

Tab 1

**SCHOOL OF ACTIVISM:**  
**A MOVEMENT OF  
MOVEMENTS FOR  
BRISTOL?**

**RODRIGO NUNES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX**

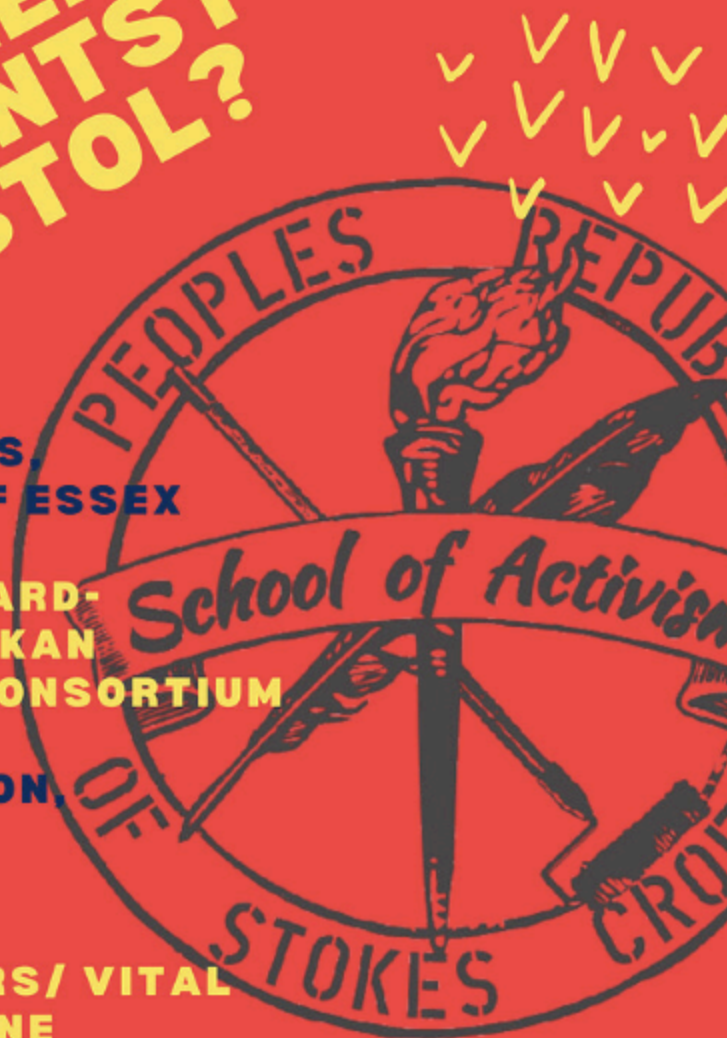
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QUASHIE, AFRIKAN  
CONNEXIONS CONSORTIUM**

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Radical organization and strategy for a postcapitalist city. Facilitated by Claudia Firth and Martin Parker.

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# Movement of movements, cosmo-localism, and AI

Notes for an article to be submitted to the Ephemera journal

Keywords:

activism, artificial intelligence, commons, coordination engine, cosmo-localism, generative action research, prefiguration

Abstracts:

## Introduction

I'm a new Bristolian, and as a renegade sociologist practising radical sociology<sup>1</sup>, I couldn't imagine having popped into a better city to live in. A School of Activism article announcing the "A movement of movements for Bristol?" event said, "Bristol is a city full of energy and vibrant alternative initiatives, but they don't always connect well together." Well, the challenges to connecting those dots may not be unique to Bristol, but here, there's something distinctive about the fledgling ecosystem of social movements.

Most activists know systemic change can only be achieved when the change-oriented movements coordinate their efforts. The partial success of local and campaign-focused efforts delivers hope, new capabilities, and lessons learned, but frequently falls short on a broader scale and more extended time frame. In the first part of this article, we examine the political dynamics of the movement of movements (MoM), including some of the roles that AI may play in it. The second part explores the economic dimensions of cultivating MoM, including cosmo-localism, entangled assets, and absorbing their complexity.

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<sup>1</sup> "The starting point of a radical sociology is not simply a humanistic faith or a utopian vision; the virtue of a sociology as a feature of the struggle for emancipation is that it sets as its goal the development of knowledge as a tool for emancipation..." — Flacks, R. & Turkel, G. (1978) 'Radical Sociology: The Emergence of Neo-Marxian Perspectives in US Sociology,' *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 4:193-238.

# The Political Dynamics of MoM: the Dance of Emergence and Design

Unlike political parties with leadership and membership rules, a MoM is like a multi-centric, living ecosystem with fuzzy boundaries. Unlike natural ecosystems that emerge and grow purely organically, social ecosystems, like MoM, are influenced by their constitutive entities' free will, values, interests, and worldviews.

That leads us to the central challenge of all catalysts or facilitators of any MoM: **How can the creative tension between emergence and design be used to build a movement of movements?**


Writing about the literature on prefigurative politics, Claudia Firth mentioned, “the literature has focused on possibility and imagination, anticipating change through an **emergence of networks of initiatives, without looking at how that emergence might be created. A critical blind spot.**”<sup>2</sup> (emphasis added — GP)

Taking a broader ontological perspective, we can posit that everything in the universe is energy and structure. The creative tension between spontaneous emergence and deliberative design isn't a problem to solve but a polarity to dance with, a dynamic interplay to be embraced and utilized constructively. This "dance" suggests that design should incorporate and foster the potential for emergence while providing a framework, rather than trying to reduce its life-giving impact.

Below are some ways that creative tension can be consciously **used as a design principle and as a facilitative practice** in building a MoM, provided by ChatGPT. Under its italicized paragraphs are the author's reflections about it.

## 1. **Acknowledge Both Forces as Essential**

- *Emergence: New alliances, ideas, tactics, and visions arise organically—often from the periphery, lived experience, and intuition.*
- *Design: Structures, rituals, frameworks, and coordination tools help hold and grow what emerges without control.*

 *Use the tension as a feedback loop: Design invites emergence to take form; emergence invites design to stay alive.*

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<sup>2</sup> Firth, C. (2024). Both or neither? Rethinking the vertical and the horizontal in political organisation. Ephemera, volume 24, number 1.  
<https://ephemerajournal.org/contribution/both-or-neither-rethinking-vertical-and-horizontal-political-organisation-0>

Harvesting the collective intelligence emerging from MoM meetings in online forums, video conferences, or live assemblies is an essential tool of coordination that can enable wiser, collective, active action. The facilitated synergy of online and offline modes of communication invites more emergence.

## 2. ***Design for Emergence, Not Control***

*You can't plan a movement into being, but you can create the conditions for emergence:*

- *Enable open-ended convergence spaces (assemblies, festivals, camps)*
- *Use modular frameworks like open-source protocols, commoning practices, or mutual aid models*
- *Offer invitations instead of directives—e.g., a pattern language instead of a blueprint*

 *Design becomes the choreography of invitations, not the enforcement of outcomes.*

By definition, we can't design emergence, but we can create conditions **for** emergence. Taking that into account makes it clearer why the intentional design of MoM assemblies optimised for both emergence and harvesting their fruits is a condition for their lasting impact.


Commoning practices can be taught and grown based on commoning principles and commoners' lived experience. It's not either-or. In well-designed programs for commons education and social renewal, those two sources of commoning practices mutually upgrade each other.

Pattern languages designed for supporting movement practices are already used worldwide, with the help of this card deck<sup>3</sup> and this book<sup>4</sup>.

## 3. ***Create “Weaving Roles” and “Listening Infrastructures”***

*In movement ecosystems:*

- *Weavers connect people, ideas, and resources across boundaries*
- *Sensemakers surface what's emerging across the field (trends, needs, possibilities)*

 *Deliberate design focuses on listening to emergence and weaving it into shared narrative and collective intelligence.*

*Examples:*

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<sup>3</sup> Co-Intelligence Institute (2019). The Wise Democracy Pattern Language. <https://www.wd-pl.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Schuler, D. (2008). *Liberating Voices – a Pattern Language for Communication Revolution*. MIT Press.

- *Movement weavers in climate justice coalitions*
- *Story curators in place-based civic labs*
- *AI-assisted annotation systems (like your hypertrail idea!)*

Using the term “hypertrail,” ChatGPT, which knows the author’s work, refers to the containers of an AI-supported, work-in-progress annotation system for collaborative meaning making.

Weaving ideas, insights, and inspirations into actionable patterns, as well as people originating them, is a key function of any movement catalyst, but in the case of a large MoM, exercising it requires the use of the best available and affordable IT tools.

The practice of listening to emergence originated in the group practices of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70<sup>5</sup>. In more recent times, the “listening society” became the keystone framework of metamodern politics of transformation into a post-capitalist society<sup>6</sup>. A metamodern-inspired collective listening movement can also integrate emergence and design in nurturing MoM.

#### **4. Hold Time Differently: Cycles of Action & Reflection**

*Embed rhythms that alternate:*

- *Spontaneity & experimentation (bursts of decentralized action)*
- *Deliberation & coherence-making (slow-down moments of collective sensemaking)*

*This can look like:*

- *Design sprints ↔ Assemblies*
- *Tactical mobilizations ↔ Restorative retreats*
- *Local actions ↔ Global reflections*

 *Time becomes the scaffolding where emergence and design co-evolve.*

Coherence-generating deliberation in a MoM, maybe even more than in traditional forms of organizing, “often requires deep thinking, and long-term relationships - Slowmentum!,” as Stephen Hilton wrote.<sup>7</sup> Collective sensing (sentience), collective meaning-making (intelligence), and collective choice-making (agency) are three vectors developed by the author as a MoM-applicable framework, derived “human sovereignty.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Farinati, L. and Firth, C. (2017). *The Force of Listening*. Doormats.

<sup>6</sup> Freinacht, H. (2017). *The Listening Society: A Metamodern Guide to Politics*. Metamoderna.

<sup>7</sup> Hilton, S. (2025). Handle with Care: early reflections on the tensions in our Capitalism Escape Room project.  
<https://slowmentum.org.uk/handle-with-care-early-reflections-on-the-tensions-in-our-capitalism-escape-room-project>

<sup>8</sup> Schmachtenbeger, D. (2017). Advancing Human Sovereignty.  
<https://civilizationemerging.com/advancing-human-sovereignty/>


The “action  $\leftrightarrow$  reflection” cycles are foundational to our version of enhanced participatory action research, which we call Generative Action Research<sup>9</sup>. It is a social technology of liberation and a methodology of collaborative knowledge and capability development of people, groups, organizations, and social systems.

The pair of “Local actions  $\leftrightarrow$  Global reflections” has a pivotal role in not only using time differently but also using space differently. We’ll return to it in the Cosmo-localism section of the second part of these Notes, where we’ll explore the economic dimension of building a MoM.

## 5. **Frame the Movement as a Living System**

*Adopt biomimetic or ecological metaphors:*

- *Design for diversity, redundancy, and interdependence*
- *Embrace mycelial patterns of decentralized connection*
- *Support ecosystem health over linear outcomes*

 *The movement becomes an ecology of movements, resilient because it is not centralized but interconnected.*

That framing guides our thinking about MoM and its “collective intelligence,” which enhances knowledge ecology. That line of research grew out from the author’s poster presentation about using [biomimicry for designing knowledge gardens for commons and inter-commons collaboration: a participatory action research](#) at the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) Conference (Hyderabad, 2011), which gained praise from Elinor Ostrom. The application scenario introduced there has direct relevance for MoM conferences and assemblies.

## 6. **Use Minimal but Coherent Shared Infrastructure**


*Think:*

- *Shared values or a commons-based social contract*
- *Open-source tech stacks*
- *Mutual aid protocols*
- *Collaborative funding pools*

*The goal is just enough scaffolding for coherence while leaving plenty of space for creative divergence.*

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<sup>9</sup> Future HOW, (2017) Introduction to Generative Action Research (GAR)  
[https://futurehow.site/our-methodology/#Introduction\\_to\\_Generative\\_Action\\_Research\\_GAR](https://futurehow.site/our-methodology/#Introduction_to_Generative_Action_Research_GAR)

 *Design as minimum viable coherence, not maximum control.*

“Commons-based social contracts can serve as foundational agreements that enable the coordination of a movement of movements by establishing shared values, responsibilities, and processes for collective action. Here are some concepts and frameworks that can be utilized.”<sup>10</sup>

We don’t consider an AI a wise advisor; its deliberations lack the understanding of local context. Nevertheless, its responses rely on a broader range of possibilities, and it’s the “living system”-savvy MoM facilitators’ task to recommend the most suitable social contracts and their applications.

## Notes on MoM’s Economic Foundation

This section of the paper was triggered by a comment in the WhatsApp chat of Bristol Commons’ Strategy and Membership Working Group, which mentioned the gathering and development of shared resources and tools as one of its strategic aims. Having noticed this, the author got invited to express something that “ isn’t quite articulated in our strategic aims yet. Something around understanding the competencies and capacities required for a post-capitalist, commoning city.”

## Cosmo-localism and entangled assets in the movements

Inspired by that invitation, the author introduced the Bristol MoM event of 17 April 2025, to his colleague and commons thought leader Michel Bauwens, who has just published a germinal think piece reflecting on cosmo-localism<sup>11</sup>, as “an approach that aims to combine resilient and regenerative forms of localized production,, with access to a globally shared knowledge commons, trans-local protocols of cooperation, and access to forms of capital that are compatible with commons-oriented approaches to local production.”

In the Comments section, below the article, we continued:

George Pór: What would YOU say, if you were here, which would respond to the

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<sup>10</sup> AI Assistant’s response to “What commons-based social contracts can be used for the coordination of a movement of movements?” <https://poe.com/s/HNyimgR5MU3bmQGxRf6C> Retrieved on 13=Apr-2025.

<sup>11</sup> Bauwens, M. (2025). *Is Trump the unwitting historical agent of Cosmolocal Accelerationism? Can we turn tragedy into opportunity?* Fourth Generation Civilization. <https://4thgenerationcivilization.substack.com/p/is-trump-the-unwitting-historical>

commoners' aspiration for more significant transformative impact, aligned with your strategic vision?

Michel Bauwens: Dear George, my own opinion is that now is the time to focus on real mutualization of productive assets, to interlink those local initiatives bioregionally, while helping the domain-specific initiative to cosmo-localize, again focusing on entangled assets to increase their social power over the longer term.

George Pór: Michel, people ask, could you give some examples of entangled assets?

By the way, thanks to my AI assistant, that's what I found out about it:

- <https://poe.com/s/xFBEhFCVGp34qhw33QQC>
- <https://poe.com/s/PMRQXyheQl5fPNiAf9Yr>
- <https://poe.com/s/MuYdqQDLi7jFL6SqHYlw>

The last one has good examples of how the commons and its partner movements can turn some technologies of late capitalism into allies for a post-capitalist, regenerative future.

Michel Bauwens: I can't say I have done much of my thinking about this, except for trying to understand the link between commons-oriented production orientation and the generic consequences on human consciousness. For that, Freinacht's first chapter on Metamemes is very useful.

George Por: Michel, to give something back to the Bristol Commons, the online chat that inspired this conversation with you, let me unpack some of Poe AI's points and place them in a context that may be directly relevant to the commoners. Below are some italicized excerpts of what Poe says, and under each is my commentary.

Entangled assets in the context of a domain-specific initiative to cosmo-localize refer to resources and capabilities that are interconnected and share significance within a specific local context while being part of a broader global network. Here are some examples:

***Local Knowledge and Global Expertise:***

*Combining local cultural knowledge with global scientific research in areas like agriculture or health to develop solutions that are culturally relevant yet scientifically sound.*

There has been much actionable, commons-related knowledge accumulating in both the activist and academic communities of Bristol. Combining its highlights pertinent to specific challenges with insights and inspirations from the global network may lead to breakthroughs both locally and globally.

### ***Community Networks and Digital Platforms:***

*Local community organizations leverage digital platforms for outreach and engagement to connect global expertise with local needs.*

An AI-supported Knowledge Garden, not unlike what the author proposed at the international commons conference in 2011, could serve as a platform for supporting local and global movements of movements.

### ***Local Food Systems and Global Supply Chains:***

*Small-scale farmers connecting with global markets through local food networks that emphasize organic and sustainable practices to meet international demand.*

Local initiatives for sustainable agriculture benefit from global knowledge banks about the same, and vice versa.

Michel, all of the above is still far from the "real mutualization of productive assets" you mentioned. I hope that after the forthcoming "A Movement of Movements for Bristol?" assembly, I can say more about that.

## **A coordination engine to outcompete capitalism**

The 3-way conversation with Michel Bauwens and my AI assistant continued as follows:

George Pór: Michel, I asked my AI colleague what the functions of a metamodern team are in raising awareness of the need for a coordination engine that can help outcompete capitalism. Before sharing its answer, here's what we mean by a "metamodern team." Here's what it had to say:

*A metamodern team isn't just any team—it's a microcosm of the metamodern ethos: self-aware, complexity-conscious, developmental, and purpose-driven.*

*A metamodern team can play several crucial roles in raising awareness of the need for a coordination engine that can help outcompete capitalism. Here are the key functions they may undertake:*

*EDUCATION and ADVOCACY: The team can educate the public about the limitations of capitalism and the benefits of alternative economic models. This includes workshops, seminars, and informational materials that explain how a coordination engine can provide better structures for collaboration and resource sharing.*

*RESEARCH and ANALYSIS: A metamodern team can conduct research to gather data and insights on existing economic systems and their shortcomings. This research can be used to develop evidence-based arguments for the adoption of a coordination engine.*

*COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Building and nurturing communities around the concept of a coordination engine is vital. The team can organize local events, forums, and discussions to involve community members in conversations about economic alternatives and the potential of coordination engines.*

*INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION: The team can bring together experts from various fields (e.g., economics, technology, sociology, ecology) to explore and develop innovative solutions that address the complexities of modern economies through a coordination lens.*

*PILOT PROJECTS: Implementing small-scale pilot projects can demonstrate the practical applications of a coordination engine. These projects can serve as case studies showcasing its effectiveness in real-world scenarios.*

*STORYTELLING and NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT: Crafting compelling narratives around the need for a coordination engine can help shift public perception. This might involve sharing success stories, personal testimonials, and visioning exercises that highlight alternative futures.*

*SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL PRESENCE: Utilizing social media platforms to spread awareness and engage a broader audience can amplify their message. Creative campaigns, infographics, and thought leadership articles can help capture attention.*

*POLICY ADVOCACY: Engaging with policymakers to advocate for progressive policies that support coordination engines can help shift the regulatory landscape. This involves drafting policy proposals, providing expert testimony, and forming strategic partnerships with other organizations.*

*NETWORK BUILDING Establishing connections with like-minded individuals, organizations, and communities can create a supportive ecosystem for coordinating efforts towards economic alternatives.*

*EVOLVING DIALOGUE: Maintaining an open dialogue about the evolving nature of economic systems and continuously reflecting on the team's strategies and approach to ensure relevance and effectiveness in their advocacy.*

## A human-based deliberative process

George Pór: Michel, what do you see the AI omitted above? From my perspective, its contribution is valuable. Still, it missed one of the most consequential contributions that metamodern teams, or any movement for civilizational renewal, can make: prefigurative modeling the values of a post-capitalist society. Does that make sense to you?

Michel Bauwens: It seems pretty comprehensive, but that may be the problem: too much to do at the same time; I would suggest a human-based deliberative process, about a number of concrete priorities that can be realistically tackled in the specific context. While of course, keeping an eye on the big picture and bioregional and cosmological capacities to raise the social power of the project in question.

## Seeds of a productive system.

George Pór: Thanks for calling my attention to Hanzi's book. I didn't have the time to read it in-depth when it was published on Medium, and I just revisited it.

> now is the time to create the seeds of the new productive system.

Do you mean the seeds of the coordination engine (for mixing metaphors) with which commoners can compete with capitalism? If yes, what are they?

Methinks that sketching out our answer to that could be pivotal for a "metamodern team" ( <https://www.google.com/search?q=%22metamodern+team%22> ) when trying to answer its "What Is to Be Done?"

Michel Bauwens: Some of my strategic options would be:

- \* Consolidating the legal and property formats for commons-centric productive communities
- \* Bioregional and Cosmo-local forms of scaling, scoping, and solidarity

\* Thermodynamic and contributory accounting to initiate a contributory value regime  
(contributions are neguentropic, everything that fights entropy; negative impact: everything that increases entropy)

\* Developing appropriate commons-centric regulations

Please note that I have specialized solution-oriented sections in my wiki on nearly all provisioning systems; with AI, they could be synthesized in more practical guides of what has already been done.

George Pór: It looks like the means of today's intellectual production are still a couple of steps ahead of our capacity to turn them into means of paving the way to the commons transition. That's why the education of AI shamans is on par with my passion for commons education in the years ahead.

## Movement of Movements and Its AI Ally: an example

To finish these notes with one practical example of how a movement of movements can use AI-generated pattern cards, I want to share the one that ChatGPT developed, based on our conversation about the “Emergence ↔ Design” dynamics.

### ***PATTERN CARD: Dance the Tension – Emergence ↔ Design***

***Pattern Name: Dance the Tension***

***Core Polarity: Spontaneous Emergence ↔ Deliberate Design***

***Essence: Invite freedom. Create form. Let one inform the other.***

#### ***Use When:***

- A movement space is growing fast or getting chaotic.
- There's a need for coherence without rigidity.
- You want to support creativity across diverse actors.

#### ***How to Apply:***

- Host convergence spaces with loose structure (e.g., unconferences, open forums).
- Introduce rhythms of reflection and adaptation (e.g., monthly story-harvests).
- Create roles like weavers and sensemakers to midwife what's emerging.
- Use protocols and principles as *\*living agreements\**, not fixed rules.

#### ***Signals of Aliveness:***

- Surprise becomes welcomed, not feared.

- *Designs are adjusted based on what's emerging.*
- *Participants feel agency *\*and\** a sense of belonging.*

 **Watch For:**

- *Over-designing that suppresses emergence.*
- *Emergence without reflection, leading to burnout or fragmentation.*
- *Fear of conflict—tension is fertile!*

**Reflection Prompt:**

*Where in your ecosystem could *\*just enough\** structure help something beautiful emerge?*

This “Dance the Tension” pattern card can be customized and used in workshop facilitation, MoM design, and other contexts. This pattern card It can also serve as the seed crystal for growing a “movement of movements” pattern language deck around it if when the evolution of the movement would make such a development desirable and feasible.

Tab 2

