

Controlversy

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"we play, but it is nature herself who determines the rules of the game"

- *Guy van den Abeele*¹

1. Abeele, G. V. (1987). *Natuurlijke Landbouw: Waarden en Krachten*. Ankh-Hermes. [translated from dutch] {page 49}

Acquaintance

Dear reader, in this thesis I would like to take you by the hand and walk with you on a path of my reasoning. The following information, thoughts, ideas and references have been following me around for the past few years and have, through more input and experience, slowly been developing in the back of my mind; now and then coming to the surface expressed in many conversations. But now is the moment that I will try to give it all some more solid form. I rarely ever write down my mind spinsels, so since something has to come out anyway, no better opportunity than one like this, a thesis in my graduation year.

In this text I would like to research how much we can learn from a garden; a 'natural garden' to be more precise. What valuable lessons we as humans can learn from the approach towards such a garden. And not just as individuals, but also as a culture at large. What can be learned from a balanced ecosystem we ourselves have to be an active participant in, what can we take from the mentality towards the other living beings in such a system that has to be taken in order for it to thrive and keep doing so.

Hence the question I started out with, as I took the dive into reading and reasoning, is the following: To what extent can the approach towards a natural garden be a helpful parallel for the organization of human societies?

The approach I am talking about here mainly details the way we as humans relate to the concept of control. How we deal with our desire and capability to have control over our environment; towards other creatures, plants, natural systems and our fellow

Homo Sapiens Sapiens (and perhaps even events at large).

It is probably pretty important to mention that I am pretty young and still need many years to develop these ideas into practical knowledge and experience (;I would like to believe that this process is already on a decent track, yet only some distance in time will be able to show if that is the case). Another crucial point to acknowledge is the fact that whatever it is I write, is written from a very west European framework. Or perhaps rather a point of view coming from a narrative of very wealthy countries and the privilege of a well educated middle class. A lot of the books, essays and articles I have read as inspiration are as well. Which, needless to say, makes a lot of sense since I find myself amidst that very world; and react to it I shall.

Who knows... maybe it is just me who can benefit from the mental stance I will be trying to define. Though I beg to differ. But I guess this is exactly what can be found out by writing these words down and having others take a peak.

Nature's Trust

The first step, I believe, will be for me to attempt explaining what it is I mean when I talk about a 'natural garden' -or the practice of 'natural farming'- and which lessons it can perhaps teach. It is a concept that is widely spread and where the definitions will vary according to whom you ask; but in this thesis my understanding of what this means is mainly derived from two books and some people I have talked to during my travels; one of the books being *The one Straw Revolution* written by Masanobu Fukuoka¹ and the other *Natural Farming* by Guy Vanden Abeele².

My knowledge of these methods is mostly theoretical, although I had some practice here and there, so I will try to stay away from many practical know-hows since they are all second hand information and have not been put into practice by myself. Also for this text I believe the theoretical part -the philosophical approach- to be of more importance.

The core concept of natural farming -to my understanding- lies within a certain trust of nature. A view that the very complex natural systems, that have evolved over millions of years, are the very best at the task/role they fulfill; better than any man made situation could ever hope to achieve. And so the natural farmer strives to strengthen these very systems to the best of their capabilities. Always trying to understand and listen to what the abundance of life can teach, while also acknowledging that a complete understanding can never be reached. Trying to intervene with nature's processes as little as possible.

Seeing oneself more as a facilitator of all the life and things within the boundaries of your farmland,

1. Fukuoka, M. (1978) . *One Straw Revolution*.(2009)
2. Abeele, G. V. (1987). *Natuurlijke Landbouw: Waarden en Krachten*. Ankh-Hermes.

rather than an owner or someone that should decide what, where and how something grows.

The opposite approach is something increasingly present in recent trends in agriculture. Especially in the western countries, where since the application of chemical pesticides/fertilizers and heavy machinery run on fossil fuels ('the Green Revolution')³, it has almost completely engulfed the whole industry; and this approach keeps spreading out to all corners of the globe.

Within this trend, where more and more natural processes are being taken over, science plays a huge role in deciding the course of action; mostly driven by our collective need for financial gain and efficiency. The highest yield together with the lowest human labour is the most desirable outcome, regardless of the negative effects certain choices have.

The most clear cut example that springs to mind is the wide scale use of chemical pesticides. These pesticides make sure crops can grow fast without getting in contact with most 'pests', making it possible to raise them in huge quantities. When chemical fertilizers are then also added to the mix, large scale operations can be carried out and continued even on locations where the soil is already depleted.

This does indeed produce high yields at incredible speeds, but it has disastrous consequences. As a great deal of the insects and microorganisms in the soil will suffer, the ground and surface water becomes contaminated and the plant species become highly dependable on these substances and therefore on human intervention. This dependence continues with each generation, while scientists at the same time are constantly on the search for properties to

3. Wikimedia Foundation. (2022, February 21). Green revolution. Wikipedia. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Revolution

crossbreed species for even higher resistance against the very substances they are exposed to. furthering the dependence of the crops we are ironically depended on in return.

Here I would quickly like to add that some people - including mister Fukuoka- have been able to show that a farming practice without the help of all the efforts of modern day technology is actually capable of producing just as, if not even higher, yields as farmers who do. Reducing the argument that modern agricultural practices (with all its fossil-fuel burning machines and chemicals) are needed to sustain a food production for our ever growing populations to nil.

The decisions made in the development of modern agricultural techniques are partly justified by the way our culture has been putting science on a mighty pedestal. When we believe that we have the power/potential to understand the world as it is, objectively speaking, and also are the only ones with that ability; we end up in the delusion that we then also have the right or even the task to exercise that power. And thus we start taking control over the natural environment all over the place. Playing rulers whenever we see fit, deciding what gets to live where and how.

The way of natural farming stands directly opposite to this belief. For the natural farmer every living thing -be it plants, bacteria, insects, fungi or mammals (and many more)- has a right to live. No living being got to have a say in the occurrence of their birth, not me, not you, not the slug eating the young beans I would like to see growing tall and strong; yet here we all are, with somewhat conflicting

interests. The slug craves the young leaves of the bean plant while I prefer the ripened beans (and let us also not forget the bean plant's own desire to grow).

As a human we then have a choice, to try our might to stop slugs from getting their way and eradicating them from the garden all together -this will almost always also result in many other species being forced out- or to accept the fact that some of the beans will not make it and fall prey to the slugs, but then also sustaining the existence of predators like beetles, birds and hedgehogs for example.⁴

One cannot just view all the 'threats' in your garden as separate occurrences that can be dealt with⁵. For that you would have to understand all the interconnected relations of all the living organisms and natural systems on this planet to get even close to a realistic sense of how to put your power into practice, something that is -to my understanding- not possible at all for humans with our limited ways of perception (i will elaborate on this in the next chapter). All is part of the same complex web of life. We should try not to view the world too much from the perspective of competition, since we are much more dependent on eachother then we sometimes want to see.

4. Attract natural enemies of slugs: 14 ways to promote slug predators. Slughelp. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.slughelp.com/promote-biodiversity-prevent-garden-pests-like-slugs/>
5. As a grand example I would like to point towards the 'four pests campain' by the chinese government: Wikimedia Foundation. (2022, January 30). Four pests campaign. Wikipedia. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Pests_campaign



Handwritten notes and equations:

- $4H + CO_2 \rightarrow CH_4 + 2H_2O$
- $S_2 + 2O \rightarrow SO_2$
- $L + 2O \rightarrow LO$
- $\frac{d}{dt} \psi = H\psi$
- $\nabla^2 \psi + V\psi = E\psi$
- $\psi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx}$
- $\psi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx}$
- $\psi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx}$
- $\psi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} - \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx}$
- $\psi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} - \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx}$
- $\psi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} - \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{ikx} - \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-ikx}$

A Complex Unpredictable World

In this chapter I am gonna elaborate on the idea that the world, with all its interlinked natural systems, is incredibly complex. Way too complex for human understanding to be more precise. With the methods of perception -our senses- that we have acquired over millions of years of evolution, we have the ability to take in and process a lot of information about the outside world, adding to our own viewpoint. But we should never forget that it is just that, a viewpoint. it is still always us that does the perceiving. Our human brain is still always processing the incoming information and then creating the image or the idea that we behold.

Just like how ants will never be able to look at human culture and grasp its reasons, we too have our limits of understanding the ways of other creature's doing (we can imagine all kinds of explanations why ants do what they do, but they will never coincide with their own perspective). We can collect as much information about the working of processes as we want, gaining insight into *why* stuff happens; yet these insights are still constructed in our framework of mind.

And this even goes beyond living beings, since it also applies to 'lifeless' natural systems on all scales (such as the earth's water cycles, atomic interactions and even the formation of star systems).

Even though humans have developed incredibly precise instruments and methods of observation (increasing our range of sensual measurement), that can give us very valuable information to be used for understanding and to do predictions of all sorts. Nonetheless it still remains to be observed and translated by us, with our very limited human methods

of perception. We will always look at the world as human beings, through the glasses of our human worldview, otherwise we would stop being human.

A particular field of research that has sparked my curiosity in the last two years, now popularly known as 'Chaos Theory'. Very well described in a book by James Gleick called *Chaos, the Amazing Science of the Unpredictable*¹; wherein Gleick writes about various scientists who, separately and all over the world, notice evidence of how many aspects of our universe turn out to be unpredictable, even in very unexpected circumstances. The simplest of systems/models (both mathematically and within real-life observations) are able to produce totally unpredictable results.

One of the simplest examples of this phenomena -when unpredictable behaviour derives from simple conditions- is something you can even test at home: Open your water tap very slightly and keep increasing the amount of water flow as carefully as possible. First you will see a drop falling into the sink periodically, the rhythm of dripping will remain constant, one drop at the time. After a bit more water pressure is added, the drip rate will grow and after a bit more it will release two drops at once (referred to as period doubling). But when a bit more flow is added, just before it becomes a continuous stream, the rhythm of the water drops becomes aperiodic. The tap now releases water drops at a rate that never repeats itself and no accurate prediction can be made about the coming drops. sometimes the drops come in pairs, then in trios and somethings not at all. this keeps on going in an unpredictable, chaotic way until the flow rate changes again.²

This transition from simple predictable behaviour

1. Gleick, J. (1987). *Making a new science*. Vintage. (1998)
2. Gleick, J. (1987). *Making a new science*. Vintage. (1998).
{page 273-300}

into chaos can be observed in many different circumstances on all scales.

Chaos theory does not necessarily show us that nature behaves purely random; the theory could still be constructed within a deterministic framework, claiming future behaviour is still dependent on initial conditions. But it does show that complex systems are so incredibly sensitive to these initial conditions that in order to make (somewhat proper) predictions about what will happen next, an infinitely large amount of data is needed. Something that is in all practical sense not possible for human beings; thus killing the deterministic worldview, at least from the perspective of humans. Beautifully shown by the research of the meteorologist Edward Lorenz (with his simple climate-models)³. This applies when talking about complex systems such as the weather, ocean currents, the climate, ecological balances, population growth and even human constructs like the economy.

Even with an unimaginable amount of computing power we will still not be able to make any sane predictions about the future up to a certain point. The more accurate the data and the better the models of calculations become, the better our guesses; but there will always be a limit to these guesses, since the tiniest change in initial conditions will have vastly different consequences down the line of time. Even if the world would be considered deterministic, we still cannot say what is going to happen next.

These situations can serve to show us how ultimately, even with all the knowledge and tools at our disposal, we cannot be the masters of the universe we are born into; we find ourselves in the midst of infinitely complex and interlocked reactions upon

3. Gleick, J. (1987). Making a new science. Vintage. (1998).
{page 9-31}

actions upon reactions.

Now you might think to yourself: Hold on... infinitely complex? Who says reality is? Maybe we just have not been able to understand all of it, but one day we could be able to see the whole picture. Just more information and better tools for translating/deciphering the data is needed.

To that I would reply with a notion we have probably all heard before: Whenever we are able to answer a question about the nature of our world, two -maybe even four- more arise.

The whole faith that (modern-western) science is built upon, is the belief that if we try to dissect everything into parts -to then be looked at/researched separately- we can understand the whole. Adding up the knowledge of all the separate parts is assumed to equal a complete understanding. The etymology of the word science makes this pretty clear, it most likely originates from the words 'to cut, divide', *scindere* in Latin⁴. This is in essence what is called the reductionist approach.

But whoever says that a complete understanding can be understood by such an approach? if it can even be understood at all. If you would ask me, there are many different ways to understand reality, many different aspects of truth to be found out (that can exist simultaneously). I do not think we can explain nature as a whole with just the viewpoint of the scientific methods of observation.

If it could ever be explained as a whole, or at least in our effort to do so, let us try to include some more aspects of thinking. Such as various forms of artistic expression; stories and mythologies, poetry, images, humor and music. Also certain spiritual values and philosophies play an important role in finding truths about the nature of our reality.

4. Science (n.). Etymology. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.etymonline.com/word/science>

Worthy to notice is also the certain ideologies that the very early developers of the scientific method carried around with them. Francis Bacon for instance, widely considered as the person who first wrote down in which manner the scientific method should be used, also wrote the following words in 1620:

"Just let the human race get back the right over nature that God gave to it"⁵

He and some fellow men relevant in the western european scientific revolution had the belief that by applying the ways of science, humans would be able to claim control over nature. By means of dissecting nature and understanding it, an increasing power over it would arise. And so it happened indeed. laying the foundation for a worldview where humans are seen as separate from nature, as is present today.

This is not so surprising, considering that Bacon and his fellows were very religious men and how a view of human superiority over the rest of nature is very present within the christian worldview.^{6,7}

So maybe the methods of science, as they are broadly used now, are not the best, or better said, not the only way to try to describe nature. Something that is becoming increasingly clear to some in various fields of science lately (partly referring to the part about chaos above). The reductionist approach in science has run its course and is now reaching its limits as a tool to understand our reality. To understand systems as a whole we cannot only look at its parts separately, add them up and then expect to have a complete picture. Almost all systems in nature appear not to be just a sum of their parts, but can be better understood by looking at the various interconnected relationships between those parts.

When humans notice problems in such interconnected

5. The new organon: Or true directions concerning the ... (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/bacon1620.pdf> {page 47}
6. Kingsnorth, P. (2021, August 5). Do what thou wilt. Do What Thou Wilt - by Paul Kingsnorth. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://paulkingsnorth.substack.com/p/do-what-thou-wilt>
7. A&E Networks Television. (2020, June 5). Francis Bacon. Biography.com. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.biography.com/scholar/francis-bacon>

complex systems and then implement antidotes in pursuit of solutions. Most of the time these implementations -new bureaucratic regulations, social etiquettes or technological advances for instance- actually create their own problems in return; likely with even more complex and interconnected relations that are even harder to solve. Making me believe that there will not be certain technologies/tools that will be the savior of our problems. Or in the words of *M. Fukuoka*, told within the context of agricultural practices:

"When a decision is made to cope with the symptoms of a problem, it is generally assumed that the corrective measures will solve the problem itself. They seldom do. Engineers cannot seem to get this through their heads. These countermeasures are all based on too narrow a definition of what is wrong. Human measures and countermeasures proceed from limited scientific truth and judgment. A true solution can never come about this way..." "...Until the modern faith in big technological solutions can be overturned, pollution will only get worse." ⁸

The notion that science is not the big method to find absolute truths and salvation in life might be quite a disappointment to some. As science, with all its additional technologies, has become somewhat of a substitute for religions. Now that it has acquired the position of an authority for many, dictating a lot of aspects for the way we live our lives. Or the way we justify our decisions.

No need for that disappointment though, on the contrary. The fact that scientific discoveries do not reveal 'real truths', but only partial temporary truths (that hold only until the framework of

8. Fukuoka, M. (1978) . One Straw Revolution. (2009) {page 84}

observation changes or/and a new 'better' truth replaces the previous one); shows us how there will always be new surprises in store for us. That there is always room for more curiosity and discovery. There will never be a shortage of angles to look through. We will never grasp the whole picture of the thing we call 'reality'. *watch out! hippie-like thought incoming*: The possibilities are endless & potential is limitless.



Intervention Addiction

Seeing as how complex, interconnected and unpredictable the world actually turns out to be; it strikes me as ridiculous to get the idea that you can actually be in charge of your environment. Either in the sense of a garden, politics, the making of history/shaping the future, raising children or when building ideologies. I am not trying to say that you should give up on shaping your world to your liking since you are too insignificant to have an influence. Not at all, the way I see it, one definitely does make an influence! But it is never totally certain what that influence will actually be or possible to keep track of its effects (within a 'cause and effect' reasoning). As it is also hard to say when something will cause something else; when a cause and effect relationship happens within a reasonably short time-span they seem quite easily linked, but who is to say that this certain 'happening' does not cause yet another something in a far away time period.

We can not in any sane/realistic sense view ourselves as Masters of our surroundings (something that has been quite present within the christian worldview, as in the thought that we are shaped by god and therefore (should strive to) resemble him in 'creating' the world to our image).

Instead I'd like to argue that we should rather see ourselves as Facilitators. We can better strive to facilitate what it is that we find around us and see how we can make the most of it. Trying to be collaborators instead of owners, by making the most of what life gives to us. To grow more together with nature. Never stopping to try to understand our world, while at the same time never having the arrogance to think we actually know it.

I have come to think that this way of reasoning, this certain approach -taken from my experience with the world of natural farming- can be carried over to many more aspects of life.

I hope for instance this way of thinking can result in people having less of a need to control another person. And maybe instead trying to understand each other to the best of one's capabilities and allowing the best in someone else to flourish. giving each other the space to create the most out of one's talents and interests. Just like how you can give space to the plants in your garden to flourish to the best of their abilities. not trying to make other living beings rely on you, resulting in a power imbalance, facilitate and care for them so they can learn to rely on themselves.

I guess to achieve something like this, trust is the thing that is required the most. Trust in your fellow humans; trust in your environment; trust in the flora and fauna around you; trust in the dynamic natural systems that the earth has offered us for so long.

It makes me sigh in hopeless disbelief when I then hear about someone like the Harvard scientist David Keith¹, who focuses on geoengineering technologies; geoengineering refers to ways to manipulate the earthly environment at large scales, commonly justified by the possibility to offset impacts of climate change. Keith makes a case for how spraying particles as sulphuric acid into the atmosphere could be a good idea -in order to reflect more sunlight and so slow down the warming of the planet- and therefore should be taken into serious consideration.^{2,3} I can understand that this could be a logical way of reasoning, but that does not make it a good idea. This opens up so many more potential problems and

1. David Keith. Harvard's Solar Geoengineering Research Program. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://geoengineering.environment.harvard.edu/people/david-keith>
2. D. Keith, G. Wagner, C. Zabel. Solar geoengineering reduces atmospheric carbon burden. Electronic library. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://booksc.org/ireader/66832577%20/>
3. Fine-tuning the climate | DW Documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1Enrzgrllw&t=135s>

disastrous effects down the line. Luckily I am far far from the only one opposing professor Keith's ideas; sadly popularity rises and experimentations on it -and similar operations- do continue, thus making it more likely to be a possibility.

I realise that this is of course quite the extreme example, since such an intervention engulfs the entire ecosystem of the earth.

But the same insane steps of reasoning happen all around us: Thinking of ways to cope with problems by negating its negative effects, instead of intervening at the source of the problem. Because then we do not have to alter our way of acting (, being in this case to disrupt natural processes).

Another occurrence that fits this narrative is the method big businesses and western governments have been handling the climate-change problem. By focusing almost all the attention on an abstract villain, namely CO₂. The catastrophe can supposedly be stopped with new 'sustainable' technologies that reduce emissions. (Sustainability has become quite a nonsensical word, as it does not specify what is meant to be sustained (slavery could be deemed sustainable when the slaves in question are persuaded to make at least two children; to give you a gruesome example)).

Just seeing the amount of CO₂ emitted as the big dragon to be fought is a huge oversimplification, since we should be looking at which lines of thought justified our actions of robbing the earth of its resources to begin with, tackling the problems at their roots. Since the climate problem does not only entail the burning of fossil fuels, it includes a much wider spectrum; here I am thinking about the worldwide decline of biodiversity, deforestation, overfishing, radioactive and chemical pollution, to

mention just a few.

A tunnel vision on CO₂ just allows our culture to not change its lifestyle, to keep steering in the same direction while imagining something is being done about the problem, which makes it such an advertisable popular opinion.

Following this direction of reasoning people start to think it is a good idea to cut down forests, use big plots of land and destroy sea-biomes to then smother them full with solar panels and wind turbines. All in the name of saving the climate.

In relation to this I would like to repeat some lines of writer/activist Paul Kingsnorth, which he speaks as he stands on top of a mountain in Ireland where a relatively small wind farm has been built.

("It used to be the case that environmentalism and green campaigning included being against the industrialization of mountain tops, but now it is in favor of them as long as the industrialization doesn't produce carbon. And the reason for that is that we tell ourselves that this is what is going to save us...") "...This is the mentality that caused the problem in the first place. Here we are assuming that the problem we have is simply the emission of the wrong kind of gas. And that the solution to that is to piper the wild landscapes of Europe in more industry. All of which is metals, is plastic, is cement; all of which is mined and transported for the rest of the world and buried in huge concrete ballads right on the top of a mountain here." ⁴

When I look at society-wide trends within governance/management of the last few decades I notice an increasing desire for more control; in a world that becomes progressively more complex (due to for instance a growing access to information with

4. De Aarde Draait door, VPRO Tegenlicht.
(n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from https://www.npos-tart.nl/vpro-tegenlicht/16-12-2018/VFWON_1295_486 {2:30}

inventions like the internet), powerful institutions of all kinds deem it necessary to gain knowledge(/ quantifiable data) and control in order to hold on to their positions of influence. This might be an effect of the mindset of capitalism, where power and wealth keeps accumulating towards centralized points. Something that also becomes evident when you look at the ever increasing inequality gap worldwide.

Something that accelerated this process as well and exposed even more the ambition of governments to be able to exercise more control over their citizens, is the way powerful institutions and governments have reacted to the (recent) corona crisis. In most places the measures taken to try to eradicate these viruses (or at least put them under control) have been very focused on restricting the individual. Asserting authority top-down, instead of putting trust in people and helping them get healthier and stronger, for instance.

I do not write this now to judge/condemn these decisions, rather to show (what I believe to be) the more prevalent mindset of people that hold power. Not trusting others to be capable or responsible, but thinking to know what is best for others instead.

And as also seen in the agricultural examples in the first chapter, such ways of acting in turn create collateral damage beyond the scope of our current imagination in many different corners of livelihood. Of course I do not hold a very realistic idea of what those collateral damages are (few people do, considering the unpredictability as mentioned before)^{5,6}. Nevertheless some things come to mind: the bankruptcies of small businesses, the huge economical blowback and the psychological toll on so many people -especially the young among us- that need social and physical contact to stay sane.

A very clear symbol for the claim to further control

5. Though some people have at least some idea: opeconoom Baarsma: "Coronabeleid Kost Veel Meer Levensjaren Dan Zij oplevert". Artsen Covid Collectief. (2022, February 3). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://artsencollectief.nl/coronabeleid-kost-veel-meer-leven-sjaren-dan-zij-oplevert/>
6. Staff, W. M. A. R. (2022, February 4). Johns Hopkins University study finds lockdowns only reduced COVID deaths by 0.2%. WFTS. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.abcaction-news.com/news/national/coronavirus/johns-hopkins-university-study-finds-lockdowns-only-reduced-covid-deaths-by-0-2>

staked by states, in alliance with corporate capital, is the new digital-ID systems. The development of these digital identity systems has been rolling out for many years already. But now as measures to (assumably) keep the viruses from spreading, implementations such as the vaccine QR-codes are allowing such systems to be realized with full throttle.

Or as professor in privacy Bart Jacobs mentions in an article by *Follow The Money* wherein several scientists warn about the arrival of a new digital identity infrastructure: "Big companies have been trying for years to come up with a standardization that suits them and now they have thought: let's hitch a ride on the pandemic and come up with a solution where we have control." ⁷

(It seems I would like to talk about this particular point way more, but I realize that such a sensitive subject requires way more depth, something that lies outside the scope of this particular thesis. Although I did want to briefly mention this topic, before we all end up in even more complex social structures that can be used as forms of control and fuel distrust, things I am actively trying to battle within this tekst.)

What i'm trying to make clear with the examples above is how a certain way of thinking is still very present in broad modern-day culture; a view that, in this one big coincidental accident of a world, the ones that 'assumably' can understand it the best also are the ones best equipped to alter it. That those with knowledge and enough data about the world, which translates to power, have a right to exercise that power.

But as far as I am concerned knowledge is not necessarily accompanied by wisdom. Considering a plea for as much widely spread individual autonomy, what

7. Roermund, J. van, Riva, C., & Tinari, S. (2021, December 11) Wetenschappers Waarschuwen voor een Nieuwe Digitale Identiteit. *Follow the Money - Platform voor onderzoeksjournalistiek*. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.ftm.nl/artikelen/internationale-digid-lobby?share=d8bbRtSLjEP6tmfIPw0FsbJd-KZXrUd%2BsBHg%2FGdkWcaGV6uw7G5tSrMQO6uLAGMA%3D>

needs to be added to all this knowledge-power humans possess, is a wisdom to 'let go and let live', to not give in/have the urge to control the world outside of one's self. Especially from an individual standpoint towards much larger scales.

How to achieve this then? is the question that most likely boils to the surface of the mind. Or maybe better said: How to try to achieve something as such?



Going About Less Control

Since in this chapter i am going to try to sketch a possibility of how the mindset i have been advocating in this thesis -to let go of the personal need to control one's environment- could be put into practice; i should probably start out with stressing that i do not have the answers, The following thoughts are just fantasies, although grounded in my personal experience/knowledge as much as possible. I am still just a young boy that grew up mostly in a city center, an environment where human control over the surroundings is present in (almost) every detail. A situation I myself have been very much dependent upon for my own survival my whole life.

That is, I guess, where it should then also start: trying to limit human dependence on a rigid controlled environment as much as possible. A situation where someone's survival is not necessarily intertwined with the survival of thousands of other humans who have very little personal connection with each other and therefore share little trust between them; Which in turn then requires the need for increasingly more control and interventions between the people in order to keep the system moving/from falling apart.

Scaling down these systems, I believe, is the most straightforward and important way to start trying to achieve this. Creating situations where the effects of human influence are put to a scale appropriate for humans, a scale where the consequences of your actions appear in your own environment.

You might imagine, after coming this far in the text, that I believe that any act of influence humans have on their surroundings is an unwanted act of control.

That following my reasoning the best thing to do, is to all just sit passively down as we watch the world unfold; meditating and ridding ourselves of any desire to act whatsoever.

If so, let me clarify: that is not the stand I try to take at all. I sincerely believe that humans have the potential to positively affect whatever they put their energy into; as long as the acts do not come from a viewpoint of thinking to know what is best for others (be it any living form or system) or a desire to enforce control.

This is why I think human influence/governance should be scaled down as much as possible. So people have better access to feedback from the system they are part of, which allows them to learn from it more directly.

This could also negate the size of problematic consequences when they do arrive. The moment certain actions reflect badly on other life forms, they will be less catastrophic and easier to resolve. As the effect of humans is scaled down it can be handled with less complication and noticed earlier. (Contrary to, for instance, the current climate crisis where actions of robbing the earth of its resources by global industry seem/feel very separate from the negative effects it has on the planet.)

A social structure where people are much more confronted with the consequences of their actions on their surroundings could also open the possibility for more meaning in life. Because when you notice the effects of the work you put in (to anything), you are better equipped to reason why you are putting in that work in the first place. Your actions reflect back at you and the people around you more directly. You will know these people on a social level and can therefore empathise with them more easily and they can in turn do the same with you. Fostering (the need for) trust

between one another.

To add something a bit more practical, I would argue that something like communal gardens is a very good idea. A place everybody (of a certain community) has access to where food, herbs and other useful plants can be grown. Many great lessons could be learned from it:

First of all it would raise the autonomy of a community dramatically. increasing their self reliance on food, which increases self reliance in general, since it is one of the few things we will always need; and when there's an abundance it can always be traded. increasing dependence on your fellow humans and other living beings within your close proximity, while simultaneously decreasing the dependence on institutions organised on large scales (so less outreaching control from above will be necessary, if at all...).

A shared garden would also strengthen the bonds of the people mending the garden together. Knowing you do not stand alone in this complex chaotic world can only be beneficial for the wellbeing of the mind.

And gardens where no chemical or large machinery is used, spread all over the place, would enable people to learn to work together with nature more closely, shaping a view where humans and their ways of living are not seen separate from nature but as part of it.

Going into most of the practical points to put such ideas in motion seems to me not possible to do inside the boundaries of this thesis; on top of that I am by no means someone with enough knowhow/expertise to do so in the first place. But if you are in doubt about the applications of solutions similar to the ones mentioned above, or if you find yourself to just be more curious about related topics, I would highly recommend the book *A Small Farm Future* written by

Chris Smaje¹. in this book Smaje makes a very solid case "for a society built around local economies, self-provisioning, agricultural diversity and a shared earth" (as the subtitle beautifully states). He does not only argue why such a revision of our society is a good idea, but also why it is very much necessary and, according to him, perhaps the only way forward.

One more point I would like to talk about in relation to the concept of small-scale communal gardens is the importance of the protection of ownership rights of the pieces of land used, in order to guarantee the autonomy of the people involved (be it collectives, families or even individuals). The human ownership of land has become quite a topic of debate in recent years (, of course it has always been, but here I am referring to a sphere of left-environmentalists in particular). As stated by Smaje:

"People sometimes oppose the idea of landownership because of the perceived hubris in claiming to own a work of nature that long preceded the claimant's birth and will long outlast their death. But that's not fundamentally what landownership is about. Its real crux is the agreement it involves between me and other people over the right to its benefits." ²

It makes sense to me that some people (thinking about ways to protect nature) can be reluctant to the idea of private landownership. Especially in our modern neoliberal capitalist climate; where the price of land keeps skyrocketing and it is made possible for individuals and companies to accumulate vast areas of land for their own benefits. In these cases private landownership actually allows huge inequality to be created and sustained. Something that withholds the opportunity for people and groups with little wealth or power to take their life into their own hands. I

1. Smaje, C. (2020). Small Farm Future. Chelsea Green Publishing.
2. Smaje, C. (2020). Small Farm Future. Chelsea Green Publishing. {page 175}

believe that it should be every person's right to be able to have a stretch of soil that they themselves can cultivate to their liking, in order to ensure a basic quality of life for everybody. So that when circumstances (mostly economic) are pretty bad, people are not consequently forced to sell themselves or their labor/time to someone else. But I do think that certain legal structures are necessary to ensure this. Because some kind of landownership laws have to exist to protect the less fortunate/powerful, making sure they are not simply robbed from their land and therefore their autonomy. Also some laws to make sure people do not harm the future potential of the land itself. Something more concrete I can imagine would be a prohibition to sell land on an open market; or otherwise making sure the value is not connected to the global economy. Creating less incentive for people to exploit their land, since they themselves then can benefit from it on a longer time scale.

Or to once again drag Smaje's words into my plea: " ...land is a necessary prerequisite for most human activities, because it's a limited and non-expandable resource in space and an almost unlimited one in time, then in situations when it's tradeable for money on open markets its value tends to appreciate over time, rather than depreciate as with most other forms of capital. Or as Mark Twain famously put it: 'Buy land, they ain't making it anymore.' Since land is so precious as a future asset and a store of value, demand for it bids up the price on open markets, especially when there are other major ways of creating value for which land can act as a repository, as is the case in capitalist societies. In this situation, land soon becomes impossible for most people to afford, precisely because they ain't making it any more, unless its price is checked by society-wide agreements. My argument is that its

price does need to be checked by such agreements if private property rights are to be liberating rather than exclusionary.”³ “So private landownership can involve a complex bundle of rights that can potentially be separated out: the right to farm, but not to build a house; the right to earn, but not to bequeath to descendants or exclude passers-by; the right to grow crops, but not to erode the soil.”⁴

As Smaje’s reasoning goes, private landownership laws are very much needed, although quite different from how they exist to date, in order to ensure people’s autonomy. Because without such laws, when no person can own land, the use of it still has to be regulated in some way. So if then (for instance) a state confiscates the land for ‘fair’ use, it will still result in the limitations of people’s freedom. “In fact, both unchecked privatisation and unchecked statism can end up looking quite similar – remote and unaccountable decision making in the hands of the few that alienates most people from self-determination.”⁴

Bringing me to the question if nation states are necessary at all. Since it does reduce the possibility for people to organize themselves based on their own beliefs and values. Limiting the diversity of human social constructs immensely. Which decreases the ability for humans to adapt themselves to local situations, area’s and grander scale events.

This argument does only hold if we draw a parallel between the adaptability of ecosystems and social constructs; one I believe is pretty fair to make considering we are not separate from nature and are completely dependent/interwoven in its workings. Ecosystems have been shown to be much more balanced and adaptable when the biodiversity is higher. So I would say it is reasonable to argue for a greater diversity in human organization.

3. Smaje, C. (2020). Small Farm Future. Chelsea Green Publishing. {page 176}
4. Smaje, C. (2020). Small Farm Future. Chelsea Green Publishing. {page 177}

To my view the requirement of a state is too often defended on the notion that without it we are surrendered to the violent forces of our natural instincts. Looking at the behaviour of other animals in the wild this can make sense: predators hunting and eating prey, parasites profiting at the expense of their hosts and the whole belief that evolution is largely based on competition between species.

While it would be foolish to deny this, it should be stressed that this is far from the only truth. What is actually seen more in nature than competition and violence/domination, is the tendency to collaborate/cooperate. There is not one species existing that does not work together with (at least one) other species. Collaboration is a much more important quality of the functioning of the natural world than we led ourselves to believe. Something that extends to human behaviour as well. Which makes a lot of sense to me, thinking about the dependence of all the natural forces on one another.

Maybe to totally reject nation states is a bit of a stretch though, as it can still have many benefits for a lot of people. But I would prefer it to be much more of an accessible choice to make, being part of government structures that is.



Tail End

When I first got interested in alternative agricultural practices (alternative to the monocultural ways which are most common where I come from) the motivation was mostly derived from a practical perspective. Practical because I was working at a vegetable stand on a biological market (and sometimes on their land) and since I felt it was really valuable knowledge to have an idea how to grow healthy food, in a (still ongoing) effort towards self-determination.

But as I got more acquainted with the philosophies prevalent in/around the culture, something intuitively clicked with me. Especially when reading the words of Fukuoka and van den Abeele -as mentioned far above. The attitude, as described, towards other living beings and the world in general made so much sense; to see all others as equals and to limit imposing one's will as much as possible, seem to me like values almost inherited from some deep instincts. Whenever I spend some successive time outside a city, being surrounded by a bigger variety of life forms, I notice a tendency coming up to converse with all the organisms I come across. The conversing is not always expressed with words, sometimes it stays inside the mental space, giving conscious attention to sending out my intentions (to whoever/whatever may receive them). Which feels to work just as well.

The methods and reasoning used in the principles of natural farming also coincide very well with some views I developed about the world through my more scientific interests, referring to the concepts of complexity (briefly) mentioned in the second chapter.

Apart from the respect for all of nature, natural farmers attempt to refrain from meddling with natural processes/ecosystems because they realize that it is impossible for them to grasp the complexity of the natural world they have to work with; thus refraining from controlling (or removing) parts of the big puzzle, since the consequences can be unwanted, disastrous and mostly just unknown. Fukuoka tries to put this idea into words as follows: "Humanity knows nothing at all", recognizing "the insufficiency of intellectual knowledge".¹

These views correlate nicely, because the scientific theories make it evident how interconnected nature is and how chaotic unpredictable behaviour is an inherent aspect of our reality. So even if we try to define everything, we still will not get the complete picture. And this 'complete picture' is needed to argue for controlling our environment -whatever that may be- in a responsible manner.

Hence the reason why I think it is appropriate to take the natural farming mentality and apply it to a wider spectrum of situations. Focusing the reasoning more towards human social context as well. Since I think it can be very beneficial to strive for a world where the tendency for controlling nature and fellow humans is kept to a minimum; although that should maybe be rephrased to just 'nature', considering humans are included in that as well.

Following that line of thought and the notion that any ecosystem is best resilient, adaptable and balanced the more diverse it is; it makes sense to resist the need for social control, with the best interest of humans and the planet in mind. The stronger and more widespread the control of people to a standard of beliefs and values is, the less people are inclined to be diverse/organize themselves diversely. Making a case against large concentrations

1. Fukuoka, M. (1978) . One Straw Revolution. (2009) {page 5 and 7}

of power such as multinationals and drastically acting governments. Perhaps even removing the need for a nation state in general.

Most likely it is pretty naive to think the desire for control can be removed from our culture completely (not sure if that is even desirable). I also notice in myself an urge to sometimes take charge of my surroundings -and perhaps humans too, when I try to convince others of my ideas. To me the distinction lies in the intention and the justification of the act. If we would not feel so justified to exert our power, we would think twice about how, when and why to do so.

It should be mentioned that the way I have talked about science before is not completely fair. Science nowadays is varied widely in its conceptions, views and methods. Although I do still agree with what I said (about motives for which the scientific method was invented), most scientists luckily get trained to not use science as a base for absolute truth telling and use the scientific methods purely as a tool to make measurements about the world and feed their curiosity.

My critique on Science is mainly based on situations where it gets used as a political tool to enforce a belief (you might have heard the phrase 'follow the science' before...); and also on big institutions that have a stake in holding on to a certain conviction and use their power to withhold certain research or steer it into a desired outcome. Something very prevalent throughout history: Prohibiting research on psychedelics; Oil companies paying for research to deny the effect of greenhouse gasses; Chemical companies using science to distract from the effects of their products on insects; Tobacco industry; Big pharma; The list goes on... A story better suited for

another time.

Nevertheless science has played a huge role in my own life, cultivating my mind mostly for the better. Giving me many ideas and tangible things (technologies and machinery) to focus my interests on. You might say our relationship can get pretty complicated sometimes.

As I have tried to argue, whenever a will is imposed, and control is exerted to deal with a problem; it will lay another layer of complex new interactions upon the already existing situation, resulting in more problems to deal with. A pattern that keeps adding onto itself.

Which is not inherently a bad thing. The new complications could even have value; in some contexts complex problems are even enjoyable to deal with. But to me it shows that trusting in problem solving control mechanisms to make life easier/better is a bit of a paradox.

Finally I would like to leave you with an anecdote that comes to mind. This example is not a (straight forward) parallel comparison to my arguments. Yet it illustrates the feeling I try to convey. therefore possibly making it a little more tangible:

On a recent winter night I found myself in a huge dilapidated mansion close to The Hague. The old house was surrounded by a big garden, filled with trees, some of which were more than a century old. A clear night sky revealed itself, accompanied by an icy wind; which could be fiercely felt as I was standing on the porch, raised several meters from the earth. After only a minute on the stone platform, it forced me to take shelter inside. However, as I walked down the stairs to grass level, the cold wind was almost non-existent. covered by the massive trees, I was able to comfortably walk through the night.

The act of taking charge of that area, by clearing the land and its vegetation, made the stone stronghold a necessity. Sitting at the warm fire, enjoying the fact the house got built, it struck me how many complications go hand in hand with such an endeavour. Taking control of the (material) world creates more possibilities, complications and complexity; both beneficial and problematic.

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Thanks for reading!