Progress is not the enemy. Technology holds immense potential to nourish, adapt, and restore our world. But when innovation becomes detached from the relationships that ground it, even our best inventions can deepen the harm they aim to undo.

The future will not be engineered in a lab alone. It will be grown, shared, and protected in the messy, living networks of people and the planet.

Sources & More:

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On the Price of Progress.

What is progress? Is it just general improvement? It seems to imply a forward directional movement, looking to the future instead of the past. In todays world, increasing productivity, efficiency, and production is the clear goal. When it comes to agriculture, itś hard to question these values. Clearly, we should strive to cultivate more food for more people.

Technology serves to catalyze this jump: faster growing crops whichneed less land and less water. Resistance to disease, to pests, to the unpredictable and ever growing climate crisis we have created. In the lab, we can create better and stronger breeds, cultivars specifically curated to their micro-climates, seeds that guarantee certain desirable traits. If we keep searching improving, discovering, creating, we might have a chance at withstanding the changing climate and building a food-secure future for all.

Agricultural innovation is not new to the modern day, but today these developments are uniquely tied to profit hungry corporations, leading to pervasive and exploitative monoculture. This model destroys diverse resiliant systems, locks farmers into expensive production cycles, and erases traditional knowledge. Recent innovations have resulted in the commodification of agricultural practices and staple crops. The living exchange between people and land is seen as a cycle of production and debt.

Stronger breeds. Cultivars specifically curated to their micro-climates. Seeds that guarantee certain desirable traits. If only there have been peoples building systems of knowledge passing down exactly these things for thousands of years on the very soil we have so deeply and disgustingly destroyed. If we believe in the patenting of crop varieties, it is these Indigenous peoples to whom the licences rightfully belong. Instead, 4 multi-national companies hold patents for seeds that account for over2/3 of the worldś seed sales. Farmers who (even unintentionally) propagate these breeds can be sued for "theft".

Green Capitalism is the idea that technological innovation, driven by private industry, will be our savior from the ecological catastrophe this very innovation has caused. Our current economic system depends on a one-way extraction of nutrients and labor. Innovations so deeply intertwined within this framework will surely not be its own cure.

What an illusion- to think that Earth can be improved by inventions replacing reciprocity with the land.

Indigenous and community-based farming practices have long embodied a different kind of progress, one rooted in relationships between people, plants, and place. They remind us that sustainability does not need to be discovered.

Small farms and seed libraries and community gardens share in this cycle of reciprocity. Their work is intimate, recursive, defiant. Their care for the land is a long-term investment, with returns that dont fit neatly into the fiscal year.