SAFSC WINTER NEWSLETTER 32

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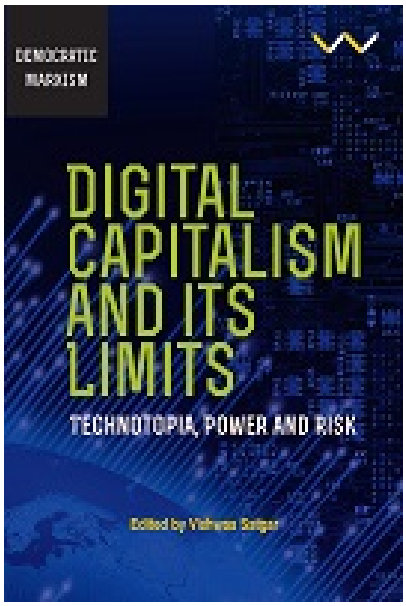

EDITORIAL

In late May, we launched a bold new chapter in the fight for food justice with the opening of the COPAC Food Sovereignty Hub and Training Centre during our four-day Gauteng Activist School at Wits University. This milestone event physically and politically grounds our long-term vision to dismantle the corporate food system and replace it with ecological, people-led alternatives. Rooted in over a decade of organising, the Hub now stands as a vibrant space for learning, organising, and action.

During our 4-day workshop activists, academics and farmers engaged with agroecological methods, toured our gardens, shared stories about seeds, and learned tools for building the Triple Transition: from hunger to food sovereignty, from ecological collapse to regeneration, and from market rule to democratic food commons. Together, we studied the Climate Justice Charter, engaged the People's Food Sovereignty Act and Policy, and tested activist tools , from zero waste systems and seed banks to land mapping and water campaigns. Throughout the sessions, a unified call echoed: to build a provincial food sovereignty movement rooted in shared knowledge, local struggles, and collective strategy. From Snake Park to Springs, new energy surged around monthly forums, reading groups, and garden visits, all of which is anchored in the shared commitment to nourish our communities and planet.

At the heart of our strategy is a *Hub and Pathway a*pproach, a grassroots method of transformation that anchors food sovereignty in real places, led by real people. In Gauteng, this call is taking form through the launch of the Gauteng Food Sovereignty Forum, a participatory platform that will hold regular forums, coordinate activist schools, and connect community gardens, seed banks, and food kitchens in a living network of transformation. This process is not isolated. Similar provincial activist schools and pathways will be initiated in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal later this month to seed local food sovereignty forums and deepen our national organising. These forums are not just about coordination, they are about building democratic systemic alternatives from below. They are tools for grassroots power, spaces for collective learning, and mechanisms for shifting our food system toward the food commons. By rooting transformation in lived experience and real relationships, we are moving from crisis to sovereignty, from isolation to interdependence.

The Food Sovereignty Hub at Wits is a prototype of this broader vision, a living model of community-driven food systems that value land, water, and seed as commons. It embodies a pathway approach: one that builds from the ground up, through hubs, forums, and networks, to enable systemic transformation. We invite all activists, communities, and allies to join us in growing this movement across the country.

COMMONS IN THE EVERYDAY

At a time of ecological collapse and deepening social inequality, reclaiming the commons , from land and seeds to libraries and coastlines, is essential for both community well-being and planetary survival. The commons are not just a resource, but a way of relating to to nature that is rooted in care, cooperation, and stewardship.

Two powerful pieces on the Emancipatory Futures Study platform speak directly to this: Timothy Downs explores the public library as a communal cognition system, where knowledge is collectively held and shaped and Roushanna Gray invites us into the natural commons as a classroom, showing how foraging connects us to ecosystems and ancestral ways of knowing.
These contributions are part of a growing body of work reimagining how we eat, live, learn, and share in common.

Discover more and read the full programme here:
https://emancipatoryfutures.co.za/blog/2025/june

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AS A COMMUNAL COGNITION SYSTEM BY TIMOTHY DOWNS

The Benoni Library
These days, the books I read I buy from corporations. Most often I purchase them as Kindle editions and read them in a very cursory way, much as I would browse a web page or read a post on social media. These patterns of consumption have not always been the case. I previously used the local public library. I have vivid memories of visiting the public library as a child, at least once a week, sometimes more often than that. I grew up in Benoni and have deep, almost physically embedded, memory of the little building which today sits in the eclipsing shadow of an expanding and dilapidating shopping mall. Looking back now, it seemed so commonplace, so unextraordinary to visit this space as a child and draw from it as a resource. In thinking about this essay I decided to revisit this old relic of my past, to climb again the spiral staircase in the centre of the building which draws one upwards from the children’s section on the ground floor, through the main section on the middle floor (where my mother would be found, selecting novels far beyond my ability to comprehend), and then, finally, ascending further to the lofty heights of the reference section on the upper floor.

On my first attempt to visit the space, and to my naive astonishment, I found the doors closed and locked. Apparently, our public library system no longer operates every Saturday. A second venture after work during the week proved more successful. The building remains much as I remember it: the dated, almost brutalist architecture, the lacquered wooden cabinets, even the scale model of a voortrekker ox waggon which as a child born into the dying embers of apartheid I found so fascinating, and now can't help but feel uncomfortable about. The shelves are emptier than I remember, the passages between them less labyrinthine, but I was pleasantly surprised to find the space still in use. A few students studied at the desks, an elderly woman perused the fiction section, and the down-at-heel had a dry and comfortable place to sit out the summer rain. What are these few souls doing here in this space? Are they simply pursuing their own needs, disconnected from one another, or, rather, are they participating perhaps unconsciously in something more complex, something grander, something more collective?

The Library as Commons

Public libraries are resources, shared, supported, used and sometimes abused by people. They are alive (at least in part) and are subject to neglect, decay and death, but are also fertile, and if treated with practical reverence can be sustained by, and help to sustain, the communities within which they are embedded. In this way we can think of public libraries, and the knowledge contained within them as a commons to be fostered. The concept of knowledge as a commons is not a new idea. Madison, Frischmann and Strandburg [1] have done much exploration into the institutionalisation of knowledge as commons. They posit the idea that knowledge as a shared resource which circulates through networks of community, may be subject to various social dilemmas. Although the authors spend much time focusing on the intangible nature of knowledge, and thus its essential inability to be depleted, the embodiment of that knowledge in physical artifacts (paper books) introduces an aspect of possible degradation, while at the same time allowing for growth and enhancement. Once our knowledge is materialized, so to speak, we begin to understand it as a shareable resource with fixed boundaries, accessible to communities with defined membership, the interaction of the two being subject to rules and standards both formal (the library as a defined public service with rules of engagement), and informal (activities and norms established organically through common use). I would like to suggest that the physical library represents a communal cognition system, one that is not simply an amalgamation of static knowledge, but rather, is active, living, evolving and cognitive.

The Library as Distributed Cognition

The concept of distributed cognition was first introduced by Edwin Hutchins [3] during the 1990s. He argues that the act of thinking occurs not only with a single mind, but rather across minds through communication either directly or via tools. He expands our traditional assumptions of the boundaries of the human mind to encompass social groups and the material environment. This means that, and here I quote Hutchins directly, "both what's in the mind, and what the mind is in are societies".

As I read his ideas, individuals participate, not as centres, but rather as nodes in a much larger, more complex cognition system that holds a kind of externalised mind, the mind of the community. I would argue that our public libraries facilitate Hutchins' distributed cognition by providing an infrastructure upon which this cognition can occur. The library in this context becomes an active entity which scaffolds individuals together into a communal thinking and remembering organism.

The somewhat dusty books, stacked together on the shelves of the Benoni library are not as meticulously ordered as they once were. Alberto Manguel [5] describes the personal library of the German art historian Aby Warburg as 'memory as organized matter'. Manguel is fascinated by the relationship of individual human minds to books and how this relationship is made physical by our placement of books relative to one another. These shelved books, in the nature of their organisation, converse with one another, and in so doing create a cacophony of communication, even as we are discouraged to talk out loud in these spaces. The Benoni library has chosen the Dewey Decimal System to organise its material, but lack of rigor has rendered this system somewhat incomplete. In searching for authors or subjects of one kind, a user is often confronted with books seemingly out of place, tossed onto the shelves in a manner which appears haphazard. I do not see this system failure as a necessarily negative thing. When a user takes a book from a shelf, and deposits it on a different shelf, they are contributing to a more informal arrangement of knowledge, creating synaptic bridges between the information points on those shelves. In this way the 'memory' of the library is organised emergently by the user of that memory (the community itself).

Marginalia

- One formal behaviour institutionalised in the rules of conduct of most libraries, is that users of the common resource pool of books must not deplete the resource by defacing the books, by writing in them, redacting them, or in any other way annotating them with marginalia. Questions that suggest themselves to me are: Although the library attempts to formalize this as a rule, is it really a rule of engagement if it is transgressed so often and so readily by users of the resource?
- Is the creation of marginalia in books always destructive of that resource?

In answering these questions, I would like to expand on my thesis that libraries embody a communal cognition system. I would like to posit that when we share books within our community we engage in that shared cognition, and that when we write in these books, we contribute to that system. In her study of university library staff's attitudes towards marginalia in library books Linda Gilbert [2] attempts to understand why people annotate books. She tells us that when readers mark the books they are reading, it indicates that they are reading with 'particular intention' and that they are engaging in a sort of dialogue with the text. According to Gilbert, the marking of text is less about being destructive, and more about engaging deeply with the knowledge contained within that book. If we subscribe to the idea that library books are an externalised form of communal knowledge, it follows that writing in those books is simply a way of engaging deeply with the knowledge bank of one's community. It becomes an act of participation in that community.

marginalia in library books deepen the connection between users of those books, or in my terms, between individual nodes in the communal cognitive system. Often, when people see writing in books, there is a pre-disposed negative reaction. We have been trained to believe the book has been vandalised, abused, depleted. Björneborn, however, highlights the act of creation of marginalia and the act of discovering marginalia as a social experience in sharing library books. He highlights that the essence of paper books grants them a particular affordance or 'usage potential' which encourages their use in a particular way. It is almost as if the library is encouraging people to communicate in this way. Björneborn sees marginalia as an additional statement to an already existing communication between the text and the reader, one which both enriches and clouds it, and in so doing, creates a 'polyphonic dimension' to the reading experience. In his analysis, Björneborn concentrates on the forward direction of communicative marginalia, that a writer in the present is communicating with a reader in the future. If we however take the perspective that a library as a communal cognition system, it may be more apt to see marginalia not as communication of one individual to another, but rather as an active way for nodes to participate in the communal cognition. Receiving, processing and transferring messages as a simple part of a more complex whole.

While perusing the shelves of the Benoni public library, I pulled out a book and flipped through it. The laminated plastic cover showed signs of much usage, and it occurred to me that this might be a highly trafficked object of knowledge within the cognitive system. The title of the book was 'The Spirit of African Leadership' authored by Lovemore Mbigi. Flipping through the pages I found this to be a kind of text book attempting to not only describe various aspects of 'African' leadership, but also give guidance on implementation. The pages were littered with marginalia which seemed to present a much less optimistic opinion on the subject matter than that of the author. When one reads these pages, one is forced to think about the annotator's point of view. Their annotations have added perspective to this knowledge that is now embedded in the cognitive system. In considering the text and then writing "Lost Africanism, Western Inspirations and Aspirations" on the back page, the annotator has changed the colour of this knowledge, making it a unique point in the commons of the local cognition system. Regardless of the intention of the author, or the person who decided to purchase this book and place it on the shelf, the local community now has its own recorded and transmitted interpretation of this text.

The Degradation of Our Communal Cognition System

Vladimir Vernadsky [4], a Soviet scientist renowned for his groundbreaking work in geochemistry and biogeochemistry, formulated various concepts regarding the earth and its spheres of being. He describes the expansion of the human animal to all corners of the earth, bringing with it an envelope of distributed cognitive activity, which he names the Noosphere. Vernadsky sees this as a natural and inevitable phenomenon of the evolution of planetary activities and cannot help but see this as incontestable evidence that humankind is in fact a single unified whole, that individuals, communities and states are simply units of a great whole of cultural energy.

It is with this belief that he finds our insistence on separation and conflict so upsetting. Vernadsky is consoled, however, in his belief that the Noosphere is an evolutionary biological certainty and thus will eventually fully manifest through human history. This essentially Marxist determinism is comforting in a way, telling us it will all be okay in the end. According to the concept of the Nooshpere, our local libraries, these communal cognition systems are simply nodes themselves, participating in a much larger planetary system.

Returning to the library of my youth, my mind brimming with these lofty ideas, was, however, tinged with melancholy. Although it felt good to reminisce in a once vital pastime, I was very aware of the overall stagnation of the system. I cannot take a blameless position on this. The system has stagnated because I (and others within my community) have ceased contributing to it. The knowledge is turning old, the communicative pathways are crumbling, we are forgetting. There are many causes for this decay I am sure. Governmental funding is low, maintenance is poor, security is a cause of concern. But, aside from these, the internet has radically evolved the way in which knowledge is captured, shared and accessed. There are both benefits and drawbacks to this information revolution. As I alluded to in the introduction to this essay, almost all my reading and consumption, my participation in Vernadsky's Noosphere is now mediated, not through public infrastructure, but instead through mega corporations such as Amazon, Google and Open AI. The implications of this late capitalism are both powerful and frightening. For all my access to a much larger bank of knowledge, I am becoming alienated. I no longer feel the tactile contributions to this knowledge by members of my immediate community. I lack the closeness of reading a book, seeing the presence of other human beings, and belonging to a group. I become a node, only consuming, no longer contributing. In this world where I no longer connect to my library, I become a node adrift from all others.

THE NATURAL COMMONS AS A CLASSROOM -FORAGING ON LAND AND IN THE OCEANS
BY ROUSHANNA GRAY

Learning outside of the box

In a traditional classroom or lecture hall, a square room is filled with students sitting at square tables and chairs, learning through text books, a chalk board or a screen. This environment offers education through traditional instruction: reading, story and study. Attention span in this setting may be limiting with this linear approach, and restricted to student's individual attentiveness, concentration and interest.

Let us pause and allow our minds to wander for a bit, like that of a distracted student. Gaze out the window, close your eyes, relax your shoulders and picture the colour of the ocean and the sound of the sea crashing onto the shore. Imagine for a moment that knowledge sharing can be enhanced by an innovative, engaging and embodied methodology: by simply stepping out into nature; the natural commons of water and land.

When we work with nature as a classroom, our subject surrounds us. It leans in on all sides, generously offering up subjects like physics, ecology, botany, oceanography, astronomy and natural science in exploratory multi-sensory lessons. In this space it is easy to capture and retain attention and it allows for new knowledge to be absorbed through hands on experiences. Education in this environment can be taught through storytelling, exploration and play, and if this outdoor classroom feels safe and nurturing to the student, the pedagogy possibilities are endless.

Out on the lacy shoreline where the mountain slips into the sea, an immersive living classroom can be found. Spring tides take place twice a month every two weeks, over a full and new moon. When the sun and moon are in alignment with the earth, it creates a magnetic force that generates much stronger tides than usual due to the gravitational pull on the earth's waters from these two celestial bodies. When this happens, it creates a very exaggerated high tide which rises up to completely submerge the rockpools and greet the sandy beach, sometimes even extending as far up as the sandy dunes where you will sometime find the telltale signs of beach cast kelp flung high up and mixed in with the dune vegetation. Then slowly, receding over a six-hour period a super tide falls much lower than usual, receding over the rocky shores and out towards to sea, exposing a secret glittering life-filled slice of intertidal zone, also known as the littoral zone, now easily accessible to enter by foot to seek out and observe the many ecological stories at play. This area is not available or accessible over half-moon neap tides when the tidal range is smallest and the fluctuation of the high and low tides are not very pronounced. Spring tide lows always occur in the mornings, shifting up to afternoon lows over neap tides. By understanding these rhythms and cycles of nature, we can flow with the timing of the macrocosms to access the microcosms.

When taking students out to explore this unique ecosystem teaming with a multitude of organisms, a curiosity organically develops when we slow down and take the time to look deeper into nature. This pause and reflection can open up many doors through questions that surface naturally. What is this seaweed called and why is it so different from this one growing on the very same rock? What happens to the anemones when the tide goes out? How does the swell size affect the low tide mark? A deep ecological classroom naturally rises from this kind of immersive learning; our commonwealth. It becomes a nurturing space of inquiry and can form the perfect environment for both teaching and for retaining new information. Once you have learnt something through an embodied experience, you can never unlearn it. If you yourself have a hands-on experience which has taught you something that you can personally connect back to a memory, a time, a place or a taste, you are less likely to forget it. With this shift in perspective and thinking, how can we walk through the world in the same way again? This pedagogy is embodied and creative, encouraging a deeper connection and felt experience with both the natural world and ourselves.

We are never alone in nature.
When we spend time in nature, we start to form relationships as we begin to understand and relate to the plants and seaweeds in our surrounds. It is like walking among friends. They share stories and offer up clues of flavour and food, of healing and community. The Ecklonia maxima (kelp) bobbing like a forest in the ocean, its holdfast - an ecosystem in itself with thousands of species living in symbiosis – is anchored firmly at the bottom of the ocean, the stem or stipe rises up and eventually forms a hollow bulb whose job is to keep the seaweed afloat so its golden fronds glittering at the surface of the sea can photosynthesise in the sunlight. These fronds can be boiled and eaten as a nutritionally dense vegetable and can also be used in place of lasagne sheets, exhibiting an uncanny similarity in texture and taste to pasta. Kelp is full of vitamins a-k, b12, potassium, magnesium, iodine, minerals and micronutrients as well as different pigments. When the kelp fronds are boiled for eating, the pigments like fucoxanthin melt away and dissolve with the application of heat, leaving behind the strongest pigment. As the kelp hits the hot water, it swiftly changes colour like a crowd-pleasing party trick into a bright neon green, revealing the true hue of the light harvesting chlorophyll – one of those moments where science feels like magic.

My head is always filled with recipes when I am at the beach, stepping barefoot over pink and purple pebbles that have been gradually eroded smooth over time by years of the crashing waves. I scan the landscape and my senses switch – I start to see flavour. Growing nearby on the side of the path are the grey leaved wild coastal sage Salvia Aurea bushes. These leaves can be steeped and drunk as a tea to aid coughs, colds, respiratory ailments and digestive disorders.

together, goes together - an old adage that has proven true time and time again in the kitchen. The sage produces pretty flowers in early spring, with corollas as golden as the sunset. These soon drop off the green calyces which fade to a rusty brown hue, becoming papery in texture and delicate to the touch, rustling when the wind picks up and carpets the ground beneath it. This ingenious indigenous plant has adapted itself over time to accommodate and regulate its pollinators.

High up on the tideline in the littoral zone, a cluster of fat periwinkles huddle silently almost camouflaged in the rocky terrain. At night they awaken and are active, embarking on many nocturnal adventures, traipsing around the intertidal zone and feasting on the algae growing on the rocks and even on the slimy trails of other snails. Natural world knowledge is like the unfurling petals of a suurvye (Carpobrotus edulis) flower in the midday sun – layer upon layer of beauty and wonder.

The act of gathering our food from source is one of the most fundamental connections we have to nature as humans living on earth. Foraging has completely changed the way I view and interact with the world. Over the years, it has shown me a deeper respect for what the ocean holds and has taken me on many incredible edible journeys where seaweeds and wild plants are experienced as food and medicine, home and habitat, facilitating connection to community, science, spirit and self. It has altered my senses in the way I look at the coastline and landscapes. These are not just rocks, seaweeds and shellfish, mountains, plants and flowers, these are stories, history and mystery, taste, recipes and heritage, and the educational keys to unlocking so many richly layered lessons to learn and teach.

When we engage with the commons, we engage with an ecological community and diverse ecosystem of ancient technology. The human to nature relationships that we can experience in these blue and green spaces are where we can find a shifted sense of perspective, understanding, value and belonging in the natural world. Like a tree with its roots planted firmly in the earth, we are also connected to all living things. We breathe with the plants and ocean - inhaling oxygen created by the trees and seas, and exhaling carbon dioxide that is taken up again and transformed through this choreographed carbon-oxygen exchange. Our sleep, hormones and hunger sync to the cycle of the moon and the sun. Our blood flows with remarkably similar mineral content to that of the ocean and our bones mirror the calcium, magnesium and phosphorus that we find in the mountains and soils. We belong here, because we are nature. The more we remember this truth, the deeper our reconnection becomes. Stillness invites presence and presence is intimate. It is in these moments of slowness in natural environments, that we can return to relationship with ourselves and come home to our own human nature.

Care through participation and connection

The South Easter wind has been blowing relentlessly over the past few days. The Atlantic is a bright noisy turquoise blue and postcard perfect, the colour of semi-precious stones, lilac breasted roller birds and my sons' eyes when he laughs. This means that the summer sea is absolutely freezing today. Unlike the 20-degree Celsius ocean I swam in happily last week, weaving through the kelp forest around the other side of the mountain in the False Bay, so icy cold and fresh is this side of the peninsula, that when I put my bare feet into the sea my ankles are chilled to the bone like an ice cream headache in the foot – at least 10 degrees colder. The ocean is an unpredictable queen bound by the forces of nature, dancing with the elements. She can transform dramatically overnight or even within hours, with the changes of the weather, swell, wind and waves.

Today the air is filled with salt, minerals and iodine, a thick heady mix. It is a spring tide low with a small swell running. The waves have receded far beyond the biggest rocks where the black oystercatcher birds cry out to each other and forage in pairs for shellfish and polychaetes with their blood red beaks. A brief one-hour window in the intertidal zone awaits before the pushing tide returns and covers up this delicious space. I carefully step onto a seaweed strewn rock, crouch down and look into a rockpool. Whenever I return here no matter how many times over, new questions always surface. Each little rockpool is like a treasure chest, filed with brightly coloured jewels. Today the treasure is represented by an abundance of ingredients and the beach is full of food. I get up and look around this edible landscape. I am standing in a living pantry fully stocked with ocean vegetables, shellfish, sea urchins and more. I carefully cut a few seaweeds for supper with a pair of scissors, just a third of each so the seaweeds can easily regenerate, rock hopping as I go to spread the harvesting load. Porphyra capensis, our local nori, for oven baked chips. Brassicophycus bifurcariopsis / wrack, a greenish brown seaweed that looks like little soft branchlets and the easy to identify emerald-green Ulva ridgida / sea lettuce for a salad. Young light coloured Ekclonia maxima fronds are carefully selected for a kelp lasagne. I have also run out of Aeodes orbitosa / slippery orbit in my dry store pantry and cut handfuls where it is growing abundantly. I use them at home and for classes to thicken soups and stews, for adding flavour and nutrients to rice and using it in place of tin foil for bakes and fire cooking. Once sundried, all seaweeds can be stored for years in a sealed container and revived when soaked in warm water. Any plastic bottles, fishing line or other litter I come across in the rockpools gets collected too. A reciprocal relationship has developed over time - care through participation and connection. I pause, give thanks to the ocean and head back home to make supper and plan tomorrows class in nature.

LOCAL NEWS

INTERNATIONAL SEED DAY
BY DELWYN PILLAY

To mark International Seed Day, the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) supported the Greenpeace Africa Seed Workshop held at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Hillcrest, KZN.

International Seeds Day is observed on April 26th every year to raise awareness about the vital importance of seeds in our lives and the need to protect and preserve seed diversity, which is critical in maintaining food sovereignty and the health of our agricultural systems.

“It is also a day to also exercise one's right to save and share seeds. By saving and sharing seeds among community food growers ~ we are promoting both seed sovereignty and food sovereignty”, says SAFSC provincial coordinator Delwyn Pillay.

Delwyn used the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC) Seed Saving ~ Activist Guide to help facilitate the workshop. Delwyn adds that the seed saving guide is user-friendly with great supporting illustrations. To download the guide for free: https://www.safsc.org.za/seed-saving-activist-guide/

THE INVISIBLE BARRIER TO RESILIENCE
BY DOROTHY YEGON

In many parts of Africa women are the backbone of Agriculture. Yet despite their pivotal role in feeding nations, millions of these women do not legally own their land they farm. This legal exclusion doesn't deny them security, it locks them out of participating in critical efforts like climate change , mitigation, soil conservation and sustainable water management.

Without formal land ownership women cannot access the financial tools needed to invest in sustainable farming . Banks rarely lend to those without legal tittle. Climate adaptation grants, government subsidies and training programs are often targeted at landowners, leaving women on margins. As climate change brings more erratic rainfall prolonged droughts and degraded soil the lack of access becomes more than unfair it becomes deadly.

In Rural communities in Kenya, Nigeria and Ethiopia when land is passed down through patriarch lines or controlled by male heads of household women must ask permission to plant trees, adopt soil saving techniques or dig water-conserving trenches. Without autonomy there is no investment, without investment there is no resilience.

Power of Recognition studies shows that when women are given legal rights to land they invest in long term sustainability. They plant trees, they improve irrigation, they rotate crops and nature the soil. Their children eat better. Their communities grow stronger. The land becomes more productive.

In Rwanda legal reforms granting women equal land rights have led to greater investments in conservation practices. In Uganda women land ownership have been linked to improved household food security.

Across the continent the evidence is clear when women own the land everyone benefits. To break the cycle of vulnerability African governments , civil society and international partners must make Women's land rights a cornerstone of climate adaptation strategies that means, enforcing equal inheritance and land ownership laws, reforming customary practices that exclude women, providing access to legal aid and land registration services, ensuring climate financing and training reach women farmers.

African women are already leading in agriculture . They should be leading in sustainability too. But without land they remain invisible partners in fight against climate change. Legal recognition is not just matter of justice it is path to prosperity for women , for families and for the planet.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

CLIMATE, CHICKENS, AND CRISIS: WHY WE NEED A CLIMATE EMERGENCY SOCIAL CONTRACT

South Africa's recent suspension of poultry imports from Brazil has raised alarm bells across the food system. While the mainstream narrative focuses on the economic fallout, price hikes, protein shortages, and pressure on local producers, what remains absent is a critical link: the role of climate change in driving the very outbreaks prompting such bans.

Avian influenza in Brazil is not an isolated incident. Globally, we're seeing a sharp rise in animal disease outbreaks exacerbated by climate shocks. Foot and Mouth Disease in South Africa is persisting longer because warmer temperatures help viruses survive. Bluetongue Disease in Wales is expanding due to a longer season and range for the midges that carry it. In Kenya, Rift Valley Fever is intensifying due to extreme rainfall followed by heat, conditions perfect for mosquito breeding. And across Europe, scientists are tracking how diseases once confined to specific zones are now appearing in entirely new regions due to global warming.

These aren't random biological events, they are ecological signals. Yet, media coverage and government responses remain narrowly focused on containment, trade, and economic impact. This tunnel vision obscures the deeper systemic vulnerabilities in our industrialised, export-oriented food systems. Calls by figures like John Steenhuisen for a "Biosecurity Compact" may seem proactive, but in reality, they reflect a dangerous drift toward securitising biological threats without addressing the structural drivers behind them. Protectionist measures and state-led bio-political responses won't build resilience. What we need is not a biosecurity pact, but a Climate Emergency Social Contract—a people-led response that prioritizes democratic accountability, ecological regeneration, and food sovereignty.

This contract must prioritize grassroots food systems over fragile global supply chains. It must invest in agroecological farming, support local producers, and democratize land, seed, and water commons. These are not just moral imperatives, they are practical necessities in a warming world. Without a climate-grounded transformation, outbreaks will multiply, prices will continue to surge, and hunger will deepen. Our response cannot be militarised containment. It must be food system transformation from below.

🔗 Download the CESC document here
Further reading: "Bluetongue in Europe: How climate change is shifting disease patterns"

SOLIDARITY ECONOMY NEWS

WATER JUSTICE FOR SOUTH AFRICA: A CALL TO ACTION
BY AWANDE BUTHELEZI

Water is life, yet for millions of South Africans, access to clean, reliable water remains an ongoing struggle. Climate change, failing infrastructure, and poor governance have created a crisis that threatens not only human well-being but also the environment and our nation's future. The Climate Justice Charter Movement (CJCM) is taking a bold step forward in 2025, launching a six-month national campaign to push for water justice and ensure that this precious resource remains a common good, not a commodity. This campaign is a call for deep systemic transformation. From grassroots activism to policy reform, the campaign aims to mobilise communities, educate the public, and pressure those in power to protect our water commons and accelerate the deep just transition.

A Nation on the Brink The warning signs have been clear for years. The 2017 "Day Zero" scare in Cape Town served as a stark reminder of how fragile our water systems are. While the immediate crisis was avoided, countless communities across the country (particularly in townships and rural areas) have continued to face their own Day Zero moments every day. Gauteng, South Africa's most populous province, is experiencing an accelerating decline in water infrastructure, turning governance failures into life-threatening water shortages. The CJCM campaign recognises that climate change is exacerbating the crisis, bringing more severe droughts, floods, and ecological disasters. But these are not merely natural disasters, they are governance failures. The movement's goal is not just to react to crises but to build long-term grassroots solutions that protect South Africa's water resources and ensure equitable access for all.

Three Phases of Action
The CJCM Water Justice Campaign is structured into three phases, each with targeted objectives and a roadmap for real impact. Phase One (March - April): Building Awareness and Mobilisation The first step is to educate and organise. This phase focuses on: Launching a national campaign platform to unite communities in water activism. Developing water activist material to empower communities with knowledge.

Raising public awareness through social media, multimedia toolkits, and community meetings. Establishing provincial activist forums to localise efforts. Advocating for community control of water resources and promoting water commons management forums.

Phase Two (May - Mid-June): Grassroots Mobilisation & Research This second phase focuses on understanding the crisis in depth and mobilising local action. Key actions include:

Hosting community town halls and forums to gather firsthand accounts of water struggles. Mapping out crisis points where water scarcity or pollution is at its worst. Legal advocacy for water as a constitutional right. Door-to-door engagements to educate communities about their water rights. Organising community-led water testing and audits to document issues and demand accountability. Phase Three (Mid-June - July): Transformative Change The final phase seeks to take our CJCM water perspective to the mainstream. In this phase, we will release our CJCM Water Policy and present it to local and national governments. We will also establish community-led river and fire-risk management groups. Finally, we will also push for the recognition of Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs) and stronger laws against pollution. Beyond the Campaign: Sustaining the Momentum This campaign will serve as the foundation of continued water justice work within the CJCM. Beyond this campaign, the CJCM plans to continue mobilising through regional forums and structures, advocating for sustained grassroots activism and forging international alliances to strengthen the global water justice movement. South Africa cannot afford to wait for another crisis. The time for action is now.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

WHETHER YOU ARE AN ACTIVIST, COMMUNITY LEADER, OR CONCERNED CITIZEN, YOU HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY. JOIN THE CJCM, SPREAD THE WORD, ATTEND MEETINGS, OR SIMPLY SHARE OUR MATERIAL TO EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS. WATER JUSTICE IS NOT A LUXURY—IT'S A NECESSITY. TOGETHER, WE CAN ENSURE THAT NO ONE IS LEFT WITHOUT WATER AND THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS INHERIT A NATION WHERE WATER IS RESPECTED, PROTECTED, AND SHARED FAIRLY. THE FIGHT FOR WATER JUSTICE IS THE FIGHT FOR LIFE ITSELF. LET'S ACCELERATE THE DEEP JUST TRANSITION!

ACTIVIST TOOLS

Visit our websites: We have several activist's tools from mapping tools, to training guides and visual tools and others. All of these are important activist's tools! https://www.safsc.org.za/ AND https://cjcm.org.za/ .

Check out recordings for our online food systems dialogues on Youtube at: **The Ocean Commons: Risks and Challenges for Food Sovereignty**: https://youtu.be/vNuTiQmp3y8?si=Z51MsIt-ucg67FE-.
Closing the Loop: Food Sovereignty and Zero Waste: https://youtu.be/qr5MCUunuHw? si=hK3beyC4v9qBEfy7
Food Sovereignty as Emancipatory Feminism: https://youtu.be/wfT03mrprk8?si=unGSnOwKMhb1GmFH
Launch of Volume 8 of the Democratic Marxism Series_Digital Capitalism and Its Limits: Technotopia, Power and Risk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvudDmVHCCA
Tornado Destruction in Tongaat: Lessons for Disaster Management & Reconstruction: https://emancipatoryfutures.co.za/programme/talks/harold-maistry