Hello World!

Welcome to the Ecologies of Technology zine!

As the oligarchs take over the world we are actively looking for opportunities to spend less time on the tech bro platforms and instead find reasons to invite people to join us in our own spaces online. This is our third attempt to create a zine dedicated to one online class, this one focused on the ever important and pressing theme of the day, *Ecologies of Technology: Tools to Disconnect/Reconnect* led by the lovely human and ethical veteran activist, Alistair Alexander!

This is a brand new course and Alistair is very excited to share all of his accumulated knowledge with us which is especially important to me at this moment when the world is literally in crisis on all fronts. I personally do not know how to look away from it all. While it feels like a moral responsibility to understand all the world news daily, I'm also aware that if we don't learn to disconnect right now, it will have far greater implications for the future, in which even any semblance of peace of mind will not be sustainable. SOS Alistair!!! Lol. I laugh to not cry.

This zine only scratches the surface of what this course has to offer. We hope you Enjoy! And if you feel so inspired, come join us for the full five-week online course which begins this Wednesday! We'd love to have you. <3

In Solidarity,

Rachel Uwa,

Creative educator, human, and artist at School of Machines, Making & Make-Believe

# Alistair Alexander

Ethical Sustainable Tech Practitioner

Alistair explores the ecological and socal impact of technologies in workshops, art, research, writing and lots of other hopefully engaging ways. Alistair teaches a seminar on Ecologies of Technology at The Universtiy of Europe for Applied Sciences, and is currently researching regenerative futures for the AI and digital sector wth Bath Spa University. He recently displayed his work Connection Matters at the Invisble Networks exhibition in Berlin.

He has hosted workshops on technology and ecology at re:publica, Mozfest and Floating Universtiy and many other events online and offline. Alistair was one of the first people in Europe to write about China's - and other countries' - internet surveillance in the early 2000s. From 2016 to 2020 Alistair led the Glass Room immersive art project on technology, data and privacy with Tactical Tech.

https://reclaimedsystems.substack.com/

https://reclaimed.systems

reclaimed_alicma@mastodon.world
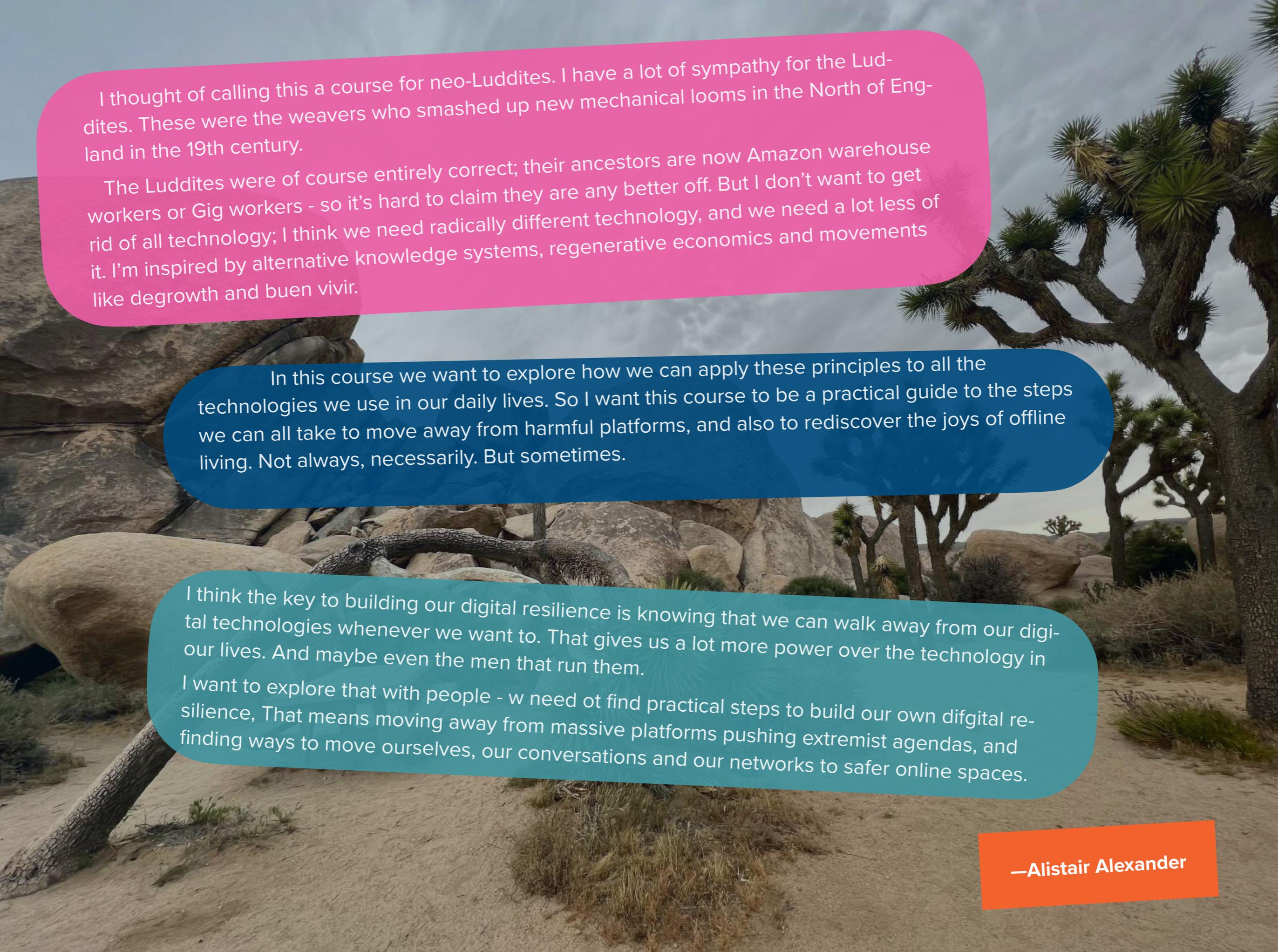
I thought of calling this a course for neo-Luddites. I have a lot of sympathy for the Luddites. These were the weavers who smashed up new mechanical looms in the North of England in the 19th century.

The Luddites were of course entirely correct; their ancestors are now Amazon warehouse workers or Gig workers - so it's hard to claim they are any better off. But I don't want to get rid of all technology; I think we need radically different technology, and we need a lot less of it. I'm inspired by alternative knowledge systems, regenerative economics and movements like degrowth and buen vivir.

In this course we want to explore how we can apply these principles to all the technologies we use in our daily lives. So I want this course to be a practical guide to the steps we can all take to move away from harmful platforms, and also to rediscover the joys of offline living. Not always, necessarily. But sometimes.

I think the key to building our digital resilience is knowing that we can walk away from our digital technologies whenever we want to. That gives us a lot more power over the technology in our lives. And maybe even the men that run them.

I want to explore that with people - w need ot find practical steps to build our own difgital resilience, That means moving away from massive platforms pushing extremist agendas, and finding ways to move ourselves, our conversations and our networks to safer online spaces.

—Alistair Alexander

When I was at university, I was mesmerised by this idea of the internet but I had never actually seen it.
So i went to search for it. And eventually, in a long neglected library in a random suburb, I found the
only 2 computers in my university that at that point actually had a web browser.

Switching on the computer I finally connected to ...the web.
It was an extraordinary moment.
I remember actually visiting the web page of a pet shop.
In tokyo.
I could actually look at Japanese dog food.
In real time. (actually, in real time just was not a thing then).
I do not speak Japanese.
I don't have a dog.
But I knew nothing would ever be the same again.
I've been captivated by the internet ever since.

At that point the internet seemed like a truly liberatory technology. And it definitely was,
We were all transfixed by it.

But somehow between that point and now, our relationship with technology has changed.
Now many of us feel trapped in an abusive relationship with the technologies we use - or use us.

And as we are facing ever more climate chaos.
And political extremism.
It's clear our technologies - and especially our internet technologies - are a major driver of both.

This course is for anyone who has a deep feeling that what we need to do is stop, get off our phones,
breathe, and take in the multitude of intelligences in the living world around us.
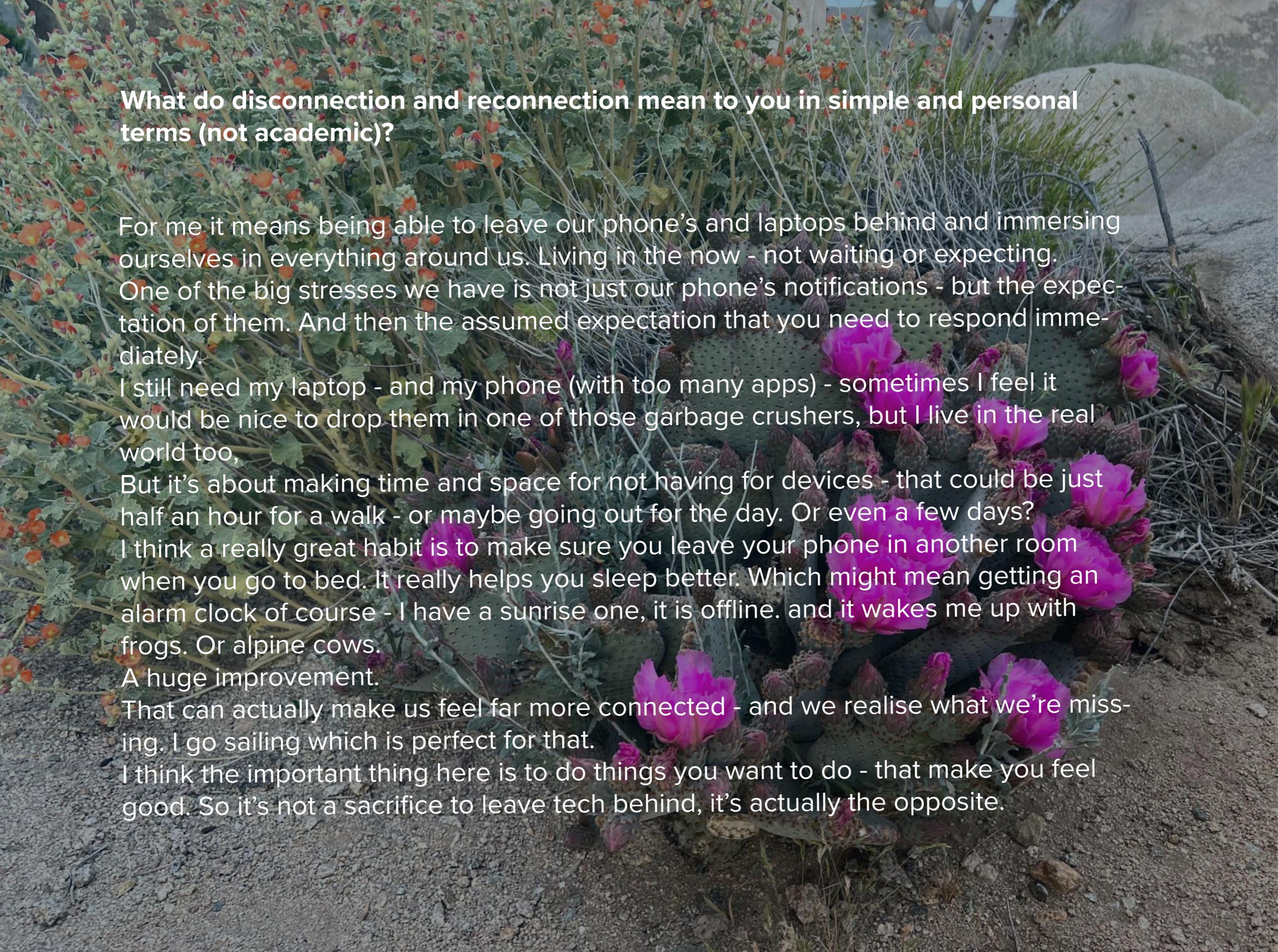
What do disconnection and reconnection mean to you in simple and personal terms (not academic)?

For me it means being able to leave our phone's and laptops behind and immersing ourselves in everything around us. Living in the now - not waiting or expecting.
One of the big stresses we have is not just our phone's notifications - but the expectation of them. And then the assumed expectation that you need to respond immediately.
I still need my laptop - and my phone (with too many apps) - sometimes I feel it would be nice to drop them in one of those garbage crushers, but I live in the real world too,
But it's about making time and space for not having for devices - that could be just half an hour for a walk - or maybe going out for the day. Or even a few days?
I think a really great habit is to make sure you leave your phone in another room when you go to bed. It really helps you sleep better. Which might mean getting an alarm clock of course - I have a sunrise one, it is offline. and it wakes me up with frogs. Or alpine cows.
A huge improvement.
That can actually make us feel far more connected - and we realise what we're missing. I go sailing which is perfect for that.
I think the important thing here is to do things you want to do - that make you feel good. So it's not a sacrifice to leave tech behind, it's actually the opposite.

ADVANTAGES OF SIMPLE TOOLING/this same concentration permits us to set about breaking the relentless grip
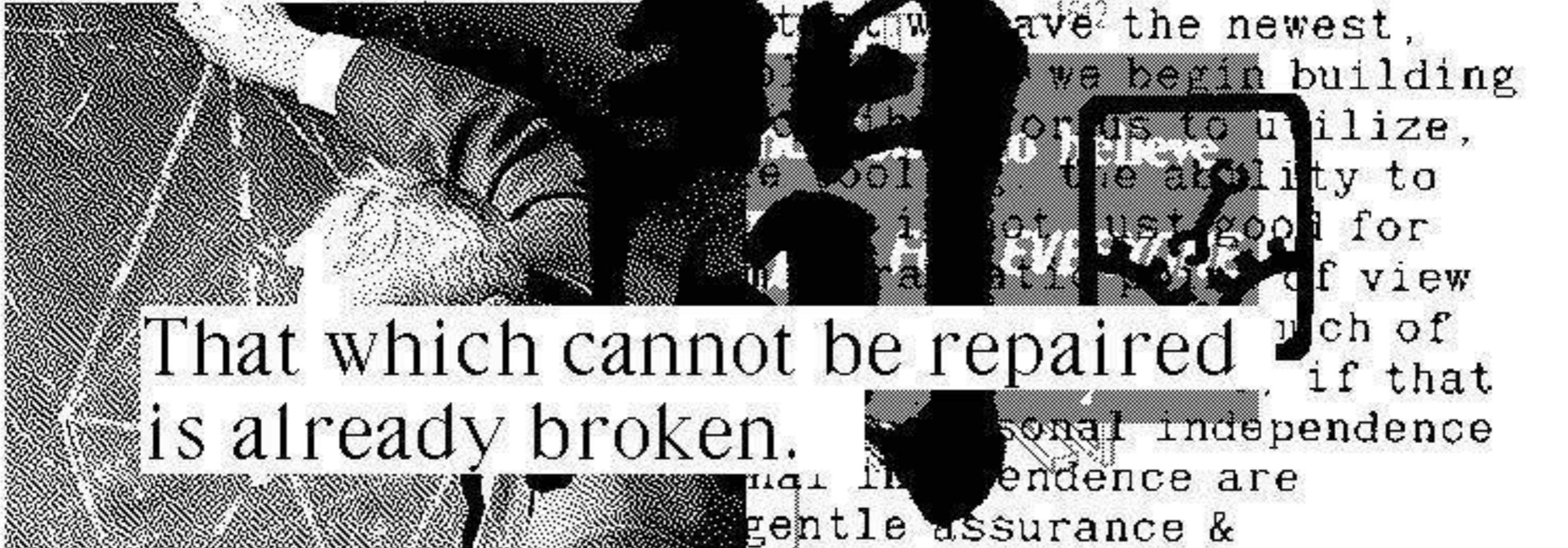
That which cannot be repaired is already broken.

non-violent self-confidence.

EVER WONDER WHERE YOUR STUFF GOES?
One of the world's largest
e-waste dumps in Ghana.

Big tech companies are planning to spend over 400 billion dollars this year alone on new AI data centres - that's about twice as much as is spent on foreign development aid. Tech companies are expecting to require 300GW of power for their data centres by 2030 - that's about 20% of world electricity supply - just for AI.

A tool is convivial if:

Use
- Ease of use
  - by anybody
  - Readily available
- Frequency of use
  - Often
    - Doesn't degrade
  - Seldom
    - No obligation to use
- Purpose
  - Choice (user)
    - Expression by action
  - No restrictions on others
    - No certificate required

What do fungi want?

We are networkers too
Our interconnectedness *is* us

Tech fascism is not inevitable: community is the alternative

Activist Alistair Alexander works on alternatives to a techno-authoritarian future - drawing inspiration from nature as a model for resilience.

—The Citizens Dispach
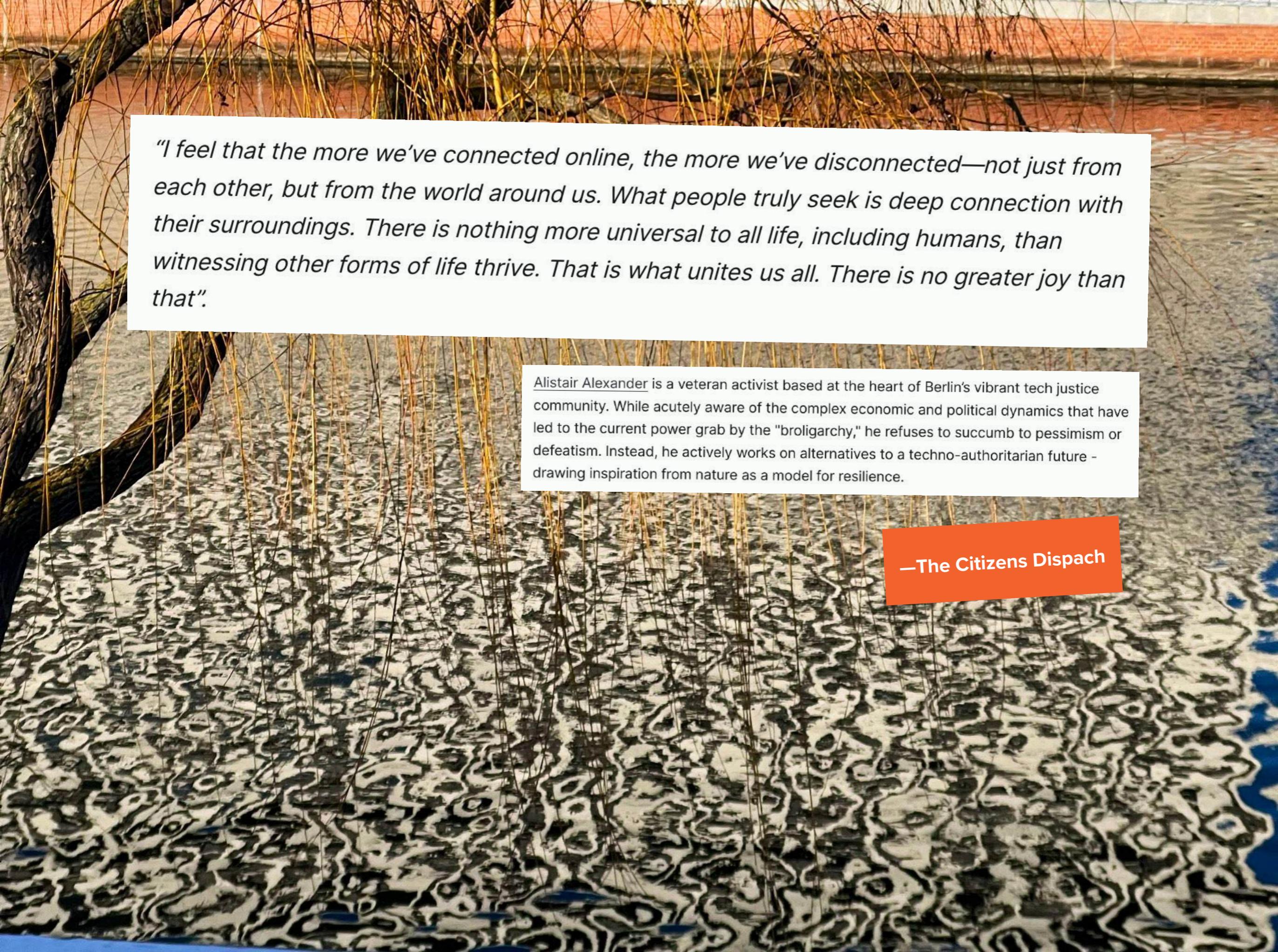
"I feel that the more we've connected online, the more we've disconnected—not just from each other, but from the world around us. What people truly seek is deep connection with their surroundings. There is nothing more universal to all life, including humans, than witnessing other forms of life thrive. That is what unites us all. There is no greater joy than that".

Alistair Alexander is a veteran activist based at the heart of Berlin's vibrant tech justice community. While acutely aware of the complex economic and political dynamics that have led to the current power grab by the "broligarchy," he refuses to succumb to pessimism or defeatism. Instead, he actively works on alternatives to a techno-authoritarian future - drawing inspiration from nature as a model for resilience.

—The Citizens Dispach

WORD FIND!

Find 30+ *Ecologies of Technology* related words.

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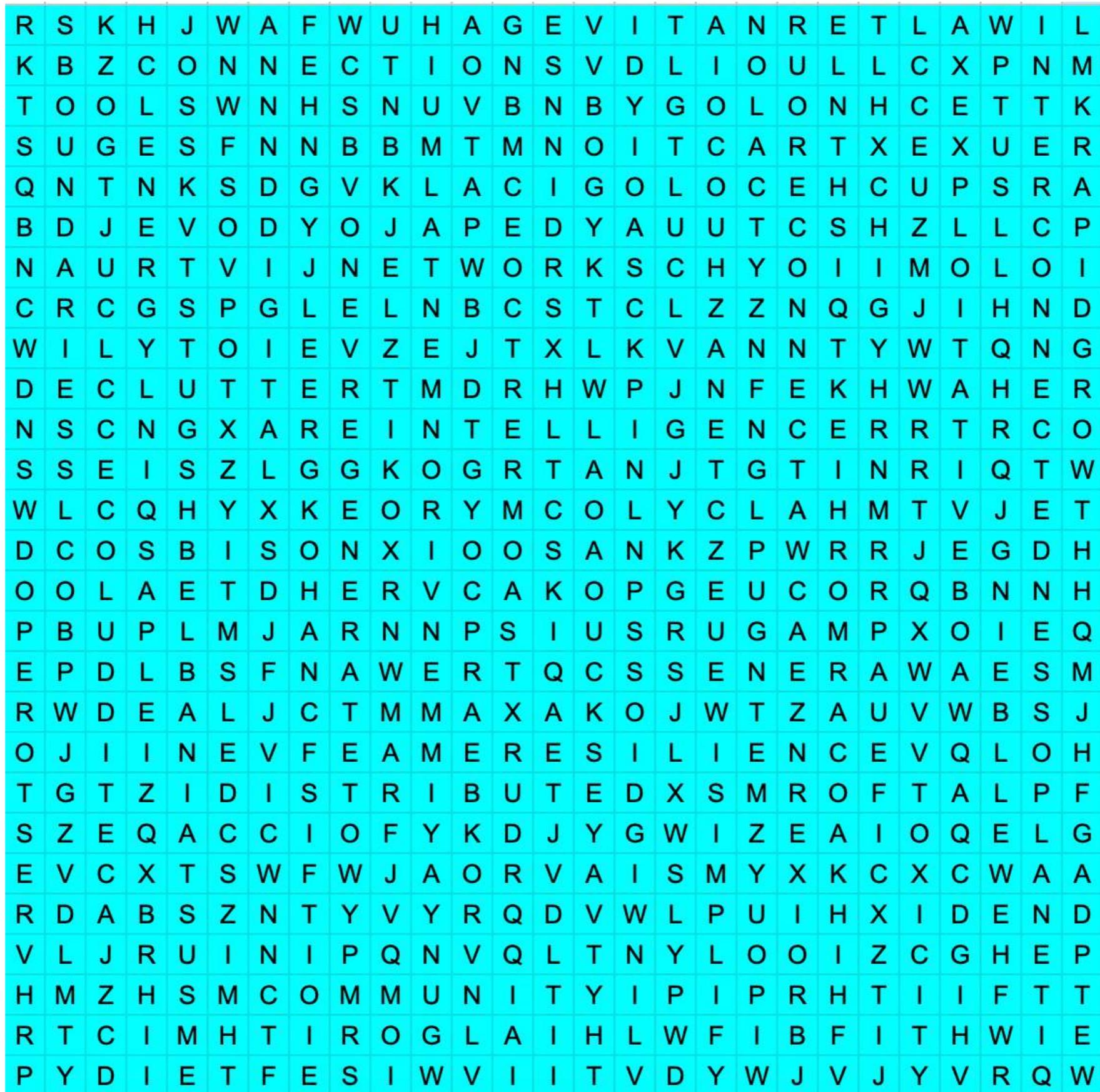
RECIPES

Celeriac Stew

My recipe for hearty winter celeriac stew and dumplings (which is all effortlessly vegan)

I just got a knollenselerie (celeriac) in my veg box — and this is the perfect thing to do with it. And i love this recipe because it involves really rolling your sleeves up and getting messy as you kneed the flour to make the dumplings....

Which of course makes checking your phone completely impractical.

By the way, if we're rethinking technology - I really recommend avoiding any plastic utensils and containers when making this stew – the more we learn about micro-plastics the worse it gets, so its time we got these horrible chemicals out of our kitchens and out of our food chains.

You will need:

Lots of olive oil (but other oils will work of course)

3 big onions

At least 1 and half bulbs of garlic (there is no such thing as too much here – even in Germany)

With a stew like this you really don't have to be precise about the veg – any roots will do nicely.

Here's my suggestion:

3 big carrots

A big celeriac – roughly 1 kilo

Parsnips – around half a kilo

Mushrooms - 3 to 500 grammes

Several big sprigs of rosemany

300 g dried Brown, Berg or Puy Lentils (these are often scandalously priced – they should be max. 1.50€ for 500g)

2.5 litres of veg stock

Most of a bottle of red wine (allow yourself a good glass for cooking support - throw the rest in)

Harissa

And for the dumplings

300g of some kind of flour

150g of the celeriac above, grated

75g of yeast flakes (not essential – you could also grate in some cheese, but please don't tell me about it)

150g of vegan spread, in tiny pieces

Sprigs of thyme

From here its really easy:

1. Write this recipe down or if you must, print it out.

2. Put your phone somewhere outside the kitchen. In this recipe your hands will get really messy – so far better to put your phone somewhere else altogether.

3. And switch it off.

4. Get your biggest oven proof saucepan/casserole

5. Put a small glass of water and your vegan spread in the freezer (this is easier for the dumplings).

6. Roughly chop the onions and fry for at least 10 mins

7. Add the garlic crushed (I'm too lazy to chop/slice) for another 3 mins

8. Throw in all the veg - let them get glazed for another few mins

9. Add the wine, rosemary and half the stock – and put in the oven for an 45 mins at 180C

10. Meanwhile put all the dumpling ingredients together in a bowl, grate the cold spread into it too – add about 45ml of cold water or as much as a you need for it all to bind

11. Take plenty of time to kneed it into a big doughy ball.

12. Do not rush this stage. There is simply no point.

13. Roll the dough out into small balls – ideally smaller than a golf ball each

14. When the 45 mins is up, pull out the stew and add in – the remainder of the boiling veg stock, the lentils and then plonk the dumplings on top

15. Stick back in the oven lid off for another 40 mins — or maybe longer until the lentils are cooked and the dumplings are brown

16. When its done stir in some harissa

Spanish Chickpeas and Spinach

This is a great tapas kind of dish, which is always very moorish when you have it in the fridge. I love to cook this in a huge batch, then put in the freezer. I quite often use Kale or Chard from my veg box - and it works just as well....

You will need:

2400-gram cans of chickpeas, rinsed

A lot of slugs of olive oil

500 grams (18 ounces) spinach, or pretty much any green leafy vegetable

75 grams (3 ounces) white bread (about two 1/2-inch slices), crusts removed, cut into small cubes

3 cloves garlic, crushed• 3/4 teaspoon cumin seeds,

1 small bunch fresh oregano, roughly chopped

1 small dried red chile, crumbled

1 1/2 tablespoons of red wine vinegar

1 pinch saffron (about 60 strands), infused in 4 table-spoons boiling water

1/2 teaspoon smoked Spanish paprika

1 pinch sea salt

1 pinch black pepper

From here its really easy:

1. Write this recipe down or if you must, print it out.

2. Put your phone somewhere outside the kitchen. In this recipe your hands will get really messy – so far better to put your phone somewhere else altogether.

3. Switch it off. Really.

4. Place a large saucepan over medium heat and add half the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the spinach with a large pinch of salt. Do this in batches if necessary. Stir well—remove when the leaves are just wilted, drain in a colander, and set aside. If you're ussing kale or chard, split the leaves from the stalks - and put the stalks in for longer so they soften.

5. Heat the remaining oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Fry the bread until golden all over, then add the garlic, cumin, oregano, and chile, and cook 1 minute more, until the garlic is nutty brown. Transfer to a mortar and pestle or a food processor along with the vinegar, and mash to a paste.

6. Return the bread mixture to the pan along with the drained chickpeas and saffron-infused water. Stir until the chickpeas are hot and have absorbed the flavors of the bread mix and saffron water. Season with salt and pepper. If the consistency is a little thick, add a little water. Add in the spinach and cook until heated through. Serve sprinkled with paprika and with fried bread on the side.

Ecologies of Technology: Tools to Disconnect/Re-connect

- **26. February - 26. March**
- **Online!**
- **Five-weeks, Wednesdays, 8-10PM CET**
- **Small class of participants**
- **Instructor Alistair Alexander**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The rapid growth of digital technologies and AI has introduced a new and pressing ecological challenge, with far-reaching impacts on the planet, human societies, and more-than-human communities. These systems extract not only energy, minerals, and labor, but also our data and collective well-being. In this course, we'll investigate the complex ecologies of the platform economy, grounding these seemingly overwhelming issues in our lived experience to uncover ways to navigate, resist, and reimagine them.

Through a blend of discussion, hands-on exploration, and alternative perspectives, we'll rethink our relationship with technology. Drawing from critiques and creative practices—from neo-luddism to open-source communities—we will explore pathways toward more balanced, intentional, and sustainable ways of engaging with the digital world. This is an opportunity to connect deeply with others, with ourselves, and with the living world around us, as we envision a post-digital future shaped by care and community.

WHO IS THIS COURSE FOR?

We'd love in this course a diverse mix of people who want to critically explore their - and our - relationship to technology.

It's a non-technical course, so no prior knowledge is expected. Questioning technologists, artists, researchers, designers, activists would all add hugely to the discussion.

We'd also love people to join who have a particular interest in more-than-human, regenerative and systems-based perspectives. But people who are just curious about those topics, and how they might apply to technology, will have just as much, if not more, to contribute.

IN THIS COURSE YOU WILL LEARN

- How the internet really works - from programmatic advertising to why Silicon Valley is betting the (troll) farm on AI

- An in-depth understanding of the environmental impact of technology

- A very different - but practical - view on how we might look at technology and progress

YOU'LL LEARN NEW TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR

- Re.evaluating your relationship and technology

- How to go offline gracefully

- How to create boundaries around your digital and non.digital lives

- Tools and strategies for taking your friend and networks to better spaces - online and offline

YOU'LL ALSO LEARN PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR

- Understanding the environmental impact of your technology

- How you can keep your devices working for longer and better

- Where you can find tools, resources and communities for low-impact tech

- How to trace disinformation and toxic behaviours online

- Setting yourself on platforms on the fediverse

FOR MORE INFO AND TO REGISTER, CLICK HERE.