Report to atelier d'architecture autogérée

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Introduction

R-URBAN is an innovative development intervention that offers a new way forward for building resilient urban living environments. R-URBAN embodies a distinctive *process*, one that is guided by principles of participation, the democratization of knowledge and governance, and environmental responsibility. It enrols architectural and design expertise, place knowledge, dis-used spaces, the energies of local actors, ecological inputs and institutional authority into a series of interventions and ongoing activities that reshape the urban. Taking inspiration from theories of rhizomatic growth through replication and extension, R-URBAN enacts a politics of commoning.

While having different starting points there are many resonances between R-URBAN and the action research conducted by the Community Economies Collective (CEC). The CEC work has focused on alternative pathways for *regional* development and has conducted its projects largely in non-metropolitan settings. Our *entry point* into world making has been a revisioning of what constitutes 'the economy' and a subsequent reoccupation (a taking back) of the economy for people and the planet. For us, this starts in place and it involves negotiation around ethical interdependence in what we call *community economies*.

In my understanding, R-URBAN's entry point is vacant or dis-used urban space and its subsequent reoccupation for people and the planet. In the process of occupying and sharing space, people and urban materialities negotiate co-existence and 'community' forms. Rule of use are established, continuously renegotiated, and a self-organizing system of sociability, production, consumption and governance emerges.

Despite differences in geographical focus (regional/urban), and slightly different entry points (economy/space), there is much to explore by bringing the CEC experience into conversation with that of R-URBAN and its antecedents. In this document I explore some themes that arise out of this 'conversation'.

1. Innovations pioneered by AAA

1.1. An innovative politics/process of urban intervention

R-URBAN starts from the premise that urban change is inevitable and that the kind of growth that gentrification promotes is only 'bad' when it restricts participation by existing residents in an area, especially low income or 'marginalized' people. Reinvesting in the urban fabric, upgrading housing and community facilities, making space for artistic and cultural activities are all commendable components of making a vibrant city. But when processes of urban change actively (or implicitly) exclude certain populations they make the city a more divided and unfriendly place. R-

URBAN takes a stand by initiating processes around un-used spaces that allow opportunities for multiple social groups to interact and begin to find a voice in urban governance.

This is an innovative stance. It adopts a *pragmatic* approach to the urban setting. While potentially agreeing with many contemporary urban commentators who highlight the neo-liberalization of the city, its transformation into a place of increased surveillance and control, the destructive impacts of privatization and financialization of the urban landscape etc, R-URBAN sets out to build a different urban, finding the cracks or forgotten places from which to start. While this approach might be dismissed as a micro-politics that can never counter the macro-politics of 'capitalist urbanization', R-URBAN operates within a different, less binarized, ontology of power. Its interventions have the capacity to set in motion rhizomatic networks of growth that spread and infiltrate the urban fabric, offering both alternative ways of living in the city and knotty meshes of resistance to homogenizing forces.

The R-URBAN process places ecological sustainability at the centre of any intervention. All spatial designs are made to harness and contribute to the resilience of ecological cycles. By accessing funding to set up solar energy, water harvesting and composting toilets the project both educates participants about the value of working with the environment to meet needs sustainably and achieves a low running cost operation. With access to space negotiated at no cost, 'free' power, water and sewerage, the project is well set up to offer a space that does not have to 'earn its keep'. With less pressure to generate income to cover costs the space can be a place for creativity, including around alternative economies.

1.2. Mobile intervention

Starting with vacant or underutilized space R-URBAN initiates a process of reoccupation by beginning to do things that are visible to various communities—
professionals, architects, artists; local residents and passer-by, interest groups such as
gardeners, tinkerers, innovators. They take the uncertainty of occupation as a given
and construct mobile investments right from the beginning. This nomadic strategy
assumes the dynamism of the urban landscape. It accepts that gentrification will take
place as cities are reshaped by patterns of investment. It accepts that growth and
change can bring good things to urban areas. But it takes a stand on who is included
in the process of change—making sure that those who are often marginalized have a
role in what happens and a stake in the benefits that accrue to the local area. The
interventions are one vehicle for local people who are often left out of the change
process to get involved, get their contribution recognized and to find (or raise) their
voice.

1.3. Temporary-ness as a strength—a resilience strategy

R-URBAN accepts that there may be no possibility of permanent occupation. There is a refusal to invest in securing permanent title of ownership. Often this concern takes up so much time and legal discussion that nothing practical happens. R-URBAN circumvents this stasis by negotiating access and use rights from Municipal authorities without pressing for legal ownership. They are committed to 'commoning' of space in a temporary time frame. Temporary-ness is built into the design of

material structures, at least at the outset, and this may well have the effect of making the immaterial networks more resilient—a hypothesis to be explored. Certainly with the moves that ECO-BOX was forced to make, the social organization surrounding the occupation activities became more robust, assuming self-management in the process.

1.4. Practical activity

There is a social levelling process that is promoted by practical activity that produces something tangible—whether building, gardening or cooking. Different social groups, genders, ages can all become involved. Many people have some level of skill to share—by performing or teaching. By providing an opportunity for relatively immediate involvement in an activity, the projects are able to engage with people quickly. This is predicated on having the space available to host or be the subject of activity. When groups must spend a lot of energy finding spaces the interest that might draw people together in the first place dissipates.

1.5. An iterative development process

The Colombess R-URBAN manifestation combines the know-how gathered together from past projects—ECO-BOX, 56, others I am less familiar with. The leap forward with this most recent iteration is the co-existence and networking of three different interventions—urban agriculture, housing and business enterprise.

2. Articulating an ecological / economic vision in R-URBAN

In addition to the overarching inspiration of rhizomatic development coming from the work of Deluze and Guattari, R-URBAN draws inspiraton from ecology and utopian urban and regional development models (Petcou and Petrescu *R-URBAN Resilience* chapter). The dynamic of cycles, particularly of closing cycles, is important.

All the interventions will work with ecological cycles:

Hydrological: water harvesting, recycling, irrigation

Solar energy harnessing: panels and power

Photosynthesis: growing plants, harvesting, eating, composting

Composting: green waste recycled as soil

Spontaneous combustion: organic compost as a heat source

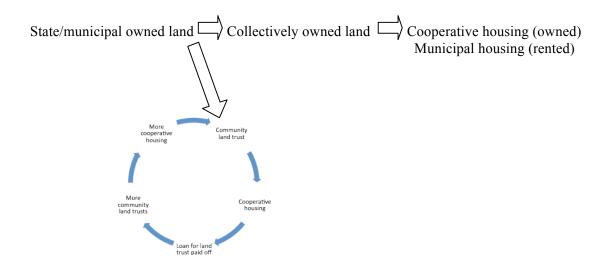
There is strong desire to work with closing other urban cycles. Not all interventions have figured out how to do this yet. What is meant by urban cycles? They are drawn from various models of resilient cities.

2.1. Closing the cycle of financial investment in the urban fabric

Howard's Garden City model proposed a transfer of ownership of the built environment from finance capitalists to co-operator/inhabitants. While never eventuating, this model proposed cooperative housing ownership and locally funded welfare. It also placed rural pursuits in the city, with a leading role played by community gardens.

Opportunities for R-URBAN:

Vacant land is currently owned by the Colombes Municipality. At the housing site there are plans to establish a Community Land Trust and a mix of ownership types for the six housing units. This intervention has the potential to spawn more community land trusts either via some direct mechanism of on-going community investment, or via replication as this ownership model becomes more widely understood.

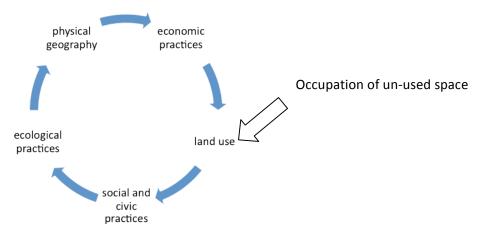


2.2. Organic links between people, work and place

Geddes' Regional City model situates the urban within its hinterland and highlights the organic links between geography, ecology, economy, institutions, civic life and public space. These links form mutual enabling cycles, so the natural and built environment creates conditions of possibility for the economic and social fabric and vice versa. Attention is given to gender relations and self-managing at a local scale.

Opportunities for R-URBAN:

Social occupation of un-used space enables the generation of new civic practices initiated by new socialities around gardening. Accompanying this, new ecological cycles are introduced—water harvesting, solar energy harvesting, composting and heat generation. Related to these are new economic activities like urban agriculture, composting for sale, recycling. This in turn recreates the physical environment. The soil fertility is improved and the urban landscape starts to green. The social landscape is changed by increased civic engagement.



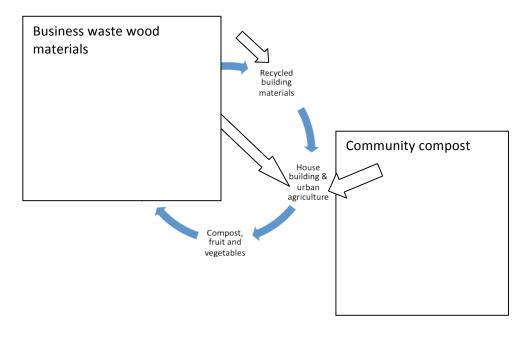
2.3. Closing cycles of production and consumpti

Hopkins' Transition Town model links ecological and economic resilience. There is an emphasis on production using locally available energy and resources and consumption practices that actively dissociate from global cycles of environmentally destructive production. Community gardens, local food production, renewable energy, recycling of water and materials, local currencies are all parts of interconnected cycles that aim to increase resilience.

Opportunities for R-URBAN:

At each of the three interventions in Colombes there is an opportunity for closing cycles of production and consumption. Once built there will be a totally self-sufficient energy cycle. Solar power and heat from composting will be harnessed to source all consumption needs for electric power and heat. The project will aim for a closed hydrological cycle. Water harvesting, tanks and reticulation systems will provide water for gardens, washing, drinking (?). The waste recycling will have an internal component—composting toilets, recycled solid waste on site.

There are also plans for cycles of interaction between the sites with inputs and outputs circulating through the local community perhaps via a local community currency or time bank system.



The ecological vision that appears to be most operationalized in the design of R-URBAN is an ecological dynamics of reproduction and sustainability via closed cycles of interdependence.

The economic vision that appears to be most articulated in the design of R-URBAN involves a dynamics of self-sufficiency outside market relations as local consumption becomes more tied directly into local production.

I think there are other ecological and economic understandings embedded in R-URBAN's design, but they are less prominent.

3. The R-URBAN process

The R-URBAN process replicates the model of community engagement practiced in the ECO-BOX and 56 projects. In these antecedent projects the process appears to have followed these steps:

- 1. Vacant or underused land identified by AAA
- 2. Negotiations with authorities about accessing the land
- 3. AAA organizes events on site to attract interest of local residents
- 4. Community consultations regarding uses to which space could be put
- 5. Initial design by AAA for occupying the space built on gathered ideas
- 6. Practical implementation of plans using community volunteers, AAA staff volunteers, student volunteers
- 7. Management and governance of space by AAA, users have rights of access (keys)
- 8. Ongoing development of new ways of occupying the space led by community interests and inspirations of AAA
- 9. Gradual transference of management and governance of space to community association
- 10. Possible relocation and organization to find an alternative space

R-URBAN is different in that it is operating over the much larger scale of a municipality rather than a one off inner-city site. It is more or less simultaneously developing three separate sites each with their slightly different residential, industrial, commercial and community mix. And, the process elaborated above is made more complex with the addition of enterprise users, as well as resident participants.

The philosophy of emergence and rhizomatic growth still underlies the R-URBAN experiment. It is a logical outgrowth and 'up-scaling' of the two successful antecendent projects/prototypes.

4. Points of intersection with community economies collective action research

4.1. Place-based and long term

Like R-URBAN the CEC action research projects we have conducted in US, Australia, Philippines and Indonesia are all place-based and involve some kind of partnership with local residents, local authorities and interested NGOs over a period

of 3-4 years. In a similar vein projects do not propose a new development model to be implemented, but a way of working with existing people in places, starting where they are.

Our overarching interest is in helping people to meet their survival needs (broadly defined) directly. This involves 'taking back the economy' for people and the planet. Taking back involves appreciating the ways in which any local area already *has* an economy (a diverse economy), despite representations in official discourse of economic lack. Our projects involve a first step of reframing the local economy and exploring how its existing assets/strengths could be made more visible and supported. This is followed by a second step of mobilizing local resources to develop new economic practices and enterprises that produce well-being directly (variously defined as meaningful employment, cash income, community ownership, greater variety of affordable food, repaired social safety net). Occupying space to enact these new developments is part of this latter step.

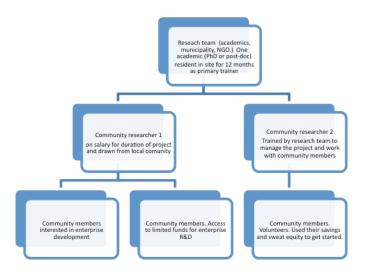
The CEC projects have been conducted over a 3-4 year period with on-going contact and involvement of the research team beyond the formally funded period. They have usually taken place in areas where researchers have pre-existing relationships with NGOs or place-based communities. The timing of the projects is, thus, 'long' term given the usual timing of social research projects.

4.2. A People's Pedagogy

As with R-URBAN the process of community participation involves an educative component—learning to be a different kind of economic subject in our case, learning to be an active citizen in the case of R-URBAN. In both approaches a 'learning-by-doing' pedagogy is employed. In the CE projects we engage in some explicitly pedagogical exercises to

- 1. help shift participants' focus from needs to assets
- 2. inventory the diverse economy and people's roles in it
- 3. inventory the gifts of heart, head and hands that people are willing to share
- 4. help groups research the feasibility of enterprise ideas

The CE projects have adopted a more arms' length relationship to the action research than AAA, in that the research team has not always been able to live full time in the communities over the entire duration of the project or be present at all events. For this reason we needed to train local (paid and unpaid) researchers to take on the approach and manage the emerging developments in line with the philosophy and politics briefly laid out above. Most of our training focused on Community Researchers recruited from the area. They, in turn, conducted training with wider numbers of interested community members and worked closely with those who volunteered to research the feasibility of, and then form community based social enterprises.



We had a quite structured pedagogical pyramid, whereas I get the impression that R-URBAN's educative mission is conducted more organically. Perhaps this reflects the level and type of resourcing? I note that AAA has done a fantastic job of recording the timing and nature of participation in its projects (I'm thinking of the ECO-BOX graph). Unfortunately, we never did such detailed recording of all the events organized over 3-4 years. We were more focused on the enterprise outcomes and recorded participation in these more targeted projects.

4.3. Community as something to be negotiated, performed, as ephemeral and yet resilient

Both R-URBAN and CEC action research projects approach the topic of 'community' in an anti-essentialist way. There is no attempt to work with any one group that self-identifies as a 'community of sameness', indeed quite the contrary. The projects and spaces are sites where multiplicity is welcomed and community, rather than being assumed, is created anew with each event. The projects prompt development of practices of negotiation between different people with different skill sets, backgrounds, educations, legal status, race and ethnicity. Out of this mix various operational communities emerge. There is a sense that these will function while they function. Attempts to formalize relations within associations (or cooperatives) with rules of membership and responsibility come late in the process.

5. Ecological and economic dynamics in CEC projects

As with R-URBAN, in the CE projects ecological thinking and alternative approaches to economic regional development (as opposed to urban development) have been increasingly important influences. We have been less concerned with cycles of reproduction and sustainability per se and more with theories of ecological resilience and interdependence within multi-species communities, and how they might be extended into the economic realm. I think there are some interesting points of intersection, complementarity and difference with how we are thinking about economic and ecological matters.

Our CEC projects have primarily focused on initiating a very different dynamic of economic development—one motivated by ethical decisions around interdependence with each other, rather than one driven by structural logics deriving from a machinic capitalist economy. Up to now we have worked in regions that have been 'left behind' by mainstream development, or, in the case of the Connecticut Valley in the US, are centres of alternative economic experimentation. These non-metropolitan regions have kind of chosen us, given our various institutional locations and funding access. It's not that we couldn't do one of these projects in an urban area, it's just that we haven't. Now I am back in Sydney this is a possibility.

5.1. Diversity

Our initial strategy of taking back the economy involves re-presenting the economic landscape as populated by a vast range of diverse economic practices. This strategic thinking move was prompted by feminist post-structuralism and the idea of a decentred subject (woman/economy). The diverse economy framing has been populated with examples drawn from a range of disciplines and activist movements (eg economic anthropology, sociology, the cooperative movement etc). But the representation of a diverse economy has a strong ecological resonance. Diversity is a precondition for resilience in the 'natural' world, and we have appropriated this ecological dynamic into our economic vision.

For us, economic diversity does not only mean sectoral diversity (agriculture, manufacturing, services etc) as it does in mainstream economics, but diverse forms of transactions and commensurability, labour remuneration, enterprise organization of surplus production and distribution, property ownership and ways of sequestering and investing stored wealth (see Diverse Economies Framing Figure). The simple axiom is that the more diversity of economic practices the less vulnerable to shock and the more resilient to recovery and repair if disaster in any one practice occurs.

Connection with R-URBAN:

I see this principle embodied in the plans for the R-URBAN agriculture centre in that there are three differently organized practices of gardening—self-employed/volunteer experimenter in urban agriculture; allotment gardens available to a range of self-provisioners; pedagogical garden maintained by the school/state. Might be possible to include this principal in the recruitment of enterprises to the Recycling site and the production facilities at the Agriculture site. At the moment the main anchor in the Recycling site is a social enterprise, but there might be spaces for self-employed businesses, worker-owned cooperatives, green capitalist firms etc?

5.2. Ethical negotiation

Beyond supporting and generating diversity (especially via non-capitalist enterprises such as social enterprises and worker owned cooperatives capable of generating surplus for social ends), we have worked to enact a community economy centred on ethical negotiation. (Not all diversity is desirable—consider the prevalence of slave enterprises and indentured labour—all part of a 'diverse economy' but not to be condoned).

In *A Postcapitalist Politics* Julie and I identified interdependence around four coordinates or key concerns of a community economy:

Necessity: what we need for our own and others' survival *Surplus*: how social surplus is appropriated and distributed

Consumption: how the earth's resources and social surplus is consumed

Commons: how a commons (what we make and share) is produced and

sustained

These coordinates have come out of our Marxian political economy heritage. We have never explicitly used this language in our action research projects to date. Our new book *Take Back the Economy, Any Time, Any Place*, which is designed not as an academic text but as a tool for popular economic literacy, is, however, actually organized around these key concerns, with 2 added—Encountering others and Investing in our future. This book presents another iteration of our theory of community economies and will influence how we pursue action research projects in the future.

Note that these ethical concerns for interdependence are not limited to the local but can inform relations with distant others in shadow places, as Val Plumwood urges:

...denied or shadow places [are] all those places that produce or are affected by the commodities you consume, places consumers don't know about, don't want to know about, and in a commodity regime don't ever need to know about or take responsibility for. (Plumwood, 2008:6)

Plumwood resists localism by seeing "... 'your place' [as] those parts of the earth that 'grow you', that support your life" (2008:6). In this view all people in place are intimately connected into all those other places that grow them. Even if there is an attempt to produce self-sufficiency in place, this does not erase one's connection to shadow places. Keeping these in mind might help to make explicit the way we could be reducing claims on those places.

Connection with R-URBAN:

There is a tendency for some to interpret R-URBAN as a project of localist self-sufficiency. This could be due to the language of closed cycles that has been used to convey some of the key dynamics that the project seeks to activate. Any place-based intervention is subject to this interpretation. Local self-sufficiency is seen by some, especially those on the left, as a criticism (given the hostric opposition to particularlism), while for others, who engage with more ecological agendas such as permaculture or transition towns, it is a positive highlight. Perhaps there needs to be a way of representing an interweaving of various kinds of local and non-local cycles of material and immaterial interdependence all of which touch base in Colombes?

5.3. The non-human

Two influences have driven the Community Economies Collective to engage more seriously with ecological thinking as a way of envisaging alternative pathways for local development. One has been our engagement with the post-humanism of the Ecological Humanities research network led by Deborah Bird Rose, Freya Mathews and Val Plumwood (before she died). The other has been the post-humanism of

Latourian material semiotics. Under both these influences we have been working to extend the notion of interdependence to include 'earth others' or the 'more than human'—meaning not just other species but the whole gamut of non-human materiality including bacteria, minerals, technologies, rivers etc.

It's a challenge to budge the human subject from centre stage of economic processes. One way Ethan Miller and I are doing this is to see the economy as a selected sub-set of human ecological behaviours concerned with the material sociality that is a necessary condition of life. The problem as we see it is that this sub-set of 'economic practices' has been theorized as separated, bounded and dis-integrated from other human and non-human ecologies.

Economy, then, was produced when discursive boundaries, at once symbolic and material, were drawn around a particular configuration of ecological relationships—specifically those between certain humans and a world made into resources for their instrumental use. Diverse processes of human livelihood were reduced to narrow logics. Sociality was reserved only for those who count as 'human'. And all more-than-human life was relegated to the domain of passive objects. Our challenge is to engage in forms of thought and practice that undermine the conditions of possibility for thinking 'the economy' as a hyper-separated domain beyond the reach of politics, ethics and the dynamics of social and ecological interdependence. (Gibson-Graham and Miller, 2011)

In our view we can no longer talk of community in only human terms. Being-in-common—that is, *community*—can no longer be thought of or felt as a community of humans alone, it must become *multispecies community* that includes all of those with whom our livelihoods are interdependent and interrelated. We have made many of our livelihood processes into enemies of ecological resilience by thinking and building ourselves into self-conscious separation from ecological interrelationships and the sociality of life. Our acknowledgement of this history of separation, and our commitment to rejoin a community of life through both our concepts and our actions is a crucial step toward a more robust ethical engagement with the world.

Connection with R-URBAN:

Harnessing and contributing to the resilience of ecological cycles is at the centre of R-URBAN, but the ecological is represented in technical and engineering language. Contribution and reciprocity is posed in largely functional terms. Might there be some value in making a space for interactions with non-human entities and other species that develop different affective relations between humans and non-humans?

5.4. Biomimicry

How have we attempted to incorporate an ecological perspective into our action research? Thus far it has been largely by retrospective interpretation of what our action research has achieved. We have drawn specifically upon Jane Jacobs' form of biomimicry, that is, her work that brings ecology into conversation with economy (see *The Nature of Economies*, 2000). As I wrote in 2010

Jacobs is aware that what distinguishes human communities from natural communities is the ethical and political moment—the space of decision. But she

is also keen to situate economies in nature and to see human action as an ecological agent. In *The Nature of Economies* (2000) she revisits the themes of her 1983 E.F. Schumacher lecture in which she lays out the dynamic principles of natural ecosystems and links these representations to what she knows about the economic vitality of regions. Jacobs proposes that we cultivate an ethics of economic sustainability, imitating the complex dynamics of natural ecosystems, such as the **growth** of diversity and resilience, habitat **maintenance**, and the complex web-like **interdependence** of developments and co-developments. (Gibson, Cahill and McKay, 2010)

In our action research in the Philippines we used a range of tools to inventory community needs and assets, diverse economies and enterprise ideas (see www.communitypartnering.info). Our inventorying exercises were partly designed as experiential pedagogies that prompted a shift in focus amongst participants from passivity and victimhood to mobilization and active citizenship. At the same time, these exercises provided a wealth of information about how social and physical habitats were being maintained by ethical actions (eg gifting, tolerance of gleaning on farms, volunteering for environment care etc) and undermined by other practices (eg. illegal quarrying, theft, extortionate interest rates, blow-out sharing) (see Gibson, Cahill and McKay, 2010 Table 1 Habitat Effects of Local Ethics and Practices). They also allowed us to make visible the incredible diversity of non-capitalist economic activities that were keeping people alive. And they helped to identify the developmental dynamics that were both reducing diversity and promoting it. For example, the rise in rural poverty was placing too great a demand on gleaning practices, instigating regulations to forbid the gleaning of coconuts. On the other hand, remittances from overseas workers from the community were being directed into enterprise development and farm to market road surfacing which allowed for more diversification of agriculture.

Jacobs argues that a key to economic development in situ is what she calls 'self-refuelling'. This involves producing within the region what the region needs to fuel itself, rather than relying on inputs from outside the region.

The gifts of nature and the ingenuity and creativity of human effort are what kick-start the circulation of energy in an economy. Jacobs calls the capture and recycling of energy by diverse economic /ecological activities within the conduits of an economy/ecology, 'self-refuelling'. The continued refuelling of a system contributes to its resilience. (Gibson, Cahill and McKay, 2010)

In terms of economic development this means replacing imports of, for example, foodstuffs with products made locally. Our enterprise development strategies focused on meeting local demand for goods that either were being brought in from elsewhere, or were usually too expensive for most people to afford. By producing goods locally in small community based social enterprises they could be cheaper and more accessible. We discouraged grand plans for business ideas that would rely on out of the region 'export' markets.

Connection with R-URBAN:

The Recycling Business area is open for enterprises other than the initial wood recycling social enterprise to set up. Our action research found that there is a need for

groups to be supported to do research into enterprise feasibility before they get started. Local market research is crucial to this process. If there is a ready local market for products the enterprise can get going and begin to iron out developmental production, governance and employment training issues. Finding out what products could contribute to self-refuelling is a useful piece of research. There may be particular niche products that certain groups desire that could be produced locally, for example.

5.5. Closed cycles and open systems

There is a sense in which self-refuelling involves closing one cycle so that goods do not flow in from outside and in turn payments/profits flow out of the region to be accumulated elsewhere. But this cycle can in some cases be reliant on harnessing funds from outside the region. In the case of the Philippines overseas workers wanted their foreign incomes to be diverted into locally sustainable development so they sent small investments back home. The closed cycle replied on an open system which in turn allowed the closed cycle to expand/spiral out. By investing in social enterprises producing goods for local consumption they enabled the social enterprises to expand production, accrue surplus, diversify products, meet more local needs and employ more local people.

6. Ideas for consideration by R-URBAN

What follows is a loose set of suggestions, concerns, ideas for consideration that have arisen from my engagement with R-URBAN and reflection on the CE projects.

6.1. Relations with local people

Enrolling interested participants from Colombess may be a challenge. As I understand it there have been many on-going meetings with local associations to disseminate knowledge about R-URBAN and enrol support. As with any residential area, there are various divisions (socio-economic, racial, ethnic, political allegiance) to negotiate in the local population. In previous projects the actual doing of things on site generated its own interest among people and each space became a place to negotiate participation and inclusion.

Suggestion: Community researchers

Given the complexity of R-URBAN it may be useful to supplement the 'get doing' strategy with some activities that draw out some of the less visible assets and knowledge embedded in the local population and in the region. Could there be a role for volunteer local researchers who might assist in inventorying diverse economic practices and people's assets (not financial but gifts of head, hand and heart). This community research exercise might have a mapping component. This is a different kind of doing that could tap into a range of social niches in the population that might not have been drawn into occupying the three spaces. This information could feed into plans for how people might use the enterprise and meeting space at the Urban Agriculture and Recycling sites.

6.2. Learning to be affected by the needs of the environment, as well as

human needs

One of the challenges of living in cities today is to recognize our debt to the non-human environment that we draw upon and 'draw down' so profligately. R-URBAN has the potential to bring environmental concerns into visibility and to modify urban practices. People have the opportunity to learn about solar power, water harvesting, composting, soil regeneration and plant growing. But could they also get more acquainted with the other species that are part of a becoming community in Colombes? How might the needs of animal, insect and plant life be met? And how might our interdependence with other species be acknowledged?

Suggestion: Mapping bio-diversity

This is already happening, I gather. At least it has been done for this region by other specialists and there has been discussion about allowing for green corridors for animals and plants. Perhaps this specialized knowledge could be added to by a people's mapping of species over different periods of the year as a way of enrolling citizen scientists and promoting the value of ecological diversity. The Nature Park is a great asset in Colombes.

Suggestion: Connecting with local ecologies past and present

The Colombes municipality once hosted market gardens and orchards which are now built over. Yet the soil may well have a memory of what once was produced. As one project is going to reinstate agriculture in the area, albeit in a very different way than was there before, it might be interesting to tap into the local knowledge of what once grew there. Some of the older residents in the single family dwellings may still remember what was grown in the market gardens, what birds once visited the area, whether different animals once lived in the area.

6.3. Governance of sites

In previous AAA projects the governance of sites has emerged out of the interventions and activities over time, with AAA staff acting as 'managers' in the initial stages of each project. In 56 an association has grown up to take on self-management of the site. Is this period of transition to self governance a viable model for the governance of the R-URBAN sites? Can AAA spread its managerial skills and capacities across three sites to oversee this process? Might there be some way of enrolling partner association/managers as each project comes into being? Is there a danger of choosing between existing associations and excluding some people? I don't have any suggestions to offer, but wonder if this could be the topic of some kind of forum for discussion and exploration of different models of temporary and self-evolving governance.

6.4. Resilience of research/action team

The impetus and inspiration for R-URBAN comes from Doina and Constantin. Their accumulated experience over many years and projects is an invaluable and impressive component of the planning and design of R-URBAN. How can their expertise be reproduced and replenished? How can R-URBAN continue in the event of one or both of the instigators having to relinquish the reins for a period?

Suggestion: Spreading the load

It is imperative to start to sharing the directing skills that Doina and Constantin have developed. Might it be possible to recruit some funded PhD students or post-doctoral scholars to join the research team and, under supervision by Doina and Constantin, take charge of directing segments of the R-URBAN project? It might be useful to think of advertising for interested scholars in fields such as Human Geography and Urban Sociology as well as Architecture and Design.

6.5. Strategic thinking support

R-URBAN is a theoretically informed action research project that is pushing the bounds of thinking on many fronts. The project could benefit from a vibrant theoretical support group who could offer strategic reflections, be a sounding board for new ideas and approaches, and bring to bear different, new and parallel theories that will enrich the R-URBAN experience.

Suggestion: a R-URBAN Forum

Set up a regular discussion forum around key aspects of R-URBAN in which participants bring their theoretical interests and reading to bear on the topic under consideration. A panel structure might work well to allow for the greatest range of views to be aired and discussion themes to emerge.

6.6. Dissemination

One way to attract the interest of the right kind of thinkers is to publish more of the approach that AAA has developed in its past projects. The book that documents ECO-BOX and 56 will help to reach people not immediately in architecture or design fields.

Some resources

Gibson-Graham, J.K. 1996 "How do we get out of the capitalist place?" Chapter 4 in *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*. This chapter is an engagement with feminist postmodern spatial becomings—it includes brief discussion of the nomadic thought of Deleuze and Guattari. Probably pretty out of date now, but as I read it over again there were many points of connection with R-URBAN.

Gibson, K., Cahill, A. And McKay, D. 2010 "Rethinking the dynamics of rural transformation: performing different development pathways in a Philippine municipality" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35,2: 237-255. This article lays out our used of Jacob's work in a regional setting.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. and Miller, E. 2011 "Economy as ecological livelihood" chapter in *An Ethics for the Anthropocene* edited by K. Gibson and D. Rose (under review with University of Minnesota Press).

Gibson-Graham, J.K. 2011 "Reading for difference" chapter in *An Ethics for the Anthropocene* edited by K. Gibson and D. Rose (under review with University of Minnesota Press).

Gibson-Graham, J.K., Cameron, J and Healy, S. 2012 *Take Back the Economy, Any Time, Any Place* University of Minnesota Press (forthcoming probably not till 2013).

Miller, E. 2012 "From community economy to solidarity economy (and back again)" paper presented at the Assoc. of American Geographers Conference February, New York.

http://www.thenation.com/article/166122/new-politics-disorderly-world article by Ross Carne on OWS and leaderless political movements

"MAMA ECONOMY" (THE ECONOMY EXPLAINED) ORIGINAL SONG by TAY ZONDAY http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37eqoYbj1QM just for fun