

Convivial Futures
Public Programme

An exhibition at Qatar Preparatory School (QPS)
and the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ)

Conviviality

التآلف

For millennia
على مدى آلاف السنين

Desert dwellers survived
نجا سكان الصحراء

as Living with

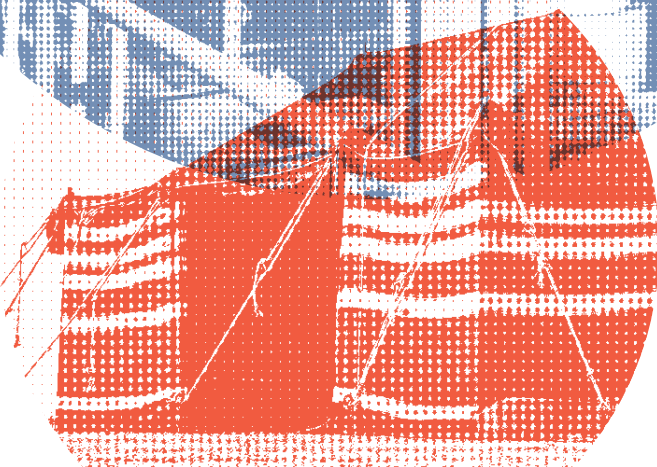
العيش مع

Uncertainty

من خلال السيطرة
not through control

اليقين

but through rhythm
بل من خلال الإيقاع



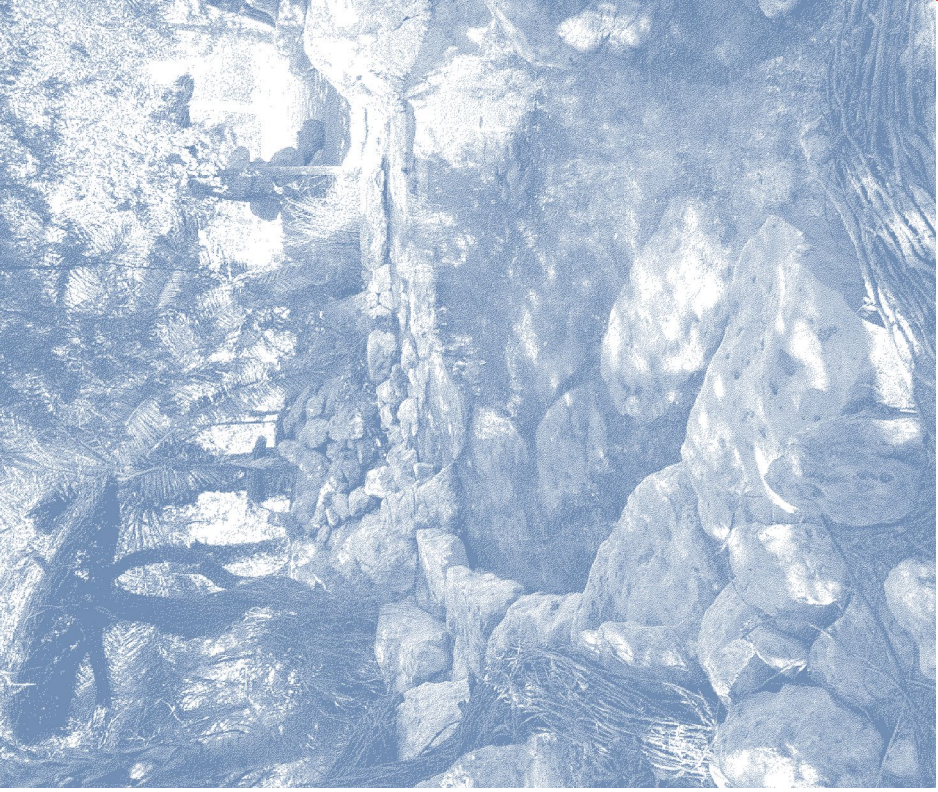
Doha, Qatar
November 2025

Desert Ecologies

No being survives alone, especially in desert ecologies. The mangroves Dr. Aspa Chatziefthimiou helps regenerate stabilise coastlines and sediments; they are nurseries where marine life reproduces. Their resilience is entangled: roots, tides, microorganisms, juvenile fish, salt, and mud exchanging energy across the land-sea threshold.

"Human security is not separate from biodiversity. It is nested inside it."

Farms reveal similar dependencies: pollinators as partners; shrubs anchoring soil; quifers storing ancient water; microbial cultures animating soil and stomachs; seed banks carrying ecological histories. "Soil memory" names this durability — life persisting through dormancy, waiting, cycling, regeneration. Yet modern systems respond to uncertainty by intensifying control: more cooling, more desalination, more enclosure. Technology becomes a shield rather than a collaborator; governance a fortress rather than a corridor.



A shaded pond at Torba Farm, Ash Shafallahiyyah, north-central Qatar, an oasis-like micro-ecology where stone, palm canopy, and circulating water create refuge from desert heat and sustain a carefully manicured and curated agroecological landscape.

What emerges from the Countryside Exhibition and the Autumn 2025 Convivial Futures programme is a more intertwined view of what sustains life: reproduction as earth-care, labour as metabolism, and care as the infrastructure beneath every food system and conservation claim. Across dates and dairies, soil memory and microbial work, enclosure histories and wage dependency, the same question returned: what does the countryside reproduce — life, or extraction? The work of being alive is never only human, and never only economic. It is the shared labour of bodies, species, waters, and worlds, shaped by governance, property, metabolic processes and the technologies that modulate them. Convivial futures begin where this work is made visible and supported: where commons replace isolation, where technology deepens relation rather than domination, and where nourishment becomes a practice of remembering interdependence.

With gratitude to

Qatar Museums; OMA/AMO; the Countryside 2 curatorial and coordination team; Torba Farm (Nasha, Muhammad, Fatma and the Torba staff); Mazzraty Dairy (management, engineers, guides, handlers, and herd teams); Qatar Preparatory School (QPS leadership, staff, and facilities teams); Chef Noof, Chef Jihad, John Mari, Roxanne, and the research kitchen team; the media, documentation, and logistics crews supporting all public programme events; the symposium and field-visit speakers and contributors — Aspa Chatziefthimiou; Lorato Tahane; Nitin Rai; Robert Carter; Safouan Azouzi; Karl Widerquist; Tarek Al-Olaimy — and all participants, students, attendees, volunteers, and colleagues.

Produced by **WorkOverTime (2025–26)**.

Design by Nur Studio: **Judy Kessba & Ayyse Demirel**

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Mazraty Dairy, Processing Factory, Ab Nakh'ah, Qatar, part of the National Group for Agriculture and Animal Products, vertically integrated system, where automated processing, by-product recycling, and controlled production environments anchor Qatar's contemporary food-security infrastructure.



Food Security

When nations secure food, water, energy, or materials for one place, the costs often reappear in another countryside — displaced through trade regimes, supply chains, and land markets. "Self-sufficiency" may stabilise one territory while destabilising another.

"Resource security has geography."

During the 2017 diplomatic rift, sand was extracted from local dunes — formations shaped by geological time, woven into desert habitats. Emergency logic treated dunes as inert stockpiles; desert ecology insists otherwise. The pattern repeats through slower mechanisms: water-stressed regions export water through industrial agriculture and tourism; pollution concentrates where fertiliser is produced; land acquisition extends food-security strategies into places already facing

hunger and hydrological stress. The countryside becomes a ledger where risks are hidden and re-distributed.

"One area's safety becomes another area's insecurity."



Street 967, Qatar — a thin ribbon of asphalt cutting through open desert, where scrub, sand, and sky stretch outward toward the vastness of both desert and sea.

Conviviality as Living With Uncertainty

Part of a series of reflections from the November 2025 public programme for Countryside: A Place to Live Not Leave. Through symposia, excursions, tastings, and shared dialogue, "Convivial Futures" approached the countryside through Convivial Conservation — asking how just coexistence might replace logics of separation, cultivating conditions for human and more-than-human flourishing.

"Uncertainty is not a failure, it is part of the terrain."

In the programme, uncertainty emerges not as failure but as part of ecological systems. Desert lifeways evolve through rhythm, mobility, and attunement to heat and irregular rainfall. Modern security answers uncertainty with protection, overproduction, and enclosure. These are ingenuities that breed dependency, shifting ecological and social costs across landscapes, especially in times of crisis. To live convivially with uncertainty is not to reject technology but to reorient it toward securities that are rooted in interdependence between soil and seed, water and wind, humans and wider webs of life.

"To live with uncertainty is not to reject technology, but to reorient it — from shield to collaborator."

Countryside Reflections, on living with uncertainty, field notes from Convivial Futures, Doha, November 2025

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emissions, and waste.

— Bram Büscher

"Conservation has too often been cleaning the mess behind a destructive machine."

"There's a precariousness to the countryside... we inwardly have a scar about that." — Tariq Al-Olaimy

Tariq Al-Olaimy and ecologist Dr. Aspa Chatziefthimiou reflect on a regional inheritance of precarity. A founding generation of Qataris made their way through the pearl economy — a livelihood undone when cultured and synthetic pearls transformed global markets. Such stories leave a scar: the sense that nature-based economies are fragile.

Desert Agriculture

Against this backdrop, desert agriculture becomes an astonishing feat of control. Climate-controlled barns. Sensor-managed dairies. Pivot-irrigated fodder circles visible from space. Desalinated irrigation. Cooling systems for heat-stressed livestock. The ingenuity is undeniable — so are the dependencies: high water and energy demand, misalignment with extreme heat, reliance on imported feed, disrupted supply chains, and persistent ethical questions about welfare, emissions, and waste.

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Mediating Countryside

الوساطة في
الريف

Material landscapes mediated by
المشاهد المادية التي تتوسطها

multiple, layered

and at times

Mythologies &

الأساطير
معانٍ متعددة،
ومتراكبة
وغير متجانسة

Materialisms

والماديات
& often contradictory
meanings
وغالبًا ما تكون متناقضة

Doha, Qatar
November 2025

Paradox 1 — **Nature, Without Nature**
Nature, Without Nature. Landscapes that forged pastoral imaginations — rural England, rolling hills of Northern Europe — are now among Earth's most nature-depleted regions. The modern countryside emerged through enclosure, displacement, and agricultural consolidation. The idyllic field conceals histories of extraction.

Paradox 2 — **Escape, Rather Than Relation**
Industrial modernity reframed nature as scenery to visit and aestheticise rather than live within. Yet those who work the land — for whom irrigation, road repair, walls and fences are technologies and traditions across generations — are increasingly marginalised by environmentalist and technological "solutions." The countryside is loved and left, not loved and lived with.

Paradox 3 — **Imperial Hinterland**
Urbanisation at planetary scale now encloses land across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, transforming whole regions into resource frontiers. Forests, soil, labour, and water are outsourced; wealth accumulates centrally. Colonial geographies endure in contemporary chains.

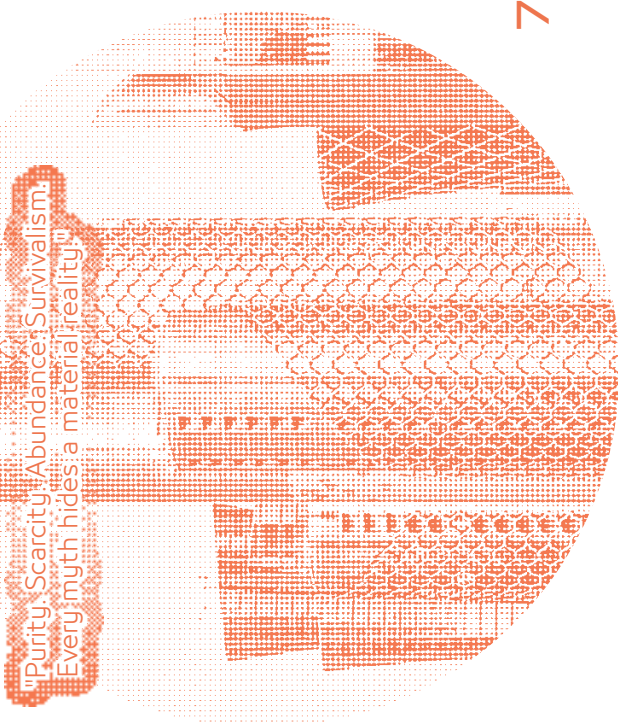
"The rural is never only soil and sand. It is also narrative and media."



Mangrove nursery and restoration site near Khasooma on Qatar's northern coast, led by Aspa D. Chatziefthimiou — where tidal ecologies, saltwater soils, and patient cultivation meet the infrastructural edge of the desert.

Myth of Purity
the countryside as un-aerial views of endless touched, obscuring irriga- dunes, concealing the ener- tion, imported feed, cooling gy-intensive activities that infrastructures, and labour continuously consume re- regimes. sources.

Myth of Scarcity
the desert as empty void, heritage images celebrate masking complex ecologies endurance while erasing and long histories of adap- politics of dispossession tation. and forced transformation.



"Purity, Scarcity, Abundance, Survivalism. Every myth hides a material reality."

What emerges from the Countryside Exhibition and the Autumn 2025 Convivial Futures programme is a more inter- twined view of what sustains life: reproduction as earth- care, labour as metabolism, and care as the infrastruc- ture beneath every food system and conservation claim. Across dates and dairies, soil memory and microbial work, enclosure histories and wage dependency, the same ques- tion returned: what does the countryside reproduce — life, or extraction? The work of being alive is never only human, and never only economic. It is the shared labour of bod- ies, species, waters, and worlds, shaped by governance, property, metabolic processes and the technologies that modulate them. Convivial futures begin where this work is made visible and supported: where commons replace isolation, where technology deepens relation rather than domination, and where nourishment becomes a practice of remembering interdependence.

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Driving northward along the coastal road into Doha, the landscape shifts abruptly—from low desert scrub and tidal flats to glass towers, geometric façades, and engineered boulevards—an accelerated pas- sage from dune ecology to vertical city.

Part of a series of reflections from the opening pub- lic programme for Countryside: A Place to Live Not Leave. "Convivial Futures" approached the countryside through Convivial Conservation — "to live with" — exam- ining the politics of connection over disconnection.

"Images do not reflect landscapes. They shape what landscapes are allowed to become."

Countrysides are created and recreated through images, diagrams, narratives, branding, data visualisations, and tourism aesthetics. Rural space is mythologised, materi- alised, and mediated, participating in fantasies of purity, emptiness, abundance, and cultural memory.

To circulate representations of the countryside is to par- ticipate in world-building. What kinds of mediation are required to build the myths — and the material realities — of con- nection?

"From protected areas to promoted areas — landscapes inhabited with people, sustainably." — Bram Büscher

Countryside Reflections, on living with uncertainty, field notes from Convivial Futures, Doha, November 2025

"A desert framed as empty invites extraction. A desert framed as heritage invites preservation."

In Qatar, the countryside appears in contradictory forms: a desert of leisure; a heritage landscape shaped by Bedouin identity; a tourism experience; a laboratory for agricultural experimentation; a working terrain of pipelines, desalina- tion plants, and logistics networks. Each is filtered through specific visual regimes: satellite imagery mapping vegetation density; NDVI grids translating plant life into colour; agricultural logos promising purity; roadside views framed through car windows; touristic scripts narrating falconry and camel culture; museum dioramas staging the desert as timeless. The countryside is encountered not only as land, but as image — rehearsed, branded, diagrammed, aestheticised.

Mediating the Countryside

The countryside is not simply a "place" defined by non-urban character. It is mediated and imagined space — constructed through representation as much as through soil, water, and labour.

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Archipelagoes عواالم من ماضي

Interconnected oases, like islands
وحدات مترابطة، وكذلك جزر
can be modes and models
يمكن أن تكون أنماطاً ونماذج

of Future-Pasts مستقبل

for constructing
livable futures
لبناء مستقبل صالح للعيش

Design as Remembrance

Dr. Safouan Azouzi reframes design not as invention, but remembrance. His grandmother asked, "Do you really need to win the Nobel Prize to talk about permaculture?" — revealing how traditional knowledge was never lost, only devalued. Colonial governance dismantled biocultural commons both materially and epistemically: traditional water-sharing systems, lineage-based land management, and seasonal rhythms were replaced by private ownership and centralised technocratic control.

"Permaculture is one way of saying 'agriculture' in a traditional oases." — Dr. Safouan Azouzi

Safouan critiques the paternalism of "design for the other 90%". Instead, he advocates design from lived territorial knowledge — commoning practice, not capital's turbocharger. "Designers are storytellers. We can create convergence spaces." Archipelagic thinking, drawn from Édouard Glissant, offers an alternative to mainland, centralised models. Islands are distinct yet connected; they resist hierarchy and monoculture. Oases are archipelagos too — nodes of life distributed across harsh terrain, bound by shared water and reciprocal governance. In Tunisia's Nefzaoua region, colonial reorganisation replaced elected Water Chiefs with centralised regimes. Oases merged into a single 38,000-hectare industrial zone. The water table now drops 3–5 metres per year. Yet oases remain design models for the future: distributed, relational, adaptive.



Qatar Oilfield Supply Centre, Al-Rayyan Industrial Area — a modest storefront within Doha's industrial supply district, providing equipment and components for oilfield engineering, pipelines, and communications systems that underpin the region's energy infrastructure.

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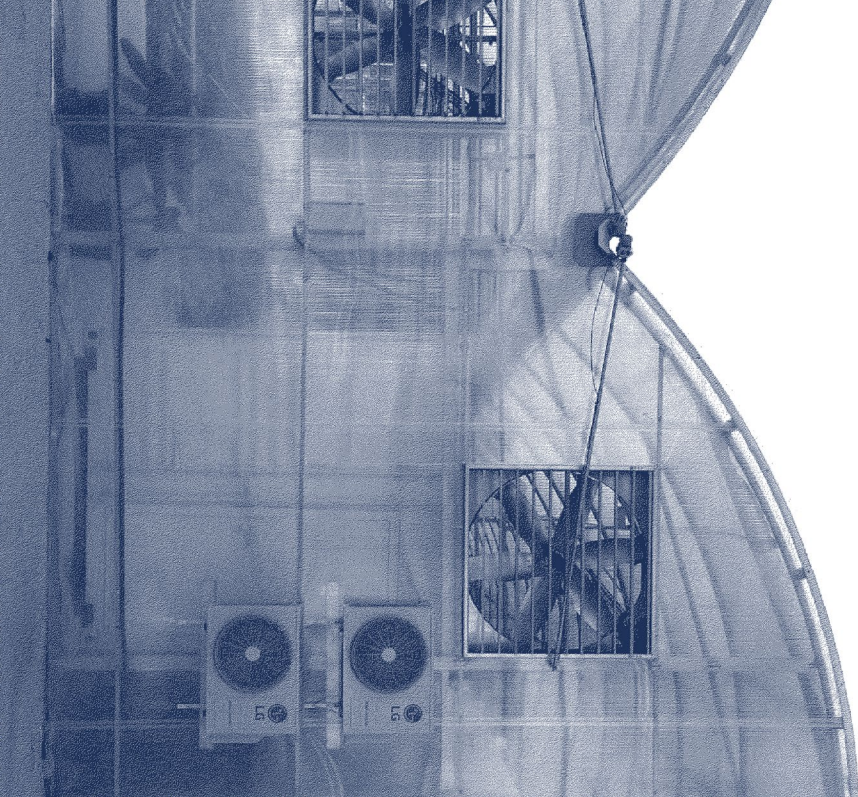
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Ventilation fans and cooling systems regulate the greenhouse environment at the former Doha Boys' School, site of the Countryside: A Place to Live Not Leave exhibition installation by Hassad Foods—a microclimate where engineered airflow, shade, and irrigation sustain cultivation in both Qatar's desert conditions and Doha's urban ones.

Karl Widerquist reminded us that private property — often treated as natural — is historically recent. "We are led to believe that it benefits everyone... but the system we have did not develop naturally — it was imposed." Before enclosure, most human societies governed land as commons: overlapping, flexible, negotiated systems of shared access and responsibility. Around 400 years ago, enclosure and colonial expansion advanced together. European elites transformed themselves from administrators of shared land into exclusive owners. Rural populations were expelled. Commons were fenced. Subsistence was severed. What was dismantled was not only access to land, but the relational webs that sustained ecological balance. Enclosure introduced a new ontology: land as commodity. Nearly half of Earth's habitable surface has been converted for human consumption. Land-use change remains the leading driver of biodiversity collapse. The countryside feeds the city, yet is metabolised in the process.

"Private property is not natural. It was imposed." — Karl Widerquist

The Loss of the Common Earth

A hay shipment traveling along Salwa Road near Mukaynis, close to the Satellite Earth Station–Doha and the Markhiyat Al Darb hiking area, fodder moving through Qatar's transport corridors, linking oases of livestock and agriculture infrastructure.



"Interconnected oases, like islands, can be modes and models of future-pasts for constructing livable futures."



This publication traces how conservation, commons, property, ecology, and sovereignty intersect in a time of planetary burnout — across deep-time histories that shape such conditions.

We imagine a countryside not defined by extraction or enclosure, but by relations spanning ancestral, generational, and geologic time. In November 2025, a public programme unfolded through field visits and symposia across oases, farms, springs, and historical settlements — reflecting on shared land, mobile rhythms, communal water, and multispecies coexistence.

"Pasts become design principles for living otherwise."

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"We need a renewal of critical, perhaps even radical, imagination." — Bram Büscher

Technology can participate too — when aligned with reciprocity rather than enclosure. design-with rather than design-over. Future-pasts persist in fragments: water-sharing agreements, seasonal mobility, distributed land use, communal governance, and seeds lying dormant for decades awaiting rain. The countryside need not be abandoned nor intensified beyond recognition. It can be reconfigured through archipelagic spatial thinking that links wetlands, mangrove corridors, aquifer basins, and cultivated patches into living systems. Technology can participate too — when aligned with reciprocity rather than enclosure.

"Dormancy is not absence. It is stored possibility."

To be convivial toward the future is not to design crisis, but to treat the future as something we

Archipelagic thinking offers an alternative to singular master plans. It suggests distributed constellations of resilience: multiple, situated, relational futures composed of interconnected nodes. Oases, like islands, offer perspective for how we think about the future.

Archipelagos Of Future-Pasts

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The Work Life is sustained by the visible work of labour تستمر الحياة بفضل العمل المرئي of Being Alive أن تكون حيًا and invisible work of reproduction والعمل غير المرئي لإعادة الإنتاج

Methods of Nourishment

Some of the most consequential work happens below the surface. Soil repairs structure, hosts microbial symbioses, weathers seeds, stores nutrients, and carries "memory" — traces of rainfall, grazing, disturbance, and regeneration. Desert ecologies teach a different tempo of reproduction: dormancy, waiting, sudden bloom, slow repair. Infrastructure overlays these cycles but does not erase them; life persists in pockets, thresholds, and intervals.

"Every bite carries photosynthesis: irrigation, digestion, fermentation, transport, and kitchen work."

Food systems make these relations tangible. Fertility is not only a chemical input; it is the result of organisms working together across time. Pollinators, composts, microbes, shade, and water circulation become forms of cooperative labour. Even the most industrial sites depend on living processes they cannot fully command: digestion, immunity, bacterial cultures, reproductive timing, metabolic heat.



Date palm grove at Torba Farm, Qatar—rows of cultivated palms shading grasses and understory growth, with green harvest baskets hanging from branches, part of the careful human labour and ecological care that sustains oasis agriculture in the desert.



Shared eating reorients this picture. A tasting is a method of acknowledging dependence. Every bite carries photosynthesis, irrigation, animal digestion, microbial fermentation, transport, kitchen work, and the histories that organised land and labour to make that bite possible. Reproduction is never private. It is collective earthcare: the distributed maintenance of conditions for life.



Desert rose crystal found near Rawdat Rashed, Qatar. Formed when gypsum or baryte crystals grow within sandy desert soils, the mineral binds with sand grains as water evaporates, slowly creating rose-like layered structures over long periods. These fragile formations record the quiet geological reproductivity of arid landscapes—mineral precipitation, groundwater movement, and evaporation.

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Against this, commons practices appear not as nostalgia but as survival technology: shared wells, rotational grazing, seasonal harvesting, collective decision-making, overlapping rights and responsibilities distributed across kinship. They did not eliminate scarcity; they organised life within it.

"When subsistence is severed, people are free only to sell their labour."

When access to land, water, grazing, and gathering is restricted, reproduction migrates into the market. Food becomes commodity; shelter

The feeling of permanent acceleration — work that never ends, survival tethered to income — did not emerge naturally. It is bound to a long history of enclosure: the conversion of shared land into private property, the severing of subsistence from territory, and the rise of wage dependence as the default condition of survival.

Enclosure & Wage Life

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Layered highway overpasses near Al Soudan North, Doha—modern urban infrastructure multiplying itself across the landscape, channels of mobility and circulation sustaining the continuous reproduction of the city.



Attention turns here to the work that keeps worlds going: reproduction, nourishment, maintenance, care.

Life is sustained by visible labour — building, harvesting, milking, transporting — and by invisible work: seeds waiting years, soils remembering, microbes fermenting, palms fruiting through human care, animals producing under engineered climates. Modern political economies often split this work. Some living beings are prone to reproduce life; others reproduce capital. Access to land and water is severed, and the means of subsistence are repackaged as wage dependency — life bought back through labour.

"The work of being alive is never only human, and never only economic."



"What kind of economy doesn't destroy people and nature perennially?" — Bram Büscher

Every living being labours. Plants metabolise sunlight; microbes cycle nutrients; animals transform feed into milk; palms convert water and heat into fruit. Humans plant, pollinate, repair, carry, cook, clean — keeping things going. Yet the work that sustains life is rarely counted as "the economy." It is treated as background: naturalised, feminised, outsourced, or hidden behind machines.

"Reproduction cannot remain invisible. Care is not an afterthought: it is the architecture..."

To name reproduction —

Reproduction cannot remain invisible. Care is not an afterthought: it is the architecture...

(Re)Production: Life's Work, Life's Politics