The planet was formed of cosmic particles.

...In the gravitational polka that shaped it.

Eventually flora and fauna appeared as part of that change-process.

And in time, that change, that process, led to us!

As we humans developed social institutions, our influence over that process came to grow.

Murray Bookchin called this 'second nature.' He explains:

Second nature contains both the danger of tearing down the biosphere and given a further development of humanity toward an ecological society, the capacity to provide an entirely new ecological dispensation.

Humans are part of nature. Through and through, while...

At the same time the planet's wider ecology is profoundly affected by our social choices based in values.
If humans play a big part in nature, why do we always seem at odds with it?

The answer lies in the things we choose to value...

...and in our responses to the challenges we face when reproducing that value.

For most of the intellectual history of the West, humanity has been placed at a remove from the ‘natural world.’

As being in conflict with our surroundings or ‘husbanding’ scarce natural resources for our own survival...

Even in the nineteenth century, with intellectuals appearing to revere nature...

...we see the invention of protected areas such as national parks as fortresses for enclosing pristine nature, dividing the ‘civilised’ world from wilderness.

When modern empires started to form, this narrative of man divided from nature became very useful...

...helping to invent and solidify prejudices necessary to the success of its endeavours.

This narrative continues to be replicated to this day, in the rhetoric and policies of leaders and decision-makers.
In spite of the fact that much current positivist science functions to reify the fallacy of a division between human-kind and nature, and for the same old reasons...*

It is still values that shape the socio-ecology of the world in which we live, even if those are the type of economic values pushed under the rule of capital.

The values of capital, in particular, replicate a number of difficult consequences, and it is clear...

...that at the margins of this capitalist socio-ecology, consequences have started to become a little unpredictable...

Perhaps even, a little...

This weirding represents the limits to seeing the world through only a very narrow aperture.

Dominant governance models, continuing to slavishly reproduce the same value structures under capital, privileging economic growth...

...can barely recognise, let alone contend with the emergent truths of the multiple crises we face.

*Same old reasons: include, but are not exclusive to: racism, sexism, classism, white supremacist prejudices, imperial mindset, liberalism, neoliberalism, conservativism, neoconservativism, best intentions, the logic of the bosses, poor imagination, and good ol' fashioned careerism.
WE SEE FROM ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS COMPOUNDED CRISIS LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE OR GLOBAL PANDEMICS, THAT A TOP-DOWN, ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH TO POLICY IS DOOMED TO FAIL. ALTHOUGH THE MOST INSULATED FROM HARM, OFTEN OFFERING...

LITTLE MORE THEN GREATER CONTROL AND TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT OVER SOCIAL LIFE AND NATURE FOR WHATEVER INSTITUTION OR INTEREST IS BACKING THE PROPOSAL. THE POLICY NARRATIVES THAT JUSTIFY THESE APPROACHES FORM A LARGE PART OF THE PROBLEM, PRIVILEGING...

FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY THAT OBSCURE THE ROOT CAUSES AND THE INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS OF A GLOBAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM ORIENTED TOWARDS GROWTH AT ALL COSTS.

BY EXCLUDING DISSENTING VOICES AND HIDING UNEVEN POWER RELATIONS, THIS POLITICS CLOSES SPACE FOR DEBATE AND CREATES POLICY LOCK-IN THAT RESEMBLE LITTLE MORE THAN A CEREMONIAL DANCE MACABRE BETWEEN BIG BUSINESS AND OUR COLLECTIVE FEMISE.

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS SUMMIT

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC AND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP.

THIS AMOUNTS TO A FORECLOSURE ON THE SOCIAL IMAGINATION, CONSTRANING POSSIBILITIES FOR PEOPLE TO ACT, CREATE AND FLOURISH IN A CHANGED AND CHANGING WORLD.

THE SO-CALLED "GLOBAL LEADERSHIP" IS NECESSARILY LIMITED TO A NARROW COURSE OF ACTION, AS IF IT WERE THE ONLY OPTION.
Leadership’s pursuit of growth, even in the face of global disaster, has led to a deepening privatization and commodification of nature, culminating in phenomena like ‘sacrifice zones’...

Human life is also ‘zoned’ in this model of extraction-fuelled growth. Children as young as four years old suffer the harsh conditions of mica mines in southern Madagascar, forsaken, sacrificed.

Value systems are a product of the human relationships and institutions that support them. Value systems therefore have just as much potentiality as there are ways to organise human society.

Governments, corporations and states are not the only way to organise and so profit. Capital and growth are not the only forms of value.

All this does is hide the fact that the ghastly future is already here, seen through a crisis in democracy, creeping fascism, inequality, locked-up landscapes and expanding enclosure.
But do people take other forms of value seriously? Do they present an alternative?

Yes!

All one has to do is look to the commons, or more specifically those commoning, where there are many emphatic empirical examples.

Commoning, the ‘doing’ of the commons, involves relationships, practices, and values by which folks create, govern, reproduce and defend resources and other forms of social wealth.

This social wealth represents things and activities that we share in common and that are best managed by those who enjoy them. It could be songs, a mangrove, public spaces, parenting...

...or simply the food on our table.
UNLIKE ‘GLOBAL LEADERS’ AND THE POLICY APPROACHES THEY ENDORSE, COMMONERS ARE RESPONDING TO THE STRUGGLES OF OUR TIME.

ORGANISING MORE ECOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT. BRINGING FORTH FUTURES IN THE PRESENT BASED ON LIVING, THINKING AND ACTING IN MULTI-SPECIES WORLDS.

THE GREATEST POTENTIAL IN COMMONING LIES IN COMMONERS’ ABILITY TO PERFORM CHANGE FROM BELOW TO BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE THAT RESPECTS COMMUNITY NEEDS AND RUNS COUNTER TO DOMINANT POWER STRUCTURES.

RESTRUCTURING WORK, MARKETS, HOUSING, CARE, PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND GOODS, ENACTING THAT OFT-DREAMT VISION OF A...

REVOLUTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

EXAMPLES OF COMMONING CAN BE DRAWN FROM AGROECOLOGY, PERMACULTURE AND FORESTRY, AIMING TO CREATE AND DEFEND NEW FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION REGIMES THAT RUN COUNTER TO MARKET VALUES.

COMMONING PRODUCES POWERFUL, VALUE-DRIVEN COUNTER NARRATIVES, BY DEMONSTRATING THROUGH PRACTICE THAT OTHER WAYS AND WORLDS ARE POSSIBLE.
BUT HOW IS COMMONING ORGANISED?

Commoning is an active social process and that is reflected in the politics of commons governance.

Commoning brings together distinct communities of folk, with their own norms, practices and values, to create and cultivate mutually agreed-upon ends.

Individual and communal autonomy are prime factors in commoning organisation and governance and are in essence unscaleable. Those two factors mean that it is very unlikely that commoning would replicate the types of organisational models we have become familiar with in business or at work. You need to work faster or find a new job!

...the same is true of those commoning. It's situational.

But there are some key similarities to any commoning activity.

The governance of such operations or sets of operations, necessitates an informal, institutional dynamic...

...centring on the relationships between people, and potentially non-human, material or intangible elements too, all depending on the value of social good to be reproduced.

So it is best to see commoning as a practice concerned with social good...

The Common Good

The Autonomy-Coopeation-Transformation Triangle

Not a note: Many commoners come from anarchist and autonomist Marxist traditions.
But if we forget mainstream economic approaches and see resources beyond this classification as mere ‘property,’ and consider resources instead in terms of tangible and intangible ‘social goods,’ we begin to see an outline of the commons appear.

Because in figuring resources as social goods they become intrinsically linked to social relationships and to social value.

So here we can say that the commons refers to a resource, form of value or social good at the centre of commoning activity.

And we find the commons everywhere, often making up for the shortfalls in care that mark traditional governance models.
COMMUNING DOESN'T EXIST IN ISOLATION...

...IN FACT, THE TANGIBILITY OF THE EFFECT OF THE COMMONS IS OFTEN FOUND IN THE WORK THAT GOVERNMENTS AND CORPORATION CAN'T OR WON'T DO.

...OR THE COVID MUTUAL AID NETWORKS.

THINK OF THE DISASTER COMMUNISMS THAT AROSE AFTER THE EFFECTS OF HURRICANE KATRINA WERE FELT IN NEW ORLEANS...

COMMUNALS-BASED PRACTICE CAN LEAP IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

AN EXAMPLE IS FOUND IN THE EXPERIMENTAL COOPERATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPED BY COOPERATION JACKSON.

WE ALSO SEE COMMUNING AFFECT THE FIELDS OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY, WHETHER IT BE RIGHT TO REPAIR MOVEMENTS...

THE COMMONS IS MANIFEST THROUGH THE STRUGGLES OF PEOPLE TO REPLICATE THEIR OWN WAY OF LIFE AND FORMS OF VALUE.

*IN FACT, THIS VERY COMIC IS CREATED UNDER A CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE, AND YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD CARTOONIST [ME] ENCOURAGES YOU TO FREELY SHARE THIS WORK WITH ANYBODY AND EVERYBODY... WELL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GET SHARING!*
COMMONING, with its innovative practices, movements, networks and technologies, is rapidly diffusing through the wider economy, though this is not necessarily a cause for celebration amongst commoners.

DIFFICULT TENSIONS AND CONTRACTIONS HAVE ARisen in the common struggle to retain autonomy. As the business world adopts commons-based peer production, organisational structures and free software...

...but with little regard for the social value these common goods were created to replicate and defend. An understandable, even advisable, scepticism remains about mainstream economic crossover, or hybridisation, with the commons.

ENCLOSURE IS NO SINGULAR EVENT, LIKE FOR EXAMPLE, THE DISPOSSESSION OF THE ENGLISH PEASANTRY IN THE 13TH CENTURY. ENCLOSURE IS A VAST CONTINUITY, AN ONGOING AND FUNDAMENTAL PROCESS THAT UNDERGIRD COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM, GLOBALISATION AND ECONOMIC ‘GROWTH’.

IT IS A SEDIメントED AND PRIMARY LOGIC IN THE EXERCISE OF FORMS OF POWER THAT SEEK DOMINATION AND CONTROL OVER SOCIETY AND NATURE. TENSIONS BETWEEN COMMONING AND ENCLOSURE FORM A HISTORICAL TERRAIN OF STRUGGLE THAT IS NO LESS TURBULENT TODAY THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST.

WHETHER IT BE ATTEMPTS TO RE-FRAME NATURE AS ‘CAPITAL’ AND BIOLOGICAL LIFE AS ‘INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY’ OR TO CLAIM THE SUN’S WARMTH AS A ‘GREEN ASSET’ IN RHETORIC AROUND ENERGY TRANSITIONS, THIS LOGIC OF THE ‘NEW ENCLOSURE’ FINDS AN OPPOSITION IN THE VALUES-LED PRACTICES OF THE COMMONS.
As well as replacing, changing, and supplementing the material needs of the present, commoning also creates an imaginative surplus when thinking about the future. In accepting that the reproduction of value plays a large role in the formation of our world, and by taking varied forms of value seriously, commoning is opening a great vista of possible and imagined futures. In a very real sense the political ecology of the commons is a work of science fiction, for it is both a means of autonomy, cooperation and transformation in the present, and a compulsion to imagine differently.

Ciao for now!