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It's our responsibility to reflect on the things  
that got lost along the way.

(Stunned, 2020)

In the modern Western world, the relationship between the human and non-human environment seems to be one of separation and dominion. However, it is uncannily evident that this relationship runs much deeper than what is believed, and in fact, human health and planetary health exist interdependently.

I find these relationships extremely fascinating and because of my family's farming background, I wondered whether the ever-growing disconnection between farming and the rest of society had a large part to play.

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If we take from Yurak Havari's theory that the Agricultural Revolution was the foundation from which larger populations; and therefore civilisations grew, (Harari, 2015) then it is no wonder that everything we as humans have constructed from there on in, is inextricably linked back to farming.



Figure 1. Photo by Tony Johnson, *Simon Dobson at Green Field Produce in Carlton near Wakefield* (2017)

In an aim to present my research in a simple, more fluid structure, I use the trajectory of my Father's farming business as an anecdotal thread that links a more personal experience, to events, technologies and ideas that have arisen at a wider scale.

The business trajectory represents just how quickly agriculture has had to adapt to the rapidly shifting and evolving social, economic and environmental landscapes over the past century.





Figure 2. Sternof Beyer, Weissman, Stafford, & MacGlashing, *Hachiko's Garden*  
 "Hachiko's Garden uses the activity of a Zen rock garden with the meanings of a mandala, and thus is a "mind-scape" of the universe as a whole. The raked concentric circles are our ability to form meaning and pattern from nature, and thus our ability to describe the forces of the universe, such as electromagnetism, gravity, and space time." (Sternof Beyer, Weissman, Stafford, & MacGlashing)

During my research I have come across work from many inspiring people of different disciplines who widen and deepen the conversation by introducing philosophies, faiths and technologies from outside of Western culture.

These include (but are not limited to) Seetal Solanki, Indy Johar, Amitav Ghosh, Julia Watson and Alan Watts. They all concern themselves with the way in which cultures outside of the West seem to be more aligned with the world in which humans are not the centre.

Cosmological belief systems that underpin Eastern ways of seeing and living may seem completely foreign and almost laughable to the Western, rational way of thinking, but as Tim Lott (*The Third Eye*, 2019) points out, it would be extremely valuable for us to try and understand what they are actually trying to tell us.



Figure 3. Yukultiji Napangati, *Untitled* (2011)

After following the trajectory of my Dad's business, I present an overview of imaginative alternatives that have already started to take shape, switching the perspective from one of subjugation, to empowerment and coexistence with the more than human world.

To finish, I comment on a thesis well understood by the indigenous communities which presents a radical, explanation for why the West have become so mis-aligned with themselves and their environment. It involves an exploration within and beyond the material world, into the human psyche; and acts as a short introduction for what is explored further in my final project 'What Lies Beneath'.

I have been overwhelmed by the complexity that underpins this subject; and have found it equally difficult to deeply understand, extract; and then piece back together parts of an infinite amount of research, knowledge and speculation.

However, I hope that the parts of history, philosophies and ideas that I have chosen to touch upon, shapes out a vast immaterial landscape which leaves space for readers to map out their own paths of thought and navigation.





Figure 4. John Dobson (c.1980).

“

How have we ended up with a global food system where you have massive food producers who are feeding the world; but have shrugged off the responsibilities of looking after the ecologies of where they grow their produce, the people that grow the produce for them; and the welfare of the people that eat their food?

(Drain, 2019)

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## CONTEXT

The farming business has been in the family for seven generations and has grown from a 25-acre cereal farm in the 18th century to a 3,000-acre cereal vegetable business with a small-scale Farm Shop.

My Father has invested his life into finding new ways to adapt to the immense pressures posed upon farming from the supermarkets, consumer demand, and climate.

I have witnessed the strain it has put upon not only him, but the family as a whole.

---

Many cultures across the world see food as our most intimate connection with the land. What we eat literally becomes a part of us; and then when we die, we become the land.

If we don't care for those who care for the land to produce our food which cares for us, we have further separated ourselves from ourselves.

It is important to be reminded of this simple serendipity, but unfortunately, at the global scale, it loses its resonance as it describes a hugely complex system incomprehensible at the scale of the individual.

The industrial revolutions, according to Jeremy Rifkin (VICE, 2018), were born out of three main technological revolutions of which concerned communication, mobility and energy. These revolutions allowed for a surge of job opportunities along with the transportation for employees to travel to them, therefore drawing people from their rural homes into the cities.

This went hand in hand to serve the growing 'supermarket' culture of the 1950s.

As technologies advanced to ease the storage, packaging and food distribution processes, it displaced both the people and produce from their original rural habitat into the expanding city.

This distance is something that Helena Norbery Hodge (TEDX, 2011) comments in her work as 'long distance drone economy'.

She asks the question of how can we be ethical when we can't see our impact?

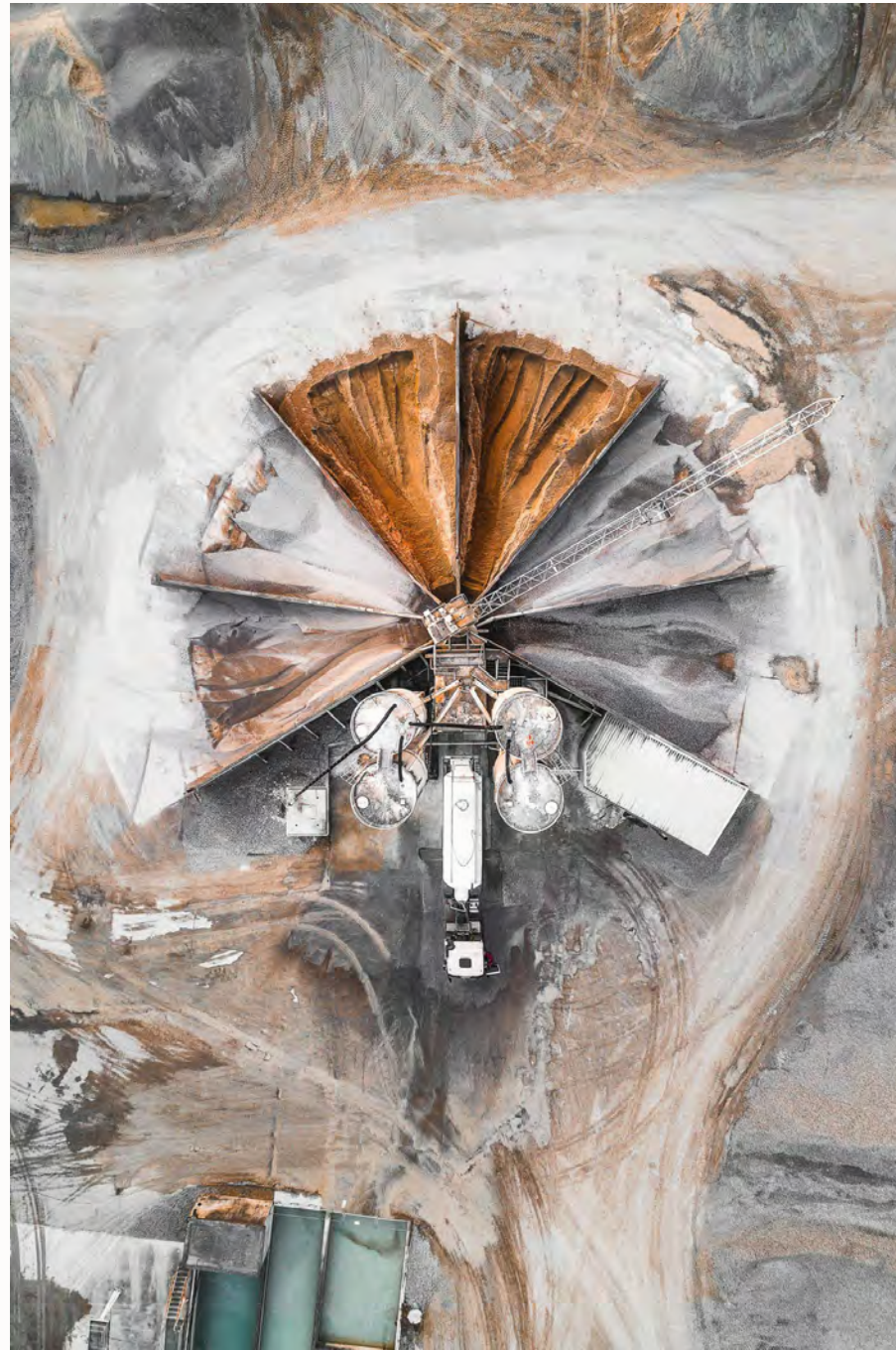


Figure 5. Tom Hegen, *The Quarry Series* (2016) showing open pit mining in Germany for the huge amount of raw materials needed to construct growing cities and infrastructure.

“

How can we be ethical, when we can't see our impact?

Helena Norbery Hodge (TEDX, 2011)

---

## INDETERMANCY

In the past couple of years, my Father has had to make some hard decisions about the future of the business; and recently chose to let the vegetable farming part go, focusing on cereal farming, and the farm shop.

It was a sensical move financially, driven by the traditional profit incentive. But unfortunately, the productive gains are

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“

There's no profit in preventing.

Noam Chomsky (País, 2020)

Under our current society, incentive is driven by the desire for profit; and as Kate Raworth (Academy, 2018) eloquently points out, the addiction to growth is rooted at the heart of political and financial systems. She sees the archetype of the 21st Century man as the 'Rational Economic Man', with money in his hand, a calculator in his head, ego in his heart and nature at his feet.

Raworth sees the new urban challenge as 'to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet'; and proposes a new system of economics which she coins as 'Doughnut Economics', where there is a transferral of values from wealth to health which doesn't relate to only the health of the human being, but the health of the planet.

She asks why, in the economic world, do we see continual growth as an exception to the cancerous continual growth in nature's systems. In nature, things grow, grow up, and then mature.

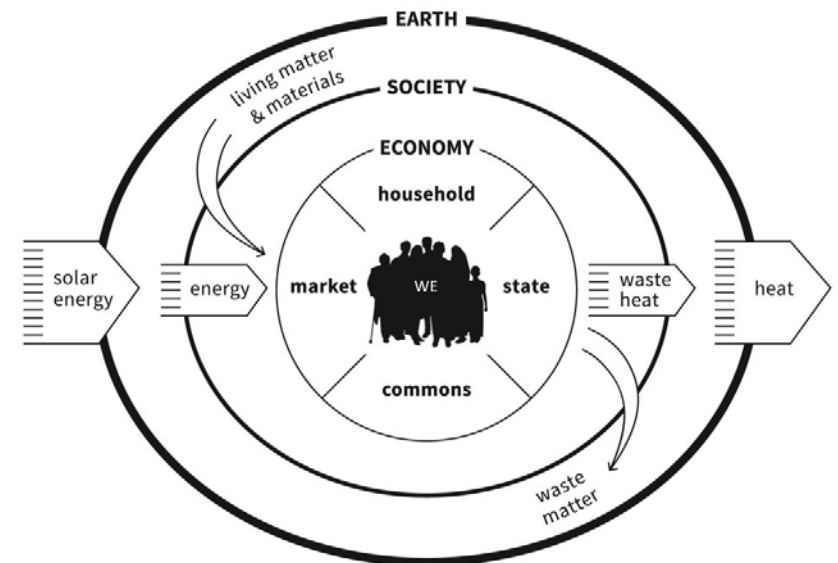


Figure 6. A diagram of Doughnut Economics. Courtesy of Kate Raworth.



calculator



money

ego

nature

'Rational Economic Man'

Figure 7. William Blake, known as *Glad Day* or *The Dance of Albion* (c.1794) seen to symbolise England's political awakening and liberty. Adapted by me to represent Ranworth's idea of the Rational Economic Man.

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## INDETERMANCY

All throughout my Father's career, he has adapted the business model to keep up with the rapid changes in technology and retail. He grew the farm from cereal, to cereal and vegetable; and adopted new farming techniques that promised a higher yield. This included the use of GMOs, pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers.

I remember my delight in not smelling the stench of slurry circulating the house; and in turn, watching the sprayers move up and down the fields, mesmerised by their size and ingenuity.

---



Figure 8.  
Tractor boom  
sprayer

Capitalism and the free market created huge opportunity for innovation and rapid economic growth, which undoubtedly created the conditions for humanity to thrive. But unfortunately, over time these innovative techniques and growth incentives started to prove detrimental on the fate of agriculture and our environment, driving both the agricultural class and certain ecosystems to near extinction.



Figure 9.  
Citra Sasmita  
*ab initio, ab  
aeterno* (2016)

In 1837 John Deere invented the steel plow (The Original Steel Plow, n.d.) which replaced the previous wooden plow. The properties of steel allowed the soil to be broken down much easier, aiding the control of pests and cultivation of crops.

Marked as a positive turning point in agricultural innovation, it allowed for the increase of efficiency and productivity at an industrial scale, catering to feed the ever-increasing population. However, it has been said that initially, many farmers had resisted the move away from labour intensive to 'traditional' techniques as they had suspicions of these tools poisoning the soil (Isaacson, 2018).

It was like their unbounded wisdom and connection to the land gave them the power of pre-cognition.





Figure 10. Käthe Kollwitz, *Hunger* (1923)

“  
The First World War left many German's starving; and the Fritz Haber process - of which was originally invented as the recipe for ammunitions and poison gas - was introduced into agriculture, creating a fertiliser that dramatically increased crop yields and cemented chemical fertilisers as the foundation of modern agriculture.



Figure 11. Fritz Haber (Source: Synapses)(n.d.)

(Montgomery & Biklé, 2016)



Figure 12. Monsanto Graph' in Abode of Chaos by Thierry Ehrmann, Saint Romain en Mont d'Or, France. Photo: Urban Scraper via Flickr (CC BY-NC).

In 1974, another chemical was added to the cocktail as an herbicide, termed Glyphosate or Roundup. This chemical started to be sprayed directly onto monocrop cultures, like wheat and soybean; and there is claimed evidence to suggest a link between this and gluten sensitivity (Samsel & Seneff, 2013).

Its water-soluble properties give it the ability to pollute both water and air, and therefore affects not only humans, but all other forms of life. Through polluted rainfall, it indirectly affects other crops including those grown 'organically', albeit in a much-diluted concentration.

To stop the herbicide killing the crop itself, the technology of genetically modifying crops to render them Roundup Ready<sup>1</sup> was invented and in 1996 introduced into commercial production. GMOs have always been a subject of great debate.

The ingenious technology was undeniably a great feat in terms of producing yield, but as pointed out in the work of physician Zach Busch MD (Roll, 2018), it is important to question its longevity and impact on a wider scale, and indeed, the core incentives of the corporations behind them.

<sup>1</sup> 'Roundup Ready' is the Monsanto trademark for its patented line of genetically modified crop seeds that are resistant to its glyphosate-based herbicide, Roundup.





Figure 13. Drawing by me, *The First Microscope* (2020)

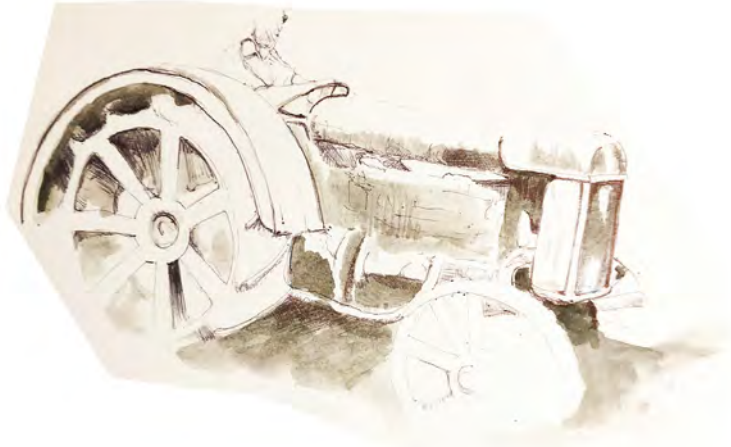


Figure 14. Drawing by me, *To Tanks* (2020)

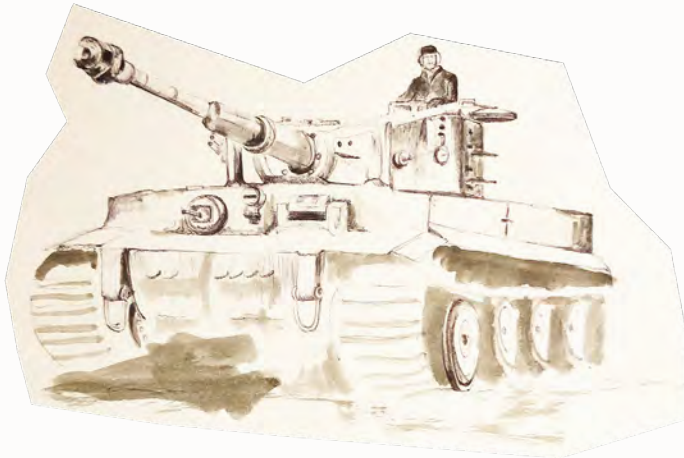


Figure 15. Drawing by me, *From Tractors* (2020)

“

In seeds are powerful creative, generative forces, and they are being manipulated by companies with roots in warfare.

(Canape, 2019-2020)

Dr Zach Bush (Roll, 2018) sees chemical inputs in agriculture as having a detrimental impact on soil fertility by depleting its microbiome.

As early as 1905, mycologist Sir Albert Howard began researching into how microbes in the soil affected human health; and the importance of the microbiome has once again received popular interest in recent years (Montgomery & Biklé, *War on the Soil*, 2016).

With the arrival of rapid, less expensive sequencing tools, discoveries into just how much microorganisms play a part in the functioning of life, is becoming increasingly more apparent. The evidence provided suggests that we become more resilient with a diverse microbiome, as it plays a huge part in cell communication and functioning (Lozupone, Stombaugh, Gordon, Jansson, & Knight, 2013).

Alongside the chemical inputs on the land itself, sanitation, medication and diet are held accountable for the further depletion of the microbiome. Furthermore, they could be perpetuating ill health by temporarily dealing with the symptoms rather than targeting the root cause, effectively weakening the immune system and therefore rendering it more susceptible to future disease.



Figure 16. Drawing by me, *A Handful* (2020)

At the cellular level, functional similarities have been seen between the gut and soil rhizosphere which further adds to the theory that soil health and human health are inextricably linked (Montgomery & Biklé, *Inner Nature*, 2016).

“

Not only is the human body 90% microbial, but there are more bacteria in a handful of fertile soil than number of inhabitants in China, Africa and India put together.

(Montgomery & Biklé, *The Hidden Half of Nature*, 2016, p. 25)

“

Even the biblical story of Eve and Adam poetically recognises the dual unity of life and soil - the name Eve is derived from hava, life, and Adam is derived from adamah, soil.

(Montgomery & Biklé, *The Hidden Half of Nature*, 2016, p. 67)

In 1936, following the Dust Bowl, Franklin Roosevelt spoke out about the importance of soil when signing the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (Peters & Woolley, 1936), claiming that the history of every nation is eventually written in the way it cares for its soil.

He also added that “a nation who destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.”



Figure 17. Arthur Rothstein, *Fleeing a Dust Storm* (1936)



## INDETERMANCY

When yield had plateaued, yet consumer demands were higher and seemingly more unattainable, another problem arose - waste.

There was an ever-increasing desire for the aesthetically perfect vegetable. Colour, size, shape, smell all played a part; and if the produce didn't fit the bill, then it would be rejected for sale, leaving it redundant with no place to go except the bin.

My Father found another use for these rejects and invested in soup and pre-prepared vegetable businesses. Produce that was destined for the bin, instead, was either sent to the warehouse to be chopped up and sold as pre-prepared veg.; or would be sent to the soup factory.



Figure 18. Photographer unknown, *the Good Soup Company* packaging (2014)



Figure 19. Photographer unknown, *Pre-prepped veg. from Green Field Produce* (n.d.)



Figure 20. Photography by me, *Food for thought* (2020)

“

8.4 million people are struggling to afford to eat in the UK, but 250,000 tonnes of the food that goes to waste each year is still edible, which is enough for 650 million meals [....] And on a global scale it's even more promising, as we could feed all of the world's 815 million chronically hungry people by saving just half of global food waste.

(Yuan & Drain, p. 3)



Statistics suggest that the highest volume of waste is not domestic, but commercial (Edler n.d.); and as environmentalist Ed Gillespie claims (TedX, 2015), we have a food production and distribution problem, in a world of abundance. He adds that the food that is wasted has a vast number of resources embedded in it including water, energy, chemicals and human labour.

Gillespie also makes the suggestion that we have become obsessed with novelty and that there might be a problem with the label 'consumer' which automatically makes us self-interested, therefore less interested in what is involved before or after we purchase it.

Could we be more mindful about how our food choices affect our world surrounding us?

In the commercial sector, there have been conscious steps towards more sustainable systems, and Silo in London, have claimed to be the 'World's first zero waste restaurants [...] who demonstrates that sustainable businesses are financially viable.' (Story, n.d.)

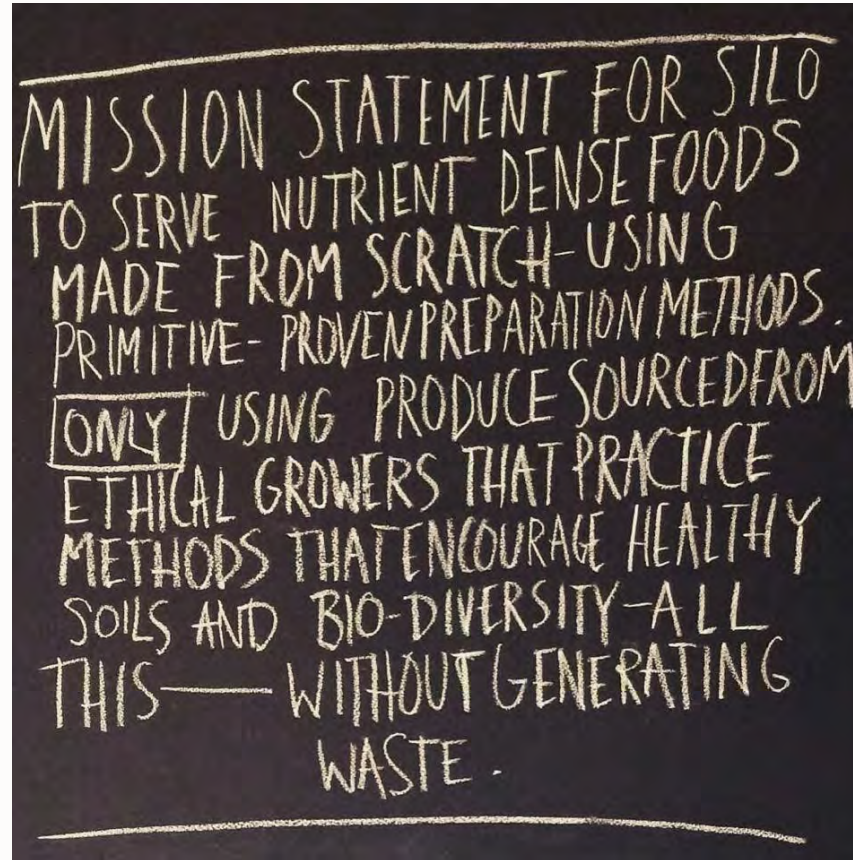


Figure 21. Photo of Restaurant Blackboard in Silo, London (source: unknown)

“

[Waste] is a persistent weed within our food system. Its roots are plentiful: issues with logistics, habits, politics and failures of imagination all render the edible inedible.

But as Natsai Chieza reminds us, a weed is merely a plant out of place.

(Yuan & Drain, p. 3)



Figure 22. Photo of The Rhubarb Triangle Farm Shop, Rothwell

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## INDETERMANCY

In 2012, my Father added another arm to the business - a farm shop - renovating on-site sheds that were originally used by his father to grow forced rhubarb but became unsuitable for modern-day agriculture. This gave him an opportunity, first-hand, to witness the difference between farm-shop customers and supermarket customers and the trends that continually affected them.

When the Horse Meat Scandal hit in 2013, sales showed that customers changed their preference from supermarket convenience to farm shop quality, without too much of a concern for the additional expense. However, as the time passed, the scandal was gradually forgotten, and customers slipped back into their old habits of valuing convenience over quality.

More recently, with the COVID19 pandemic, he witnessed history repeat itself.

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Figure 22. Dan Kitwood, *Covid queues London* (2020)



A positive aspect of the free market in terms of building an alternative future lies in consumer sovereignty, in that we have the power to change the supply through our demand.

Events that have had a direct effect ethically or on our health have rapidly shifted our consumer habits, but this new habit is short-lived; and by the rapid nature it was born, people quickly return back to old ways - ways which involve less effort in thought, time and energy.

Could there be a deeper understanding of why and how these events occur in the first place?



Figure 23. Screenshot taken from the Documentary Series by Adam Curtis, *I just can't get you out of my head* (2020)

“

The arduous journey to understand the complex connections between food and farming is not transparent to every consumer.

(Canape, 2019-2020, p. 119)

After WWII, women continued in their pursuit for professional careers; and there was a shift of roles from 'housewife' to 'professional female' ("Just Add an Egg" Sigmund Freud's contribution to Human Centered Design, 2019). Less time was dedicated to sourcing, buying and preparing food and as a result, there was an influx of food products geared towards convenience.

'Mummified' food was born; so separated from its natural state and seasonality, it almost became unrecognisable. This artificial representation - aside from lacking in nutrient density and integrity - was perfectly formed, brilliant in colour, irresistibly tasty, easy to prepare, clean and eye-catchingly wrapped.



Clever marketing techniques were also introduced, which were thought to have been first introduced by a nephew of Sigmund Freud, Edward Bernays.

Bernays used his Uncle's theories to develop the field of Public Relations in which the minds of the public could be manipulated via their unconscious into wanting a certain product. He termed this 'engineering consent'.

(Gunderman, 2015)



Figure 25. Max Ernst, *Celebes* (1921)

How can fresh food producers be expected to thrive in a market that is dominated by these psychoanalysed foods that are cheaper, faster and tastier?

Architect Indy Johar (Johnston, 2021) recognises these products as 'emotional goods' which effectively patch up the vulnerabilities of society which are driven by our economic environment through its promotion of precariousness.

Figure 24. Taken from Betty Crocker poster (c. 1950)



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## INDETERMANCY

Things were not getting any easier, and in 2018 there were some important decisions had to be made.

Contracts with supermarkets were becoming increasingly harder to maintain; the dependencies on expensive chemical inputs were increasing; the depleted soils were close to infertility; EU regulations were being adapted for Brexit.

The list could go on.

---



Figure 26. Banksy, *Brexit* (2019). Dover, UK

---

My Father had to diversify his income once again, taking advice from his accountants, he acted on the following.

Unable to compete with the newly launched supermarket own-brand soups, the soup company was made redundant. The vegetable farmland was sold, rented or converted into bean crops or monocrops for biofuel.

Wasteland, or near infertile land was sold to developers.

---



“

The food system we have now is centralised, globalised, and profit orientated. This system maintains the highly extractive value chain of industries that are causing environmental ruin as well as the decline in human health due to massive use of chemicals in the form of pesticides in spraying crops and as additives and preservatives in processed food.

(Canape, 2019-2020, p. 119)

The centralisation of the food industry has transferred the power directly from the producers into the hands of the supermarkets and chemical companies, leaving farmers contractually beholden to them and unable to see a way out.

The recent farmer uprisings in India over the Farm Bill represents the same narrative of disempowerment by which tech companies are trying to integrate millions of farmers into a vast, centrally controlled network. Through this network, the farmers will have access to real-time data constituting an in-depth analysis on the conditions of their land (GRAIN, 2021).

Comedian and activist Russell Brand (Brand, 2021) points out that the deeper problem lies in the fact that the culture of these independent farmers is being decimated and destroyed to afford the space for big tech corporations to enter and centralise power and therefore control it. These are big, profit-driven organisations who traditionally are not seen to have the interests of the people at heart.

Indy Johar (Johnston, 2021) sees a general problem in that we are still deploying styles of management bought from the 19th century industrial society, where one person perceives that they can understand all the situational reality of another person to give control decisions. He adds to his thesis that the contracts, of which are a fundamental part of labour, are in fact a modern form of slavery, where one becomes subject to control and ownership.



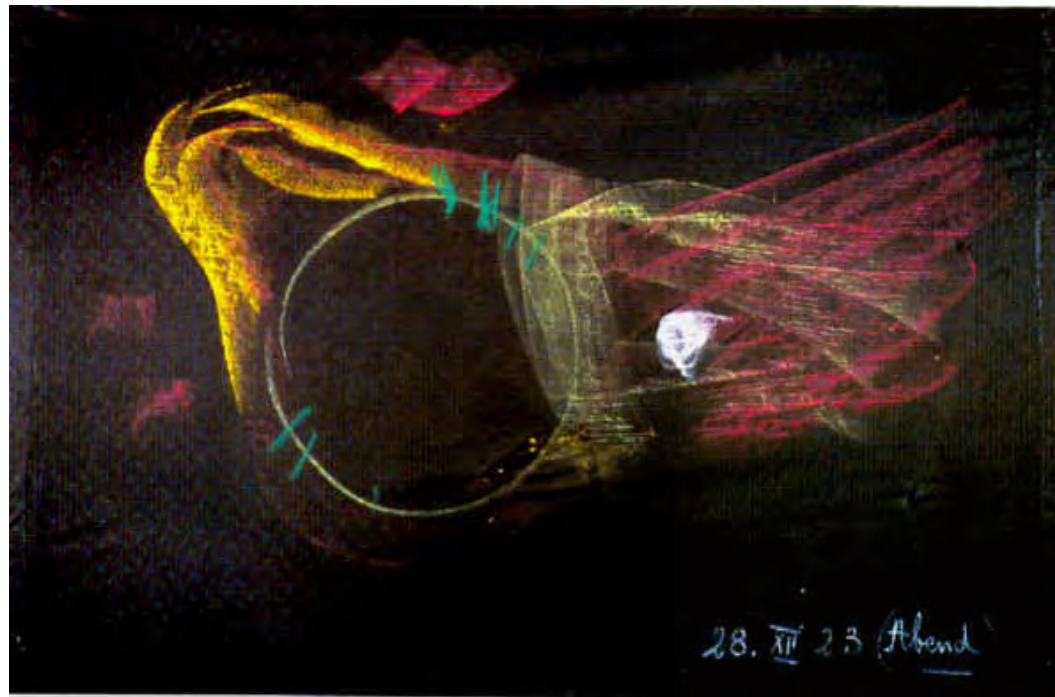
Figure 27. Photography by Prashanth Vishwanathan (n.d.). India

The disempowerment of farmers has led to many selling their assets, becoming bankrupt, or even worse, committing suicide.

As previously mentioned, it was almost as though farmers had an inert feeling that since the advent of mechanical labour, the land would be poisoned<sup>1</sup>. Fast-forward nearly two-hundred years later, we would literally see this poison taking its effect on the world as a whole.



Figure 28.  
Rudolf Steiner,  
one of many  
*Black Board*  
*drawings* -  
drawn essentially  
as visual  
accompaniments  
to some five  
thousand  
lectures given  
during his life  
time many at his  
Goetheanums,  
on all aspects of  
Anthroposophy  
including but  
not limited to;  
spiritual science,  
biodynamic  
agriculture,  
architecture,  
drama, eurythmy,  
medicine,  
philosophy,  
religion and  
mysticism.  
(c. 1908-1925)



In the late 19th century, Rudolph Steiner and Lady Eve Balfour were amongst the first to see holistic agricultural techniques as imperative to sustaining human and planetary health (Montgomery & Biklé, *The Hidden Half of Nature*, 2016, p. 226). Recently, there has been a resurgence of these traditional techniques, which invest in a long-term business model that puts the health of the soil as primary concern.

Regenerative farming, permaculture and biodynamic farming are some of the methods that sit within this approach.



Figure 29.  
Photo taken  
from the book  
*Miraculous*  
*Abundance* by  
Hervé-Gruyer &  
Hervé-Gruyer  
(2016)

The book '*Miraculous Abundance*' (Hervé-Gruyer & Hervé-Gruyer, 2016) offers an inspiring blueprint on alternative ways of farming based around holistic practices.

They recognise the associations farmers make when imagining the transition from industrial to small-scale as stressful and depriving; but see these emotions as only mere perception within the concepts and systems in which we live by today. They admit that their prior professional experience had been 'sponsors' of this endeavour and they were completely dependent upon this for the first few years.



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## INDETERMANCY

Despite recommendations from financial advisers to relinquish the farm shop, my Father kept it alive. But it serves another purpose, driven by a different incentive other than just profit.

It's as an expression of my Father's creativity, allowing him acting as a real interface between urban life and the natural world.

A gift to himself, his workers and the local community, it keeps him grounded, inspired and empowered.

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Figure 30. Photo taken by Tony Johnson for press piece *The Yorkshire Post* (2017).

“

I believe strongly that farms should revert to growing crops to feed their own livestock to then fertilise the land and in turn, grow crops for human consumption.

‘Mixed’ animal and crop farming is the sustainable way we should be following. But the price of food will have to go up... that is the inevitable of the above and the more environmentally sensitive farming practises. I think the worldwide cost of food should go up 20% to make farms less intensive.

Grow and produce only what your land will produce, don't try and force the land.

(Dobson, 2020)

My Father is fortunate that the assets he has aside from the farm shop can act as its sponsors; and it is only for this reason that he is able to continue within today's context.

He recognises the need for a transition to regenerative farming or more holistic practices; but also recognises the huge input of money, re-training, time and energy needed to do this.

For large industrial farming businesses, the vast input of resources needed to make a transition without support from the government seems pretty unattainable. However, for the smaller scale businesses, organisations and communities the prospect becomes more plausible.

Environmentalism Rob Hopkins is a co-founder of the Transition Network and began Totnes Transition Town - the first transition group in the Transition movement which now exists in fifty countries and in thousands of communities (Hopkins, n.d.).

The transition network website itself offers a guide in multiple languages on how to start and develop a transition group; and from that, a variety of transition groups have emerged from different cultures who all serve to reclaim the economy, spark entrepreneurship, re-imagine work and re-skill themselves, weaving webs of connection and support.

In Hopkin's book (Hopkins, From What Is To What If: Unleashing the Power of Imagination to Create the Future We Want, 2019), he presents and celebrates the abundance of resources, communities, organisations and businesses that have already taken that leap of faith to break away from the centralised systems that previously had not been serving them. They have reclaimed their agency in imagining, creating and building projects of their own.

Hopkin's book and work in general, offers an extremely refreshing example of how we can make a change; and provides us with the courage we need to move forward both individually and collectively.

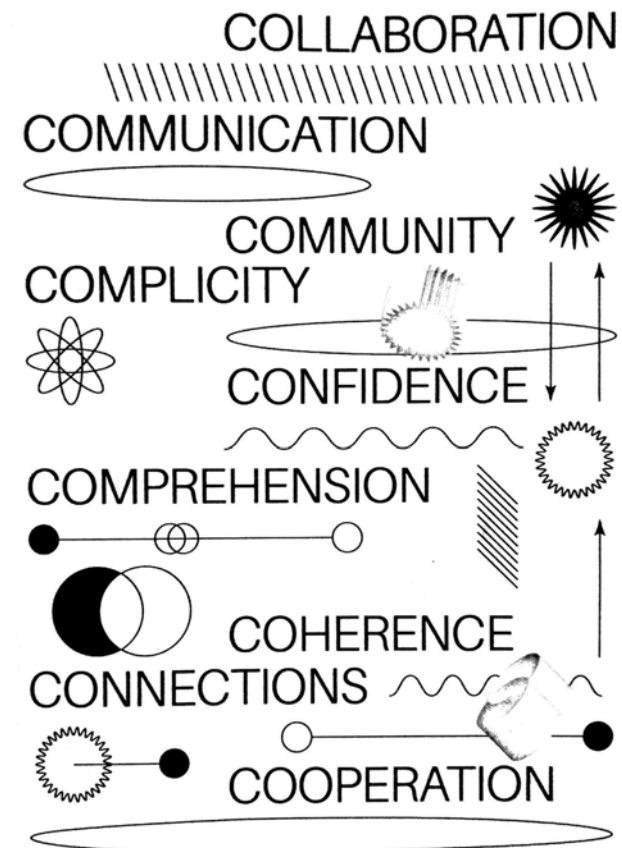


Figure 31. Vincenzo Marcone, *Rules for Existence* (2020)

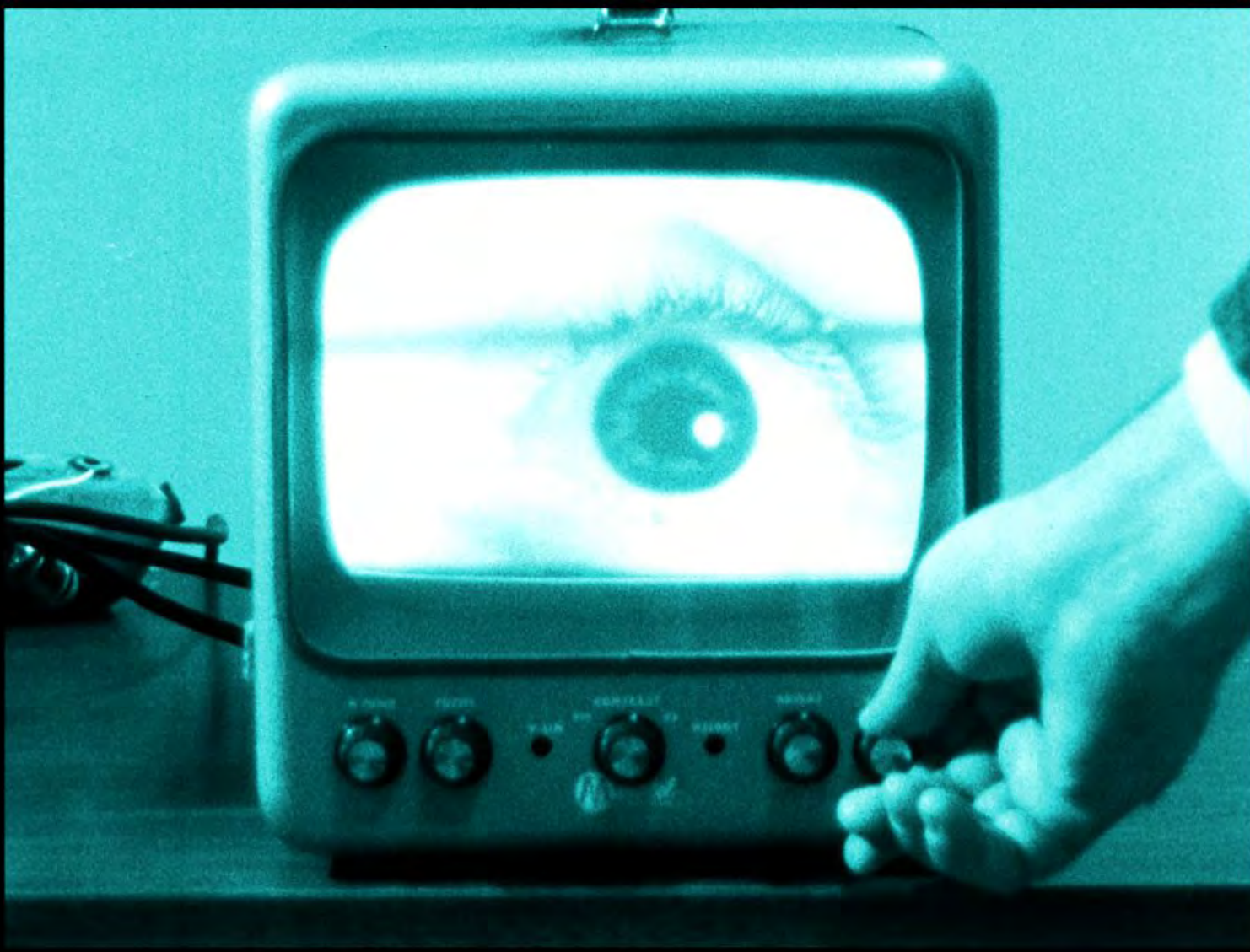


Figure 32 Stjin Jonckheere, *Rule No.1.* (2020)

TIME FOR THE  
ALTERNATIVES



Figure 33.  
Screenshot  
taken from the  
Documentary  
Series by  
Adam Curtis,  
*I just can't get  
you out of my  
head* (2020)



Once we are able to switch off the from the media frenzy and nihilistic views on the end of the world, we can begin to open our eyes to the abundance of ideas and opportunity that surrounds us.

Film-maker Adam Curtis in his latest documentary series 'I Just Can't Get You Out of My Head' (Curtis, 2021) questions the actual power of marketing and advertising and suggests that we may have just lost confidence in our resilience. He reminds us of activist David Graeber's quote,

“

The ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we made and could just as easily make differently.

(Graeber, 2015)

A look towards lost, ignored or overlooked traditions is embodied in the research and work of Julia Watson. It highlights the incredibly intricate and resilient systems built by indigenous peoples that deeply understand and sit in alignment with the natural cycles of the earth.

Fourth industrial revolution techniques which involve only the advanced digital technologies like hydroponics, vertical farming, and precision farming have attracted some concern.

These newer methods are of course highly innovative, but still share the same destructive incentives of extraction, growth and yield. Solutions to ecological damage, waste, equality, resilience and employment are not evident in their philosophy and therefore poses the question of whether they continue to perpetuate the crisis we face and seek to eradicate today.

Watson sees incredible value in the marrying of technological ecological knowledge with the innovative technologies of late, to create long term and resilient solutions the systems that currently seem to be failing us.

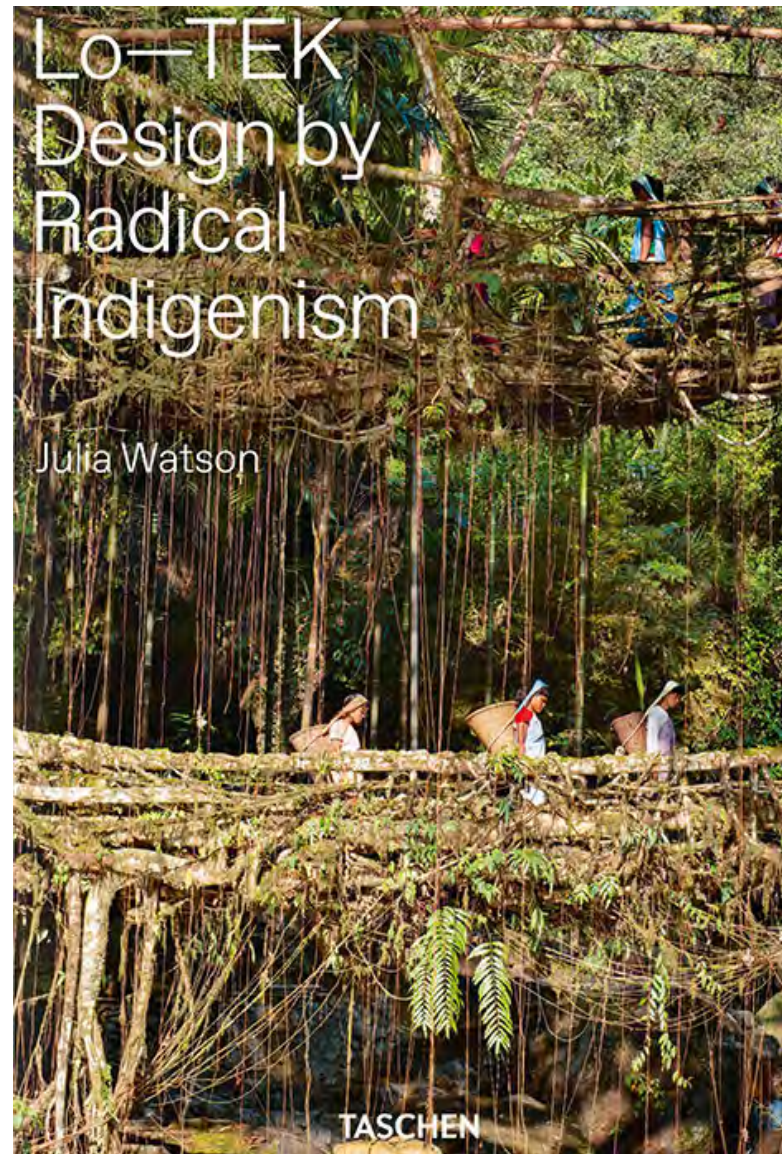


Figure 33. Book cover of *Lo-Tek Design by Radical Indigenism* Julia Watson (2019)

“

Tradition is nothing but  
successful innovation.

(Watson, 2019)



## CREATIVITY

Creative practices are diversifying their teams, and collaborating with people from a multitude of disciplines across art, food, science, philosophy, education, community, architecture; to produce new and compelling ideas for projects. Its members are beginning to label themselves something other than a 'designer'. Seetal Solanki calls herself a 'translator', whilst Studio Ossidiana prefer themselves as 'gardeners' rather than architects; and others label themselves 'practitioners'.

These alternative creative infrastructures have something much more than just design or the finessing of aesthetics at their disposition. They are reinventing ways in which we live with things.

“

Creatives have to challenge the orthodoxy of the vision and relationship we have with things.

(Academy, 2018)



Figure 34. The Climavore project by studio Cooking Sections, London, is a long term project which consists of a series of site-specific interventions that invite guests to come together and explore the relationships between humans and their environment through the medium of food.



Figure 35. Studio Ossidiana, Italy, is a studio that focuses on the more-than-human design. They create beautiful yet functional pieces for the co-habitation of different species and challenge our current thesis of experiencing and living with the non-human.



Figure 36. Seetal Solanki creates learning spaces that provide people with playful and accessible ways of thinking. She questions the role of the designer and re-frames relationships we as humans have with both the material and immaterial worlds.



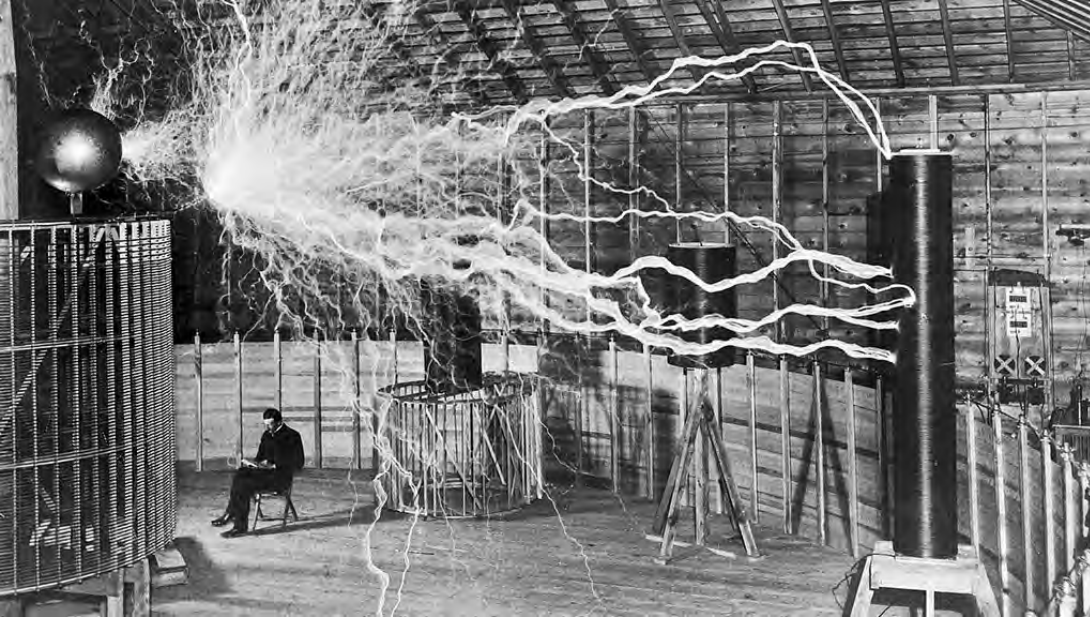


Figure 37. Nikola Tesla reading by the light of a Tesla coil, Courtesy of D.v.alley Wellcome Collection

“

Whether at the biological level or the quantum level, the science is telling us that we are deeply entangled with our world around us.

We have to co-habit this landscape. In recognising our relationship with things, rather than being consumers or users of things, we become stewards. This then extends to the relationship with ourselves and the relationship with society around us.

(Johnston, 2021)

‘Free’ energy, originally dreamed up by inventor Nikola Tesla, is created by the mimicking of natural patterns of atoms, producing an immaterial, infinite, non-pollutant form of energy.

Although now labelled a conspiracy theory, there are many engineers that are rumoured to have made breakthroughs in the production and application of this type of power (Gamble & Gamble, 2020).

The introduction of this type of technology into the market would dismantle pretty much everything we know to be true in our material world as it would de-commodify energy and therefore cut out the energy sector who are seen to be one of the main controllers of our current systems.

## ENERGY

A strong element of spirituality has been introduced to the political stage through the 2020 Presidential campaign of activist Marianne Williamson<sup>1</sup>.

Williamson concerned her campaign with finding explanations for ‘bigger’ questions which traditionally have not earned a place in politics as they are ritualised into places that are thought to be ‘sacred’ or easily dismissed.

In an attempt to resurrect science from its remoteness, Dr Zach Bush has been drawing in deeper questions about meaning and truth into the sphere. His recent work has been devoted to educating the public in realising the importance of environmental health and how it directly impacts human health.

## SCIENCE, POLITICS, EDUCATION

Guardian columnist George Monbiot has posed ideas on re-wilding in his book ‘Feral’<sup>2</sup> which very evocatively explores the ways in which we can positively re-engage with our environment, whilst introducing the idea of entanglement humans have with other life-forms.

Filmmaker and actor David Gameau, known for his role in ‘That Sugar Film’, has recently released his documentary ‘2040’<sup>3</sup> which is a refreshingly hopeful and imaginative look at climate change and the potential that already surrounds us for change.

The independent podcasting culture has become a worldwide phenomenon, providing the public with non-censored, informative discussions, debates and interviews on a plethora of topics.

It gives people a change to inform and educate themselves on subjects outside of the mainstream media or education systems.



Figure 38. René-Antoine Houasse, *Apollo et Daphne* (1677)

1

See (Williamson, 2020)

2

See (Monbiot, 2014)

3

See (Gameau, 2019)

“

It's delicate confronting  
these priests of the golden  
bull  
They preach from the pulpit  
of the bottom line  
Their minds rustle with  
million dollar bills  
You say Silver burns a hole  
in your pocket  
And Gold burns a hole in your  
soul  
Well, uranium burns a hole in  
forever  
It just gets out of control

(Sainte-Marie, 1992)

The birth of the world. Before the Age of Stories.



Figure 39.  
Marjetica  
Potrc, *The  
World in the  
Age of Stories*  
No.1 (2020)

The Age of Stories: Humans in a Barrenness head. The Imaginary, the Real, the Symbolic, all together. People live in coexistence with all living matter.



Figure 40.  
Marjetica  
Potrc, *The  
World in the  
Age of Stories*  
No.2 (2020)

The Barrenness head is reimagined. Earth, wind, water, and light, coming from the departing element, new land and gather. Pattern is a sign of life.



Figure 41.  
Marjetica  
Potrc, *The  
World in the  
Age of Stories*  
No.3 (2020)





Figure 42. Judy Natal, *Future Portrait, Steam Portrait Woman In White* (2020)

Albeit only briefly summarised, it is completely evident that promising transitions have already begun, in a wide variety of sectors, to rebuild and regenerate alternative futures.

I would like to finish, however, with a more radical alternative which requires a look beyond the material world in which we currently interpret and operate in; one that could hold the key to unlocking real processes of change.

It involves a thesis long well-known amongst the indigenous people that Western society has been infected by a mental virus that thrives in conditions of a disassociation from the whole.

In the song “The priests of the Golden Bull” by singer song-writer Buffy Sainte-Marie, the lyrics are interspersed with the word ‘Wendigo’, translated from the term ‘Wetiko’. Wetiko is seen as a cannibalistic spirit that is driven by greed, excess and selfish consumption; and operates on multiple dimensions - intra-personally, interpersonally and collectively (Levy, 2011).

In Paul Levy’s book (Levy, *Dispelling Wetiko: Breaking the Curse of Evil*, 2013), he comments that modern civilisation suffers from the overly one-sided dominance of the rational, intellectual mind, a one-sidedness that seemingly disconnects us from nature and from ourselves; and that the global economic system which we have constructed is a symbol of the out-of-control Wetiko disease ‘in business’.

## WETIKO

Wetiko’s properties of viscosity whereby its non-locality means it is everywhere and nowhere reminds me of Timothy Morton’s work on ‘Hyperobjects’ (Morton, 2013) where just by trying to get away or resist it, only spreads and feeds it, or submerses you deeper within it.

Put in this way, it is a terrifying concept, however, if we see it in the way that Morton proposes the end of the world has already happened, such that we accept Wetiko is, and will always be, a part of us and our environment, we can relieve ourselves of the terror and relinquish the relationship to ourselves and non-humans.



Could the separation between the land, farming and societies be both a symptom and proliferation of this Wetiko disease?



Figure 43. Judy Natal, *Future Portrait, Tomato Greenhouse* (2020)

Whether it to be a virus, or something else, its simplicity in being just one thing that has the potential to affect everything; to which nothing has immunity, gives some perspective. It leaves nobody and nothing accountable, yet everyone and everything accountable at the same time; and the only method by which we can suppress its effects is through recognising it, accepting it and coexisting with it.

It resonates with Karl Jung's archetypal shadow theory that has greatly informed the concept for my final project 'What Lies Beneath?' - a spatial experience composed to re-establish connection with ourselves, each other and our environment.

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## INDETERMANCY

I had felt a sense of guilt for not wanting to take over the business, but on reflection, I can recognise why I didn't see it as an option. At school, we never learned about agriculture - geography, photosynthesis, and the digestion of a cow was as close as it got; and nor was farming presented to us as a viable career path.

Upon asking why he didn't take me to work with him to try and inspire some interest, his reply was that I was too busy with other things and he didn't want to interfere. Maybe this was true, but maybe a part of it stemmed from the fact that he didn't wish the stress upon me; maybe he didn't see longevity in farming; or maybe he thought I was destined for other things.

---

I was reluctant to end this piece with a tone of cynicism when all the subjects relating to our environment and human health seem to be laden with pessimism.

It is unfortunate that we live in a system which constantly attempts to inflate our feelings into a state of anxiety.  
It is equally unfortunate that a lot of ideas posed to us, use political tools to drive individual agenda.

For these reasons, I have tried my best to stay apolitical; and refrained from including any statistical evidence that could be mis-leading.

Although we do seem to be living in a state of separation and polarisation, where we deny, defy and blame each other for which we are all a part of, it is a complete necessity to express and acknowledge any conflicting ideas or interests.

It is in our ability to develop inner-faculties which enable us to hold these conflicting positions at the same time; and surrender any previous 'knowledge' that will ultimately help us to realise our full potential, both individually and collectively.

“

We will re-become farmers.

(Desbrosses, 2014)



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## **UREC 1 RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW FOR STUDENT RESEARCH WITH NO HUMAN PARTICIPANTS OR DIRECT COLLECTION OF HUMAN TISSUES, OR BODILY FLUIDS.**

All University research is required to undergo ethical scrutiny to comply with UK law. The SHU [Research Ethics Policy](#) should be consulted before completing the form. Answering the questions below will confirm that the study fits this category and that any necessary approvals or safety risk assessments are in place. The supervisor will approve the study, but it may also be reviewed by the College Teaching Programme Research Ethics Committee (CTPREC) as part of the quality assurance process.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), for keeping data secure and if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption and research data management. Information on the [ethics website](#)

The form also enables the University and College to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

The form may be completed by the student and the supervisor and/or module leader (as applicable). In all cases, it should be counter-signed by the supervisor and/or module leader, and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in the appendices of their research projects, and a copy should be uploaded to the module Blackboard site for checking.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Safety Co-ordinator.

### **1. General Details**

Name of student	<i>OLIVIA DOBSON</i>
SHU email address	B8036011@MY.SHU.AC.UK
Course or qualification (student)	Interior Architecture and Design BA
Name of supervisor	Tony Broomhead
email address	t.broomhead@shu.ac.uk
Title of proposed research	<i>AGRICULTURE, THE PLANET AND US</i>
Proposed start date	Oct 2020
Proposed end date	May 2021
Brief outline of research to include, rationale & aims (250-500 words).	<i>In the modern Western world, the relationship between the human and non-human environment seems to be one of separation and dominion. However, it is uncannily evident that this relationship runs</i>

	<p>much deeper than what is believed, and in fact, human health and planetary health exist interdependently.</p> <p>I find these relationships extremely fascinating and because of my family's farming background, I wondered whether the ever-growing disconnection between farming and the rest of society had a large part to play.</p> <p>If we take from Yural Havari's theory that the Agricultural Revolution was the foundation from which larger populations; and therefore, civilisations grew, (Harari, 2015) then it is no wonder that everything we as humans have constructed from there on in, is inextricably linked back to farming.</p> <p>In an aim to present my research in a simple, more fluid structure, I use the trajectory of my Father's farming business as an anecdotal thread that links a more personal experience, to events, technologies and ideas that have arisen at a wider scale.</p> <p>The business trajectory represents just how quickly agriculture has had to adapt to the rapidly shifting and evolving social, economic and environmental landscapes over the past century.</p>
--	---

I confirm that this study does not involve collecting data from human participants \_\_X

## 2. Research in Organisations

Question	Yes/No
1. Will the research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency, etc.)?	No
2. If you answered YES to question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research? <i>If YES, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.</i>	N/A
3. If you answered NO to question 2, is it because: A. you have not yet asked B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access. <i>Note: You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.</i>	N/A

## 4. Research with Products and Artefacts



Question	Yes/No
1. Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?	Yes
2. If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain?  <i>Notes: 'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission.</li> <li>Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc.</li> </ul> <i>If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.</i>	Yes
3. If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data? <i>If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor.</i>	N/A
4. If you answered NO to question 3, is it because: A. you have not yet asked permission B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access.  <i>Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.</i>	N/A

### Adherence to SHU policy and procedures

<b>Personal statement</b>	
I can confirm that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures</li> <li>I agree to abide by its principles.</li> </ul>	
<b>Student</b>	
Name: <b>OLIVIA DOBSON</b>	Date: 03/10/20
Signature: <b>OLIVIA DOBSON</b>	
<b>Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off</b>	

I can confirm that completion of this form has confirmed that this research does not involve human participants. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received and any health and safety measures are in place.

Name: Tony Broomhead

Date: 03/10/20

Signature:



Additional Signature if required: N/A

Name:

Date:

Signature:

**Please ensure the following are included with this form if applicable, tick box to indicate:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Research proposal if prepared previously	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Any associated materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>