved to eventually create a much sturdier and more organised system, where building and keeping large reserves becomes a staple, as agents keep optimising for high degrees of networking, intelligence, and sophisticated forms of direct communication. The plants that took this path also evolved into producing larger, longer-living bodies, made of ever more carbon-rich materials. Denser and more complex materials such as lignin (a major building block in woody shrubs and trees) have since moved out of the decomposers' radar of most bacterial species, and thus escaped the list of bacterially available food sources. It is fungi that have become specialised in decomposing these materials, so that they become readily reincorporated into the networks they form with partnering plants.

DECOMPOSED MATERIALS ARE INCORPORATED BACK INTO THE NETWORK

Fungi are famous for their mastery of decomposition, capable of solubilising virtually anything in this world with their vast range of acidic enzymes. But they are also masters of aggregation, albeit of a different, more spectacular kind than that which bacteria are capable of. They pick up bacterial microaggregates and turn them into larger, denser, darker macroaggregates, allowing even more air and water into the soil matrix. Fungally dominated soils tend to be dark, spongy, and lightweight. Apart from more nutrients being efficiently stored in less space than before, soil structure becomes increasingly inviting to roots, other microorganisms, and animals ranging from small to large.

AS RESERVES GROW LARGER, SO SHOULD ACCESS TO THEM

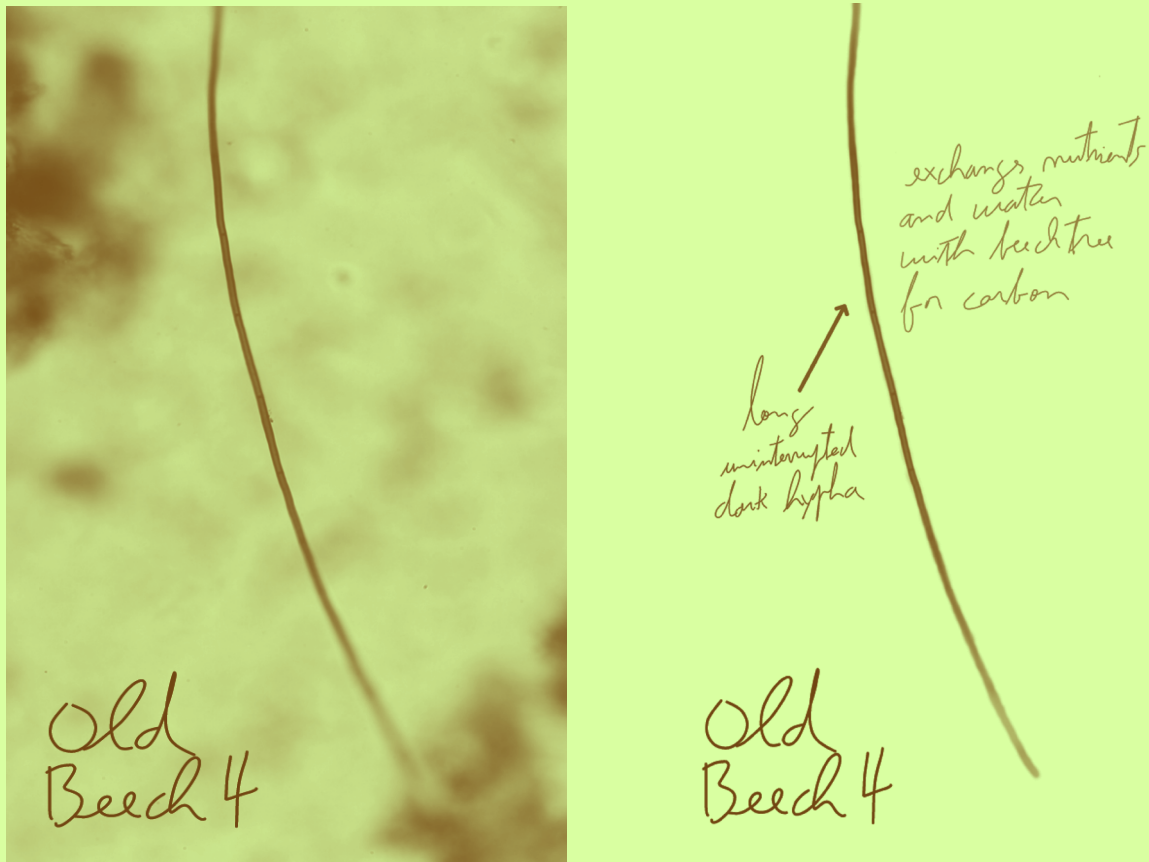
Again, this opposition between small-short and big-long cycles does not, in itself, push us forward indiscriminately towards an ideal path. There are certain odd perennial systems we should pay close attention to, so as not to blindly mimic.

Plants and fungi (and, for that matter, all the secondary and tertiary users and beneficiaries of this basic infrastructure) convert the mineral world out there into biomass. Regarding what concerns humans (also made of organic matter), this should still be taken – as it was for bacteria and the first simple non-mycorrhizal plants – as the most primitive and insurmountable form of economic activity. Something which is not alive, not organic, becomes part of a system through some kind of energy-demanding activity. By doing so, it becomes of greater value to the entities within the organic realm.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE INORGANIC TO ORGANIC CREATES VALUE

Mycorrhizal networks come in a vast array of forms and levels of sophistication, but all in all, the purpose is the same: to produce and maintain an economy based on organic matter. However, unlike anything that came before, the so-called symbiotic relationships between mycorrhizal plants and fungi establish much more direct and efficacious systems, which better recall the image of an institution as we know it. Rather than staying small, setting up open funds for the community in general (free exudates), and depending on the positive results of such investments, mycorrhizal plants invest much larger portions of their production (sometimes close to 80%) into much more closed networks. This benefits the fund-issuing plant and its fungal partners first, and then only a narrow selection of members more directly. The relationship is more transactional, in that both parties (plants and fungi) directly exchange something of value which the other cannot produce, or could only produce inefficiently or at a much greater cost.

ADVANCED MYCORRHIZAL PLANTS INVEST MOST OF THEIR ENERGY IN THE NETWORK



Group 7: *Seeking Connection*, Landra, 2024

One of the major consequences of having higher levels of direct transactionality is the emergence of a sharp tendency to move technology and resources in-house, so that they become more easily controlled, accumulated, and protected by the institution. On one hand, this means that a greater portion of the whole system's activity is supported by the necessary functions of powerful institutions, which are carried out as efficiently as possible to serve their own interest. On the other hand, this could – and sometimes does – result in a certain level of generalised inaccessibility to capital, which could be undesirable if the institution is to serve a purpose of public utility.

EXCLUSIVE BEHAVIOUR MAY REDUCE

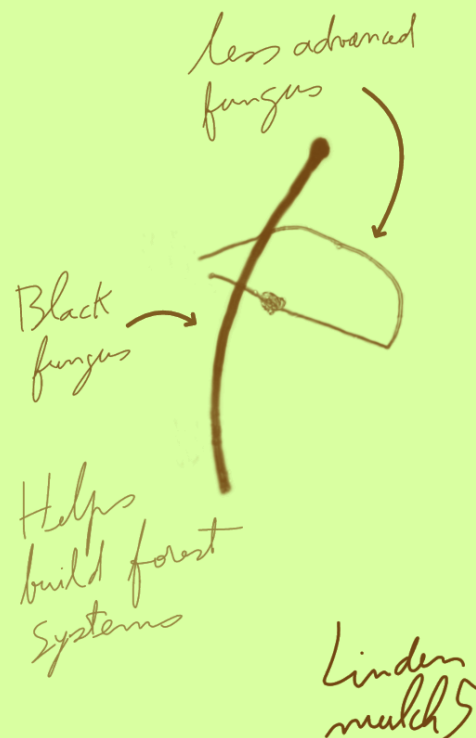
Certain tree-fungi communities achieve such a high degree of sophistication, and become so effective in what they do together, that they start developing exclusive behaviours which result in a decrease of biodiversity in the ecosystem they are part of and come to dominate. Ultimately, over the long term, collapse becomes more probable when diversity is low, so extreme versions of “successful” perennial systems should be carefully and critically observed for flaws.

COLLAPSE BECOMES MORE LIKELY WHEN FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY IS LOW

For instance, some conifers and their fungal companions have developed encryption protocols to keep information but also, to a certain degree, water and nutrients, imperceptible, untrackable, or untouchable to external, smaller, and curious parties. Coincidentally, these partnerships are generally the most powerful institutions around. The ground becomes fully occupied and monitored by them, so virtually all nutrients become prospective assets within their domain. Smaller institutions and agents participating in such advanced systems must either conform to the system's rules, playing a highly regimented part in the small niches made available to them, or abandon it altogether.

POWERFUL INSTITUTIONS MAY END UP DOMINATING RESOURCES

This process of growing exclusivity and protection simply occurs because gains – reflecting higher investments into processes of greater efficiency and directness – become ever more at risk of being easily appropriated by non-investing parties.



So a healthy balance could be pursued between ambition and power on one hand, and responsibility and pro-social behaviour on the other. Whereas fast and dominant forms of growth result in higher running, management, security, and defence costs, limits should be maintained on extraction and non-inclusive control over resources. The aim is to achieve a less extractive and less paranoid socio-economic system.

A good example of this is the Cantabrian forest, characteristic of the temperate oceanic climate and common in the north and northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. We generally call this kind of biome a mixed forest, in that it is populated by dominant groups of both deciduous and conifer species alike. Whilst conifers, like pines, tend to exhibit more extractive, aggressive, and defensive socio-economic behaviour, deciduous species like oaks have proven to be excellent diplomats. The mix becomes quite rich.

When a balance between extraction and recycling is achieved, when power does not suppress diversity, and when economic gain does not imply lack of distribution, an ecosystem (or an institution, at any scale) can become something quite marvellous. In this sense, moving functions in-house can be very positive.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BALANCE BETWEEN AMBITION, POWER, AND RESPONSIBILITY

GAINS SHOULD BE WELL DISTRIBUTED

For instance – returning to the scale of human institutions – rather than sourcing food externally, even if locally, producing it in-house allows for substantial long-term savings in catering costs. Perhaps more importantly, it constitutes a fundamental position of control and autonomy over the means of production and product quality. It also means that extraction and potentially damaging practices are not conducted elsewhere to the detriment of other ecosystems which, at the largest scale, are also our own. In-house food production should be done responsibly, according to regenerative methods, yielding nutrient-rich foods whilst maintaining and improving soil life and the ecosystems which depend on it.

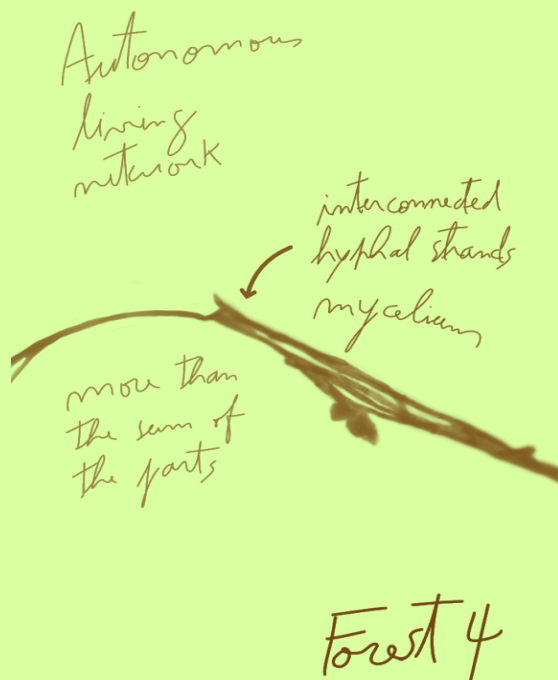
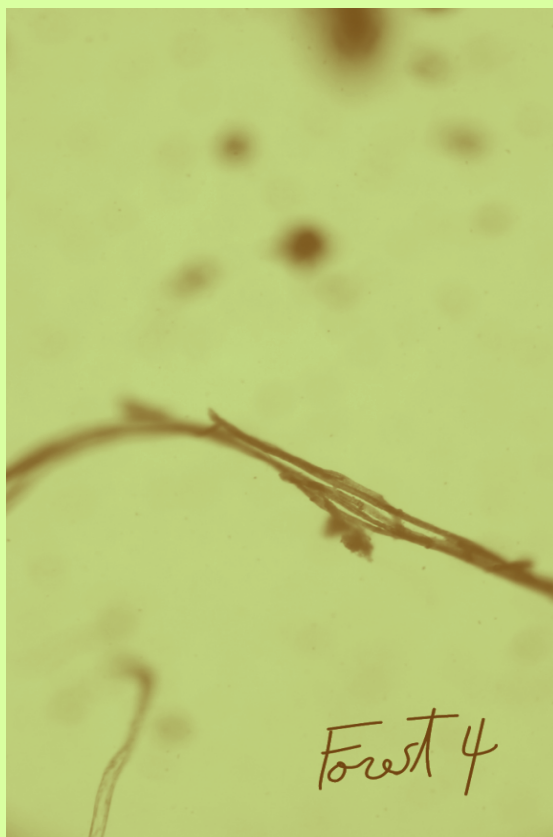
CONTROL THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

DO NOT OUTSOURCE EXTRACTION

Practical change

BY EATING, FERTILISING, INOCULATING,
SOWING, PLANTING, AND TRANSPLANTING,
CURRENT SPECIES EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON
THE WORLD

A POLITICAL ACT OF NEGOTIATION



Without delving deeply into agroforestry technicalities, one example of how to establish a perennial food production system within your institution follows.

If you are in the Northern Hemisphere, it is quite probable that the naturally successful biomes of your region will be populated by trees such as the often dominant oaks, beeches, and chestnuts, followed by smaller understory companions, many of which are fruit-bearing. Together, the various layers of a biodiverse forest will produce much nutrient-rich food for humans and other species of large animals.

ESTABLISH A PERENNIAL FOOD SYSTEM

GROW A TOP CANOPY AS YOUR FOOD BASIS

INTRODUCE UNDERSTORY COMPANIONS

It is important to consider planting and sowing larger populations of the same species and, if possible, including varieties from dispersed bioregions in an attempt to better cope with various climate change scenarios, while enhancing genetic diversity.

SOW AND PLANT ABUNDANTLY AND DIVERSIFY

PLAN TO ACCOMMODATE COMING CHANGES

The institution should have an area where food can be minimally processed, prepared, and eaten. A substantial percentage of what is served – half or more – should be based on foodstuffs springing from the proposed food forest. The aim is to substitute many of the annual grains – a staple for most human diets around the world – and other short-cycle products, while also enhancing the nutritional value of what is eaten.

Since we have proposed the Cantabrian forest as our working example: the fruits of oaks – acorns – are one of the most abundant, nutrient-rich, and currently neglected food sources in the Northern Hemisphere. They contain a well-balanced, high concentration of all of the essential amino acids, besides providing a constant supply of medicinal compounds. And it only takes a couple of days to pick up enough fallen acorns to meet the staple needs of a human for a whole year!

AN OAK TREE IS NOT A SINGLE UNIT WITHIN A GROUP OF OAKS BUT A LOCAL MANIFESTATION OF A COMPLEX INSTITUTION ON A MUCH LARGER SCALE

Think about this: who is the institution feeding and what for? What are the second and perhaps third or even higher levels of economic activity emerging from this infrastructural first step? How should the products and consequences of such dynamics confirm and secure the institution's position in its own context?

Still from the video *Landras*, Landra, 2022

2: Digestion and Recycling

Conceptual change

ANIMALS STAY WHERE FOOD IS

Recycling, here, is not the kind where things made by the industrial world enter colour-coded containers to be magically sent to some sort of (still industrial and absurdly energy-wasting) redemption. Instead, we are speaking of an efficient and actually necessary kind of recycling.

ORGANIC MATTER IS CURRENCY

IT BOTH REPRESENTS AND IS MADE OF ENERGY

For complex life forms to exist on this planet, nutrients must be recycled. Let's imagine a chemical element – any, really – entering the body of a living being. It is part of the material body of a piece of food as it gets ingested by a larger body. This element will serve the eater for a time and live in this new body until eventually, once it loses its usefulness or its accumulation becomes dangerous, it finds its way out. It gets excreted or, to put it bluntly, becomes some sort of poo.

Why should we care about this? And is such vulgarity in any way relevant to the success of an institution?

Complex forms of life have had enough time on this planet to figure out many ways in which the production of excrements does not become a threat to life (as modern societies tend to see it), but rather the very potential source of it. To extend the vulgar quality of this topic a bit further, we can call it the “poop loop”.

WHAT IS NOT USEFUL TO ONE BODY MUST BE SO FOR ANOTHER

This requires one important condition: that a diverse range of beings with highly diversified metabolic needs must compose the system, so that the true wonders of the recycling loop can be unleashed. This is to be taken quite seriously, and in a literal sense. Absolutely all materials in circulation in a given economy must find their way back into circulation whenever, for any reason, they stop being useful to one or another agent within the system. In other words:

THERE IS NO WASTE

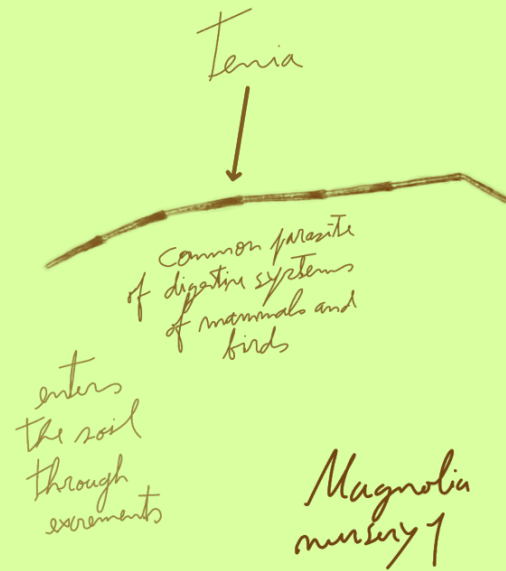
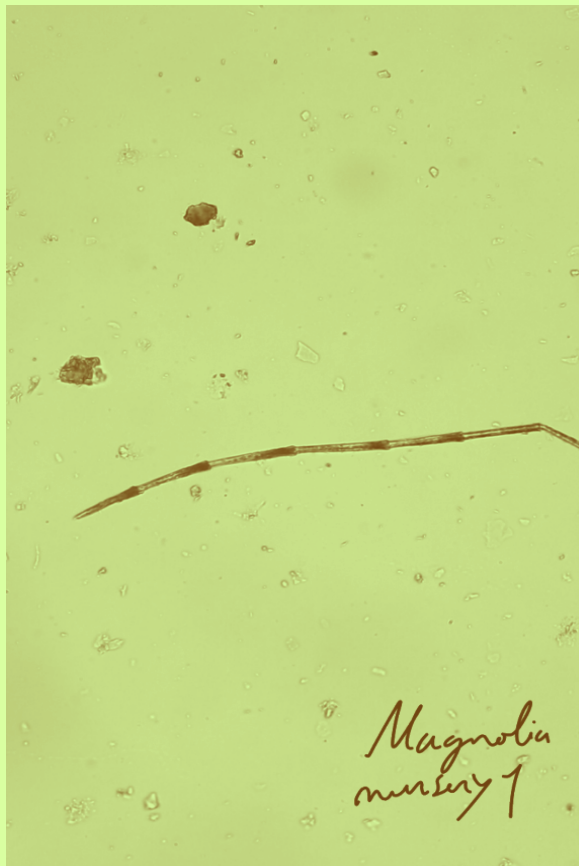
Furthermore, any given recycling process at work must be highly efficient. The energy it uses should be considerably less than the energy employed in producing or making available the material being recycled. Since life is very well-versed in such processes, any kind of recycling should be carried out primarily by energy-efficient biological processes, rather than energy-demanding industrial ones.

RECYCLING SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT BY BIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

In the case that the first proposal is already in place, and your institution has implemented a soil-preserving perennial food production system, one way to put a most efficient material loop into practice is to make compost in-house. We invite you to be bold about it, for the sources of compost are more than those generally accepted today.

FORESTS ARE CONGREGATIONS OF INTEREST

Forests congregate the interests of the parts they comprise – whether more permanent or visiting. Congregational seasonal events, such as spring, attract the interest of migratory birds to make a temporary stop where the food is, and there they leave their fertilising droppings, often carrying pro-diversity travelling seeds. The millions of flowers and upcoming fruits lure all pollinators to their food sources as they promptly assist with sexual reproduction. This intense recombination of genes is what actually guarantees a sturdy future version of the system that is now in place.



Group 10: Seeking Connection, Landra, 2024

USE CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS AS POTENTIATORS

Public-driven institutions are, like forests, environments capable of attracting a variety of bodies into their domain for a period of time. The presence of those visitors should become as beneficial as possible to the institution and its development.

VISITORS SHOULD ENHANCE THE SYSTEM WITH THEIR PRESENCE

The obvious recommendation is that food scraps from canteens, bars, restaurants, and cafés inside any institution should be turned into valuable compost, effectively feeding and enhancing the institution's own food production system. Now, the real boost to the system happens when all organic matter (rather than just a convenient part) is considered.

END-OF-CHAIN ORGANIC MATTER SHOULD BE COMPOSTED

Since visitors use toilets at institutions, it would be wise to use the materials left behind as manure. It may seem strange to the everyday Westerner, but one should take some time to accept that, in some other cultures, this idea is unquestioned. Korean family-scale farmers, for instance, are remarkably good at making their own toilets very comfortable, clean, and inviting to visitors. Needless to say, their toilets are not connected to any municipal or large-scale sewage systems. The point is that you keep it there, in relatively sound conditions, where it will be used again, instead of wasting it in a rummaging mix of toxic chemicals running every day from urban households and facilities...

Still from the video *Deep Into the Landscape*, Landra, 2023



TURN VISITORS' WASTE INTO MANURE

In the forest, besides plants and microorganisms, animals poop and die all the time. A huge amount of nutrients eventually finds its way back into the plants and microorganisms! The movement of materials is gigantic, yet unnoticeable – a cue to its success. The fertility surplus and the resulting humic soils of healthy forests is such that no artificial fertiliser bag is ever to be seen on-site.



Group 11: *Seeking Connection*, Landra, 2024

Practical change

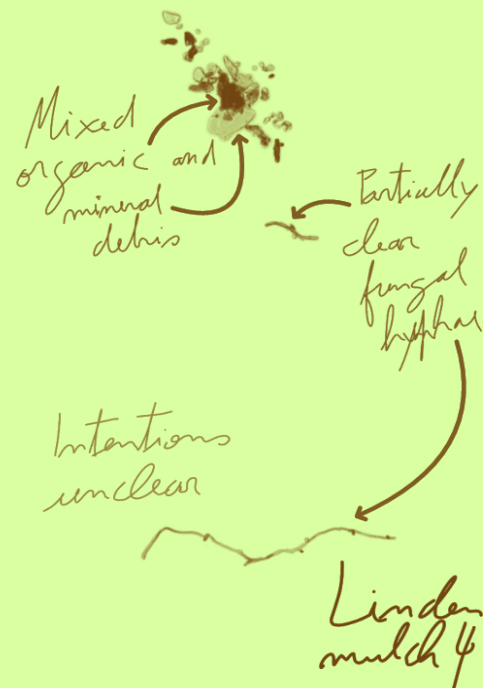
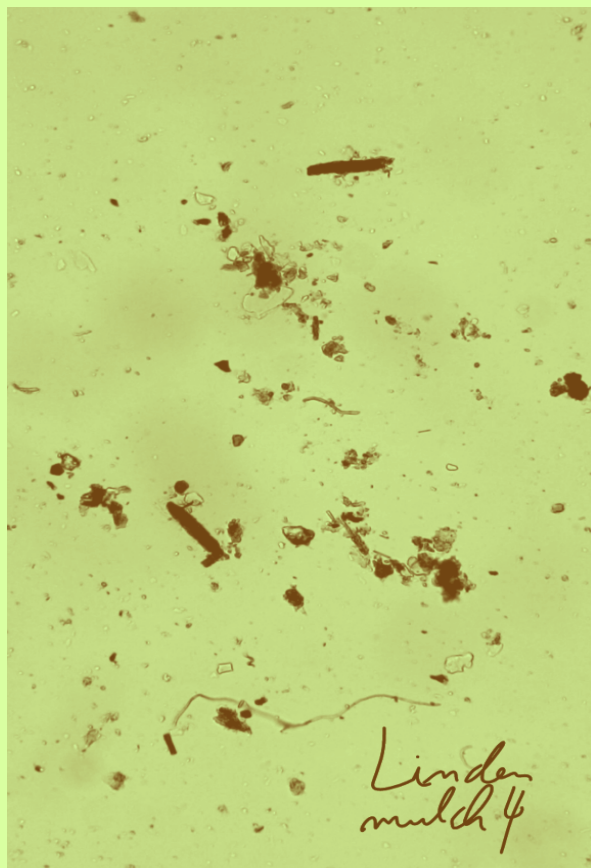
Back to the human-scale institution. People are afraid of diseases, but we must think about why neither dead animals nor defecation in the forest are typically sources of disease. There, decomposition starts instantly, a joint effort by micro- and macroorganisms, each doing their part, through a process that includes accelerated (hot) oxidation and anaerobic fermentation. These are the processes that human-made compost systems try to mimic. This miracle is only possible because the environment in a forest floor is rich and complex, unlike our sanitised and sterilised modern world, where, in the absence of the complete web of life, and its inherent balancing properties, mostly opportunistic and aggressively growing pathogens thrive.

Also, people subject themselves to pharmaceutical treatments and eat equally toxic industrial food. What, then, will happen to the accumulating chemicals in the pits of your institution?

DESANITISE THE INSTITUTION

Learning from the forest, a couple of composting methods are at hand. Bokashi-based methods, whereby organic matter undergoes a strictly anaerobic, highly acidic fermentation process, produce strong organic acids which, in the absence of oxygen, kill most disease-causing organisms. On the other side of the decomposition spectrum, hot composting methods also destroy any other pathogens through the heat generated when the pile is turned and the sudden influx of oxygen triggers exponential bacterial growth. A combination of these two procedures can be sequentially planned so that pathogens, as well as odours and fumes, are effectively dealt with.

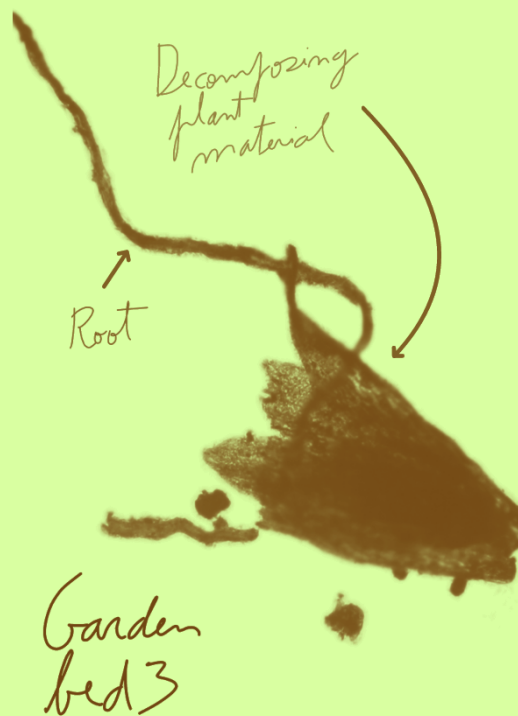
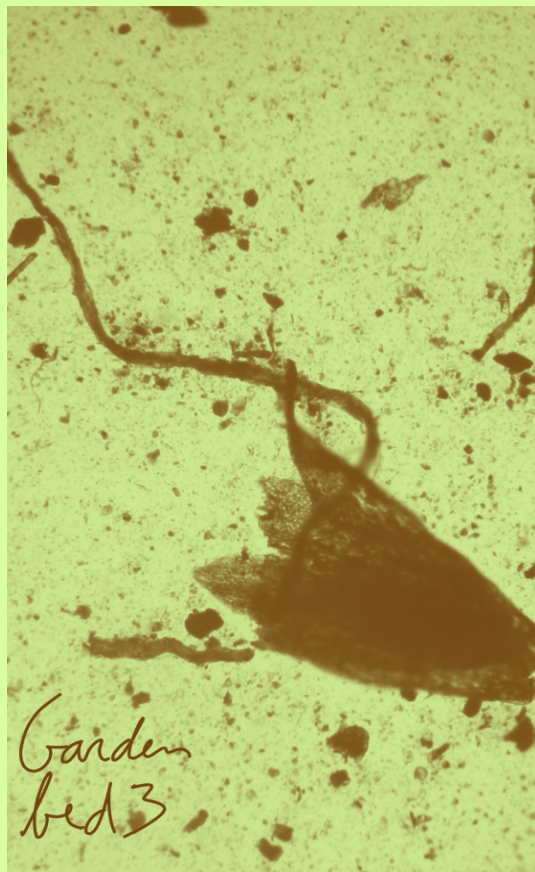
MAKE USE OF ANAEROBIC FERMENTATION AND AEROBIC OXIDATION TO REDUCE PATHOGENS AND DISEASES



Group 12: *Seeking Connection*, Landra, 2024

Then, we must address the possibility of antibiotics and other toxic chemical accumulations coming from the guts of people whose gastronomic habits and medical conditions are unknown.

A good amount of aerobic bacteria or free-living, saprophytic, and mycorrhizal fungi are capable of reading the environment around them for any undesirable chemicals. They will take some time to produce the necessary enzymes in order to degrade, simplify, bind, neutralise, and often incorporate these chemicals into their own bodies. In the end, these no longer pose a threat to themselves or to the environments they operate in. These microorganisms are often anywhere in the world where some form of natural decomposition is happening, such as in the leaf mulch heaps throughout autumn and winter, or in the decomposing bark and branches of dying trees. The power of these natural processes should be easily harnessed in parks, gardens, and allotments, and welcomed into your institution's realm.



Group 13: *Seeking Connection*, Landra, 2024

On taking responsibility. In the forest, some fungi not only support trees and recycle nutrients, but also help immobilise dangerous elements such as heavy metals by digging them deep into the ground. They thus effectively reduce toxicity for the benefit of the whole ecosystem. Supported by plants and their access to the sun's energy, these organisms take responsibility for dealing with what would otherwise threaten the whole.

Could your institution take responsibility for cleaning up the mess others are making, in an attempt to benefit the whole? A range of human-scale remediation techniques is available, harnessing the power found in kingdoms of fungi, plants, and bacteria in dealing with toxicity.

UNPAVE, REMEDIATE, AND REGENERATE LAND

Back to less problematic kinds of waste and the ways to treat them: where water is abundant, and some slope is available, evapotranspiration canals can be built, where exuberant plant guilds will gladly sort out the slurry through their roots. These will grow embedded in a mix of gravel and other well-draining natural materials. Within certain limitations, many of these plants can even produce edible parts to complement any agroforestry project. Depending on the collection of remediating plants desired by or available to your institution, a system like this could be set to function before or after the other kinds of (aerobic or anaerobic) compost making.

There are many options, but before finding the most adequate methods for your situation, a main obstacle must be overcome.

ALIGN CULTURE AND HABITS WITH THE INSTITUTION'S SUSTAINABLE AIMS

Culture and habits. Your institution must positively consider the cultural, ethical, and even legal implications of this leap forward. It will probably become a pioneer in this transition. This may mean that, because of your institution's bold and successful decisions, dry compost or evapotranspiration toilets will eventually become more commonly accepted. More sophisticated plumbing and independent sewage systems can also be built, instead of the problem-producing and problem-avoiding defaults we have pretty much everywhere in today's industrial societies.

TAKE IN VISITORS AS GIFTS

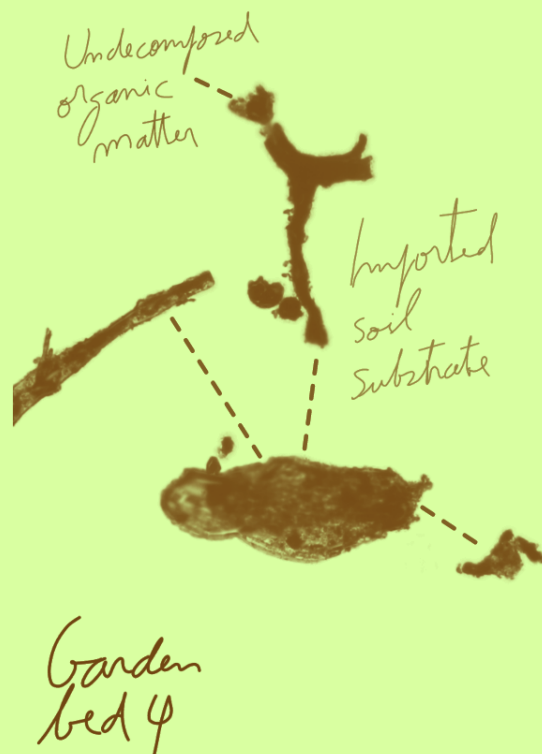
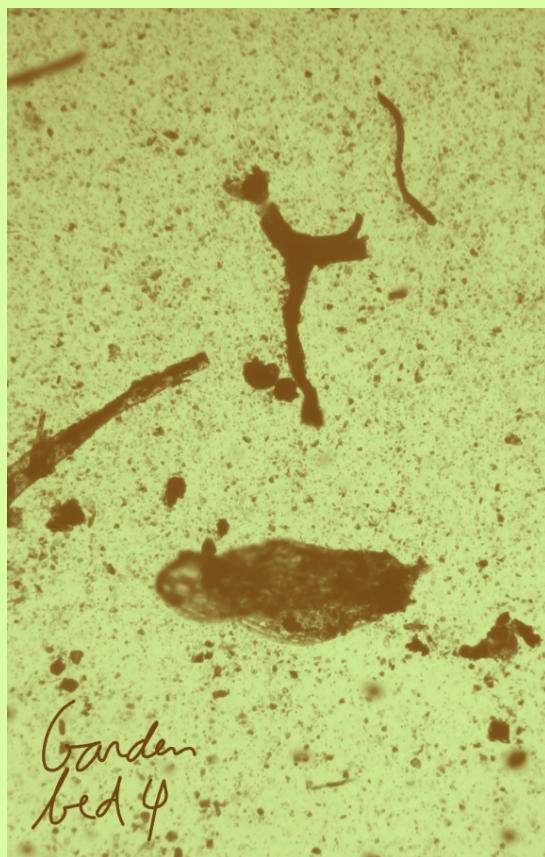
A note on efficiency. Apart from the inherent efficiency of the biological composting process, there are other considerations to be had which can be economically beneficial. What makes this system so effective is that, akin to a forest, an institution only needs to partially sustain visitors while they remain within their domain. Their bodies generally enter the institution alive and leave in that way. Their digestive system's power is not paid for, and the products it leaves behind are free as well. The valuable material they produce comes directly into the institution, mostly via lightweight transportation, meaning that costs are incomparably lower than the potential gains.

CREATE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR FOOD PRODUCTION AND NUTRIENT-RECYCLING SYSTEMS

A final note on partnerships. If your institution alone cannot incorporate the food production and the nutrient-recycling systems proposed, it may still be valuable to think of local partnerships that could be established to help implement all of this in as close to a closed loop as possible, with minimal transportation costs and emissions.

Consider investing in your immediate geographical surroundings and the land around your institution's physical space. It may be possible to regenerate abandoned lots, poorly managed or condemned plots, or even underperforming fields and grey areas in general. If none of this is possible for your organisation, get involved in activating local community projects dedicated to unpaving, remediating, and producing good-quality food in these pieces of land.

ACTIVATE LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH EMBODIED DIRECT ACTION



About *Seeking Connection*

Selection of images from the piece *Seeking Connection* (2024) by Landra, commissioned for the exhibition *Underground. Exploring Ecosystems* at Villa dei Cedri Museum, Bellinzona, Switzerland. Conceived for a slide projector in one of the museum's rooms, the images show microscopic analysis, conducted by Landra, of the various soils found both in the museum's garden and the local surrounding forests. As part of the work, a small nursery was created in the garden for the duration of the exhibition, with a large variety of bushes, shrubs, and trees which would positively increase the biodiversity of the garden. Being of historical heritage, the garden's design could not be largely transformed, so some of the trees were donated to the city of Bellinzona and transplanted into public green spaces under the supervision of the municipality's head gardener.

Agrarian Reform performance, Landra - Silo, Arte e Latitude Rural, 2023 © Silo



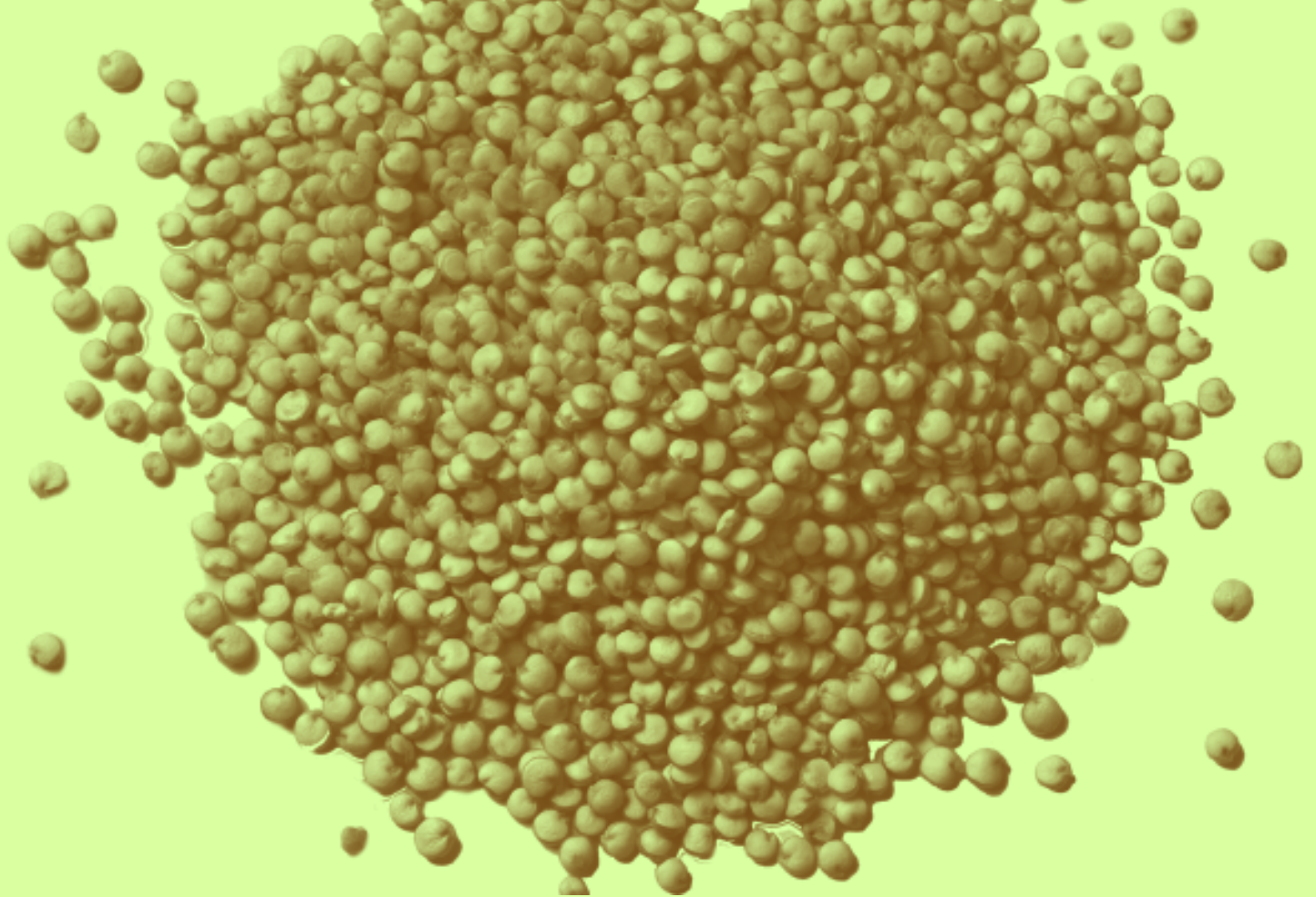


Nourishing Institutions: Toward a Regenerative Practice of Care

by Luigi Coppola

co-founder of Casa delle Agriculture

Participative process of preparation of the installation for the *Notte Verde*, 2019.



Casa delle Agriculture

Casa delle Agriculture is a grassroots coalition based in Castiglione d'Otranto, in the Salento region of southern Italy, combining a volunteer organisation and a farming cooperative active since 2013 and 2018 respectively. Practising *restanza* – the art of staying and revitalising depopulated, marginalised territories – the collective rehabilitates abandoned farmland, supports biodiversity, and builds a local economy grounded in sustainable agriculture, social inclusion, eco-pedagogy, and free access to culture. Their work energises a broad territorial network of farmers, communities, and institutions around a shared conviction: that the world changes because of examples made, not opinions given.

Much of the dominant discourse surrounding climate change is framed through the lens of sustainability. Institutions, corporations, and governments increasingly adopt the language of “sustainable development”, promoting strategies that aim to minimise environmental harm while maintaining existing systems of production and consumption.

However, as Tony Fry (2009) argues, sustainability often operates as a form of defuturing when it merely prolongs systems that are structurally unsustainable. In this sense, sustainability risks becoming a managerial strategy – focused on efficiency, mitigation, and adaptation – rather than a transformative project.

Such approaches frequently remain embedded within the same economic and industrial paradigms that have produced ecological crises. They aim to reduce damage without addressing its root causes: extractivism, uneven resource distribution, and the separation of human systems from ecological limits.

Within this framework, institutions may become more “sustainable” while continuing to reproduce exploitative relations: outsourcing environmental costs, relying on precarious labour, or maintaining asymmetrical flows of value.

Museums, universities, cultural centres, and public organisations are often framed as neutral infrastructures: spaces that preserve, display, and transmit knowledge. This framing suggests solidity, permanence, and objectivity. Yet in practice, institutions are anything but neutral. They are shaped by histories of power, sustained by human labour, and embedded within specific social, political, and ecological territories.

A regenerative approach demands a deeper shift. It calls not for the optimisation of existing systems, but for their reconfiguration. It asks how institutions might actively participate in the restoration of ecological relationships, the redistribution of resources, and the cultivation of long-term resilience. To think of an institution as a living organism is to foreground its dependencies. Like any organism, it requires flows of energy, attention, and care. It metabolises resources – financial, intellectual, emotional – and produces effects that ripple outward.

This perspective challenges the illusion of institutional autonomy. No institution exists in isolation. Each is embedded within a territory: a network of relationships that includes local communities, ecosystems, infrastructures, and histories.

Territory here is not just geographic. It is also cultural and political – shaped by who is included, who is excluded, and how knowledge circulates.

If institutions are living, then they are also vulnerable. They can become extractive, exhausted, or disconnected from their environments. But they can also regenerate – if conditions allow.

For art institutions in particular, reframing art as collective metabolism shifts attention from discrete objects to processes of transformation. Art becomes a mediating practice that reorganises relationships between culture, ecology, and community. This aligns with broader discourses in political ecology and decolonial thought, such as those articulated by Arturo Escobar (2018), who advocates for “pluriversal” design practices rooted in relational ontologies.

Participatory process of preparing the installation for *Notte Verde*, 2024





The Street of Biodiversity at *Notte Verde*, 2023

Nourishment as Regenerative Practice

To reconceptualise the institution as a living system is therefore to reject the fiction of neutrality. It is to acknowledge that institutions metabolise resources – material, affective, cognitive – and that they participate in shaping the conditions of life within their territories. It requires attending simultaneously to material, emotional, and ecological dimensions of nourishment:

-Material nourishment demands the fair redistribution of resources and the refusal of exploitative cultural labour. Institutions must ensure that participation improves, rather than depletes, the material conditions of those involved. This includes long-term investment in people, infrastructures, and land.

-Emotional nourishment emphasises continuity, shared authorship, and practices of listening. It challenges transactional models – short-term engagements, extractive collaborations – and replaces them with relational processes that build trust and collective agency over time.

-Ecological nourishment situates institutional activity within living systems. It aligns cultural production with cycles of regeneration: soil health, biodiversity, seasonality, and circular economies. It recognises that all cultural work is materially grounded and ecologically embedded.

If institutions are to move beyond sustainability, they must also redefine how success is measured. Metrics such as visibility, growth, and attendance – dominant within both cultural and educational sectors – often fail to capture the relational and ecological impacts of institutional activity.

A nourishing framework proposes alternative questions:

What commons are strengthened through this work?

What relationships are sustained or repaired?

What becomes more resilient because this institution exists?

These questions shift evaluation from output to impact, from quantity to quality, from short-term visibility to long-term viability. They also require temporal reorientation.

Regenerative processes unfold over extended durations; they resist the acceleration and immediacy of contemporary institutional cycles.

Moving beyond sustainability toward nourishment requires a fundamental reorientation: from minimising harm to maximising the conditions for life and contributing to the restoration of ecological balance, social equity, and collective imagination. It asks institutions – cultural, educational, civic – to become active participants in regenerative processes.

In this sense, nourishment is not an outcome, but an ongoing practice, one that unfolds through co-evolution with the systems that sustain us.

Regenerative thinking emphasises transformation, reciprocity, and renewal. Anna Tsing (2015) writes, “collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination”. Rather than seeking purity or control, regeneration embraces complexity and interdependence.

Chi semina utopia raccoglie realtà (Who sows utopia harvests reality), inscription in the *Parco Comune dei Frutti Minori*, Castiglione d'Otranto, Lecce, Italy

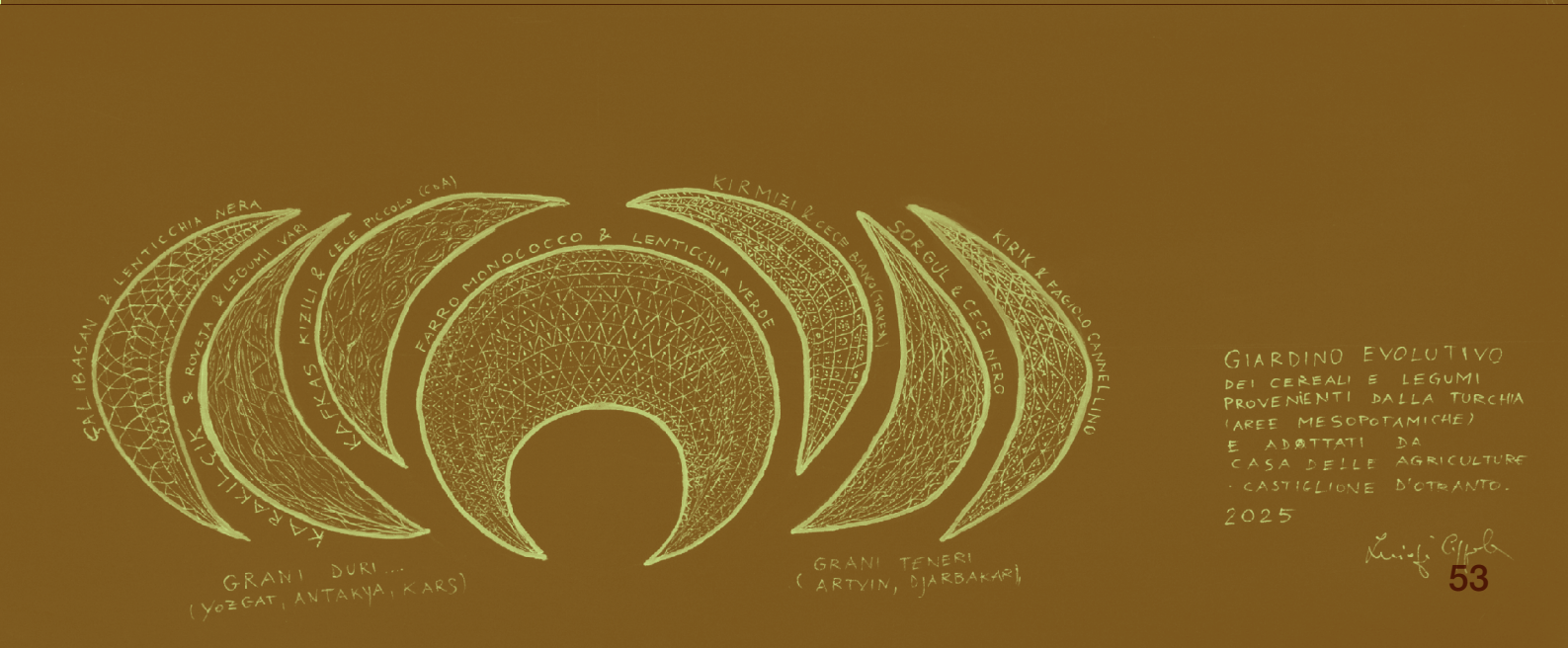


An ecological understanding of institutions foregrounds their embeddedness within specific territories. These territories are not merely spatial, but relational assemblages composed of human communities, infrastructures, histories, and ecological processes.

From this perspective, the institution is not a container but a node, one that both shapes and is shaped by flows of energy, knowledge, and matter. Its responsibility extends beyond internal governance to its external entanglements.

Care, within regenerative institutional frameworks, operates as both method and outcome. It structures the distribution of resources, the recognition of labour, and the temporalities of engagement.

Evolutionary Garden of Cereals and Legumes Cultivated by Casa delle Agricolture, Luigi Coppola, 2025
drawing and earth pigments on fabric, 30 x 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist



*What if care were not a support function,
but a central artistic methodology?
Not something that happens after the work is made,
but something that shapes how it is conceived,
produced, encountered.*

*Care is structural.
It demands shifts in power,
in authorship,
in what – and who – is valued.*

A regenerative practice of care should include:

- Redistributing resources** toward those historically marginalised within and around the institution
- Valuing maintenance and invisible labour** as much as innovation and output
- Cultivating reciprocal relationships** with local communities and ecologies
- Designing for longevity and adaptability**, rather than short-term impact

Care also requires acknowledging conflict. Institutions cannot be fully “nourishing” without confronting the ways they have participated in harm. Regeneration is not a return to an ideal state, but a process of transformation through accountability.

Such a shift requires rethinking authority. Who gets to define what counts as culture? Who benefits from institutional legitimacy? And how might these structures be reconfigured?

This means recognising that institutional decisions – about programming, funding, hiring, architecture – have material consequences beyond their walls. It also means relinquishing the idea that expertise resides solely within the institution. Instead, knowledge is co-produced across networks of practitioners, communities, and environments. Institutions become facilitators of exchange rather than gatekeepers of value.

Casa delle Agriculture: Dissolving the Boundary Between Cultural Production and Agricultural Practice

Casa delle Agriculture, a grassroots collective institution based in the Salento region of southern Italy, has developed an integrated model where farming, art, and community organising operate as an interdependent system.

The collective has been active since 2011 in Castiglione d'Otranto, a small village in southern Italy, with the aim of practising *restanza* – a concept that refers to new ways of inhabiting and revitalising marginal territories affected by depopulation. This long-term commitment unfolds within a fragile context: a village marked by low birth rates, high emigration, and largely abandoned land.

In response, the collective has worked to reverse this trajectory by regenerating land made available through temporary use agreements. These lands are cultivated using organic farming practices, with the active involvement of the local community, alongside artists, intellectuals, and farmers. All are driven by what can be described as a “concrete utopia”: the desire to restore places to beauty, memory, and future possibility; to rethink rural traditions; and to create spaces for experimentation and reflection grounded in an awareness of the value of land, labour, and collective life.

Participative process of preparation of the installation for the *Notte Verde*, 2019





Mulino di Comunità (Community Mill), photo: Alexander Corciulo

Casa delle Agriculture originated from a cultural initiative – the festival *Notte Verde: agriculture, utopie e comunità* – which quickly gained recognition both from the public and critics. Conceived in opposition to processes of touristification and cultural consumerism, the festival creates space to address the deeper political and cultural questions shaping the territory. It proposes a transformative approach, where imagination is opened and the guiding logic shifts from exploitation and extraction toward regeneration and rethinking.

Over time, it became clear that such moments of gathering needed to be sustained by continuous practices and concrete actions. This realisation led to the cultivation of abandoned land and to a long-term process of experimentation, involving workshops, educational programmes, public meetings, walks, and biodiversity initiatives.

This capacity for cultural transformation – or what Alexander Langer (1994) called “ecological conversion” – has been central to the development of further projects, including the *Mulino di Comunità* (Community Mill) and the *Vivaio dell’Inclusione* (Inclusion Nursery). The former is a productive infrastructure designed to support local supply chains and make a return to the land economically viable, while the latter functions as a reproductive space for cultivating a culture and pedagogy of coexistence and co-evolution.

The collective engages daily with a wide range of interconnected issues: relationships with diverse local communities, including migrants, students, and elderly residents; the redefinition of economic, social, and environmental systems of production and reproduction; and the development of pedagogical and environmental education practices.

Art and cultural action play a fundamental role in this process by contributing to the construction of the commons. While the commons already exist within everyday life, they often remain latent, constrained by cultural and economic limitations. Art, by working on the level of the imaginary, has the capacity to synthesise complexity, to reveal underlying narratives, and to bring them into shared awareness.

In this way, art does not simply represent reality; it acts upon it. It helps make the commons visible and operative, fostering social and political connections that enable the formation of communities grounded in cultivation and care.

The collective's work began by reconnecting fragmented landscapes through the restoration of historic pathways, re-establishing a tangible relationship with place. This was accompanied by research into local biodiversity, including the collection, selection, and reproduction of seeds in preparation for cultivation.

Art is understood as a relational practice that contributes to building shared horizons of action. By reimagining places and relationships, and by acting in the present while working toward possible futures, communities gradually transform their practices over time.

The collective has adopted a guiding motto: *Chi semina utopia raccoglie realtà* (Who sows utopia harvests reality). This reflects a pragmatic approach to utopia: one that is cultivated daily through concrete actions aimed at overcoming the limitations of the present.

Practices of commoning emerge through taking responsibility for shared needs: identifying resources, asking critical questions, learning through failure, and building new social networks capable of restoring ecologies while producing food, care, conviviality, and even love.

Casa delle Agriculture, source: Visible Project



For instance, working with land made available through temporary use agreements led to the creation of the *Parco Comune dei Frutti Minori*: a distributed rural park that challenges the traditional model of large estates. This initiative develops infrastructures and pathways that support both ecological regeneration and social reproduction.

The Mulino di Comunità, in particular, emerged from an exceptional process of local participation. It enables small-scale producers to circulate their crops through a milling service at fair costs, making it viable to cultivate lands that would otherwise remain abandoned or vulnerable to degradation and fire. The more land that is cultivated, the greater the production of high-quality grains and legumes, contributing to a local economy based on proximity and fair pricing, free from speculation.

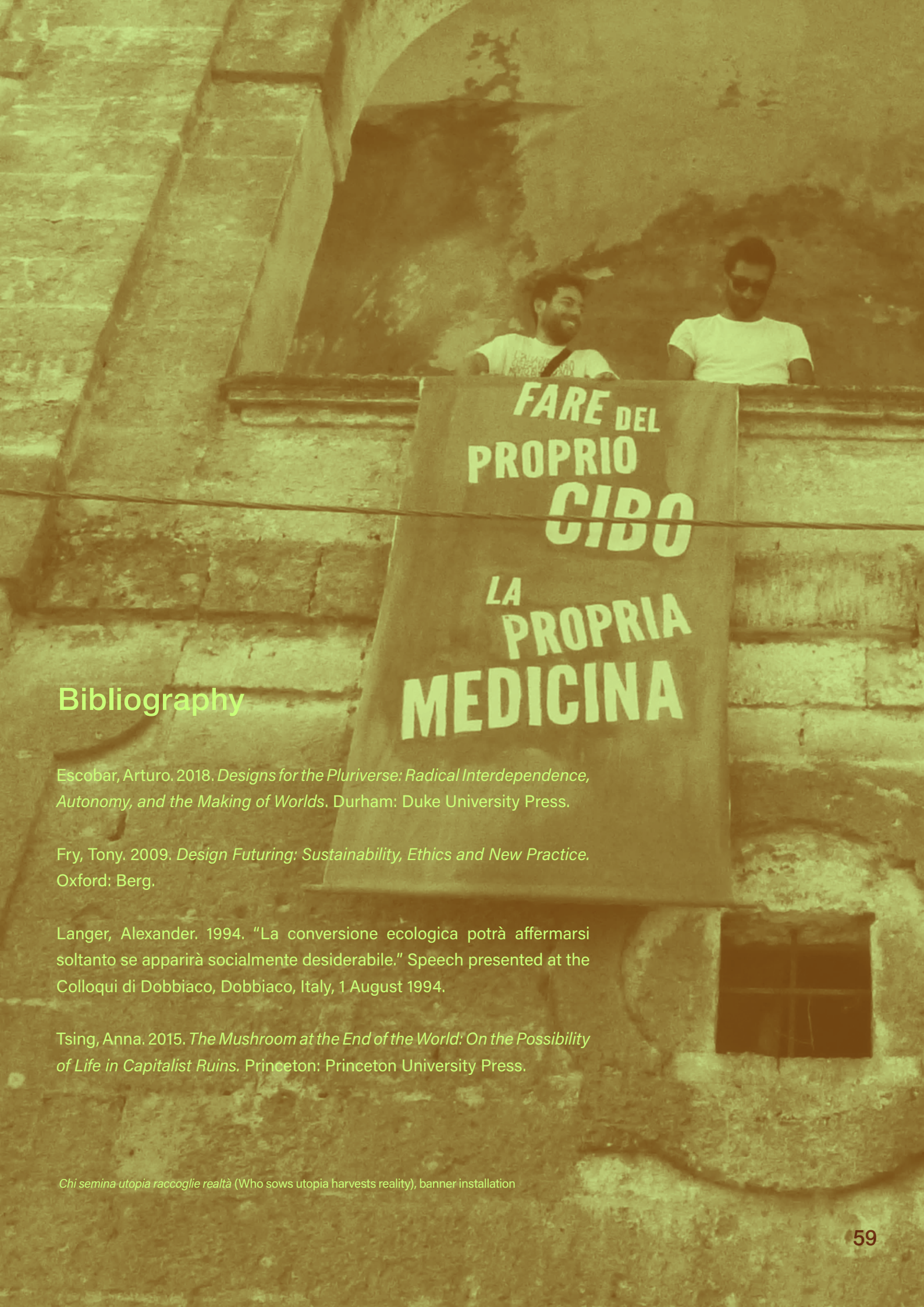
By moving away from competitive models and embracing cooperation, the collective has reactivated dormant resources – land, labour, and seeds – while rebuilding valuable community bonds.

Globalisation can be understood as a vast process of enclosure through privatisation, dispossession, and the destruction of ecosystems. It imposes specific ways of relating to the world and to nature, often severing connections that sustain collective life.

In response, Casa delle Agriculture experiments with alternative models of co-evolution – not only among people, but with the more-than-human world. This involves learning not only how resources can be shared, but how they can become generative for both communities and ecosystems.

Thinking in terms of the commons requires a radical shift in attitude: natural and immaterial resources are no longer seen as objects to be consumed without responsibility, but as vital elements to be cared for, sustained, and transmitted.

**Those who cultivate land
become cultivators of change.**



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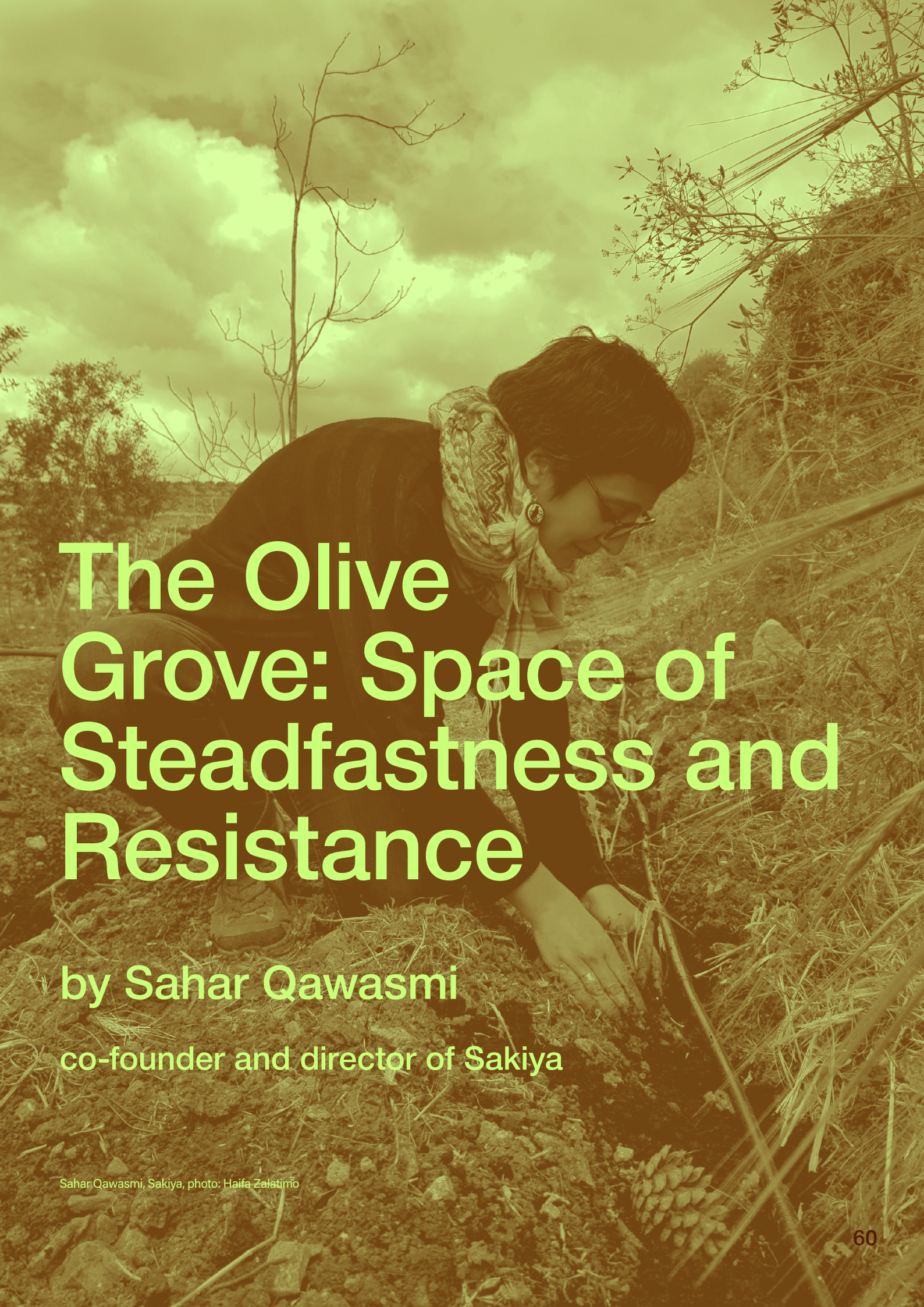
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Chi semina utopia raccoglie realtà (Who sows utopia harvests reality), banner installation

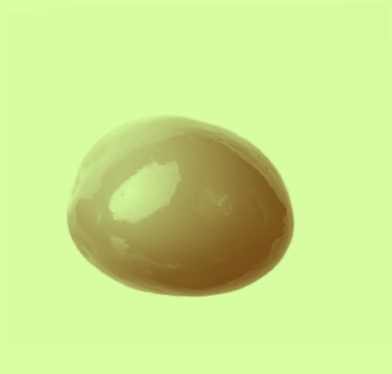
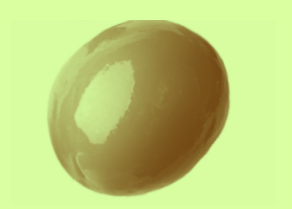


The Olive Grove: Space of Steadfastness and Resistance

by Sahar Qawasmi

co-founder and director of Sakiya

Sahar Qawasmi, Sakiya, photo: Haifa Zalatimo



Sakiya

Sakiya is a progressive academy for experimental knowledge production based in Ein Qiniya, Palestine, grafting local agrarian traditions of self-sufficiency with contemporary art and ecological practices. Through residencies, food production, exhibitions, and education programmes, Sakiya cultivates collective knowledge across the intersections of art, science, and agriculture, grounded in the land, springs, and ancient pathways of its territory, and in resistance to the ongoing fragmentation of Palestinian life and landscape.



Sakiya summer school, photo: Ahmad Odeh

Sakiya grew through encounters, which grew into immersive experiences, which in turn grew into praxis. With a mutual yearning to map the land of this “vanishing landscape”, as Raja Shehade, a dear friend and a great author, writes, Nida [co-founder of Sakiya] and I travelled as much as we could around Palestine. We carried our tea kettle every time we visited the Zalatimo estate in Ein Qiniya together, long before we knew that was where we would plant roots for Sakiya. We made tea with spring water and wild sage and thyme, and with each visit our community grew and our shrinking geography expanded with narratives that wove underground infrastructures with above-ground spirit worlds. Stories emerged through and with this small village about their relationship to the land, to their village, and to the rest of Palestine; from refugee camps, to other cities and villages, coastal areas, valleys, mountains, trees, fields, springs, caves, plants and animals, and holy people. Sakiya grew through these encounters. For us, it came to resemble all of Palestine, and the entire world.

Sakiya is a progressive academy, a field for experimental knowledge production and sharing in Ein Qiniya, a village seven kilometres west of Ramallah, Palestine. In 2017, the Zalatimo family entrusted Sakiya with their ancestral land, a rewilded hillside in Ein Qiniya Area C under Israeli military control, home to two historic buildings in disrepair, the ancient spring of Um al-Einein, the Sufi shrine of Abu al-Einein, and two holy trees, a holy oak and a holy strawberry tree. Through land stewardship, art, and building practices, we seek to create a new narrative around our relationship to land, knowledge, and the commons; to imagine a liberated future; and to engage in practices of collectivity, sustainability, and security. These practices are not new but are continuously and increasingly threatened by the forces of colonisation and neoliberalism. Liberation, we believe, comes from connecting with and reframing an ancient relationship to the land. In Arabic, the root of *sakiya* (سقي، ساقية) relates to the stem of a mushroom, papyrus, an irrigation ditch, a water wheel, a cupbearer, quenching someone's thirst, the act of supplying or obtaining water, concluding a sharecropping contract, the right to access water, tending to or caring for, or making flow. Sakiya is used in Palestine and throughout the Arabic-speaking region to refer to water springs and their infrastructures, or to the villages that host them. Sakiya is also the name of a destroyed village near Yaffa in Palestine.

The shepherds in the community were sceptical about the fate of the spring at first. The majority of Bedouin communities in Palestine have faced forced displacement and lost access to water springs through colonial policies of land confiscation and claims of natural preservation. The process of land privatisation and modernisation plans of different governments that laid claim to and asserted control over the commons closed off lands that were once collectively managed. Some of the springs that had been used by farmers and shepherds for centuries have had their infrastructure modernised for "efficiency", with water transported directly into pipes to the different farms, terminating access for goats and other more-than-human life.



Pool at Sakiya, photo: Ahmad Odeh

Two of the last springs in the village that were somewhat accessible until two years ago, Ein al-Majoor and Ein Boubeen, have been taken over by the nearest settlement and are now out of reach for Palestinians. The spring on our site, Ein Um al-Einain, or al-Oueina, is currently the last spring accessible to the shepherds who continue to water their herds, especially in the dry season between spring and autumn. We watched dozens of goats give birth under the holy oak, and we witnessed young shepherds grow to become caretakers of their own herds.

The valleys surrounding the village and Sakiya are among the most fertile in the region and lie within one of the most ecologically diverse corridors in the Eastern Mediterranean. Walking through these lands, you can see layers upon layers of infrastructures. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the terraced hills were full of vineyards, olive, almond, and stone-fruit and citrus groves, vegetable farms, and wheat and barley fields. During the summers, starting with the wheat harvest and ending with the grape and fig harvest, people stayed on their lands in small dry-stone structures called *manateer* (Arabic plural; singular *mintar*), or watchtowers, where they tended their crops, gathered yields, and dried figs and grapes for the winter. Different typologies of these structures still dot the hills between Ramallah and Ein Qiniya, alongside wells, springs, pools, and small dams that slowed water in the valleys after rainfall, such as Wadi al-Oqda and Wadi al-Kalb, where today a major road is being built by the Municipality of Ramallah, threatening to bury much of the valleys beneath it.



Pool at Sakiya, photo: Sahar Qawasmi

Sami Yacoub, a village elder, tells the story of his arrival in Ein Qiniya at age four, when he fled with his family from Barfilia, their village, in 1948. Barfilia is one of 500–600 villages destroyed by Zionist militias alongside Palestine’s vibrant coastal cities. The valley was a lifeline as people walked and rode donkeys until they reached Wadi al-Dileb. Today, half of the village residents have roots in Barfilia, but Wadi al-Dileb is closed off by settlements occupying the hilltops around it, and farmers are barred not only from returning to Barfilia but from cultivating their lands in the valley. Climbers who came from all over Palestine to climb the rocky hillsides were kicked out, attacked, and arrested. This valley, once abundant with *dileb* (maple) trees, wheat, and honey, where shepherds and families gathered along the stream, children swam, and women gathered and washed together, has become one large enclosure.

Olive groves and agricultural lands, hillsides, and valleys in the West Bank have become military buffer zones around hilltop settlements built after 1967, closed off by barbed wire and military checkpoints, and made inaccessible to most landowners and stewards, or cut off by the separation wall that Israel began building in 2002. Many of the olive groves in Ein Qiniya were made into military buffer zones for the four settlements that surround the village to the west and north. In a few cases families receive permits for a small number of members to pick olives on certain days during specific hours. The collective work and celebration associated with the olive-picking season are largely no longer possible.

Much of the historical forest in the West Bank that hosted hundreds of tree species and hardy bushes was heavily cut down for wood, but some pockets survived, especially around holy shrines as a sign of respect for these sites and the spirits believed to inhabit them. Narratives and rituals related to these sites, the hills, trees, and springs around them, cultivated an embodied and collective relationship to the land. Seasonal rituals associated with holy shrines in Palestine and the region once brought together entire communities who participated in remembrance, chanting, cooking, and organising, resulting in vital cultural production and political mobilisation. The stories of the Sufi shrine of Abu al-Einein on our site remind us of a time when spiritual and cultural practices took individual and collective forms of expression and symbolised relationship to land, to each other, and to the spirit and divine worlds.

Our ecology is constantly facing takeover by settlements and military occupation, alongside settler attacks, and it is further threatened by the expansion of neighbourhoods around Ramallah and the roads that connect them. However, being on the hill has allowed us to extend our space into the roots and water canals, into tree canopies and among the roaming spirits, and to expand our sense of time as we work on rehabilitating historic infrastructures, restoring soil, learning and sharing stories, foraging, cooking, and collecting and planting seeds. Ancient routes along old trees, holy shrines, magnificent boulders, and protected springs, alongside structures of neoliberal expansion, settlement takeover, and land dispossession, collide around us in the past and present, while opening a pathway to imagine a possible future. We do not know how long we can stay, reclaim, resist, challenge, accept, and dream, but we see Sakiya in the future we imagine. The relationships that brought us to Sakiya, or brought Sakiya to us, existed long before us and, we believe, will remain long after us.

View north from Sakiya, photo: Sahar Qawasmi



Rooted as Institution

To be rooted for us meant to be rooted as an “institution”. Our programmes and tools grew from collective memories, encounters, experiences, stories, histories, and relationships that have been around for long before we existed and will stay for long after us. All of it became what we carry. And what we need to reclaim, resist, challenge, accept, and dream with.

The olive grove was one of the spaces that resembled our work. The academy in the Greek tradition is an olive grove where wisdom is shared. As in the tradition of Arab and Islamic collectivity and learning, we gather in circles or *halakat* (Arabic plural; singular *halaka*). The *halaka* is a chain of connected rings where people come as equals despite and because of differences, to share knowledge and stories and engage in generative conversations. We learn through *mujawara*, which means learning by neighbouring; by being someone’s companion. It is learning from masterful praxis through observing, helping, supporting, asking, and imitating. We learned from other people in the village, trees and boulders, water springs, and other creatures. Our companions spanned the space of the soil, the land, and above and beyond.

Our programmes resemble the seasons spatially, thematically, and in their pace. Our ethics are rooted in land protection, indigenous knowledge and cultures, shared responsibility, more-than-human relationships, liberation practice, experimenting and learning by doing, collective self-sustenance and imagination.

We forage and grow our food, and cook and eat together. We visit archaeological sites that hold stories, or that have been dug up by archaeological looters, or destroyed for extraction. We walk ancient paths with farmers, shepherds and goats, and wild animals. We witness water springs and lands being taken over by settlers, roads expanding over springs, walls erected, and lands becoming ecological protected areas in greenwashing attempts to exclude people from their land and to disconnect them from sustenance practices.

Our time on the hill slows down as we work on rehabilitation and restoration. What we learned will stay with us, and we would like to share it with you.



Upper house at Sakiya, photo: Sahar Qawasmi

The Olive Grove as Regenerative Institution

The olive grove teaches us that institutions can become spaces of steadfastness against colonial fragmentation and uprooting. From the olive grove, we understand rootedness as living resistance and transgenerational continuity as a strategy against dispossession. Our olive grove institution offers nourishment – material, emotional, and ecological – through:

Contextual sovereignty: We exercise sovereignty in land use through rehabilitation and restoration, in food practices through foraging and cultivation, in memory through storytelling and walking ancient paths, in culture through collective learning and artistic production. This sovereignty is not abstract but lived daily through our relationship with the land and each other.

More-than-human relationships: Our institution recognises that care extends beyond humans to trees, springs, boulders, and creatures. The olive grove teaches us that institutions can be places where human and more-than-human beings thrive together in mutual nourishment rather than extraction.

Intergenerational continuity: Against colonial structures that seek to fragment time and sever connections to the past and future, our work creates spaces where elders and youth, ancestors and descendants can meet in the present moment, sharing knowledge and building continuity.

Collective responsibility: Where capitalist institutions operate on individual ownership and extraction, our olive grove model operates on collective stewardship. Success is measured not in profit but in the health of the ecosystem and the strength of community relationships.



Pool at Sakiya, photo: Ahmad Odeh

Practices for Other Institutions

We offer these practices not as prescriptions but as invitations for adaptation:

-The halaka circle: Gather in circles where hierarchy dissolves and knowledge flows horizontally. The circular form itself resists the linear, colonial logic of progress and domination.

-Mujawara learning: Learn through proximity and companionship. Knowledge emerges not from expert lectures but from being present with the land, with each other, with the more-than-human world.

-Seasonal programming: Structure your work according to natural rhythms rather than institutional calendars. Let the land guide your timing and themes.

-Collective foraging: Share food and knowledge. The act of gathering sustenance together builds community and reconnection to place.

-Walking paths: Walk ancient paths with elders, with farmers, with children. The footsteps of generations still mark the land, and walking these paths connects us to those who came before and those who will come after.

The olive grove reminds us that institutions can be more than buildings and programmes. They can be living ecosystems, places where resistance and nourishment grow together, where colonial fragmentation gives way to the wholeness that comes from connection to land, to each other, to the living world that sustains us all. In this olive grove, we see an institution that feeds rather than extracts, that connects rather than fragments, that stands steadfast in the face of dispossession, offering nourishment to all who seek it.

Lower house at Sakiya, photo: Sahar Qawasmi



A sepia-toned photograph showing the silhouettes of a group of people from behind, looking out towards a bright, hazy landscape. The scene is framed by the dark, intricate branches of trees in the foreground. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Afterword

by Jule Kurbjeweit

photo: Daan Stevers

Toward Regenerative Institutions

The four practices gathered in this toolkit – CATPC, Landra, Casa delle Agriculture, and Sakiya – emerge from radically different territories and histories: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the northern Iberian Peninsula, southern Italy, and Palestine. Yet read together, they constitute a coherent argument about what institutions might be and do. Each refuses the fiction of institutional neutrality. Each understands the institution as embedded in a territory – ecological, political, historical – and takes responsibility for that embeddedness rather than managing it. Each treats care, nourishment, and repair as structural principles: the conditions under which meaningful cultural work becomes possible at all.

CATPC articulates an urgent institutional critique while also concretely materialising a metabolic logic of transformation. The resources they access through the art world carry an ‘unhealthy’ quality because they emerge from histories of exclusion, extraction, and colonial dispossession. It is only through conscious, collective, and intentional transformation that these resources become genuinely nourishing: shared and converted in Lusanga into a sacred food forest, a museum, and a school. What was toxic in its origins becomes regenerative through the work of metabolising it. This is not a metaphor but a practice – and a challenge to every institution that claims to nourish while leaving the conditions of extraction intact.

Landra looks to living systems for processes from which institutions might learn. From bacterial cycles to forest networks, living systems demonstrate the importance of closing loops, ensuring that what is extracted is returned, that what ends feeds what continues, and that complexity and diversity are the conditions of resilience rather than its byproducts. The perennial food system is not an agricultural recommendation alone but an institutional model: build for the long term, invest in the network, measure success in soil health and continuity rather than output and visibility.

Casa delle Agriculture shows that *restanza* – the practice of staying, of refusing to abandon a place – is itself a form of institutional design. Against the logic of depopulation, efficiency, and extraction, the collective builds slowly, collectively, and with what is already there: abandoned land, local knowledge, community bonds, seeds. Their work demonstrates that cultural production and agricultural practice are aspects of a single project of care for a shared territory – and that this project requires infrastructure and presence.

Sakiya teaches that rootedness is not possession but practice. In a context of active dispossession – springs and land taken, paths closed, groves converted into buffer zones – the institution becomes a form of steadfastness: a commitment to stay, to remember, to cultivate continuity across generations and across the more-than-human world. Knowledge here is not stored but enacted: through walking ancient paths, foraging, gathering in circles, learning by neighbouring. The institution does not simply contain knowledge; it is the practice through which knowledge stays alive.

Across these practices, five commitments recur. **Nourishment:** the insistence that institutions must actively sustain, rather than merely draw from, the communities and ecosystems they inhabit. **Repair:** the acknowledgment that institutions are implicated in histories of extraction and that regeneration requires accountability alongside action. **Redistribution:** the understanding that resources, authorship, and knowledge must be shared more equitably, including toward those whose labour and land made cultural institutions possible in the first place. **Continuity:** the prioritisation of long-term, slow, intergenerational work over episodic programming and short-term visibility. And **sovereignty:** the cultivation of collective autonomy over the means of production, sustenance, and meaning-making.

Taken together, these commitments point toward what we might call a regenerative institution – one that transforms rather than merely accumulates, that returns what it takes, and that measures its success in the health of the systems it is part of.

What These Practices Teach Us

Institutions are not neutral. They are shaped by histories of power and embedded in specific territories. They metabolise resources – financial, cognitive, affective, ecological – and produce effects that extend far beyond their walls. Acknowledging this is the beginning of responsibility.

Institutions metabolise. Like living organisms, they depend on flows of energy, matter, and care. They can be extractive or regenerative, depleting or nourishing, depending on how those flows are structured and toward whom they are directed. The question is not whether an institution metabolises, but how.

Care is infrastructural. Care is not a soft supplement to the real work – it is the architecture that makes the work possible. It shapes how resources are distributed, how relationships are sustained, how knowledge is transmitted across generations, and how communities remain resilient in the face of dispossession, precarity, and ecological crisis.

Food and agriculture offer institutional models. The perennial food system, the sacred forest, the community mill and inclusive nursery, the olive grove: these are not metaphors but literal infrastructures that model what institutions could become. They demonstrate that it is possible to produce cultural and material value while improving, rather than depleting, the conditions for future production.

Questions for Institutions

These questions are invitations to sustained reflection, best pursued collectively and returned to over time.

On extraction and return: What does your institution extract from its territory – materially, ecologically, socially, culturally? What does it return? Is the balance regenerative or depleting?

On labour and nourishment: Who nourishes the institution? Whose labour, land, or knowledge makes it possible? Are those people nourished in return – materially, not only symbolically?

On time and continuity: What remains after the programme ends? What infrastructures, relationships, or capacities does your institution leave behind? What would it mean to measure success in decades rather than seasons?

On exclusion and repair: Which communities have been excluded from your institution, or have involuntarily financed it? What would genuine repair – concrete, sustained, and co-designed – look like in practice?

On the more-than-human: What is your institution's relationship to the ecological territory it inhabits? What does it take from that territory, and what does it contribute to its health and continuity?

Exercises and Prompts

Map your institutional metabolism. Draw a diagram of your institution's flows: what comes in (funding, food, energy, labour, knowledge, visitors) and what goes out (programming, waste, effects on community and ecology). Where are the loops closed? Where do materials or relationships leave the system without returning? Where is extraction happening that could become regeneration?

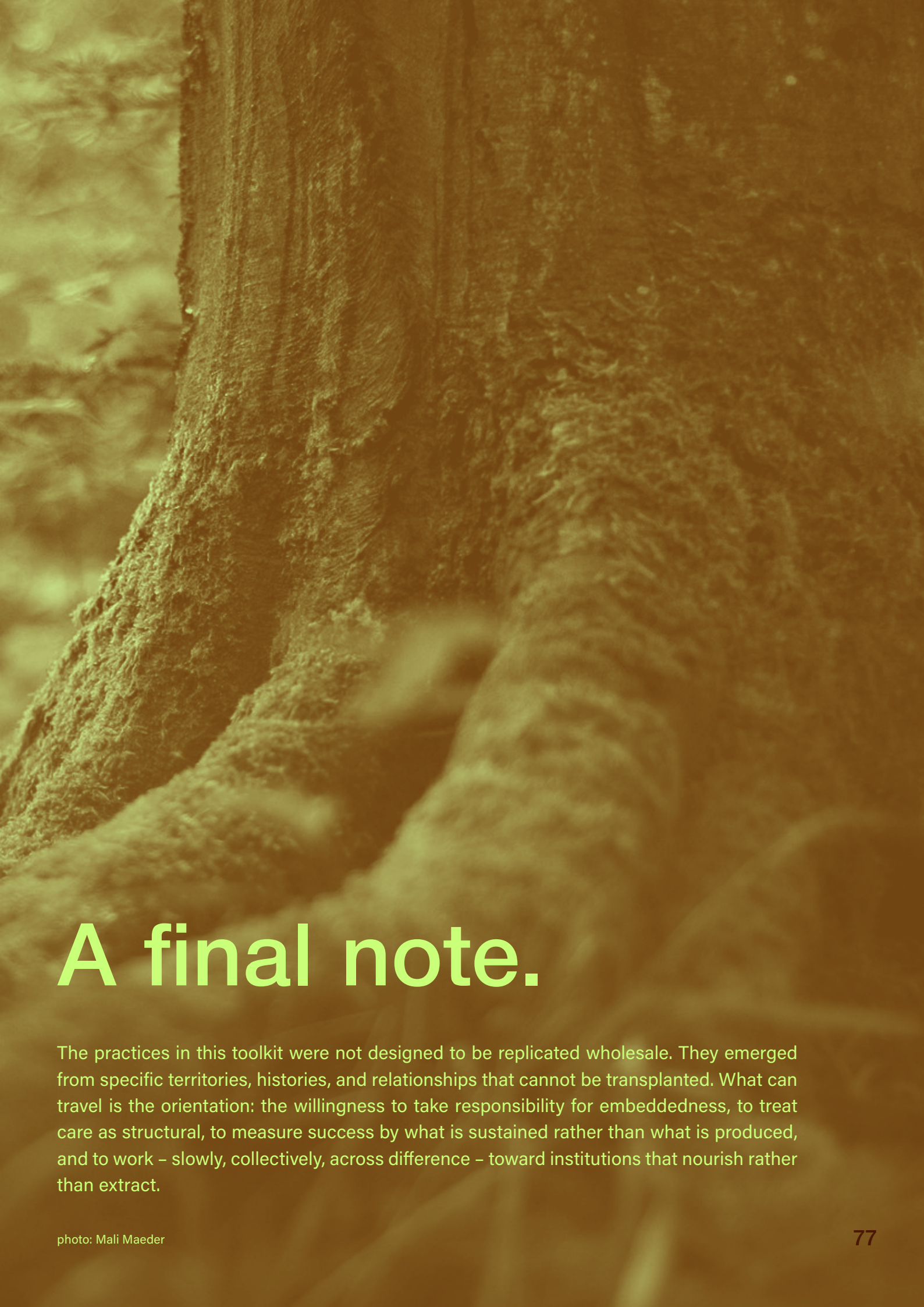
Identify your waste streams. What does your institution currently discard – materially, socially, ecologically? Food waste, precarious labour, communities engaged once and never again, land left unattended. For each stream, ask: what would it take to close this loop? Who would need to be involved?

Identify excluded communities. Who is not in the room – not as audience, not as collaborator, not as beneficiary? Who has historically contributed to making your institution possible, materially or otherwise, without receiving recognition or return? Map these absences as specifically as possible.

Design a regenerative intervention. Choose one area of your institution's activity – catering, programming, procurement, land use, partnerships – and design a small, concrete intervention that moves it from extractive to regenerative. Use the models in this toolkit as inspiration, not prescription: a community composting system, a long-term residency, a collaboration with a local farming collective, a participatory seed library, a land restoration project on institutional grounds. Start small, build slowly, measure in terms of relationship and ecosystem health rather than output.

Learn through presence and proximity (mujawara learning). Identify someone whose knowledge or practice is adjacent to yours – a farmer, a neighbour, a community elder, a child – and spend time learning by being present with them, without agenda. Knowledge emerges through companionship.

Practice the halaka. Convene a circle – staff, community members, collaborators, neighbours – in which hierarchy dissolves and everyone speaks as equals. Ask collectively: what is this institution for? Who does it serve? What would it need to become genuinely nourishing? Listen more than you speak. Return to this circle regularly.



A final note.

The practices in this toolkit were not designed to be replicated wholesale. They emerged from specific territories, histories, and relationships that cannot be transplanted. What can travel is the orientation: the willingness to take responsibility for embeddedness, to treat care as structural, to measure success by what is sustained rather than what is produced, and to work – slowly, collectively, across difference – toward institutions that nourish rather than extract.



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