



# AND SO WE BLOSSOM GENTLY INTO THE INFINITE GARDEN

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At this moment in time, a quiet revolution is underway. A renaissance is before us. One that by its very design, is predisposed to encourage the highly creative and collaborative nature of humankind. This is a renaissance where we can all be the Medicis, cultivating mutually beneficial networks of ongoing support and cooperation for each other while we improve the condition of life on this planet. The utopian ideals first awakened in the 1960s, brought us the promise of technology as a silver bullet to solve all problems through its capacity to organize life at scale, all while continuing to grow exponentially. What's happened instead is a globalized, techno-capitalist attention economy, built on centralized platforms that lock in users and incentivize addiction, to maximize time on site and ad revenue. This, in turn, increases polarization, diminishing our capacity to empathize and meaningfully dialogue with one another.

But is there another way to build our digital and physical infrastructure? One that establishes each as a commonwealth collectively owned by all of us. What if we completely redefined our conception of ownership itself? What if we began to understand ownership as fluid and participatory in nature? What if we could replace the attention economy with a new art world? One whose primary objective is to transform society for the benefit of all?

In 2008, Satoshi Nakamoto quietly and anonymously released the white paper that would lay the foundation for a paradigm-shifting technology that has the potential to realize this vision. Blockchain protocols allow for secure, P2P transactions to occur without a centralized third-party intermediary. This could be understood as a new financial layer to the internet; much like email but for sending money. That said, the financial application is only the tip of the iceberg. In 2013, Vitalik Buterin published the Ethereum white paper, stretching beyond the binary of Bitcoin, and into the multidimensional magic of smart contracts, which allow complex algorithms to be executed by code. DAOs, DeFi, NFTs and social tokens are poised to disrupt nearly every aspect of our lives. I won't dive too deeply into decentralized finance (DeFi), but it's helpful to visualize it as the lifeblood of the network—it makes all these other functions built on top of it possible. I do believe that we will all participate in and utilize these tools in the near future—the question isn't if, but when. More importantly, in building this ecosystem, we have a unique opportunity to completely reimagine what we value as a society, how we allocate our resources, and how we might embed these ideas into code.

In early 2021, non-fungible tokens, or NFTs began to boom in an undeniable way, confounding almost everyone. It seemed that the lockdown paired with stimulus and a well-timed crypto bull run brewed the perfect storm to catapult jpg ownership into a much broader, non-crypto-native audience. In the year prior, Foundation had sprung up alongside a handful of other platforms making marketplaces of scarce, digital goods. They made a name early on for establishing an eclectic artist roster, centering women and QT-IPOC, and cultivating a community of genuine talent around them.

Eileen Isagon Skyers is an artist, curator and the Communications Director of Foundation.

Through her position, she illuminates the work & stories of this diverse, global community, dismantling the barriers to entry that persist in much of the legacy art world. She says, "Part of what I've appreciated about web3 is that it supports and makes space for decentralized expertise, skill sharing, and generative knowledge—all of which poses a threat to existing hierarchies that have established themselves in physical spaces. Art cannot actually be reflective of life until it can circulate in the real world—which in practice, will mean rethinking the institution, developing new tools and structural models for art's mediation, and recontextualizing value."

In May 2021, IX Shells (Itzel Yard) became the highest selling female NFT artist, with her auction on Foundation to benefit The Tor Project, a nonprofit protecting the human right to privacy. Dreaming at Dusk, a generative artwork derived from the private key of Tor's first onion service fifteen years ago, is its only remaining artifact and sold to PleasrDAO, a collective of collectors, for 500 ETH/2 million USD. The cooperative nature of web3 is increasingly apparent. Itzel reflects, "It's more free than the traditional world. Crypto feels like you're building a community. You have to work as a team. It's a team game and a different kind of society—if you're going to be part of it, you're going to be part of a community." NFTs can be collectively owned, transferred between wallets without an auction, and anyone holding an NFT can list it on the secondary market, making this an investment opportunity. Collectors can flip for a profit, and artists receive a commission for those sales, the percentage embedded in the NFT's smart contract. This allows artists to capture the value of their work as their prices increase and reputation expands.

Beyond the financial aspect, it's valuable to consider the provenance of NFTs on the blockchain as part of an immutable historical record, a living encyclopedia. Cyn Bahati, artist, poet and instigator of HerStoryDao shared, "As a writer, it gives me a sense of relief. Sometimes I will mint work that I know probably is not going to sell right away. And that's okay for me, the money isn't the important part, the important part for me is fulfilling a dream of my ancestors, fulfilling the ability to make art that's going to last, the ability to make eternal art. As a Black woman, it means everything that I may be the first Black poet in this space, and fifty years from now, it won't be a debate, because it's on the blockchain."

A DAO (decentralized autonomous organization) is a digital coordination tool, facilitated by the blockchain. There's a shared treasury and participants can vote through a transparent governance mechanism on how to allocate the treasury and make other decisions on behalf of the organization. DAOs can own NFTs and some like PleasrDAO are created explicitly for that purpose. Flexible in structure, DAOs are collectively-owned & governed. I'm not the first to hypothesize that in the future, we will all work for multiple DAOs, and some say it will replace our current conception of corporations altogether. Holly Herndon is an artist and co-host of the *Interdependence* podcast. Based in Berlin, she has been investigating web3 and its mechanisms for years. This summer, she released Holly+, an AI trained to her voice, and minted as NFTs, alongside a DAO that will vote

on community submissions created using the AI, which is open to anyone, whether or not they own the NFT. The winning pieces will be minted as NFTs on the Holly+ auction house, built using the ZORA protocol. People are also free to mint their own. The whole thing is completely open source. Herndon says, "The idea of the project is to find a balance between experimentation with my likeness and identity, and some way to ensure things don't get out of hand. Public figures already navigate a separation between themselves and public perceptions of themselves. Everyone feels like an imposter, and the only answer to that is establishing your own parameters for success and meaning. Web3 tools help more of those different visions come to life in ways that centralized systems have suppressed."

Jon Gold is a multi-hyphenate artist and one of the instigators of CabinDAO: a community-funded, creator residency at the Creator Cabins property outside of Austin, Texas. He says, "We view CabinDAO as a prototype for a generalizable funding model for creative residency programs: CabinDAO can be an open experiment into land use. Taking inspiration from the digital, we separate "hardware" and "software." Varied software programs can be run on different hardware, just so long as the architecture is compatible. Looking sideways, the physical logistics of the space (land ownership, building construction, zoning) and the things we might wish to do with that space (intentional communities, communes, artist residency programs) are separate-but-intertwined concerns. Hardware owners are free to experiment with the software they run: living in the place themselves, having a tenant, putting it on Airbnb, or doing something like CabinDAO. I believe that web3 and its adjacent cultures are the key to unlocking our cosmic destiny as a species. That destiny is to work in systemic harmony rather than conflict; web3 in this context is a quantum chiropractor, making adjustments to the way we use technology."

A promising bridge between web2 and web3 is the social token. It's something akin to a digital membership badge, but one that can be financially valuable, and grants access to (as of now, primarily virtual) experiences. Often facilitated through a discord server, a social token represents shared membership in a community. Furthermore, the tokens we hold are a form of self-expression, a curation of the things we care about, and groups we participate in. For artists who wish to migrate their audience away from centralized social media platforms, a social token could provide the solution. Jess Sloss, instigator of Seed Club, a DAO incubator shares, "Web2 is subscribe/follow, tokens are own/invest. Tokens represent a shared collective belief in the value of something. We now have the ability for communities to have a bank account and a cap table. Ultimately it allows individuals to capture more of the value that they create on the internet. Giving agency to individuals is key to radical transformation."

Seed Club is a DAO that works with communities to develop their tokenomics. In exchange, Seed Club receives 3% of each project's token supply. This represents a common ethos across the web3 space and specific to social tokens: build together, win together. There's a shared investment in mutual, future success. They work with a wide spectrum of projects, from



SongCamp, a collective, virtual songwriting and world-building venture, to Afrofuture, a DAO and social token that curates and commissions Afro-futuristic artworks, to PartyDAO, which allows participants to spin up a collector DAO as a PartyBid to pool their resources and bid on an NFT auction together, resulting in a fractionalized, collective ownership of the NFT. This week, a Partybid placed on one of the Holly+ AI NFTs won that auction. From our current vantage point, it's difficult to anticipate the long-range implications of the emergence of shared ownership as standard practice.

Web3 technologies naturally cultivate cooperative ownership and collective benefit. Neither are guaranteed, but the potential is built in. Beginning to proliferate is the notion that participants in a platform are not passive and those who create value for a company should benefit from its ongoing success. Cooperative economics are nothing new, but most web-based companies do not operate this way. The web3 stack creates new pathways for ownership—both of the platforms themselves and the digital goods we create for them. Imagine that it was standard practice for everyone who uses Instagram to receive a monthly dividend of the revenue it generates in direct proportion to their participation on the platform. This calculation would happen publicly and transparently, so everyone understands how much they are receiving and why. It's challenging to envision this reality because centralized platforms have built their entire business model around extracting the free labor of its network of users.

Austin Robey is an alumnus of the Seed Club accelerator, and a founding member of Ampled, a worker cooperative that's built a Patreon-like alternative for musicians. They operate without VC funding, and are maintained through the contributions of their member-owners. Its objective and barometer for success is markedly different from most tech startups. Robey says, "We've said from the beginning that we just wanted this to be a permanent vehicle for artists and prosperity. The obsession with scale is just an artifact of startup culture bias. We can build things where the purpose is to meet each other's needs, not monopolize the market."

GenreDAO was born out of LA-based independent label, Leaving Records, founded by Matthew David McQueen about a decade ago. They're not a coop, but they've always done things differently, and never take ownership of their artists' masters, a common predatory practice employed by traditional labels. Embracing all genres and breaking cultural molds, the secret to their longevity is the pairing of impeccable curation with a DIY mindset. In turn, they've cultivated a lovingly devoted, grassroots community around them. This year, they launched GenreDAO, instigated by Samsonite, who's also a member of Seed Club & SongCamp. He asks, "What does a record label look like in web3? Curation will continue to be a necessity, especially in a decentralized internet. So, what is the role of the label? This could be a collaborative effort, where everybody's pitching into this network, and creating something bigger than themselves, raising up everybody in the community." GenreDAO has a social token, \$GENRE, which as of now has no monetary value, but instead is gifted as a reward

for community participation. GenreDAO will facilitate collaboration between the community and label, inviting fans into the creative process. In the legacy art world where hierarchies and power differentials color the relationship between artist and curator, there's an opportunity to blur the lines here. Artists can curate and curators can make art, and everyone can benefit mutually. Our past ways of relating can dissolve as we merge into this beautiful, new, collaborative landscape. This is a very different way of being together, where we no longer perceive one another as competition, nor are we siloed by professional delineations. Instead, we exist in a state of dynamic co-creation, where a rising tide lifts all boats.

Web3 is uniquely situated to support our evolution from the creator economy into an ownership economy, where contributors not only get paid for doing what they love, but more importantly own the platforms themselves. The ease of entry into web3 microeconomies further reduces historical barriers to access. Ownership is the crucial piece that transforms the relationships from being extractive to mutually beneficial. On the *Bankless* podcast, founder of Atelier Ventures, Li Jin said, "Creators are building their businesses on rented land when they build on web2 platforms." When we spoke to expand on this, she added, "In his book, *Capital in the 21st Century*, Thomas Piketty presents studies that show that the return on capital has now exceeded the return on labor, which means that even if you work your whole life, you'll never catch up with someone who has tons of capital, and is just earning returns on it. That means we need to distribute ownership more broadly and make everyone an owner in what they're building. I think this is the only path to emancipation."

Kinjia Shah, an investor at Blockchain Capital, instigator of Komorebi Collective, and participant in she256 (a mentorship program for women in web3) says, "We're seeing many micro-economies emerge across crypto, often taking the form of DAOs and social tokens. These economies require access to the internet but are not bound by any geography or socioeconomic status. They allow users to get in on the ground floor and participate in the communal upside."

Web3 technologies disintermediate us from web2, and grant us opportunities for financial independence, so that we may build our own ecosystems of support. Even among the web3 platforms that resemble web2, community ownership is rapidly becoming standard practice. SuperRare, another NFT marketplace, recently took a quantum leap towards decentralization and community ownership, when they launched the SuperRare DAO and distributed \$RARE, its curation & governance token to those who've built up the company's value since its inception in 2018. They've begun to reroute the platform's commissions and fees into the DAO's treasury, and have introduced Spaces, a community-run curatorial function governed by \$RARE, setting a powerful precedent for others to follow.

Open-source protocols are central to web3. Often referred to as legos due to their interoperable composability, developers can build with them stacked on top of one another, maximizing their utility and creating brand-new functionality that would not exist when used alone. If you've

ever built a website in Wordpress (an open-source CMS software) and installed plugins in the process, this illustrates the idea perfectly. Open-source protocols are censorship resistant, non-rivalrous, and non-exclusive because anyone with internet access can use them freely and no one's use diminishes another's access.

Nicole Magnolia is an artist, writer, cofounder of Tech Optimist, and a UI/UX designer working on AAVE, a decentralized, non-custodial liquidity market protocol that allows users to deposit and borrow cryptocurrencies. According to her, "Open-source software is foundational to web3. People all over the world are forking each other's code, collaborating, innovating and learning from one another 24/7. In web2, product design decisions were made by small teams in Silicon Valley, some of which have had disastrous effects on mental health and global politics. Before 2011, many companies had open APIs that independent developers could build with. When they realized this was a threat to their power, they began to lock down access. In web3, you won't be locked into a single platform. You'll be able to traverse the web freely, bringing your data, content, and social graph with you. Any developer will be able to build a new social platform specific to the needs of their community. You will own your digital destiny autonomously. If closed API companies are 'walled gardens,' the future we're building is an infinite garden, an open ecosystem, a series of dynamic interdependent forests, a permaculture web. We're creating tools for everyone to build with, to create a Cambrian explosion of creativity."

ZORA is an open-source protocol that allows anyone to build their own NFT auction house with the same functionality as platforms like Foundation and SuperRare. The Holly+ site is built on ZORA, as are PartyDAO, Catalog, and Mirror. Catalog allows musicians to mint 1/1 NFTs of their songs, and in the world of diminishing returns from streaming platforms, this establishes an entirely new conception for how we value music online. Mirror is a publishing platform, similar to Substack, but it grants users the capacity to mint their posts as editioned NFTs, so that readers may financially reward them by collecting. New contributors are onboarded weekly in groups of ten, as voted on by the community. Mirror offers a new toolkit to support our own work and to fundraise for causes we care about. Recently, Jack Butcher published a Mirror post to fundraise for families in Afghanistan. In two days, he raised nearly 40 ETH/150,000 USD. We've yet to see what will be unleashed when these tools stretch beyond crypto communities. Jacob Horne, founder of ZORA, has been at the forefront of the discourse around protocols for the people and the internet renaissance we're in. He asserts, "Crypto challenges the way we think about creating together, both artistically and professionally. ZORA is as much about cultivating an ecosystem as it is designing and building public infrastructure for everyone to use. This is emblematic of a whole creative movement that is taking the technology of crypto and using its strengths to push it outside of just finance. The higher-level view is that we're in the earliest stage of a societal shift away from an ownership paradigm that's existed for 400 years. It's time for an upgrade."

This week on Twitter, I saw a cow rescued from slaughter and minted as an NFT to fund his caretakers. When we can mint virtual representations of physical entities, we can attribute worth to that which has been historically underappreciated. We can co-create entirely new systems of value, and organize our resources around them. Imagine the same model applied to a body of water or a piece of land. One could work with indigenous communities to mint their landscape photos, whose auction revenue could buy back property once belonging to their ancestors, returning the land to its rightful custodians. Art can serve as an ongoing funding mechanism to transform society for the better. More importantly, we can begin to shift our economic framework into a regenerative worldview, one that prioritizes the health and flourishing of local economies and ecologies above infinite growth.

Numa Gama is a non-binary creator based in Brazil. They are part of GenreDAO, VoodooHop, and they work with Kolektivo Labs in Curaçao. According to them, "Kolektivo has two main fronts. The first is CuraDAI, a digital currency pegged to the currency of Curaçao. Curaçao citizens can receive up to 2500 CuraDAI to fund local impact projects through Kolektivo Grants. It can also be used to buy local and digital goods, currencies, and services. It's already accepted in supermarkets & local stores. The second front is Kolektivo's food forest, which receives funding from another Kolektivo Labs Project, PrimeDAO, and builds DAO2DAO coordination and collaboration tools. Regenerative economies shift economic relations from scarcity to abundance, from monoculture to diversity, heteronormativity to queerness. It values collectives rather than individuals, prosperity rather than growth. A regenerative economic system views nature as an ever-changing, diverse, living organism. Web3, as a part of a movement, can't do everything by itself. We need to radically decolonize our imagination as a whole. I envision a society where we, as lifeforms, abandon the burden of calling ourselves human, and embody what we really are: a catalyst—the left hand of Mother Earth."

The conversation around public goods has increasingly drawn focus from all corners of this industry. There is such an abundance of material wealth in this space, expanding exponentially as we speak, and many are asking how to put these resources to good use. Recently this inquiry was amplified by "Positive Sum Worlds: Remaking Public Goods," an essay published by The Other Internet, a decentralized applied research organization. Public goods are traditionally understood as anything non-rivalrous and non-excludable, meaning no one can be barred access, and no one's access restricts another's. The air we breathe is frequently used as an example. In their essay, the authors advocate for an enhanced definition of public goods, to be defined as "in service of others and towards civilizational longevity." They look to historical successes like the Black Panther Party's free breakfast program and inquire as to how we can replicate these concepts in crypto. They propose, "We would all benefit from more green space, quality low-cost housing, and better access to healthy produce. Could public goods funders and builders in crypto intervene in these areas?"

In the wake of the positive reception surrounding their essay, The Other Internet created an RFP in partnership with Gitcoin, an organization focused on building and sustaining digital public goods. Scott Moore co-founder and Head of Community at Gitcoin shared, "As the space grows and we see more and more new entrants, we want to ensure that protocols are considering the publics they're serving. For example, the Ethereum community has been great at giving back to core open-source infrastructure, but how can we get larger protocols that have found success through Ethereum to do the same?"

Toby Shorin, member of The Other Internet, and one of the essay's three authors, offered this, "If we can sustain this discourse for another six months, it's likely that a few prominent projects will do something big in that window. I think it's necessary to create ways for people to participate, empowering them to act. The most important thing is to give people examples they can copy. Once somebody has done it, it's easy. If we can get one protocol to spend \$5 million on public goods, then we can begin to ask: Why have an organization to begin with? What is money for?"

Priyanka Desai works with Open Law, a company that developed an LLC wrapper for DAOs. They've helped to launch and structure multiple DAOs through The LAO, a DAO incubator that has birthed among others, a liquidity, collector, and museum DAO: NeptuneDAO, FlamingoDAO, and MuseO, respectively, the last two of which are steadily amassing thoughtfully curated NFT collections to rival any legacy art world institution. She's deep in DAO culture and like many others, ready to reimagine the foundations of our world. Desai says, "After being in middle school during the Iraq War, then the financial crisis, now COVID, it's just been one hammer after the next. Not to mention being told you're supposed to go to college, and be in debt forever, and that it'll all work out. There's just so much that went sideways for millennials. Crypto's the antithesis to all of that. So now, we'll create this magical internet money, and we'll create value in this digital world because this is what's native to us. In a way, it's this massive wealth transfer to a whole new set of people who didn't have it before. That may have the ability to really change the world."

Human coordination is one of the most complex endeavors we will ever face. We all have different interests, needs and biases based on our locality, life experience, and intersecting identities. This technology allows us to cooperate with people we may never meet in person, aligned by a shared vision of the future. As the digital infrastructure of web3 evolves, we begin to witness the power of decentralized systems in action. Far beyond the hype of NFTs, web3 is a technological and economic scaffolding to support our evolution out of hierarchical, globalized, competitive capitalism and into vast networks of localized, cooperative, micro-economies. Its mycological nature mimics that of natural systems, and is arising in this moment as a direct reflection and facilitator of our shift into unity consciousness, in order to support the establishment of an economy and society that better reflects the truth of who we are: an interrelational, symbiotic organism. As we integrate an embodied awareness of the cosmos as "undivided

wholeness in flowing movement," as described by physicist David Bohm, we see our true nature not as fixed, but fluid, everything in motion, unfolding & enfolding through the field, intimately related to everything else. We are not things, we are processes. With the tools to facilitate coordination between us, exponential magic occurs. The ability to aggregate, manage and distribute shared resources, including fractionalized ownership of platforms and scarce digital goods, unlocks a whole new ownership and collector class that were previously excluded from access by lack of funds. Collectivism is not only promoted by this technology, it actually incentivizes and rewards it. Should we choose to, we can create a wholly different expression of what it means to be in community with each other. One that eschews and repairs the damage done by globalized colonialism and empowers all people to live in collective sovereignty.

The evolution in our consciousness gave rise to the metaverse, and these tools for digital coordination unlock our decentralized collective intelligence. The system incentivizes collaboration and creates natural mechanisms for it to occur fairly and transparently. These mechanisms are inherent but their positive use is not a given. Technology is in and of itself ethically neutral. It is up to us to intentionally shape the moral code underneath it, in the direction of fairness, equality, upliftment and freedom for all. The first trustless, stateless, permissionless currencies and the technology they are built upon could facilitate our evolution into a society that amplifies our true, cooperative, playful and creative nature, and transcends the limitations of the negative feedback loop we've been in. Another way is possible. Another world is here.



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