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This scenario was created using the methodology Futures Ecologies

Floating Maaskant

A speculative short by Marjolein Pijnappels

Cato is up before her calendar has a chance to wake her – like every morning since the Great Floods of the early 2060s. The calendar calculates the optimal time for waking, referencing cycles and patterns important for Cato's profession as a potato farmer, such as the water levels in the soil of her tender crops, anticipated weather, the river water levels and soil microbiome health.

It is the year 2100, and nestled near the river Maas in Limburg, the Netherlands, floats a unique and resilient community known as "Maaskant." Close-knit communities like these emerged in the aftermath of the Great Floods, which had forced millions of Dutch climate refugees to migrate eastward

"The question is not whether the Netherlands will disappear under water, but when."

In so-called zoops humand and other creatures work together

in search of safety and stability. At the heart of Maaskant is Cato, a forward-thinking farmer who practices the art of cultivating salty potatoes using biodynamic methods. Cato is just one of many food providers in the region, which thrive on a full-circle, generative system with zero waste. They transformed the traditional concept of agriculture into a coordinated collaboration between animals, plants, food providers, processors, consumers, and recyclers. In Maaskant, the inhabitants share a profound sense of community and care for each other and their habitat. Everyone plays a crucial role in the well-being of the society, weaving together potato farmers, eel and salmon fishers, spiritual guides, school children, and local healthcare centres into an interconnected Community of Care.

Central to their way of life is a keen observance of nature's rhythms and cycles. They take note of everything from bodily rhythms, like menstruation, to the patterns of fish and plant growth, weather changes, seasonal cycles, and geographical rhythms. An interactive calendar, shaped like a webbed spiral coil and guided by artificial intelligence, facilitates this continuous tracking process. This living calendar suggests optimal times for planting crops, taking vacations, predicting excess water, and pausing fishing activities. Although members of the community depend on each other, solidarity doesn't mean there is no friction. The community is dynamic and coordinating the activities of all its members, human and other-than-human, requires constant attunement and synchronizing. Things that affect the whole community are discussed and decided by chosen leaders, from all age groups,

Ecological calendars applied to the modern world

Giving a voice to entities such as mountains and rivers.

informed by the teachings of the calendar. There are multiple voices that represent the interests of other species, soil, and river Maas herself.

Over the last decades the river evolved back to her former personality as a "rain river", as maintenance of the dams and waterworks, that kept an even water level throughout the year, fell into disuse. Her water levels now fluctuate again with the rains upstream in Belgium and France, causing occasional extreme rises in the river's waters. The riverside communities move with the water levels, adjusting their activities and rhythms to the river. Once a month chosen community leaders meet up in the North of Limburg to present the projects they've worked on and build relationships with other communities. Timing these meetings is an art in itself, because every community has their own local time in terms of crops and labour patterns, festivities and other activities, but the ecological calendar helps with that too. Aided by artificial intelligence, the calendars from different communities are calibrated and connected to find the most optimal time for meeting. Four times a year these meetings extend to the whole community and culminate in festivities marking the seasons: the Summer Festival around the summer solstice, June 21, marks the happiest season, the warm and dry season with a few weeks of downtime. There is the Harvest Feast at the end of the warm wet season, usually somewhere in September, marking start of the longest season, the cold and wet season, a time of huddling down. Halfway through this season 'lichtjesfeest' or Light

A return to the pre-Christian origins of Christmas as a Light Festival.

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Mas, is celebrated: bonfires are lighted while drinking mulled wines. When this longest of seasons has come to an end and the warm, dry season starts early March with the mass flowering of the first crocuses and the Awakening of Flowers Feast is celebrated. These celebrations are not just fun, they are also a time to tell stories of worlds past, by the elders, of connecting to each other and replenishing energies. The communities may have a pragmatic and typical Limburgian sober view of life, the connections they feel with their mother river, the trees and beasts of their land, are commemorated in songs in the old language, Limburgian, and songs of past years are sung on stage, together with the new songs.

Limburgian language recognized as cultural heritage.

In this speculative scenario, the focus is not on predicting the future, but on bringing possible future elements into the present for critical reflection. The story centers around Cato, emphasizing the treatment of non-human entities as partners rather than resources. Cato's narrative explores how this perspective could reshape relationships with livestock, food production, and local ecosystems. Visualizing the interactions among these actors is crucial for fostering a sense of connection and developing actionable strategies for multi-species thriving. The concept of an ecological calendar is introduced as a tool to make these relationships explicit and practical, prompting questions about implementation, community involvement, and the role of disruptive events. The speculative scenario encourages consideration of how technology, such as an AI-assisted ecological calendar, could be engineered. Ultimately, it poses the question of whether individuals would choose to live in a world guided by such ecological principles.

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