INSTITUTO
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DE LISBOA

Architecture is a Political Act.
Regenerative Community Responses to Ecological Emergency

Duncan Crowley

Doutoramento em Arquitetura dos Territórios Metropolitanos Contemporâneos, na especialidade em Cidades e Territórios

Orientadores(as):

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Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Doutor Roberto Falanga, Investigador Auxiliar,
Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa

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Dezembro, 2025

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Ph.D. in Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories

Research line: Cities and Territories

ISCTE, Lisbon, Portugal

Duncan Crowley

December, 2025

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Quotes

The earth is rapidly dying:
her forests are dying,
her soils are dying,
her waters are dying,
her air is dying.

Vandana Shiva, 1988

I want you to act as you would in a crisis.
I want you to act as if our house is on fire.
Because it is.

Greta Thunberg, 2019

POWER TO THE PEOPLE
AND CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW
ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE
AND WE KNOW HOW

Climate Justice Activists chant, streets of Copenhagen, 2009

Sustainability is not Enough:
We Need Regenerative Cultures.

Daniel Wahl, 2016

We are not fighting for nature.
We are nature defending itself.

Isa Fremeaux & Jay Jordan, 2015

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild

William Butler Yeats, 1886

Appreciations

A big thanks to all who helped… Go raibh míle maith agaibh, a chairde go leir (GRMMA)

To my supervisors Teresa and Roberto, who have helped steer this strange, difficult and quite experimental process to explore what architecture is, and how it can better serve all of humanity in these challenging times. I hope you both also gained from and enjoyed our shared journey.

To Gil and Tom, who I see as sacred, action research ninjas: Weaving a magical web and giving people like me a chance to get involved in the adventure. Gil, thanks for opening the door and allowing me to become an engaged researcher, and so much more. Tom, thanks for plenty special moments, in UrbanA, ECOLISE and all the associated groups beyond. Let's walk soon.

To the little friends from nature I have gotten to know since moving to Lisbon; the birdies, the jumping spiders, the geckos, the magical octopuses and, in very special moments, the dolphins. Also thanks to our little *Golfinhos* group, our Tuesday mornings give Tania and me such joy.

To all those with whom I have wandered with. Those who have said yes to wild adventures up the hills and out to rivers. A special thanks to those who have shared moments of standing in rivers, or better still sticking our heads into sacred waters. Fantastic adventures have been had.

To all those I have stood with, marched with, or gone on actions with. We know the world we want. We know the risks of standing up for values. And a special shout out to those who took principled stands when it was not popular. What beautiful moments we had in Lisbon walking from the sea to sit under Belem's olive tree, in solidarity with the people of Palestine in 2025.

To my parents, grandparents, sisters and the little people: Thanks for all the support, always. Let's keep celebrating Brian Duffy's birthday to remember the journey of where we came from.

Lastly, to my hero, mi compañera, my wild and wonderful warrior woman from Ayacucho… Tania Landeo. Thanks for keeping on pushing me to be better. It's now Aventura O'Clock… Thanks to the rivers, to *Inti*, to *Pachamama*… *Antes la muerte, la pura vida*

Resumo

A humanidade está fazendo suficiente para garantir a sobrevivência humana? Em 2022, o Secretário-Geral da ONU afirmou que a ação insuficiente para aliviar o aquecimento global poderia levar ao "suicídio coletivo". Este trabalho avalia criticamente se as respostas regenerativas e lideradas pela comunidade à emergência ecológica estão a transformar as cidades para um mundo mais saudável. O autor utiliza a autoetnografia para refletir sobre a sua investigação engajada com a ECOLISE e a UrbanA, bem como sobre a sua atuação enquanto ativista de base. A partir da prática, examina três questões: Por que razão é necessário este trabalho? Como é que ele está a acontecer? Que lugares saudáveis estão a surgir? Uma componente teórica complementar examina a Emergência Ecológica, os Caminhos da Mudança e os Lugares Saudáveis. A arquitectura é um acto político: Analisa-se a cumplicidade da arquitetura nas crises atuais e a sua capacidade de as resolver através do apoio a transformações biorregionais lideradas pelas comunidades. O Acordo de Paris está a falhar: em 2024, a temperatura global da Terra ultrapassou pela primeira vez os 1,5°C acima dos níveis pré-industriais. James Hansen, da NASA, declarou que a meta internacional de 2°C está morta em 2025. A negação das alterações climáticas está a crescer. Os pontos de inflexão estão a aproximar-se rapidamente. As previsões precisas de emergência ecológica de 1972, feitas pelo relatório "Limites do Crescimento", foram ignoradas. O pós-crescimento ganha força, mas não é suficiente. A mudança sistémica significa terminando o uso de combustíveis fósseis. O trabalho transformador de grupos radicais para ligar as comunidades foi interrompido por guerras culturais, conflitos internos e analfabetismo em relação à justiça climática, exacerbados pelo racismo cego europeu em relação aos conflitos globais em curso. A sustentabilidade não basta; culturas regenerativas são necessárias. A reconexão com o lugar é fundamental. As alterações nas leis dos Direitos da Natureza, lideradas pelos povos indígenas, estão a impactar positivamente a governação territorial. Os movimentos sociais devem empregar o municipalismo para uma governação multinível, imitando a natureza através de sistemas interligados em redes fluviais fractais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Iniciativas comunitárias; Pós-crescimento; Justiça climática; Desenvolvimento Regenerativo; Autoetnografia

Abstract

Is humanity doing well enough to keep humans alive? In 2022, the UN Secretary-General claimed insufficient action to alleviate global heating could lead to “collective suicide”. This work critically assesses if regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency are transforming cities for a healthier world.

The author uses autoethnography to reflect on his engaged research with ECOLISE and UrbanA, and also as a grassroots activist. From practice, he examines three questions: Why is this work needed? How is it happening? What healthy places are emerging? An accompanying theoretical component examines Ecological Emergency, Pathways of Change and Healthy Places. Architecture is a Political Act: Architecture’s complicity in current crises, and ability in resolving them through supporting bioregional community-led transformations is examined.

The Paris Agreement is failing: In 2024, Earth’s global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above preindustrial levels for first time. NASA’s James Hansen declared the international 2°C target dead in 2025. Climate denial is growing. Tipping Points are fast approaching. Limits to Growth’s accurate 1972 ecological emergency predictions were ignored. Despite Post-growth’s widening acceptance, it’s not enough. System change requires ending fossil fuel use. Transformational work of radical groups to connect communities was interrupted by culture wars, internal conflicts and climate justice illiteracy, exacerbated by blind European racism regarding ongoing global conflicts.

Sustainability isn't enough, regenerative cultures are needed. Re-connection to place is key. Indigenous-led Rights of Nature law changes are positively disrupting territorial governance. Social Movements should employ municipalism for multilevel governance; mimicking nature through nested systems within fractal river networks.

KEYWORDS: Community-led Initiatives; Post-growth; Climate Justice; Regenerative Development; Autoethnography

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Index of Abbreviations and Acronyms

5DS	5 Dimensions of Sustainability
AML	Área Metropolitana de Lisboa (Lisbon Metropolitan Area)
BCNUEJ	Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability
C2C	Cradle to Cradle
CAN	Climate Action Network
CE3C	Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Changes
CEU	Central European University
CfF	Communities for Future
CJ	Climate Justice
CJA	Climate Justice Action
CJEV	Cloughjordan Ecovillage
CJN	Climate Justice Now
CLI	Community-Led Initiative
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CoP	Community of Practice
COP	Conference of the Parties - UN yearly Climate Change Conference
COP25	25th UN Climate Change Conference (Conference of the Parties)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DINÂMIA'CET	Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies
DRIFT	Dutch Research Institute for Transitions
ECOLISE	European Network for Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability
ETiA	Ecovillage Transition in Action
FCUL	Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon
FFF	Fridays for Future
FREI	The University of Freiburg
GA	General Assembly
GAIA	GAIA Education
GEDS	Gaia Education Design for Sustainability
GEN	Global Ecovillage Network

GHG	Greenhouse Gas
H2020	Horizon 2020
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICLEI	Local Governments for Sustainability
ICTA	Institute for Environmental Science and Technology (Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MiT	Municipalities in Transition
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
N30	November 30th 1999
NVC	Nonviolent Communication
NVDA	Non-Violent Direct Action
PAH	Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (People Affected by Mortgages Platform)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RoN	Rights of Nature
RTS	Reclaim The Streets
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SM	Social Movement
SSEC	Social Solidarity Economy and the Commons
SSTEC	Sino–Singapore Tianjin Eco-City
ST	Systems Thinking
TT	Transition Towns
UAB	The Autonomous University of Barcelona (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UrbanA	Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WEF	World Economic Forum
XR	Extinction Rebellion

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

I want you to act as you would in a crisis.
I want you to act as if our house is on fire.
Because it is.

Greta Thunberg, 2019

1.1. Background to the research

This work comes from a place of Peace, Love and Rage!

This work identifies and responds to the very dark place humanity currently finds itself; a multi-folded ecological emergency that threatens our collective existence. Using a three pillared, triad, or triskelion (Figures 2.23.3 & 2.23.5) structure throughout the thesis, I, the author, explore and respond to three basic questions: Why is this work needed? How is it happening? What healthy places are emerging? The work's core exploration examines how communities can, and indeed, are already responding to the range of intertwined challenges our family, the human species, collectively face, as we just about cling onto life in our seriously undervalued, underappreciated, much exploited and damaged home.

Why the rage? Because humanity is in the midst of an ecological emergency that, so far, it has been wholly incapable of dealing with sufficiently (Hansen, 2025; McKibben, 2022). Even the desire to deal with it seems lacking (Thunberg, 2019). Failure of appropriate action, coupled with escalation at current, or even increased, rate of planetary destruction could lead to what the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Antonio Guterres, identified in 2022 as "collective suicide". Now, Tuesday the 5th of July 2026, the worlds current carbon dioxide (CO2) level is 430.15 parts per million (ppm)[1], over 80 above the 350 limit passed in 1988, which climate scientist James Hansen (1988) and environmentalist Bill McKibben (2009) warned was the safe level humanity had to stay below, to avoid global climate collapse.

Why the love? Because how communities respond to ecological emergency is driven by love. This can be the deep love all peoples have for their very old histories, traditions and stories

[1] Daily Updates via CO2.earth at https://www.co2.earth/daily-co2

of place, and for the ancestors who have gone before (Magan, 2022). The love exists between the men, women and children who form communities together for an imagined better shared future, in either defending that which they have and don't intend to let go of (McCafferty, 2004; Fremeaux & Jordan, 2015), or to create a better tomorrow knowing dark and dangerous storm clouds are already coming their way. The essence of life is driven by unconditional love, all humans and animals do whatever it takes to keep their young alive, so that they might keep life itself going. Life creates conditions for life to thrive. The regenerative approach calls on society to align with the constantly replenishing forces of nature, to serve the community and to identify, understand and work with forces through which life creates conditions that make more life possible (Wahl, 2016). Driven by love, great hope bubbles, as Arundhati Roy (2014) said "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing".

Why the peace? Because the healthy places that are emerging through the work of regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency are all based on peace, at all the levels. Where individuals have the skills and support to navigate whatever problems they face, where communities can identify, understand and work through conflicts to cocreate and govern better futures. Peace on earth, peace between different human communities, peace between humans and the physical territories they are part of. A peace where refugees no longer exist, where humans voyage all over this wonderful planet, from interest and curiosity, as opposed to where communities are driven from their homes by insufferable climate breakdown, drought, famines, intolerance, sectarianism, prejudice, hate, persecution, violence, invasion or war. A peace where all are free to be what and who they are, to the fullness of their ability and desire, supported by those who love them. Peace for a rewilded world, where biodiversity has returned, where forests, rivers, streams and flora and fauna can return to more natural states. A peace where humans no longer see themselves above nature, but as an integral and dynamic part of it, understanding it, working with it, being part of it. The peace exists when the fight for nature has ended, when the old ways of exploitation and destruction have ended, by the inverting of the old order so that climate justice reigns.

Navigating through these three pillars of peace, love and rage, the thesis uses an autoethnographic lens to examine a small section of community responses I have worked with, in two different roles; that of an engaged researcher, and a grassroots activist. This method allows me to critically self-reflect on my activities as an architect, activist and academic, into architecture's complicity in these problems, and possibility of becoming part of the solutions. Seeing architecture as a political act, the work's central question asks if regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency are transforming cities for a healthier world?

Using an autoethnography methodology to assess Community-led projects

Two complimentary components answer each of the three questions of the PhD thesis; one theoretical, one practical. Practically, autoethnography is used as the methodology for the work, to explore my work in architecture, research, activism and climate during two periods.

The first period was as an engaged researcher during the PhD period (2019-2024) when I worked professionally with ECOLISE (European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability) and the European funded Horizon project UrbanA (Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities), which was very much an ECOLISE led project.

The second period was as a grassroots activist when I was involved in ecological and social movements and worked mostly informally and voluntarily with different projects and communities that had varying levels of (in)formality and a range of ideologies, objectives and scales of activity or impact. This period covers 30 years, beginning in 1996, until the present in 2026. This period is divided into two sub sections; “Architectural Moments” and “Ecological Communities”. “Architectural Moments” reflects upon six specific projects, each from a different city; five European, one Latin American; Banja Luka (Serbian Republic, Bosnia), Dublin (Ireland), Copenhagen (Denmark), Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), and one Brazilian; Curitiba. Four of these moments involved my participation with ecocity groups. This builds on time spent with “Ecological Communities”; examining ecovillage projects I worked with or visited, five from Europe and one from India (some moved to annex).

Autoethnography is a form of qualitative and/or arts-based, ethnographic research, where the researcher connects personal experiences to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings (Ellis, 2004). It includes the use of critical reflection on past moments, to make sense of things and explore for overlooked insights. It is valued for its ability to craft compelling tales (Poulos, 2021), which aligns with emerging insight, or need, for climate movements to tell better stories. The autoethnography methodology was chosen due to my decision to report directly from my practical work, from the lenses of the two periods. The key focus here is to examine the role and impact of citizen groups, including community-led initiatives (CLIs), in responding to different aspects of ecological emergency.

The theoretical component of the work explores and responds to the three basic questions in corresponding sections: Ecological Emergency, Pathways of Change, Healthy Places. Combining the theoretical exploration with the practical component of autoethnography, the discussion section will respond to the thesis’s Research Question. The work responds to each of the three sub research questions, each corresponding to a pillar of the structure approach.

Regenerative Community Responses to Ecological Emergency

Despite enormous challenges, there are pathways that can be taken to avert the worst of the damages done, as well as starting to bring about means of inhabiting our home, planet Earth, in a more balanced way that understands and works with the cycles of nature. This is the essence of the Regenerative approach (Reed, 2007; Mang & Haggard, 2016; Wahl, 2016), which incorporates sustainability, but transcends it. This is the key lens through which work underway is identified, at all levels and scales, where communities are responding to the Ecological Emergency in the places they dwell and by embodying the value of design as nature. The work identifies and explores regenerative community responses as the best means of responding to the Ecological Emergency. Regenerative design and development are unique to place and scale dependent, often being nested systems and always being living systems (Meadows, 1999). The work explores regenerative places as a desired outcome of CLIs starting to bring about the system change they desire. A key factor here is bioregionalism, which often are specific geographic areas based around river basins. Within these bioregions cities currently exist.

Part of the thesis examines what these cities might look like after a just transition, or through ongoing reiterations of regenerative transformations. This theoretical component of the thesis identifies such solutions with the still vague term of ecocities, an area in which I have worked intermittently (Dublin, Curitiba, Lisbon) since the Eco city Banja Luka project in post-war Bosnia with the European Architect Student Assembly (EASA) network in 2003. The thesis seeks to contribute to one area on the diverse ecocity spectrum, the somewhat messy area where community-led, regenerative, post growth and post capitalist communities are currently active. This theoretical component acknowledges that models for smaller scale settlements and communities already exist in practice, what the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) define as “ecovillages”. It proposes a theoretical regenerative model for ecocities, based upon scaling the GEN model to cities; “Community-led Ecocities”. A fractal model of governance, or a nested form of community decision making, would be applicable for such a model to exist, based on radical forms of communication, which means inherently political forms of organisation.

Cities do not exist on their own. Although occupying only 3% of the Earth’s surface (UNEP, 2024), they are key drivers of ever-increasing resource extraction and consumption that escalates the current crises, through ever increasing fossil fuel burning to power the current economic system. Therefor the regenerative ecocity proposal of this thesis positions ecocities within their unique bioregions, territories defined around the geographical and ecological backbone of their river basins, and explores what this means for communities living within.

The work of this PhD thesis builds upon the previous 30 years of activism and work since 1996. It seeks to further connect the various groups, seek alignment between visions of a different system, planet, cities, economies, power structures and governance mechanisms. The PhD has offered me an opportunity to stand back, assess, and explore other ways of responding to today's crises. It seeks to critically examine and to offer scientific insights to help others on similar journeys. Hopefully it can assist in wider Community-led ecocity transformation, regenerative change and, simply put, system change. The words of US anthropologist, Margaret Mead, come to mind, which she wrote after some time living on Samoan islands in the 1920's with indigenous folk: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has".

In closing this introduction, I return to the why question. Why should anyone bother about these depressing themes of possible species suicide, ever worsening climate breakdown and increasing stories of droughts, crop failure, starvation, mass migration and social tensions?

Regenerative responses include what is best described as a cultural component, which cannot be disassociated from the material side of life. Part of this approach links the current state of material destruction of our home, planet earth, to broken connections between people and place, in the deepest of senses. This requires epistemological revaluations of how individuals and communities see, feel and re-establish connections with place, or territory, at a series of different scales. At the deepest level this raises very serious questions about, or challenges to, accepted belief systems, or value systems. This demands difficult conversations about many contemporary stories or senses of identity and tradition at the core of the western belief system. A recurring question is what does it mean to be indigenous to place, again. The indigenous Hopi people of north-eastern Arizona in the US have a word Koyaanisqatsi, which means Life out of balance. The regenerative approach seeks to live in balance, again.

At its very deepest, the regenerative pathway, offers an invitation to reflect on what it means to be alive, again. We attempt to improve home, at the various scales, the backyard, street, the community, the city or rural village, the bioregion and related continent. But at the deepest level, we return to Home, *Oikos*, *Pachamama*. A recurring question is what does it mean to be indigenous to place, again. If hit by a realisation of being fully alive and working in service to the earth, to life, to the future, to what will be… feelings of deep joy, love and wonder emerge.

I leave you with the image of (y)our home (Fig 0.1).[2] I live here. You live here. How very strange. Enjoy your adventure. **VIVA LA PACHAMAMA** (Long live Mother Earth).

[2] In Appendix A, page 329

1.2. Research Gap

Are regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency transforming cities for a healthier world? While many good examples exist, the ecological emergency is worsening rapidly. The main research gap is to identify what further work is needed for humanity to respond adequately to an ever-worsening situation that threatens human existence.

Positioning architecture as a political act, attention is given to when normal citizens become active participants in shared experiments and collective adventures to bring about system change. These moments often take the form of revolt and resistance, often considered outside the normal realms of architectural and urban investigation. Not only do they need our immediate attention, from a climate justice perspective, these movements and moments need increased support through action research to further challenge mainstream narratives. Examining the current realities, which Lisbon especially is experiencing, this framing also examines current urban phenomena of what Rolnik deems "Urban Warfare" (2019), where communities are being driven out of their neighborhoods due to speculation, gentrification and touristification, all aspects of the Empire of Finance where homes and neighbourhoods become the "last subprime frontiers of capitalism". Successful community responses to these forces need identifying. Any inspiring stories that offer hope to others facing similar challenges need telling.

The CLI world is growing, but is still at the margins (Wheatley & Frieze 2006; Penha-Lopes & Henfrey, 2019). The work seeks to understand what strategies are being used, what blockages, if any, are holding back communities from getting more organised. Since 2019 there have been increases in urban social movements working for climate justice, using more direct forms of physical action to block against fossil fuel expansion. I explore how to move from social movements working against somewhat vague concepts, to CLIs that engage in visioning an improved climate adapted future and take action to implement. Transformative CLIs have a systemic approach, they not only address societal challenges, but also challenge the systemic structures and institutions that created those challenges in the first place (Wittmayer, 2017).

Regenerative design and development are unique to place and scale dependent. Scale is highly important: the local is within the wider system, in turn within the next level. A key factor is bioregionalism, specific geographic bioregions are often based around river basins. A recurring question for regenerative practitioners is what would it mean to be indigenous to place, again. While Regenerative Practice has become increasingly popular in recent years, this research seeks to explore certain community processes from the more radical end of the spectrum to see if they align with agreed upon regenerative principles. This includes positioning about climate justice, system change, decolonialism and postgrowth (Kallis et al, 2025).

While there has been much academic investigation into aspects of Climate justice (Hickel, 2024, Sultana, 2022), further investigation is needed into the practice of living, or embodiment, of these values in the world, both in academia and in the diverse world of grassroots activism from the world of social movements. Even with supposedly aligned groups and movements, further work is needed to identify what is missing from further connecting communities and establishing shared objectives on strategies to bring about system change. Always, further attention needs to be given to marginalized voices, and peoples. Global South and indigenous communities say "We are still colonized, but this time through climate change, the development industry, and globalization" (Sultana, 2022). Identifying how Global North communities, both academic and activist, can better understand and support such communities needs more work.

Within the range of regenerative solutions, community-led ecocity solutions need further exploration. The ecocity world is vague and incorporates many concepts and practices (Joss, 2010) and is still full of contradictions (Lincoln, 2023). Fractal governance could enable community-led ecocities function within bioregions. Inspired by the patterns of nature, fractal nested systems can be achieved through municipalist structures of governance, of communities within communities. GEN already has some urban projects, including Copenhagen's Christiania and Los Angeles ecovillages. Further research can identify pathways to scale GEN's model for ecocities, using fractal governance to enable "locally owned participatory processes" (Joubert, 2015). Current projects from society's edges show it is already happening, such as Rojava and São Paulo. Investigation is needed to search for more, or enable more to emerge.

Autoethnography is valued for its ability to craft compelling tales (Poulos, 2021). This form of qualitative, arts-based, ethnographic research, allows researchers to connect personal experiences to wider cultural, political, social meanings and understandings (Ellis, 2004). This methodology can be used more in the architectural realm to identify important insights from the field to assist in telling better stories. Examining insights from the worlds of engaged research and grassroots activism, can help identify what is working well, what is not and what can be tried to move things forward. While the Grassroots activist world is huge, by selecting a series of specific moments, further insights can be investigated. Even in moments where things did not succeed, reasons can be found to build for a better future. Academia and civil society can learn more from, and with, the grassroots world. If there are resources from the research world that can help the wider world navigate to a better future, then institutions, and more funding, should be opened up the to assist in this process. Climate solutions have to respond to the local struggles and challenges individuals, families and communities face. We need to learn how citizens can fall in love with a better future (Hopkins, 2025).

1.3. Research Question

The thesis uses a triskelion, triad, or three pillared system to undertake the investigation. The three pillars manifest in a number of ways and in different places within the thesis. Each pillar relates to a simple question, where "we" is the diverse network of communities and projects that I participated with, as both an engaged researcher and a grassroots activist:

- Why are we doing this work?
- How are we making change?
- What is emerging from the work?

This leads to the chief question of the PhD thesis, which is the following research question:

> **Are regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency transforming cities for a healthier world?**

Using the three pillars of the thesis methodology, the Thesis Research Question is divided into 3 Sub-Research Question. Each of the three pillars corresponds to both a question (why, how, what) and a theme (ecological emergency, community, healthy places). There is a sequentiality between each question, the first opens up to the second, which opens up to the final one. Table 1 outlines the Thesis Research Question, 3 Sub-Research Questions and Objectives of the research. Also included is the alignment between the 3 Sub-Research Questions, the 3 thesis questions and their corresponding literature review section and the 3 Thesis pillars: Ecological Emergency, Pathways of Change and Healthy Places.

Table 1*:* Thesis Research Question (RQ), 3 Sub-Research Questions (SRQs) & Objectives

Research Question			Are regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency transforming cities for a healthier world?
Thesis Pillar	**Thesis Question**	**Literature Review Section**	**Sub-Research Questions**
Driver	Why?	Ecological Emergency	SRQ1: Why does ecological emergency need responding to?
Process	How?	Pathways of Change	SRQ2: How are communities responding to ecological emergency?
Goal	What?	Healthy Places	SRQ3: What healthy places are emerging, at various scales including cities, from community responses to ecological emergency?

Objectives	
Sub-Research Questions	**Objectives**

RQ1: Why does ecological emergency need responding to?	• Identify and examine the criteria of ecological emergency, linking to GENs 5 dims of sustainability:
	  o Climate Breakdown
	  o Biodiversity Emergency
	  o Growth Addiction
	  o Social Unraveling
	  o Koyanasqatsi
	• Identify the driving factors accelerating these breakdown.
	• Identify solutions to these problems
	• Understand what inadequate responses to Ecological Emergency means
	Explore Secondary factors maintaining current destructive system

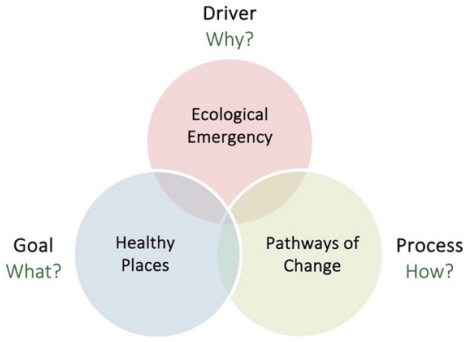
RQ2: How are Communities responding to Ecological Emergency?	• Identify different sorts of community: Social Movements, Communities of Place / Community Based Initiatives > Community-Led Initiatives (CLIs) – Sustainable and Regenerative Development • Examine ranges of value systems – politically aligned, ecological base, anti-capitalist, Post growth, climate justice, system change. • Explore responses from series of scales
What healthy places are emerging, at various scales including cities, from community responses to ecological emergency?	• Establish firstly healthy places at all scales: planet, bioregion, nested, wilds, rivers, ecocities • Network organisation with new communication tools. Horizontal, trust based, community, fractal structure. Sociocracy, Solidarity, Commons. Joy. • Identify an approach for community-led ecocities to take in their bioregions, based on scaling GENs methodology

1.4. Aims and Objectives

The goal of this work is to critically assess whether and how different practices have achieved specific goals. The thesis holds a normative orientation, so I will discuss how best community-led regenerative responses can navigate and respond to the Ecological Emergency humanity finds itself in.

I use autoethnography to critically reflect upon and assess my contributions working in the field in this area over a 30-year period from 1996 to 2026, and specifically the PhD research period from 2019 to the end of 2024. A range of other methodologies were used within the various projects over this timeframe, in particular participative action research, with mostly European based groups, communities and projects to identify and examine the impact of their responses in catalysing a more regenerative world. These secondary methodologies are listed, and a short summary given for each.

The thesis examines responses to ecological emergency by two complimentary, but interconnected, components; one theoretical, one practical. Theoretically, it investigates the somewhat vague concept of ecocities, seeking to contribute to one area within its diverse spectrum; where regenerative, community-led, post growth and post capitalist communities are currently active: What the thesis refers to as "community-led ecocities". It examines how patterns in nature could enable fractal governance systems to emerge within bioregions and what current transformative urban processes could implement such ecosystems. To investigate this, the literature review explores the research question through three key sections, the 3 pillars of the Thesis: Ecological Emergency, Pathways of Change and Healthy Places (Fig 1.1.1). Each section is based around a question, which is also a component. Starting with why, the driver of the research, as advised by Sinek (2009), then moving to how, the process of change, to what, the healthy places that respond spatially and territorially to Ecological Emergency.



Ecological Emergency Sub crisis	GEN Dimensions of Sustainability
Climate Breakdown	Integral Design (Whole System)
Biodiversity Crisis	Ecology
Growth Addiction	Economy
Social Unravelling	Social
Koyaanisqatsi (Life out of balance)	Culture (Worldview)

Figure 0.1 1: Three Thesis Pillars. 2: GEN; 5 Dimensions of Sustainability (Author, 2025)

Why should humanity respond to Ecological Emergency? What consequences exist from inaction, what was proposed and tried, what is blocking real change? Seeing architecture as a political act, I Use GEN's 5 dimensions of sustainability (GEN, 2025) methodology (Fig 1.1.2) to subdivide ecological emergency into 5 subsections: 1) Climate Breakdown 2) Biodiversity Crisis 3) Growth Addiction 4) Social Unravelling 5) Koyaanisqatsi (Life out of balance). The science is clear and a range of solutions were proposed based around ending consumption of fossil fuels to keep global warming emissions within the 1,5ºC target, agreed by the Paris agreement in 2015. Existing within the contemporary global economic system, political will has been far too slow to reach targets: the 1,5ºC mark was passed in 2024. Regenerative responses presented here include two interconnected pathways, like home and away football matches: the transformation by communities of their local territories, as well as the political processes to push governments to do more to respond to the crises, through system change.

From “why?” to “how?” From identifying the problem, the driver of the research, as Ecological Emergency, I explore what responses have been employed to counter the damage done; Pathways of Change. From a regenerative approach, how cannot be disassociated from the who? A community (who) engage in a process (how) in a unique place (what). The regenerative approach rejects a modernist one size fits all approach to urban solutions, it is more aligned to a systems approach which sees all things as processes in constant flux, as living systems. It identifies uniqueness of place, in all senses, as being critical to a regenerative approach for transformations, including working with the natural systems of the territory, understanding the histories of place, including past and current conflicts, and activating communities that exist in the place to become actors in the ongoing shaping and reshaping of that place, by working with the forces of nature, in which a place is situated. This section is divided into three distinct categories: 1) Social Movements 2) Community-Led Initiatives 3) Regenerative Cultures. The first explores how communities rise up to oppose systems of destruction. The second sees these groups starting to build alternatives where they are, at various scales. The final incorporates the regenerative shift, moving from individual and unique projects to being nested catalysts for change in wider networks of bioregional ecosystems.

And finally, from “how?” we move to “what?” The what is defined loosely as “Healthy Places”. Places here refers to a range of physical areas at different scales, often nested within each other; from a small community project, to the municipality it is located in; to the wider metropolitan area of the “city” it belongs to, to the city coupled with its rural hinterlands, to the city as part of a wider bioregion, often aligned along territorial river basin(s). The base place is planet earth itself (herself), which is a living system and needs to be treated with care. This section is divided into six distinct categories: 1) Healthy planet 2) The Waters 3) The wilds 4) Catalysts for change 5) Ecovillages 6) Ecocities. The still vague concept of ecocities do not fully exist. Although a number of projects have used this label, their value is contested (Joss, 2010; Caprotti, 2015). I add the “community-led ecocities” concept to this already contested spectrum and explore the concept from diverse approaches of different communities. I reflect on a number of regenerative experiments, many of which are ecovillages, most of which are rural community-led experiments, that are included in the Global Ecovillage Network. GEN do include two urban experiments, which are relatively small initiatives, nested within their wider cities, one in LA in the US, the other in Copenhagen in Denmark. Part of the research does explore what scenarios, or pathways, could lead to the transformation of existing cities by CLIs into community-led ecocities, based around scaling GEN’s methodology to where “every village is an ecovillage, every city a green city” (Joubert, 2017).

1.5. Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) sets out the foundations to this research and is divided into three interconnected key sections, called the 3 pillars of the Thesis: Ecological Emergency, Pathways of Change & Healthy Places. For the 3 pillars, the order allows for a required theoretical base to be formed from which the following section builds upon: Going from why, to how, to what.

- Section 1 frames the Ecological Emergency, to understand what it is humanity needs to take action around, why should we address this problem, what are the roots of the problems and possible pathways to be taken. This section is further divided into five subsections: 1) Climate Breakdown 2) Biodiversity Crisis 3) Growth Addiction 4) Social Unravelling 5) Koyaanisqatsi (Life out of balance).
- Section 2 explores Pathways of Change, to examine the range of processes humanity has employed to understand and deal with the Ecological Emergency so far. This section is further subdivided into 4 subsections: 1) Social Movements 2) Community-Led Initiatives 3) Regenerative Cultures. Social Movements explores when citizens organise to fight against systems of power, corruption, unfair systems. Moving from fighting against to working together in favour of alternatives leads us to what is a main part of the thesis research, the area of when communities try to construct the alternatives, to build an alternative world, what we explore with Community-Led Initiatives. This is a hugely diverse world, many of which still hold onto concepts from the older mechanistic, sustainable and green growth solutions viewpoint. Regenerative Cultures covers the emergence and development of the still powerful concept of sustainability, but also its limits. Regenerative responses move beyond sustainability (doing less bad in a broken system) to fixing the damages done to the earths ecosystem through a systems approach, by working with nature and using design as nature. This section includes some perspectives from bioregionalism including recent legal victories by indigenous groups around rights of nature, which prompts questions about deep reconnection between people and place.
- Section 3 explores Healthy Places, from a spatial and territorial sense. What can be brought into being so that humankind can live in harmony with nature, again? Linked to this, in the areas where humans interact and reside, are the questions of healthy communities, healthy forms of decision making and governance, working with conflicts and related human dynamics. There is a linkage between sections 3 and 2, between what we create or exist in, and how we get there, or maintain such places. Scale matters here.

The range examined is from the very big, planet earth, to the very small, an urban community garden, or balcony, and all in between. There are six sub sections here: 1) Healthy planet 2) The Waters 3) The wilds 4) Catalysts for change 5) Ecovillages 6) Ecocities. This section includes two somewhat more oddly named components; *The wilds* and *Catalysts for change*. The first is both the few physical areas left still relatively untouched on the planet, as well as new areas being rewilded, in both the urban and rural worlds. The second includes entities that can be temporary and ephemeral, that offer glimpses of a more desirable future, where the event itself sparks an idea and acts as a catalyst for radical change. This could be a temporary occupation, or a community garden, or something more expansive such as a food sharing cooperative. The regenerative approach works with bioregions, within which exist a series of smaller entities at different scales in a nested fashion, down to ecovillages and ecocities.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) gives an overview of the methodology for this thesis which is Autoethnography. This is a form of qualitative and/or arts-based, ethnographic research where the researcher connects personal experiences to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings. It includes the use of critical reflection on past moments, to try to make sense of things that happened and add perhaps unseen viewpoints to ongoing academic, and other, dialogues. This methodology is also valued for its ability to craft compelling tales. This methodology was chosen because I can report directly from practical work in this area (action responses to ecological emergency) from a small selection of collaborations from a 30-year period since 1996, with a specific focus on two particular projects during the PhD research timeframe, from 2019-2024. This critical reflection seeks to identify links between, what some would say, are very disparate groups, viewpoints, worldviews, movements or communities. This chapter has 3 sections. The first two deal with the nature of the chief methodology: 1) Autoethnography. Activist as Scientist 2) Application of autoethnography to the PhD thesis and the Field of Architecture. The 3rd section, “Case Studies & Methodological plans for described projects”, gives a brief overview of a range of other methodologies that were employed in previous projects, communities, workshops, direct actions and governance systems.

Chapter 4 (Case Studies) reflects critically upon various experiments I carried out in the field. Working at a number of scales, it seeks to identify the role I played as an action researcher working with, learning from and with, various interconnected communities, projects, initiatives and movements. There are two sections in this chapter, the first one “Engaged Research” covers

the two main projects / communities / movements that I worked with in the 2019-2024 period: 1) UrbanA (Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities) & 2) ECOLISE (The European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability). The second section "Grassroots Activism" covers ongoing work with social movements. It is broken into two further subsections. The first "Architectural Moments" makes a selection of six projects from a wider batch of forty projects. All examples of architecture as a political act. The 2nd section "Ecological communities" examines the interactions I had with these projects and communities, in a number of different contexts. Working from a regenerative perspective, there is a scaler, or nested approach, used here; going from macro global, to local, to super local.

Chapter 5 (Discussion) is the main section of the PhD thesis. This is where I critically assess whether and how different practices have achieved specific goals. Firstly, and in greater detail, the engaged research work is explored during the 2018-2024 period. From a more general sense, and to explore how architecture is a political act, the six architectural moments from the 1996-2026 are critically reflected upon. Using the autoethnographic approach, I explore the nature of myself as a practitioner and the challenges of acting as a scientific academic researcher in the field. To examine various aspects of the work, the chapter is broken into three sections, each answering one of the sub research questions; Why are we doing this work? How are we making change? What is emerging from the work? As outlined; how and what are interlinked. The how question covers more the work with ECOLISE. This includes periods of tension, conflict and ultimately differing viewpoints about system change and climate justice. The what question covers more the results from the UrbanA project at the more micro level of Lisbon (a scale below the macro level, Europe, which is covered earlier in the Case Studies). The Architectural Moments are selected for different reasons and each is from a different world city, where I was active. They include Banja Luka (Bosnia), Dublin (Ireland), Copenhagen (Denmark) - the only "away game" - Barcelona (Catalonia / Spain), Curitiba (Brazil) and Lisbon (Portugal).

Chapter 6 (Conclusions) summarises the key findings from the research. It identifies the main limitations of this work and indicates future research pathways. It draws out lessons that could be relevant for other communities dealing with the various crises and working toward regenerative transformation of our society. Despite the severity of the ecological emergency, regenerative community solutions exist at the edges. More work needs to build upon them.

The final section closes with the expected final areas of References and Annexes.

CHAPTER 2.

Literature Review

The earth is rapidly dying:
her forests are dying,
her soils are dying,
her waters are dying,
her air is dying.

Vandana Shiva, 1988

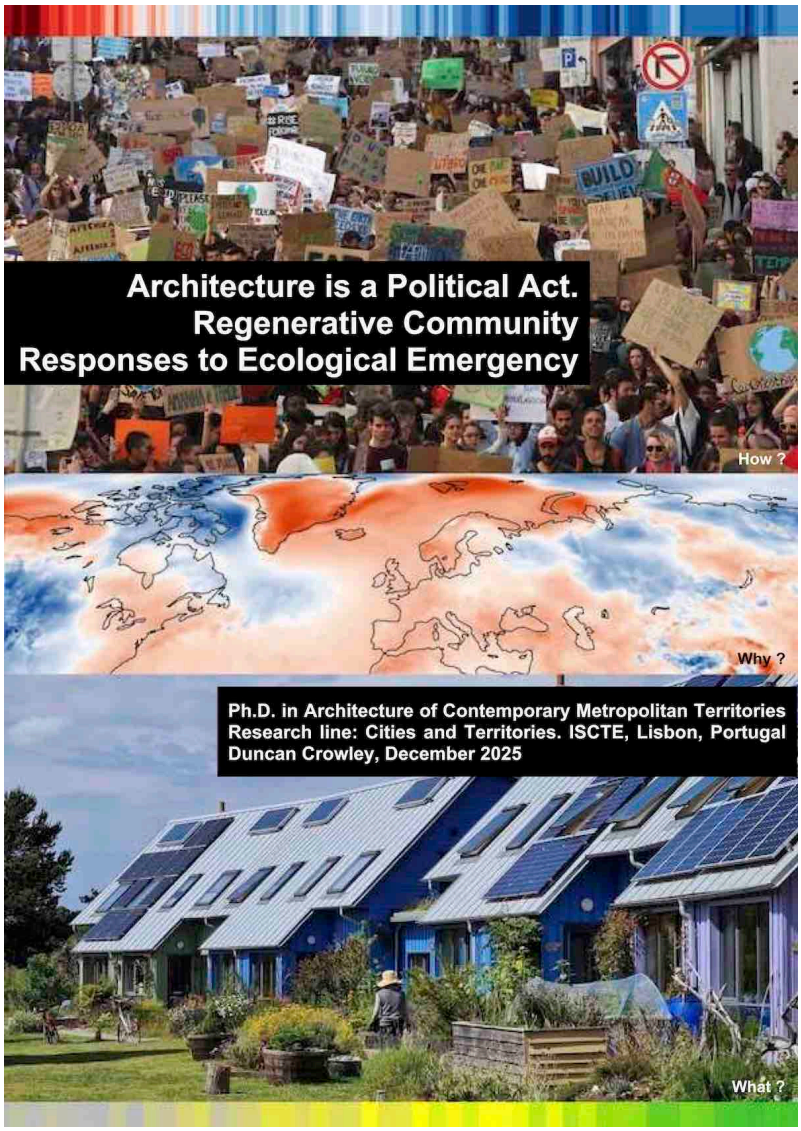


Figure 2.1 PhD Thesis Cover (Arrangement Author, 2025, Sources credited below)

System Change not Climate Change

The objective of the particular selection of images of the thesis's cover (Fig 2.1) is to communicate visually the three pillared approach of the thesis, in responding to three basic questions: Why is this work needed? How is it happening? What healthy places are emerging?

The cover's middle image (Fig 2.2) represents the PhD's 1st pillar question "Why is this work needed?". It is there with all the rage described earlier, as stated, "because humanity is in the midst of an ecological emergency that, so far, it has been wholly incapable of dealing with sufficiently". The EU Copernicus Programme[3] "supports society by providing authoritative information about the past, present and future climate in Europe and the rest of the World", it is a section from their bigger image of surface air temperature from their November 2022 report. Their January 10th 2025 report stated very starkly: "2024 is confirmed by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) to be the warmest year on record globally, and the first calendar year that the average global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above its pre-industrial level".

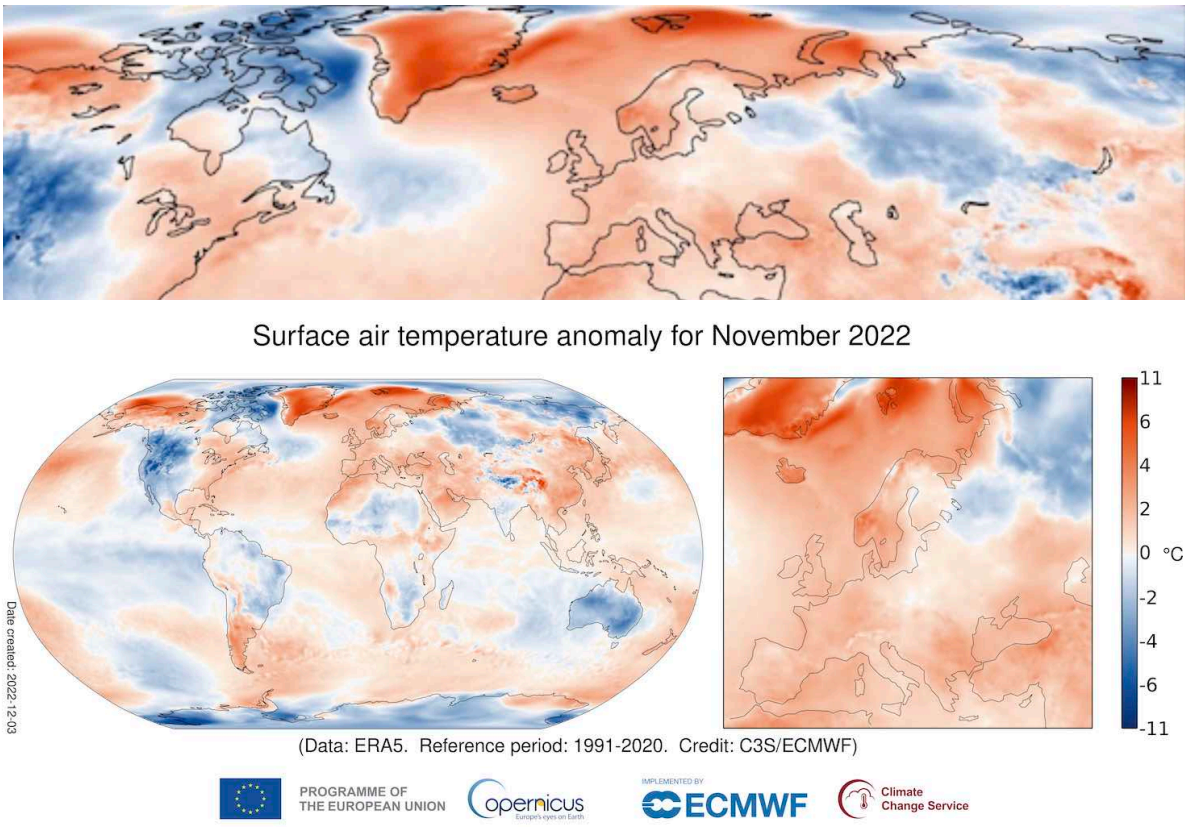


Figure 2.2: Surface air temperature anomaly for November 2022 relative to the November average for the period 1991-2020. (Data source: ERA5. Credit: Copernicus Climate Change Service/ECMWF, 2022)

[3] https://www.copernicus.eu/

The Thesis cover's top image (Fig 2.3) represents the PhD's 2nd pillar question "How is the work happening?" and relates to the love described earlier. It is from the Global Fridays for Future Climate Strike that happened on March 15th 2019, when more than one million people joined the 2,200 strikes organised in 125 countries. This photo is from the Lisbon strike, taken as the crowd came down the hill from Luís de Camões square toward the National Parliament. Despite the increasingly bad news of scientific predictions, lack of action from political leaders and a general sense of apathy or tiredness, something very strange and powerful erupted in 2018, something that grew out of a love for a sustainable and just future for all humans, on our home, planet Earth. In August 2018, a Swedish schoolgirl, Greta Thunberg, then aged 15, skipped school in her city Stockholm to protest outside the Swedish parliament against the lack of government action on the climate crisis. She held up a simple homemade *Skolstrejk för Klimatet* (School Strike for Climate) sign, posted what she was doing on Instagram and Twitter, and it soon went viral. This quickly sparked school children from around the world to carry out similar strikes which happened on Fridays. This youth-led and youth-organised movement called itself Fridays for Future (FFF)[4]. Their intense rage and energy was noted and celebrated by leaders. Their marches were joined by people of all ages, colours, religions, nationalities and all walks of life, all around the planet.



Figure 2.3: Fridays for Future Climate Strike, Lisbon, 2019 (Armando Franca / AP, 2019)

[4] Fridays for Future https://fridaysforfuture.org/

These massive street protests since 2019 served as a badly needed wake-up call for humanity. Thanks to angry school children getting organised and taking to the streets since 2018, coupled with newer direct-action tactics by climate movements, a broad, diverse and global "climate justice" movement was invigorated and increased demands for governments to do better, listen to the science and implement a wide range of suggestions. This surge of activism succeeded in getting a throng of global declarations of climate emergency made in 2019 (1,400 local governments, 28 countries), but it is not enough. While organised civil society groups demanding governments do something positive and constructive is encouraged, it is only half the battle. The greater challenge is for organised community groups, based in their own homes, localities or territories, to start bringing about the change they wish to see in the world. Just like in football, there are home and away games. This thesis explores what system change means at the macro level of global economy, geopolitics, trade deals, and agreements by national governments to lower dependence on fossil fuels and decrease CO2 outputs. But this is not enough. Communities, need to take greater responsibility, get organised and begin to implement changes in their own backyards, at all the scales, in their blocks, neighbourhoods, cities and bioregions. How to support and expand these transformations is a focus of the thesis.

The Thesis cover's bottom image (Fig 2.4) represents the third and final PhD pillar question "What healthy places are emerging?". It relates to the peace described earlier. The image is of the housing block image from the cover of the UN's 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report "Mitigation of Climate Change", which focused on climate solutions. This image is of a dense co-housing scheme recently completed in Findhorn ecovillage in Scotland. This is explored in more depth in the Case Studies section below. Findhorn is one of the key groups in the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)[5], an international network of 1000's of communities who officially formed in this ecovillage in the early 1990s. The inclusion of this image on the IPCC cover gave a real lift to many of the regenerative communities, they felt that a spotlight had been shone on them, their work, their communities, and the types of architectural, urban, landscaping, environmental management solutions they have been experimenting with and implementing for many decades. As well as physical solutions, the GEN community have also been exploring many forms of social innovation too, non-physical human processes around the difficult areas of best governance techniques, navigating difficult moments of conflict, increased forms of social, solidarity and cooperative economic and financial management, balancing dynamics between work, life and play, culture

[5] Global Ecovillage Network https://ecovillage.org/

and so much more. This shows the very integral link between this thesis's how and what questions, one cannot be taken in isolation from the other. This theme will be explored in more depth below. GEN has been one of the key members of ECOLISE

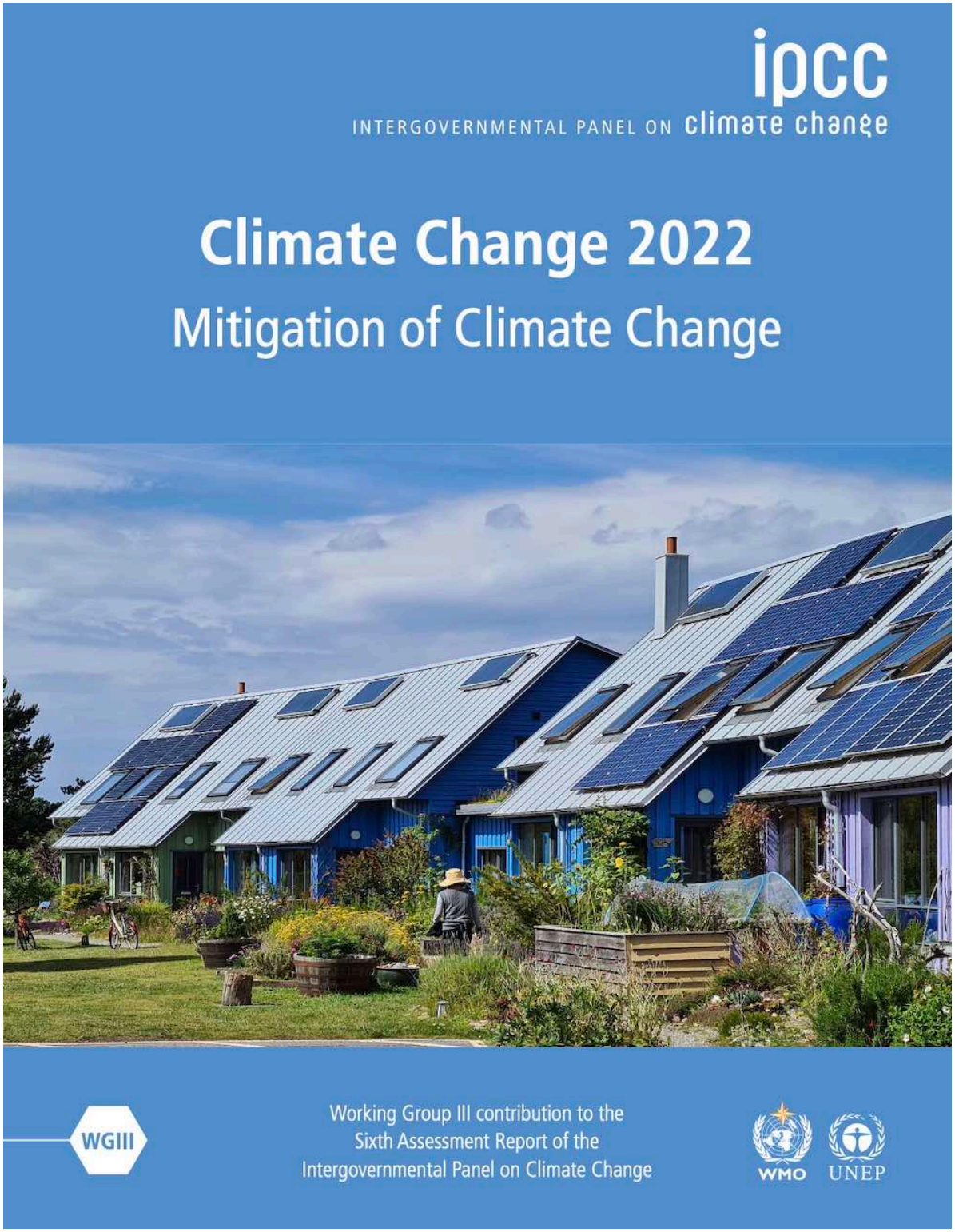


Figure 2.4: IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group 3 report cover): Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. (IPCC, 2022) (Matt Bridgestock, April 2022)

A key part of this thesis explores how some responses to worsening ecological emergency lie in the world of imagination, creativity, colour, dreams and invitations to shared adventures. Transition Towns founder Rob Hopkins comments "we cannot build what we cannot imagine", bidding us to leap and dream "From what is to what if", as he and more like him get busy "Unleashing the Power of Imagination to Create the Future We Want". For much time, the climate and biodiversity crises were presented in abstract terms that many people struggled to understand mentally, or develop a feeling for. In recent years, two visual aids appeared to beautifully, if shockingly, relate the changing natures of the times we live in. In 2018 Prof Ed Hawkins, a Climate scientist at Reading University and an IPCC Lead Author, created the Climate Warming Stripes (Fig 2.5), that show global temperature change from 1850-2020, with blue colours for colder years and red colours for hotter years. They were accompanied by the Show Your Stripes website[6]. Finding that climate issues got up to eight times more coverage than biodiversity loss, Professor Miles Richardson from Derby University created the Biodiversity Stripes in August 2022 and the Biodiversity Stripes website[7]. The Thesis's cover includes both these strips in inverted form, stating intent, and hope, for a reversal of the current situation of both the climate and biodiversity crises, to where regenerative solutions can undo the worst of the damage done since the beginnings of the "oil age", where CO2 can be taken out of the atmosphere and a new era of global cooling can begin again. Also, by allowing for nature to come back into our lives, areas of rewilded wilderness, a movement which is quickly gaining ground, but where humans are not separate from nature, but see themselves as part of it, as epitomised in the powerful phrase "We are Nature" (Fremeaux & Jordan, 2015). Considering my background and the object of the work, the thesis is normatively positioned and orientated to offer a meaningful contribution to try to help revert the current emergency.

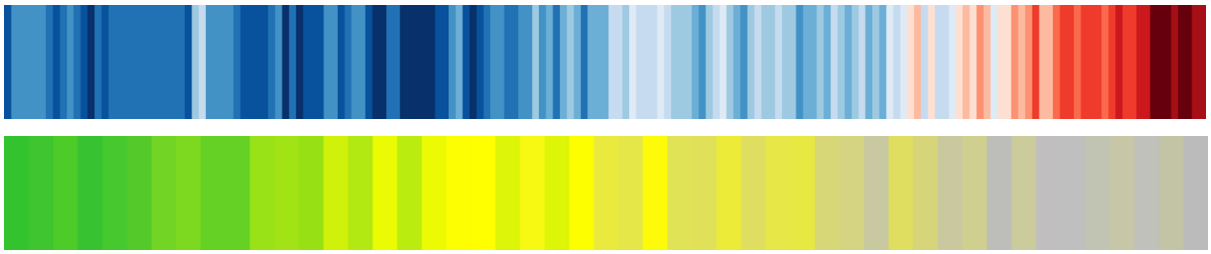


Figure 2.5: Climate Warming Stripes & Biodiversity Stripes (T: Prof Ed Hawkins, University of Reading, 2018; B: Miles Richardson, University of Derby, 2022 & Living Planet Index (LPI) database (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, UK. 2021)

[6] Show Your Stripes www.ShowYourStripes.info
[7] Biodiversity Stripes www.BiodiversityStripes.info

2.1. Ecological Emergency

2.1.1 Climate Breakdown

December 2015's Paris Agreement saw 196 world nations pledge to keep global temperature rise below 2C above preindustrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5C. Copernicus's January 2025 report stated very starkly: "2024 is confirmed by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) to be the warmest year on record globally, and the first calendar year that the average global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above its pre-industrial level". February 2025, renowned NASA climate scientist James Hansen declared the international 2C target was "dead". The source of the climate problem is an increases of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat and raise the planet's surface temperature. Increases of the main GHG, carbon dioxide (CO2), are due to the rapid and exponential growth of the burning of fossil fuels since the onset of the industrial revolution in 1760, firstly coal, then oil. In 2008 Hansen et al contended that any atmospheric concentration of CO2 above 350 parts per million (ppm) was unsafe:

> If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and ongoing climate change suggest that CO2 will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm.

Building on previous climate action campaigns in the US, environmentalist Bill McKibben created the 350.org campaign in March 2008 to mobilize society to pressure world leaders to address climate change and avoid global climate collapse. Since 1995 the UN has had a yearly Climate Change Conference, called the Conference of the Parties (COP). Much work happened to spread the 350 number in advance of the international COP15 meeting in December 2009 in Copenhagen, but the conference did not achieve a binding agreement for long-term action. While the adoption of the Paris Agreement, at COP21 in 2015, was seen as a success of sorts, insufficient climate action has been taken by world leaders. The worlds current CO2 level is 429.36 PPM (June 16th 2025), nearly 80 above 350. McKibben is convinced the required change is possible, but that it will take enormous shifts in how society organises itself, stating "We're under attack from climate change, and our only hope is to mobilize like we did in World War II" (2016) and "we have the technology necessary to rapidly ditch fossil fuels" (2022).

Correct language use matters when describing the worsening ecological emergency. Climate activists felt "climate change" did not convey the dire urgency of the situation

sufficiently and encouraged groups communicating about the topics to use language consistent with the reality of things. Many groups like the UK's Guardian newspaper obliged and changed the language it used about the environment in May 2019 noting (Carrington, 2019):

> Instead of "climate change" the preferred terms are "climate emergency, crisis or breakdown" and "global heating" is favoured over "global warming" … The phrase 'climate change', for example, sounds rather passive and gentle when what scientists are talking about is a catastrophe for humanity.

From here on in, the terms climate breakdown (CB) and global heating (GH) will be used.

If CB is allowed to continue at this rate, the planet could soon reach a tipping point that could threaten the very existence of the human species (Capra, 1996; Klein, 2015). A tipping point is a critical threshold that, when crossed, leads to large, accelerating and often irreversible changes in the climate system (Lenton et al, 2019). Tipping points can build up over a very long period, then suddenly move into the new state very quickly. Climate and social breakdown could happen in such an abrupt manner. If tipping points are crossed, they are likely to have severe impacts on human society and may greatly accelerate GH. As to how grave the UN finds the situation, as well as showing very strong support for the community-led pathway to resolve CB, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's very stark warning in July 2022, read:

> Half of humanity is in the danger zone, from floods, droughts, extreme storms and wildfires. No nation is immune. Yet we continue to feed our fossil fuel addiction... We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide. It is in our hands (Guterres, 2022).

The root causes of CB are multifold and complex, as are the solutions. A range of solutions exist from all sides of the ideological, political and economic spectrum, each with their own list of factors blocking real progress being made. Regenerative thinking points to loss of connection with place (Wahl, 2016; Magan, 2022) as a key factor, where increased modernity has lost extremely old understanding of and relationships with nature. This leads to a culture of ignorance of, or apathy toward, the severity of the problem, a lack of pressure on governments to implement sufficient change and inability by communities, at all the scales, to implement transformed ways of organising themselves in their day-to-day worlds. Regenerative economic thinking, such as the degrowth, postgrowth and ecological economics movements (Hickel, Kallis, Raworth, Jackson, Steinberger, Parrique) identifies the relentless drive of neoliberalism

and late-stage capitalism to keep the economy growing at all costs, fuelled by an ever-increasing energy dependence and oil addiction (Heinberg, 2003; Hopkins, 2008) since 1760. These perspectives align with and respect the Earth's limited carrying capacity as outlined by the Club of Rome's seminal 1972 work *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al, 1972). Climate activist and author Naomi Klein identifies the cause of the current ecological emergency as the current economic and political system that governs humankind today; global Capitalism, stating in her 2014 book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*:

> Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war. Or, more accurately, our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth, including human life. What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity's use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it's not the laws of nature. (Klein, 2014, p. 27)

CB is not new, scientists and ecological activists have pointed out the gravity of things for decades (Bookchin, 1962; Carson, 1962; Hansen, 1988). Yet world leaders have not been able to avert disaster. Fossil fuel companies have been aware for decades of the incredible damage their industries were doing, but chose to keep their knowledge secret, placing profit ahead of people and planet. Exxon subsidiary, Imperial Oil, acknowledged in 1967 the petroleum industry was a "major contributor to many of the key forms of pollution" (Merner et al, 2025). Companies expand extractive infrastructure deeper into remote corners of the world, upsetting local ecosystems, often destroying habitats and water systems, and thereby helping exterminate local flora and fauna that local communities survive from. This process, now called Planetary Urbanization (Merrifield, 2013), was identified by Lefebvre as the "complete urbanization of society" (1970). These companies often resort to illegal activity, such as bribery, intimidation, violence, murder, war, ethnic cleansing and genocide to gain access to ever-dwindling stocks of gas, oil and other resources. Vandana Shiva declared in 1988 "The earth is rapidly dying". But the Earth is not merely dying, it is being killed. In an increasingly corporate world, money appears to have ever-greater power to shape the laws and rules on how people carefully navigate the delicate balance of nature to share the planets limited and dwindling resources (Klein 2014, Hickel, 2024), and holds greater sway over various forms of desired democratic processes that form the basis of free and fair societies (Galeano, 1971; Klein, 2007; Wylie, 2018). There is also a resurgence of far-right political movements in recent years, whose discourse champions climate denial and even targets climate movements (de Nadal, 2024; Horton et al, 2025).

The impact of CB is a rapidly heating world where local weather systems since time remembered are replaced by extreme weather conditions. Increasing global temperatures heat the world's oceans. Ice sheets melt and seawater levels rise. Pacific islanders, like in Kiribati, are having to leave their homes as oceans encroach, contaminate underground fresh water wells and leech salt into the soil. Low-lying areas in countries with huge coastal populations, like Bangladesh, face similar threats. GH is thawing lands where permafrost has existed for up to 700,000 years, releasing massive amounts of GHGs, such as methane and CO2, into the atmosphere. Many regions have lost their yearly rain cycle, not just once, but years in succession. The resulting droughts mean no food is available, so people either starve, or become displaced refugees in their own countries or seek refuge in other parts of the world. This causes social tensions elsewhere, like in Europe in recent years, since the refugee crisis since 2015.

Many countries are experiencing far higher air temperatures during the summer months. The 2025 European heatwave saw temperatures soaring beyond 40C, making daily life unbearable and increasing heat related deaths in many places. The Spanish weather agency Aemet recorded a high of 45.8C in Cádiz (August 17). CB also affects wildfires, by mid-August "Wildfires ravaging the EU have torched more than 1m hectares this year, marking 2025 as the worst year on record, a full month before the fire season ends" (Niranjan, 2025). Spain and Portugal were hardest-hit, Portugal had the highest percentage of burned area in Europe, 216,000 hectares (2.35% of national territory) and Spain had highest burned area, 348,000 hectares (0.68% of national territory). There are also considerable health impacts breathing in smoke and other tiny toxic particles known as PM2.5. Fires destroy homes, communities, livelihoods and lives. Portugal's devastating fire season in 2017 claimed more than 100 lives.

Extreme weather causes more volatile and intense rain showers during the wetter months. At times a month's rain falls in only a number of hours, resulting in flooded streets and rivers that burst their banks. Such moments cause huge damage to property, often killing people and inflicts a heavy clean-up cost for local municipalities or national governments. The issue of climate justice (CJ) addresses the reality that not all citizens are affected equally by effects of CB. It is often poorer communities who are more adversely affected by extreme weather shocks, be they poorer countries in the Global South (Hickel, 2024; Sultana, 2023), or poorer communities in Global North, especially in urban environments (Anguelovski et al, 2024).

Society cannot be sure of how things will change due to CB, but scientists can give accurate scenarios based on mathematics and computer simulation. The UN's climate body and the European Union's European Environment Agency (EEA) identify adaptation and mitigation as the best steps for dealing with societal change. EEA define these concepts as (EEA, 2025):

- **Adaptation** means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause, or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise.
- **Mitigation** means making the impacts of climate change less severe by preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere.

Mitigation is a human intervention that reduces the sources of GHG emissions. Cutting the use of oil and all other fossil fuels would massively help here, but that begs the question of what replaces the energy needed to power our world, grow and transport food and other resources, keep us warm, enable the high-quality life Global North populations now see as normal and many in Global South populations now want to also have. For some, like Henson, the answer is nuclear power. Others are against this and point out that current global north consumption dynamics are already out of balance and need to change. Another aspect of mitigation is to protect the current global carbon sink stock, or enhance it further, to sequester carbon. This means changes in land and sea use to effectively capture and store atmospheric CO2, such as rainforests, natural peat bogs and healthy functioning coral reefs in the world's oceans.

The Paris Agreement set out an optimistic road plan where CO2 emissions would be cut by roughly 50% by 2030 and eventually reach Net-zero emissions (Net Zero), by the middle of the 21st century. It envisaged a world where industries began to decarbonize and fossil fuels were phased out and replaced in an energy transition by renewable energies, such as solar energy, wind power, hydropower, and to a lesser extent bioenergy and geothermal power. A problem with the Net Zero mitigation model is carbon offsetting, which began in the 1970s as part of an international compliance carbon markets as part of the UN's 1997 Kyoto Protocol treaty. Rather than polluters or high emitters of CO2 having to clean up their act, they could simply pay a tax for their negative outputs that would go to the removal of the equivalent quantity of GHG taken out of the atmosphere by other means, like Global South tree planting schemes. Many see this as just greenwashing. Kevin Smith's 2007 Transnational Institute report likened carbon offsets to medieval indulgences, saying they allowed people to pay "offset companies to absolve them of their carbon sins" and that this permits a "business as usual" attitude that stifles real change".

Resilience is a key third step for dealing with CB, it is "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks" (Walker et al, 2004). For Hopkins (2009) "the idea of resilience is a more useful concept than the idea of sustainability" because it addresses both challenges of "the "Hydrocarbon Twins" of Climate Change and Peak Oil". Involved with

community responses to CB since teaching Permaculture in Kinsale, Ireland in 2004, and with the Transition movement in the UK and beyond, he outlines sustainability's shortcomings as:

> Sustainability and its oxymoronic offspring sustainable development are commonly held to be a sufficient response to the scale of the climate challenge we face: to reduce the inputs at one end of the globalised economic growth model (energy, resources, and so on) while reducing the outputs at the other end (pollution, carbon emissions, etc.). However, responses to climate change that do not also address the imminent, or quite possibly already passed, peak in world oil production do not adequately address the nature of the challenge we face. (Hopkins, 2009)

Newman, Beatley & Boyer's *Resilient cities: responding to peak oil and climate change* (2009) was published after the natural disasters of the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (2005). They said resilient cities could "substantially reduce their dependence on petroleum fuels in ways that are socially and economically acceptable and feasible" and advocated the "need to involve all parts of the community - government, business, professional, practitioners, community groups, and individual households". The theory quickly advanced into the mainstream. Since 2013, the EEA and ICLEI have run the European Urban Resilience Forum (EURESFO), a platform that "brings together city representatives, experts, and stakeholders from local and regional institutions to discuss strategies, initiatives, and actions related to climate change adaptation, disaster management, and the cultivation of urban resilience" (EURESFO, 2025). In 2015, both terms, sustainability and resilience, were included in the 11th of the UNs 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): *To make cities Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.* The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report Working Group 2 report (impacts, adaptation and vulnerability) (2022) strongly identified how climate resilient development can be part of a larger shift towards sustainability. Grasham et al, noted (2021):

> Climate resilient development has become the new paradigm for sustainable development influencing theory and practice across all sectors globally—gaining particular momentum in the water sector, since water security is intimately connected to climate change. Climate resilience is increasingly recognised as being inherently political, yet efforts often do not sufficiently engage with context-specific socio-ecological, cultural and political processes, including structural inequalities underlying historically produced vulnerabilities.

For the 2009 European Parliament election, the European Green Party's manifesto called for *"*A Green New Deal for Europe" which meant "a Europe of solidarity that can guarantee its citizens a good quality of life based on economic, social and environmental sustainability; a truly democratic Europe that acts for its citizens and not just narrow industry interests; a Europe that acts for a green future". In the US in 2012, Greens presidential candidate Jill Stein ran on a "Green New Deal" (GND) platform, echoing President Roosevelt's 1933–1935 response to the Great Depression called the "New Deal". After growing climate protests, such as FFF in 2018 and the Sunrise Movement in the US, New York senator Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) led a drive to get legislation passed for a US GND in 2019, but the Senate blocked it. After widespread European FFF protests in 2019 (Fig 2.6.R), the European Commission (EC) approved its "European Green Deal" (EGD) policy in 2020, which aims to make the EU climate neutral by 2050, and strives to be the first climate-neutral continent: "It responds to citizens' urgent call—especially from young people—for climate action. It sets out a plan to transform Europe's economy, energy, transport, and industries for a more sustainable future". (EC, 2025).

A key component in both the US and EU proposals is Just Transition (JT), a concept that emerged in the 1980s through efforts by U.S. trade unions to protect workers' rights and livelihoods as economies shift to sustainable production. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) 2015 report "Climate justice: there are no jobs on a dead planet" states:

> Climate action is a trade union issue. We have a vital role to play to protect jobs in existing workplaces and industries by demanding industrial transformation, to organise new quality jobs in the emerging green economy and to fight for the Just Transition measures that ensure we leave no one behind. (ITUC, 2015)

"The concept of climate justice was first used in 1999 in the "Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Justice" report, published by Corpwatch, to redefine climate change based on environmental justice and human rights" (Aktaş, 2022). Since 1996, the San Francisco based group Corpwatch have provided resources related to corporate accountability. For them "the prevention of climate change goes hand in hand with the opposition to corporate rule" (Corpwatch, 1999). Their 1999 report (Fig 2.6.L) was launched in lead up to the anti WTO protests in Seattle. The reports seven-point info box explained in more depth that CJ meant:

- removing the causes of global warming
- opposing destruction wreaked by the Greenhouse Gangsters at every step of the production and distribution process

- fostering a just transition for these constituencies to a healthier and more just environment to work and live in.
- providing assistance to communities threatened or impacted by climate change
- the industrialized nations, which historically and currently are most responsible for global warming, should lead the transformation.
- international institutions such as the World Bank and World Trade Organization should halt their funding and promotion of corporate-led fossil fuel-based globalization
- holding fossil fuel corporations accountable for the central role they play in contributing to global warming.

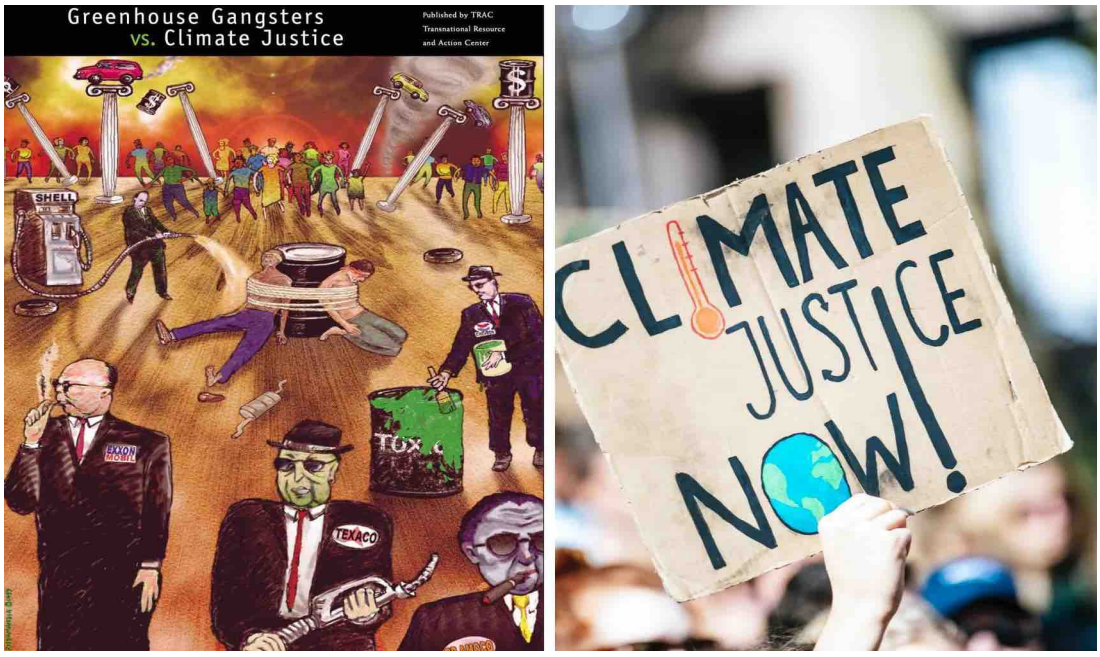


Figure 2.6: L: Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Justice report. R: Climate Justice protest sign (Corpwatch, 1999, Markus Spiske on Unsplash, 2019)

The UN's COP29 meeting happened 11–22 November 2024, in Baku, in the petrostate of Azerbaijan. Climate Action Network (CAN) is the world's largest climate network made up of more than 1,900 civil society organizations in over 130 countries, together fighting the climate crisis. CAN felt absolutely betrayed and wholeheartedly rejected the outcome of COP29 in Baku because developed countries failed people and planet. CAN member Gerry Arances of CEED in the Philippines outlined COP's climate injustice: "The message from wealthy nations is clear: their profits from fossil fuels matter more than the lives of those drowning, starving, or fleeing their homes due to climate disasters... The failure of wealthy countries to deliver funding commitments at COP29 is a direct attack on vulnerable countries" (CAN, 2024).

After similar failure in Glasgow, Scotland (2021) Bangladeshi born, US geographer Sultana (2022) wrote how COP26 "led Indigenous and environmental activists to call various climate solutions to be false and a form of perpetuating colonialism through land grabs, extraction, displacement, and dispossession". CJ is framed in regard to colonialism, capitalism, and empire, in short; the climate coloniality of "ecologically unequal exchange of ongoing colonial plunder of resources and labor from the Global South to the Global North" (Hickel et al, 2021). As someone from Global South, she says "the disproportionate burden of climate damage is falling on formerly colonized and brutalized racialized communities in the developing world. We are still colonized, but this time through climate change, the development industry, and globalization" (Sultana, 2022). She refers to Ugandan youth climate activist Vanessa Nakate frustration at COP26, "We cannot adapt to starvation. We cannot adapt to extinction. We cannot eat coal. We cannot drink oil. We will not give up." Sultana sees the growing CJ movements led primarily by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions. Their objective is to "decolonize climate at a basic level" by integrating "more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations" (Sultana, 2022). Regarding System Change, she writes "Decolonising the current system is not about more diversity. It is not about having a seat at the table, but burning the table down and a fundamental reformulation of paradigms and solidarities rooted in justice and meaningful praxis" (Sultana, 2023).

For Hickel (2024) "CB is a process of atmospheric colonization" where the atmosphere is "a shared commons, on which all of us depend for our existence". Expecting present policy to lead to 3 degrees of GH means "2 billion people across the tropics will be exposed to extreme heat and substantially increased mortality risk". He notes:

> The countries of the global North are responsible for around 90% of all cumulative emissions in excess of the safe planetary boundary – in other words, the emissions that are driving CB. By contrast the global South, by which I mean all of Asia, Africa and Latin America, are together responsible for only about 10%, and in fact most global South countries remain within their fair shares of the planetary boundary and have therefore not contributed to the crisis at all… And yet, the overwhelming majority of the impacts of CB are set to affect the territories of the global South, and indeed this is already happening. The South suffers 80-90% the economic costs and damages inflicted by CB, and around 99% of all climate-related deaths. It would be difficult to overstate the scale of this injustice (Hickel, 2024).

2.1.2 Biodiversity Crisis

Human life exists due to a delicate "web of life" that has evolved over millions of years, where biodiversity is the key factor that sustains human life (Capra, 1996). Despite Shiva's grave prognosis, 37 years ago, that "The earth is rapidly dying: her forests are dying, her soils are dying, her waters are dying, her air is dying" (Shiva, 1988), things are intensifying even more rapidly. The UN Secretary-General's 2025 International Day for Biological Diversity message was: "Biodiversity is the bedrock of life and a cornerstone of sustainable development. Yet humanity is destroying biodiversity at lightening pace" (Guterres, 2025). The World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) 2024 Living Planet Report, entitled "A System in Peril" (Fig 2.7), stated "Nature is disappearing: The average size of wildlife populations has fallen by a staggering 73% between 1970 and 2020". A rise of 15%, up from 58%, since 2016. Unless rapid conservation and global system change happen soon, how long until "the humans are dying" is added to Shiva's list? The Biophilic idea, which means love of life or living systems, was developed by the biologist Edward O Wilson in 1984. Mourning the fate of the Kihansi spray toad, now extinct in the wild, in *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life* (2016), Wilson wrote:

> The plight of the little animal should all by itself serve as a wake-up call to us for mass extinctions imminent or in progress round the world… We're extinguishing Earth's biodiversity as though the species of the natural world are no better than weeds and kitchen vermin. Have we no shame?"



Figure 2.7: WWF Living Planet Report 2024: L: A System in Peril. R: The Amazon: a drying rainforest (WWF, 2024)

The term Anthropocene was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2014, after Crutzen and Stoermer's use of it in 2000 to describe the onset of the geological epoch that humanity has driven the world into: "The global effects of human activities have become clearly noticeable… during the past two centuries, a starting date that coincides with James Watt's invention of the steam engine in 1784" (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). It is now also known as the sixth mass extinction (Barnosky et al, 2011), affecting numerous families of plants and animals, both terrestrial and marine species. For Dirzo et al, "our destruction of the global biological richness on which we utterly depend represents an unprecedented threat to the existence of civilization that could even threaten the persistence of humanity" (Dirzo et al, 2022).

The WWF report warns that the scientific evidence indicates that "five global tipping points are fast approaching, each posing grave threats to humanity, Earth's life-support systems, and societies everywhere". They are: 1) The Amazon: a drying rainforest (Fig 2.7.R). 2) Coral reef die-off. 3) Melting ice sheets. 4) Atlantic ocean circulation. 5) Permafrost thaw. To remedy things, they state "a huge collective effort will be required over the next five years to tackle the dual climate and nature crises... the world must move towards a just transition that revives life and systematically restores what we have degraded" (WWF, 2024). The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was agreed by over 190 countries at the United Nations' COP15 biodiversity conference in Montreal, Canada, on 19 December 2022, after the 2020 conference in Kunming, China was cancelled due to COVID. The GBF has been called the "Paris Agreement for Nature". Its key initiative, 30 by 30, seeks governments to designate 30% of Earth's land and oceans as protected areas by 2030. Areas under protection when the deal was made were only 17% of land and 10% of oceans. The framework also included an agreement to reform $500 billion of subsidies that are harmful to nature, and to increase biodiversity financing to developing countries.

Since the early 1970s, humanity has been in ecological overshoot, whereby a species uses resources faster than can be replenished. This scientific term is attributed to environmental sociologist William R. Catton, Jr's 1980 book *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*. Catton attributed his own wilderness experiences in US national parks as a source to understand ecological systems, and ecological limits, including the fundamental ecological principle of carrying capacity. The Global Footprint Network (GFN) estimates today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.7 Earths to provide sufficient resources to replenish itself. Overshoot Day is computed by dividing the planet's biocapacity (the amount of ecological resources Earth is able to regenerate that year), by humanity's Ecological Footprint (humanity's demand for that year), and multiplying by 365. Earth Overshoot Day in 2025 was on July 24th.

Ecological movements have existed since urban communities organized against increasing levels of smoke pollution in the atmosphere during the Industrial Revolution. Two critical books published in 1962 warned of the powerful and adverse effect humans were having on the natural world. The first, lesser known but more radical, *Our Synthetic Environment***,** by Murray Bookchin (published under a pseudonym Lewis Herber), and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Both books explore the problem of chemicals in food, Carson's book became a bestseller and helped the fledgling environmental movement develop in the 1960s. It documented the environmental harm caused by the indiscriminate use of synthetic pesticides, such as Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), developed by the military complex's funding of science after World War II. Bookchin's book grew from his 1952 article 'The Problems of Chemicals in Food'. His follow up 1964 article "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" (using a pseudonym), denounced the modern industrialized world and offered an anarchist alternative perspective. Calling it Social Ecology (SE) from the mid-1960s, he developed a scientific, socio ecological critique of capitalism, that proposed replacing all forms of hierarchy and domination in society, with democracy and freedom. For Bookchin (1964), ecology "deals with the balance of nature. Inasmuch as nature includes man, the science basically deals with the harmonization of nature and man" and "it is impossible to achieve a harmonization of man and nature without creating a human community that lives in a lasting balance with its natural environment". Tokar remarks on Bookchin (2008) "the corosive simplification of living ecosystems and the retreat into an increasingly unstable and synthetic world that Murray Bookchin predicted in the 1960s has evolved from a disturbing future projection to a global reality". Writing a half-century before the Paris Agreement Bookchin, we see how accurate his analysis was (Bookchin, 1964):

> Today human parasitism disrupts more than the atmosphere, climate, water resources, soil, flora, and fauna of a region; it upsets virtually all the basic cycles of nature and threatens to undermine the stability of the environment on a worldwide scale... As an example of the scope of modern man's disruptive role, it has been estimated that the burning of fossil fuels (coal and oil) adds 600 million tons of carbon dioxide to the air annually, about 0.03 percent of the total atmospheric mass... It could be argued on very sound theoretical grounds that this growing blanket of carbon dioxide, by intercepting heat radiated from the earth into outer space, will lead to rising atmospheric temperatures, to a more violent circulation of air, to more destructive storm patterns, and eventually to a melting of the polar ice caps (possibly in two or three centuries), rising sea levels, and the inundation of vast land areas.

It must be remembered that the 20th century was incredibly violent, with two world wars creating new technologies for killing, Auschwitz and the holocaust of millions by the Nazis, and untold levels of violent repression under Soviet Russia and Eastern Bloc Europe regimes. In the early 1970s, Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss founded a philosophical school that distinguished between "shallow" and "deep" ecology. Capra identified these differences (1996):

> Shallow ecology was seen as anthropocentric, or human-centered. It views humans as above or outside of nature, as the source of all value, and ascribes only instrumental, or "use," value to nature" whereas "Deep ecology recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life"

Capra later added "Ecology and spirituality are fundamentally connected, because deep ecological awareness, ultimately, is spiritual awareness. (Fritjof Capra, 2014). Arising from interactions in the Deep Ecology (DE) movement, Joanna Macy's work began to emerge, which ended up being known as "The Work That Reconnects" (WTR). Macy was a US environmental activist, author and scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory and deep ecology. Beginning work in the late 1970s, "when it seemed that humanity – along with much of life on earth – stood on the brink of devastation" (WTR, 2025), Macy began work with psychologist Chellis Glendinning and activist Fran Peavey. They observed that when people got together in groups and shared their feelings of fear, anguish or despair, their power to act for change was ignited.

> They developed a workshop process called Despair and Empowerment work. From this seed evolved the Work That Reconnects, a model that uses counseling methods, spiritual principles, ritual and myth, laughter and tears, reverence and irreverence - to help individuals break out of the numbness of despair and denial. (WTR, 2025)

This work culminated in workshops international trainings and a number of publications, to truly reconnect with place, to develop visions for what improved futures might look and feel like, what improved relationships with self, community and place might be like, coming from a sense of hope that human communities have the tools and capacity to enable such transitions. Profound exploration into the spiritual side of life was encouraged, from a Buddhist sense. In Macy's 1991 book *World as Lover, World as Self*, she wrote: "To be alive in this beautiful, self-organizing universe - to participate in the dance of life with senses to perceive it, lungs that breathe it, organs that draw nourishment from it - is a wonder beyond words." (Macy, 1991)

Inspired by DE, and the leftist and anarchist counterculture world, David Foreman co-founded a radical direct direct-action movement *Earth First!* in 1980, who pledged "No compromise in defense of Mother Earth!" Similar to the acts of sabotage to protest environmentally damaging activities in US anarchist Edward Abbey's 1975 novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, they carried out a series of actions to prevent logging, building of dams, and other forms of development they believed would cause severe destruction of wildlife habitats. Foreman was later arrested by the FBI for conspiracy to sabotage a powerline that fed a water pumping station. Earth First, and later groups they inspired like Earth Liberation Front are still active and probably on US and other states eco-terrorist watch lists. In 1970, Næss participated in a successful direct action with a large number of protesters, by chaining himself to rocks in front of Mardalsfossen waterfall in a Norwegian fjord to protest against the building of a dam.

DE was criticised from within the ecological movement. Bookchin's 1987 article "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement" is a scathing critique of DE, which he states has been "formulated largely by privileged male white academics". Bookchin interpreted DE as being misanthropic, having a general hatred, dislike, or distrust of the human species. He also believed DE failed to link the ecological crisis with authoritarianism and hierarchy, and failed to recognise the potential for humans to solve environmental issues (SE advocates radical and revolutionary confrontation of the capitalist system). For Bookchin DE tried "to regale metaphorical forms of spiritual mechanism and crude biologism with Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, or shamanistic Eco-la-la" and had a "latent racism, First World arrogance, and Yuppie nihilism of postmodernistic spiritualism". He was very irate at a racist, anonymous *Earth First!* article that he believed celebrated AIDS as a form of population control in Africa.

Capra's seminal *The Web of Life* (1996) concludes with both a warning and an invitation:

> As our century comes to a close, and we go toward the beginning of a new millennium, the survival of humanity will depend on our ecological literacy, on our ability to understand these principles of ecology and live accordingly. (Capra, 1996)

Capra set up the Centre for Ecoliteracy in 1995 in Berkely to assist in this transition, by understanding different views; spiritual to political. Today's ecological movements advocate a culture and ethical value system, or worldview, that places life, nature, wellbeing and peace at the centre, for all of humanity and all of nature (Capra, 1996; Kumar, 2009; Wahl, 2016; Raworth, 2017). The regenerative movement is a growing community embracing and embodying these values by designing systems to "reverse the degeneration of the earth's natural

systems, but also to design human systems that can coevolve with natural systems" (Mang & Reed, 2011). Building upon permaculture in many ways (Glanzberg, 1991 & 2017), but including living systems perspectives such as working in a nested fashion and at all levels simultaneously (Mang & Haggard, 2016; Wahl, 2016), regenerative practitioners (RPs) are active in the fields of building & architecture (Reed, 2007), agriculture & bioregional development (Wahl 2016; Brewer, 2021), cities (Girardet, 2010, 2014), economy (Raworth, 2017), leadership (Hutchins & Storm, 2019) and business (Sanford, 2017). All contributing to regenerative cultures where, as Wahl (2019) writes, "As Janine Benyus has so beautifully summarized in a single sentence: "Life creates conditions conducive to life." (Benyus, 2002).

Satish Kumar is a holistic educator and author, and disciple of Mahatma Gandhi in India who travelled 12,000+ km overland and sea from India to England (1962-1965), without using money, for peace. Inspired by the Buddhist economics of E.F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered* (1973), Kumar settled in England and later co-founded the Schumacher College in Totnes, Devon in 1990. He offers a proposal to deal with the ecological emergency, what he refers to as the nature crunch, and clearly explains what some key concepts actually mean: "The study of the 'environment' is not the same as the study of 'ecology'", because environment is an anthropocentric concept that implies humans are at the centre, whereas "the word 'ecology' is more inclusive. Ecology implies relationships between all species, humans and the natural world" (Kumar, 2009). When invited to speak at the London School of Economics (LSE), he asked his hosts, "You are a well-known university teaching about the economy but where is your Department of Ecology?", to which he was told there was no department. He thus outlines the etymological key of current problems:

> Ecology and Economy are derived from three Greek words: oikos, logos, nomos. 'Oikos' means home: a place of relationships between all forms of life, sharing and participating in the evolution of the Earth community. 'Logos' means the knowledge of our planet home, and 'nomos' means management of that home. (Kumar, 2009)

Reflecting on the LSE and both words, he asks "how can anyone manage something they know nothing of?". Kumar suggests that ecology should come before economy, and that together they "need a third 'E': ethics. Our 'oikos', our planet home, has to be built on the firm foundation of ethical and spiritual values". Fully aware of the regenerative power and abundance in life, he adds "If we are caring and generous to Nature, Nature will reciprocate" and quotes Gandhi; "There is enough in this world for everybody's need, but not enough for anybody's greed".

2.1.3 Growth Addiction

Much loved British biologist and TV presenter Sir David Attenborough paraphrased Boulding's famous quote at the 2019 World Economic Forum (WEF): "Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad or an economist" (1966). The man responsible for pioneering the sustainability concept in the mid-1970s, Lester Brown, warned "The bottom line is that the world is in what ecologists call an "overshoot-and-collapse" mode… If we continue on the current economic path, the question is not whether environmental deterioration will lead to economic decline, but when" (Brown, 2005). Over a half century ago, in 1972, *The Limits to Growth* (LTG) (Fig 2.8 L) was published by the Club of Rome, "this landmark study introduced a computer simulation known as World3, which modelled global challenges using then-new system dynamics modelling technology" (Jones & Christakis, 2024). Authors Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jørgen Randers and Wilhelm Behrens discussed the possibility of exponential economic and population growth with finite supply of resources. The resulting Business as Usual (BAU) graph (Fig 2.8 R, adapted 2024) shows the system dynamics of limits to growth on a finite planet. A series of bell curves predicted the collapse of all variables within the next hundred years, as Ecological Economics For All (2024) outlined:

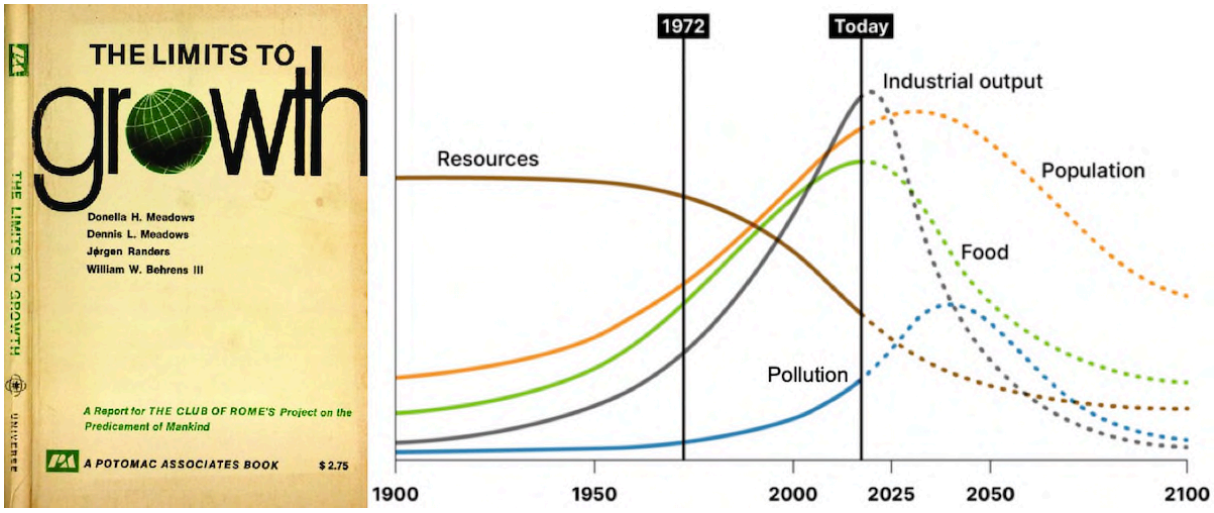


Figure 2.8: Limits to growth: L: Book cover. R: World3 / BAU 1 scenario (Meadows et al, 1972, Jones & Christakis, 2024)

The model included 5 main variables (population, industrial production, resources, food production and pollution) and showed that if we continued in a trajectory of endless economic growth humanity would deplete its resources and pollute the biosphere in the next 100 years resulting in an uncontrollable collapse.

LTGs conclusions called for total system change, to create a steady state of economic and ecological equilibrium. The Club of Rome agreed with the LTG authors, concluding:

> For the first time, it has become vital to inquire into the cost of unrestricted material growth and to consider alternatives to its continuation.. We are convinced that realization of the quantitative restraints of the world environment and of the tragic consequences of an overshoot is essential to the initiation of new forms of thinking that will lead to a fundamental revision of human behavior and, by implication, of the entire fabric of present-day society... We can talk seriously about where to start only when the message of LTG, and its sense of extreme urgency, are accepted by a large body of scientific, political, and popular opinion in many countries… Only the conviction that there is no other avenue to survival can liberate the moral, intellectual, and creative forces required to initiate this unprecedented human undertaking.

LTG received mixed responses. While environmental organizations used it to support their calls for change, many economists criticised it after publication in the 1970s (Peter Passel, Marc Roberts, Leonard Ross...) and again in the 1990s (Ronald Baily, George Goodman...). After the 1973 oil crisis LTG was translated into more than 30 languages and sold over 30 million copies, making it the best-selling environmental book in history. Bardi's 2008 blog post stated "by the 1990s LTG had become everyone's laughing stock". His 2011 study concluded that the 1972 warnings "are becoming increasingly more worrisome as reality seems to be following closely the curves" the scenario generated. After 50 years, there was still ongoing debate about LTG. In 2023 Nebel et al carried out a recalibrated study of the World3 computer model and found the same overshoot and collapse mode in the coming decade as the original BAU model.

Despite the extreme urgency of the LTG message, coupled with the accuracy of the predictions, insufficient action has happened to avert ecological emergency due to the strength of economic forces (Klein, 2014). Many ecological economic groups have been active on the margins of society, advocating alternatives and building SMs to push for change that are only now beginning to really be listened to. Two are explored below. both begin with the exponential growth scenarios, but focus on future scenarios and processes after a peak moment that can enable the steady state of economic and ecological equilibrium that LTG advocates; Permaculture (Fig 2.9 L) comes from the ecological agriculture world outlined by David Holmgren: Post-growth, degrowth and steady state economy (SSE) (Fig 2.9 R) is from the world of ecological economics, initiated by Herman Daly and developed by Daniel W. O'Neill.

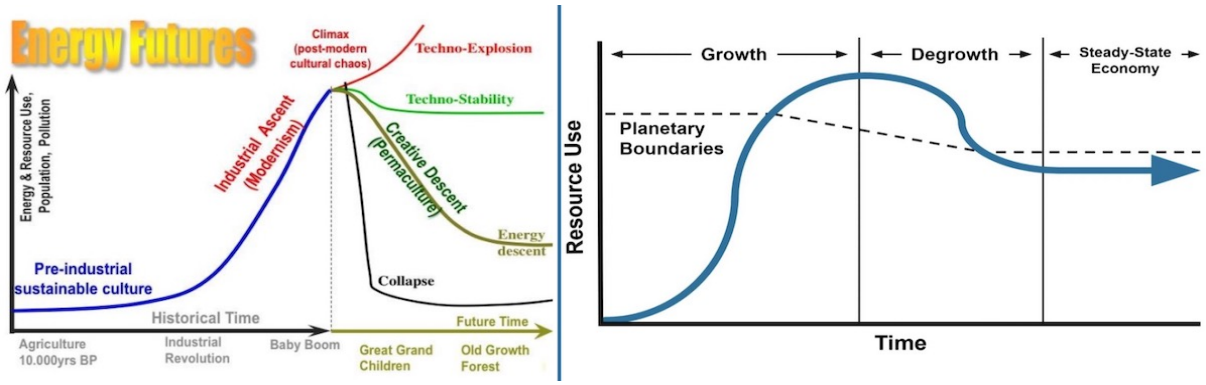


Figure 2.9: L: Future Scenarios: R: Transition for Wealthy Nations (Holmgren, 2009; O'Neill, 2012)

Permaculture (Mollison & Holmgren, 1978) practitioners recommend creative descent responses where factors accelerating CB are lowered intentionally by human design, to within planetary limits. In *Future Scenarios: How Communities Can Adapt to Peak Oil and Climate Change* (2009), Permaculture co-founder David Holmgren shared Four Energy Futures**.** At the extremes are: 1) Techno-Explosion (Red), the delusion that infinite growth can occur on a finite planet; 2) Collapse (Black), the Mad Max scenario, similar to the film's nightmare situation; In the middle are: 3) Techno-Stability (Bright Green), where todays non-sustainable level of 1.7 Earths are somehow maintained; 4) Creative Descent (Dark Green), or energy descent, or Earth Stewardship, whereby humankind uses Permaculture to respond to the Hydrocarbon Twins (Hopkins, 2008) of climate change and peak oil, to create Post Carbon futures (Heinberg, 2003) that function within the earth's limits, thereby reaching the LTG goal of a SSE.

"The central idea of post-growth is to replace the goal of increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with the goal of improving human wellbeing within planetary boundaries" (Kallis et al, 2025). Figure 2.9 R describes a Transition for Wealthy Nations (O'Neill, 2012) and is composed of three distinct phases: 1) The Growth phase begins with the exponential rise of the use of planetary resource use, then slows down into a bell curve and arrives at the peak moment. 2) The Degrowth phase decreases the resource use from its unsustainable level and returns it back beneath the carrying capacity of the planetary boundaries (which have declined somewhat due to irreparable destruction, as outlined by LTG) till it arrives at a safe fixed rate. 3) This begins the final phase, SSE, which can continue indefinitely, respecting the earths limits.

Based on literature from Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen and Serge Latouche the degrowth (*décroissance* in French) movement developed in France, Italy, Spain, and later other countries, in academic literature (Kerschner, 2009). It soon aligned strongly with anti-capitalist SMs. The first international degrowth conference happened in Paris in April, 2008. O'Neill (2012) notes

the original and then most detailed definition of degrowth, a result of a workshop entitled "Toward a Declaration on Degrowth" (Research and Degrowth, 2010). Degrowth was firstly:

> A voluntary transition towards a just, participatory, and ecologically sustainable society… The objectives of degrowth are to meet basic human needs and ensure a high quality of life, while reducing the ecological impact of the global economy to a sustainable level, equitably distributed between nations… Once right-sizing has been achieved through the process of degrowth, the aim should be to maintain a "steady state economy" with a relatively stable, mildly fluctuating level of consumption.

In 2020, Hickel described degrowth as "a planned reduction of excess energy and resource use in rich nations to bring the economy back into balance with the living world, while reducing inequality and improving people's access to the resources they need to live long, healthy, flourishing lives" (Hickel, 2020)

While development of the SDGs is overall helpful, post-growth activists have an ongoing problem with the Green Growth agenda and especially SDG8 "Decent work and economic growth". In conversation with Capra, Wahl (2019) calls for a systems approach to the SDGs and identifies SDG8 as the spanner that "sabotages the implementation of all the other goals". He suggests it be reframed as 'Good Work and Qualitative Growth", adding "that alone would start a conversation about what kind of growth we want". Hickel & Kallis (2020) doubt the World Bank and OECD's promotion of green growth can act as a route out of ecological emergency, urging that "policy programmes that rely on green growth assumptions – such as the SDGs – need urgently to be revisited".

Although some early divisions existed between different camps exploring alternatives to decouple prosperity and development from growth, such as "Georgescu-Roegens' categorical rejection of a SSE, as proposed by Herman Daly" (Kerschner, 2010), alignments formed over five decades. Daly edited the 1973 anthology *Toward a Steady-State Economy*, which included essays from Georgescu-Roegen, Boulding, Schumacher and himself, amongst others. O'Neill's framework proposed "The biophysical indicators are derived from Herman Daly's definition of a SSE, and measure the major stocks and flows in the economy–environment system. The social indicators are based on the stated goals of the degrowth movement" (O'Neill, 2012). The Lancet's 2025 co-authored article spoke in unison: "Post-growth emphasises independence from - or prosperity without - growth, and serves as an umbrella term encompassing research in Doughnut and wellbeing economics, SSE, and degrowth. (Kallis et al, 2025)

In 2012 Kate Raworth published her Doughnut Economic concept; a visual framework, shaped like a doughnut, that seeks to replace the current endless growth GDP model with a 21st century approach to "eradicate poverty and achieve prosperity for all, within the means of the planet's limited natural resources". Arguing that "between the social foundation of human well-being and the ecological ceiling of planetary pressure, lies a safe and just space where humanity can thrive". Full of optimism, her 2017 book's doughnut, with shortfall and overshoot arrows (Fig 14), intends to act as a twenty-first-century compass because "We urgently need a way to help policymakers, activists, business leaders and citizens alike to steer a wise course through the twenty- first century". In July 2019 Raworth's network created the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) and in September 2020 launched their online community platform "to help create 21st century economies that are regenerative and distributive by design, so that they can meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet". In March 2020 Amsterdam city council announced it was embracing "doughnut economics" (DEAL, 2020) and hoped to turn the city into a "doughnut city". In January 2021 TIME magazine's article read: "Amsterdam Is Embracing a Radical New Economic Theory to Help Save the Environment. Could It Also Replace Capitalism?" (Nugent, 2021), adding "Citizen-led groups focused on the doughnut that are forming in places including São Paulo, Berlin, Kuala Lumpur and California bring the potential to transform their own areas from the bottom up". The DEAL network is growing rapidly around the planet, in countries, cities, municipalities and towns.

The doughnut structure's (Fig 2.10 & Table 2) inner ring includes twelve dimensions of social foundation (the 2012 version had 11, some were reworded), which came from the UK governments' priorities for Rio+20 conference in 2012. The outer ring includes nine ecological ceilings of earth's life supporting systems that humanity must not collectively overshoot, based on Earths planetary boundaries set out by Rockström et al (2009). Raworth's depiction of the Earth's boundary transgression and of social foundations not being met (Fig 2.10 R) is deeply disturbing, yet she is hopeful. Her remedy to these ecological and social ills is through the regenerative and distributive economy, enabling all human beings to thrive. "A world in which every person can lead their life with dignity, opportunity and community - and where we can all do so within the means of our life-giving planet". The doughnut framework is based around seven principles to enable thinking Like a 21st Century Economist (Table 2) and embraces the commons. City municipalities, community groups and citizens are creating networks, sharing knowledge and applying the doughnut framework to local needs, from big cities, to small towns, in Global North and South. In 2020, Ireland's President Michael D. Higgins was the first head of state to embrace the Doughnut, and he called to make it humanity's overriding goal (DEAL).

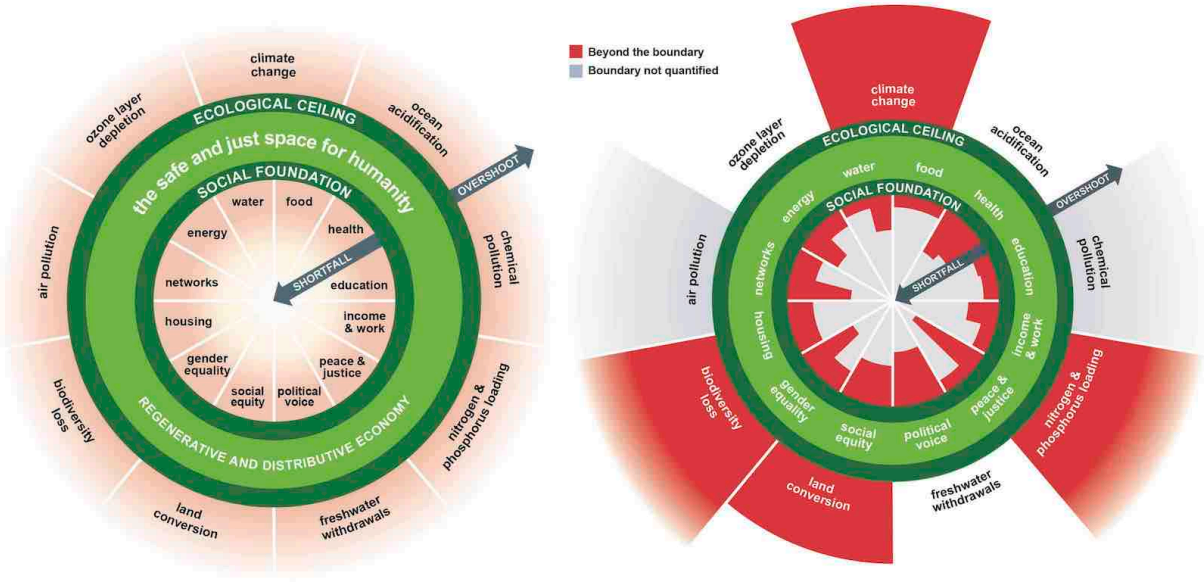


Figure 2.10: L: Doughnut as a 21st century compass. R: Earth's limits and social foundations transgressed (Raworth, 2017)

Table 2: Doughnut Economic Framework

The Doughnut			
Social foundations		Ecological ceilings	
Food	Health	Climate change	Ocean acidification
Education	Income and work	Biodiversity loss	Air pollution
Peace and justice	Political voice	Chemical pollution	Ozone layer depletion
Social equity	Gender equality	Freshwater withdrawals	Land conversion
Housing	Networks	Nitrogen & phosphorus loading	
Energy	Water		

Seven Ways to Think like a 21st Century Economist		
Seven Ways to Think:	From 20th century Economics	To 21st Century Economics
Change the Goal	GDP	The Doughnut
See the Big Picture	Self-contained market	Embedded economy
Nurture Human Nature	Rational economic man	Social adaptable humans
Get Savvy with Systems	Mechanical equilibrium	Dynamic complexity
Design to Distribute	Growth will even it up again	Distributive by design
Create to Regenerate	Growth will clean it up again	Regenerative by design
Be Agnostic about Growth	Growth addicted	Growth agnostic

After decades of being stuck in mostly academia, in May 2023 the Post-growth community had its "Woodstock moment", when the European Parliament facilitated a 3-day *Beyond Growth* conference with a host of diverse speakers from around the world, including Raworth, Shiva, O'Neill, Kallis and Hickel. Building on this, five follow up conferences happened in Austria, Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy, many happening within national Parliaments. Despite a strong building of momentum, humanity is still very far away from LTG's 1972 call.

2.1.4 Social Unravelling

To have justice, Sultana (2022) notes CJ movements need to identify injustices, address underlying causes and engage in action to transform the world. "CJ is in many ways inherently about praxis", of solidarity and collective action that include "dismantling fossil fuel dependency, defetishization of endless capitalist growth on a finite planet, challenging non-participatory democracy, resisting extractive exploitation of natural resources, confronting racial capitalism and Indigenous erasure". Strong solidarity, based around collective action on climate issues, existed between both Global North and Global South communities since the actions of Greta Thunberg and subsequent FFF climate strikes in 2019. The escalation of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict since October 7th 2023, followed by the subsequent live streamed genocide in Gaza, quickly divided much Western, especially European, climate movements.

On October 20th 2023, just two weeks after the Hamas attack, Thunberg shared a photo of herself with a "Stand with Gaza" sign (Fig 2.11 L) on social media, writing "Week 270. Today we strike in solidarity with Palestine and Gaza. The world needs to speak up and call for an immediate ceasefire, justice and freedom for Palestinians and all civilians affected." There were already large demonstrations in some European countries, especially in Ireland where large crowds gathered on October 21st (Fig 2.11 R) to denounce Israeli actions in Palestine. Ireland was seen as an outlier in the EU, where "support for Palestinian rights stems partly from its own experience of colonialism and violence" (Mullally, 2023). Monday 23rd, Guardian stated FFF Germany stood with Israel and Luisa Neubauer posted a statement on behalf of the branch saying that said the group had "unlimited solidarity" with Jewish people (Niranjan, 2023).



Figure 2.11: Solidarity with Palestine and Gaza L: Greta Thunberg Palestine solidarity Tweet. R: Dublin solidarity protest (Thunberg, 2023; Darwish /Anadolu Agency, 2023)

After the horrors of Auschwitz, the world said “Never Again”. The Nazi regime murdered over 13 million people during the war, including 6 million Jews in “the Holocaust”. Deeply unfair and unjust, colonial, imperialist, racist, sectarian, supremacist and exploitative values still form the base of Western and European worlds (Quijano, 2000; Escobar, 1995 & 2018). This led to the facilitation and enabling of Israel’s settler and colonial regime (Fisk, 2005; Mate, 2014; Shlaim, 2023) that erupted with full brutality in 2023 into a livestreamed Genocide in Gaza (International Court of Justice (ICJ), 2024; Albanese, 2024; Shlaim, 2025), with the full complicity, even armed and financial support, of the European Union (Boylan 2025; Hassan, 2025). The UN called the actions a genocide and the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for war crimes and crimes against humanity. A manmade famine exists in Gaza, alongside forced displacements of over 1 million people. Unprecedented numbers of health workers and journalists were intentionally targeted (Guardian, 2025). Up to 680,000 are rumoured dead, including 479,000 children (Hil & Polya, 2025), many shot at food distribution sites (Maynard, 2025). In the Occupied West Bank, settler violence involving murder increases, 52,300 olive trees destroyed (Ravichandran, 2025), water wells contaminated, homes attacked, occupied or destroyed. When the world said “Never Again”, it meant for anyone, of any race, colour or creed, not just Jewish people.

During the days of Apartheid in racist South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu said “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor” (1984). The CJM stands against all forms of intolerance, including racism, sexism, sectarianism, and antisemitism. Many Jewish voices stand against Israel’s genocide, colonialism and war crimes, including; lead IPCC author and degrowth activist Julia Steinberger, the daughter of a German-Jewish Holocaust survivor, who has railed against “the ongoing, full-throttle, full-throated genocide… these past months of relentless mass deadly violence on Palestinians, supported by almost all Western powers” (Steinberger, Dec 2023); Dr. Gabor Maté, an infant survivor of the Nazi genocide who lost his family in Auschwitz, now an ex Zionist who is explicit about the difference between antisemitism and what we are witnessing in Gaza (Maté, October, 2023) and now calls for land return to Palestine due to Israel's extermination, expulsion, and massacres of Palestinians (Maté, November, 2023); World-renowned political dissident, linguist and author Noam Chomsky denounced the 2014, less lethal, assault on Gaza as “a hideous atrocity, sadistic, vicious, murderous, totally without any credible pretext” (Chomsky, 2014); Canadian climate author Naomi Klein wrote in “We need an exodus from Zionism”, just before the major Jewish holiday how “This Passover, we don’t need or want the false idol of Zionism. We want freedom from the project that commits genocide in our name” (Klein, April 2024).

On Sunday, November 12, 70,000 people took part in the biggest climate protest ever in the Netherlands, ten days before a national election. Greta Thunberg was invited to address the crowd from the stage. As she went to the stage a small group of activists at the front of the crowd waved Palestinian flags and chanted pro-Palestinian slogans. She wore a traditional Palestinian keffiyeh black and white scarf and invited a Palestinian and an Afghan woman to join her on the stage. She said "As a climate justice movement, we have to listen to the voices of those who are being oppressed and those who are fighting for freedom and for justice. Otherwise, there can be no climate justice without international solidarity". The two women spoke and then an uninvited Dutch man came to the stage, snatched the microphone and said "I came for a climate protest, not a political point of view," before being shoved aside. Thunberg and activists began chanting, "No climate justice on occupied land!". A week later "Germany's leading news magazine Der Spiegel ran a lengthy article with personal comments on Thunberg's childhood character and appearance under the headline: "Has Greta Thunberg betrayed the climate movement?" (Niranjan et al, 2023), asking "Is Greta Thunberg anti-Semitic, or just incredibly naive?" (Beyer et al, 2023). Seemingly, Germany's particular history during the Nazi era and anti-Semitism guilt still affects things. Soon after, during the COP28 summit in Dubai, in December 2023, Guardian reporters pointed out that after Thunberg's actions, politicians and pundits in Germany across the political spectrum demanded that the national FFF branch distance itself from her views and that "The legacy of the Holocaust carried out by the Nazis is central to Germany's postwar identity, and in recent years has been used to argue that Israel's security is fundamentally tied to the German state today". Resulting in "Positions taken have led to splits within groups and between them" (Niranjan et al, 2023).

Many expected European groups who speak about and advocate for transformative action, eco-social just transition, climate justice, social justice and who use the radical term "System Change, not Climate Change", would add their voice to calls for ceasefire, or denouncement of war crimes and, when declared by the UN, genocide. With many groups remaining silent on the ongoing nightmare, silence is seen as complicity. Also, the question arises of just how bad would things have to get, for such groups to finally speak out? Some European climate and BIPOC-led groups did speak out at various times. CAN demanded "Israel be held accountable for the war crimes it is committing" and issued two press releases: *Gaza/Israel: CAN Calls for a Ceasefire Now*[8] (Oct 20, 2023) and *CAN statement on Gaza*[9] (May 16, 2024).

[8] Gaza/Israel: CAN Calls for a Ceasefire Now https://climatenetwork.org/2023/10/20/climate-action-network-calls-for-a-ceasefire-now/
[9] CAN Gaza Sstatement *https://climatenetwork.org/2024/05/16/climate-action-network-can-statement-on-gaza/*

The Brazilian architect and urban planner Raquel Rolnik outlined the extreme violence behind the architectural process in her 2019 book *Urban Warfare: Housing under the Empire of Finance*. She served as Secretary of Urban Programmes at the Ministry of Cities under President Lula from 2003 to 2007 and was the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing from 2008 to 2014. Her work shows how homes and neighbourhoods have effectively become the "last subprime frontiers of capitalism".

Despite an ICJ arrest warrant, Benjamin Netanyahu travelled freely to the US on February 5th 2025 to meet US President Trump. Trump vowed "the US will "take over" war-ravaged Gaza and "own it", "effectively endorsing the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians... claiming that it could become the "Riviera of the Middle East" (Smith, 2025). 20 days later, February 26, Trump shared a very bizarre, one minute long, AI-generated video for 'Trump Gaza'. Guardian noted it "features Trump and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, sunbathing in a Dubai-style resort while Elon Musk is showered with bank notes while walking on a beach". (Guardian, 2025). The Economist's August 7th 2025 cover featured the destruction unleashed in Gaza (Fig 2.12 R) to open up land for this development. Sunday August 31st 2025 the Washington Post published the leaked "The GREAT Trust" plan circulating in the White House to develop the "Gaza Riviera" (Fig 2.12 L) as a string of high-tech smart cities, which would involve the forced displacement of Gaza's entire population of 2 million people and put the territory into a US trusteeship for at least a decade. In true Trumpian MAGA style, the project's name GREAT stands for "Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation".

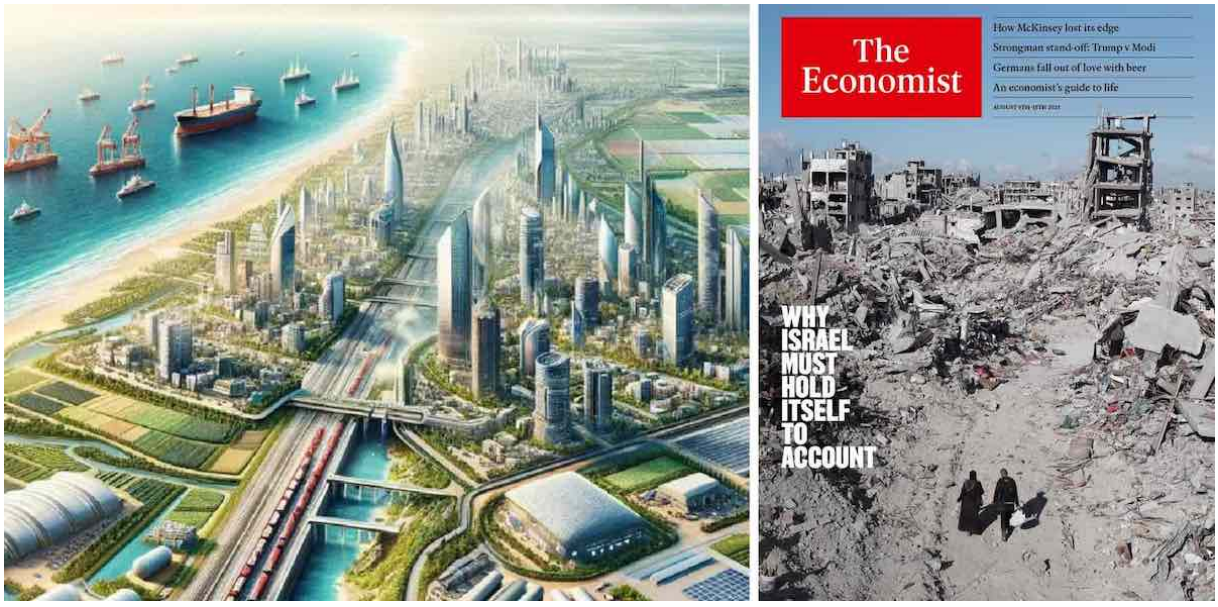


Figure 2.12: Gaza, Palestine. L: GREAT's leaked 'Gaza Riviera' proposal. R: Ruins of a genocide (*Supplied to Guardian, 2025; The Economist 2025*)

Post-growth activist Richard Heinberg notes that "Evidence of polycrisis is usually separated into two buckets - environmental and social". (Heinberg, 2023). In the report he co-authored with Asher Miller for the Post Carbon Institute, *Welcome to the Great Unraveling: Navigating the Polycrisis of Environmental and Social Breakdown,* they conclude that the tendency to frame CB as "the end of the world" or "apocalypse" is unhelpful. Instead, their view of the future "will consist of decades of social, economic, political, and ecological turmoil punctuated by periods of rescue and recovery". Importantly, there is agency to affect outcomes. The report divides social into six categories: A) Poverty B) Inequality C) Racism and Other Forms of Discrimination D) Antisocial Responses to Scarcity E) Authoritarianism F) Impacts of Technological Change. The response to their question "What would it have taken in the past for leaders to have fully averted our current social unraveling?" is based on equity and justice:

> Policy makers would have had to more effectively address its main driver: socio-economic inequality, both within and between nations. They also would have needed to strengthen balancing feedbacks by respecting Indigenous cultures and land rights, while helping people in urban industrial societies to find security and happiness in their local regions and in patterns of life that are low in resource consumption, while high in aesthetic and cultural satisfaction. (Heinberg & Miller, 2023)

The UN insist "inequalities are not only driven and measured by income, but are determined by other factors; gender, age, origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class, and religion" and state that since the 1990s "income inequality within countries has risen, this is the form of inequality people feel on a daily basis". Oxfam claims "Our economy is broken, with hundreds of millions of people living in extreme poverty while huge rewards go to those at the very top". It shows that in the 10 years since the financial crisis, the number of billionaires has nearly doubled, and the fortunes of the world's super-rich have reached record levels, growing "by $2.5bn a day, yet the super-rich and corporations are paying lower rates of tax than they have in decades" (Chan et al, 2019). In recent years the cost of living has risen sharply, which threatens people's ability to provide for their families and pay rents.

Many urban centres people are losing access to housing, rents soar, communities are driven to the periphery, due to the forces Rolnik (2019) outlined, as well as gentrification, urban speculation, touristification (Tulumello & Allegretti, 2020) where unregulated Airbnb gives better return. Lisbon has been particularly hard hit by these phenomena, as well as influx of digital nomads moving to the city (Holder, 2025), many not paying taxes or integrating locally.

2.1.5 Koyaanisqatsi (Life out of balance)

The word *Koyaanisqatsi* is from the Hopi language, of the indigenous native Hopi people of north-eastern Arizona in the US. This word was used for the name of a 1982 film that is a purely cinematic, non-verbal, non-narrative documentary, including slow motion and time-lapse visuals of natural and urban environments. It is written directed and produced by Godfrey Reggio, features music by Philip Glass and cinematography by Ron Fricke. The film's end title card lists translations of the Hopi word *Koyaanisqatsi* as:

1. Crazy life
2. Life in turmoil
3. Life out of balance
4. Life disintegrating
5. A state of life that calls for another way of living

The film is part of the *Qatsi* trilogy, which translates as life in Hopi. The other films are *Powaqqatsi* (1988), which translates as "life in transformation", and *Naqoyqatsi (2002),* which translates as "life as war". Fricke later directed and shot the film "Baraka" in 1992. Hickman (2011) regards *Koyaanisqatsi* "as the quintessential environmental movie - a transformative meditation on the current imbalance between humans and the wider world that supports them".

Living Systems theorists explore how to effectively transform human systems, including "for treating the root causes of unsustainability" (Davelaar, 2021). LTG's chief author, Donna Meadows wrote "folks who do systems analysis have a great belief in "leverage points." These are places within a complex system (a corporation, an economy, a living body, a city, an ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything" (Meadows, 1999). In Systems Thinking (ST) "the behavior of a living organism as an integrated whole cannot be understood from the study of its parts alone. As the systems theorists would put it several decades later, the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Capra, 1995). ST is based upon connectedness, relationships and context. Edward T. Hall developed the iceberg model (Fig 2.13 R) in 1976, to illustrate cultural differences. It portrayed society's culture as an iceberg, with only about 10% visible above the surface at any given time, but with the far larger portion under the surface. This was later adapted and evolved by ST and management theorists, including Maani & Cavana. ST differs from prevailing approaches in dealing with complexity by exploring "interdependencies and interactions between the constituent parts, which are the very causes of complexity and dynamic behaviour in systems". (Bosch et al, 2007)

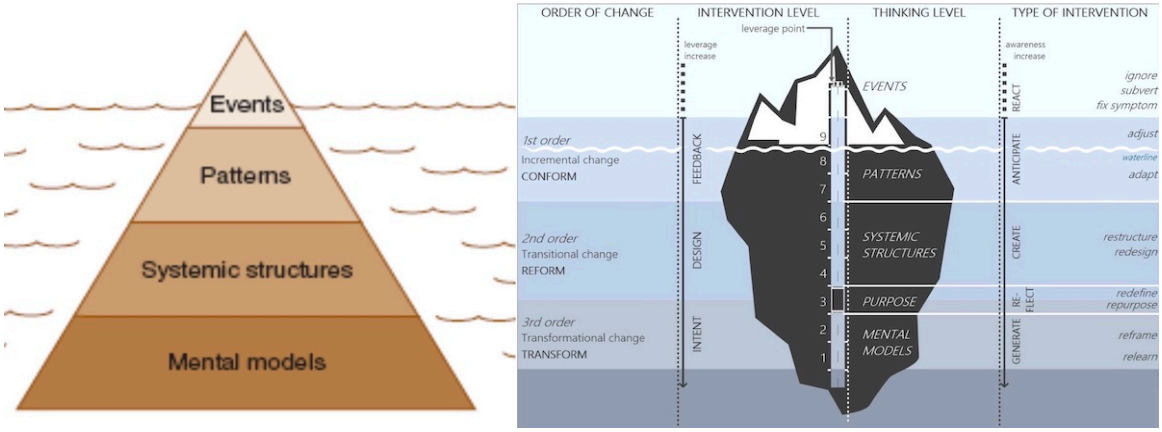


Figure 2.13: L: Systems Thinking. R: Composite Iceberg Model, with Leverage Points (L: Maani and Cavana 2007; R: Davelaar 2021 - Adapting Hall, 1976 & Meadows, 1999)

Meadows drafted *Thinking in Systems* in 1993. It was circulated informally within the systems dynamics community for years. She died in 2001, aged only 59. Her colleagues restructured and published it posthumously in 2008. In *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System (*1999) she identified a key concept for enabling system change. Her nine Leverage Points (LPs) are "places to intervene in a system" with an increasing order of effectiveness:

9. Constants, parameters, numbers (subsidies, taxes, standards).
8. Regulating negative feedback loops.
7. Driving positive feedback loops.
6. Material flows and nodes of material intersection.
5. Information flows.
4. The rules of the system (incentives, punishments, constraints).
3. The distribution of power over the rules of the system.
2. The goals of the system.
1. The mindset or paradigm out of which the system - its goals, power structure, rules, its culture - arises.

Maani & Cavana (2007) clustered Meadows' nine LPs into four sections, seeing that "human interactions with the world occur at four levels" (Fig 2.13 L): 1) Events 2) Patterns 3) Systemic structures 4) Mental models. This system has a linearity, where each is affected by all that's below. Bosch et al (2007) elaborated on these four human interactions, as:

- *Events* level where people become aware of things in the world.
- *Patterns* show the changes and trends in data over an extended period of time.

- *Systemic structures* reveal how such trends and patterns relate to and affect one another.
- *Mental models* reflect the beliefs, values and assumptions that we personally hold, and they underlie our reasons for doing things the way we do.

Davelaar combines both systems into the leveraged iceberg (Fig 2.13 R) to explore deeper "the often unquestioned, largely unconscious, systemic realm of mental models and human intent" (Davelaar, 2021). Meadows' deepest leverage point - paradigm - concerns the "deepest set of beliefs about how the world works" (Meadows, 1999), which are its goals, power structure, rules and culture. Which sounds very like Kumar's third 'E' of ethical and spiritual values. Shifting people's core paradigm is very difficult but the critical work (Capra & Wahl, 2020).

Theoretical physicist Fritjof Capra is driven by the deep "Paradigm Shift" he has seen happening around him in all areas of life for over 50 years "My main interest in my life as a physicist has been in the dramatic change of concepts and ideas that occurred in physics during the first three decades of the century and is still being elaborated in our current theories of matter" (Capra, 1996). This shift being how reality and the world is perceived, since quantum theory forced abrupt changes of understanding, due to the work of German physicist Werner Heisenberg in the 1920s that "forced them (Newtonian, Cartesian Science world) to accept the fact that the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve at the subatomic level into wavelike patterns of probabilities". Capra describes Heisenberg's work and change in understanding as a "conceptual revolution", whose central aspect was "the shift from the parts to the whole". In his 1975 classic text *The Tao of Physics*, Capra mentions the struggle Heisenberg had in switching from understanding reality with his head, through physics where 99.999% of anything at the sub atomic level is mostly empty, and with his heart, where he understands that the trees and all of nature are composed of emptiness, as Heisenberg put it:

> I remember discussions with Bohr which went through many hours till very late at night and ended almost in despair; and when at the end of the discussion I went alone for a walk in the neighbouring park I repeated to myself again and again the question: Can nature possibly be so absurd as it seemed to us in these atomic experiments?

Capra notes that, according to US physicist and philosopher Thomas Kuhn's influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), changes of paradigms occur in discontinuous, revolutionary breaks called "paradigm shifts". Capra recognizes that "the paradigm shift in physics as an integral part of a much larger cultural transformation" and that

what "we are seeing is a shift of paradigms not only within science, but also in the larger social arena" (Capra, 1996). Enabling this shift from consciousness to action, has been his life's work:

> The paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of entrenched ideas and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, and-last, but not least-the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male is one that follows a basic law of nature. All of these assumptions have been fatefully challenged by recent events. And, indeed, a radical revision of them is now occurring. (Capra, 1996)

Key insights into changing paradigms have come from leading thinkers from diverse fields: In 1946 theoretical physicist, and German refugee, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) said "The significant problems we face cannot be solved with the same level of thinking that created them". Sometime in the 1960's, US architect, systems theorist, writer, designer, inventor, philosopher, and futurist, Richard Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983) said "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete". Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and nonviolent political resistance fighter, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is credited, perhaps around 1913, with saying "Be the change you wish to see in the world".

Many believe contemporary life being out of balance, or in turmoil, stems from humanity's growing disconnection with nature in the industrial world (Wahl, 2016), coupled with ongoing pressures such as economic and time constraints under the dominant capitalist system (Hickel, 2024; Klein, 2014). It must be remembered that the 20th century was incredibly violent, with two world wars creating new technologies for killing, Auschwitz and the holocaust of millions by the Nazis, and untold levels of repression, violence, purges, forced famines and genocides under Soviet regimes in Russia and Eastern Bloc Europe, China's "Cultural Revolution" and the killing fields of Cambodia's *Khmer Rouge*. In the 21st century, genocide gets live streamed.

The "discovery" and subsequent exploitation of *Abya Yala*, renamed later as the Americas, since Columbus's arrival in 1492, led to over 500 years of racism, violence, and injustice on the various indigenous peoples who lived there. Competing European colonial powers, notably

Spanish, Portuguese, English, French and Dutch, carried out ethnic cleansing to remove people from their lands (Galeano, 1971). Added to this, were the grave injustices of the Atlantic slave trade, where over 12 million indigenous Africans were shipped across the Atlantic over 400 years (Segal, 1995). The Europeans white supremacist value system believed they were destined by God to carry out such acts, and that they were a superior race of people (Wolfe, 2006; Speed, 2020). They believed their Christian monotheistic worldview was better than the various spiritual beliefs and customs of the indigenous communities they subdued, whom they saw as lesser, subhuman, savage. Colombian post-development anthropologist Escobar notes:

> Patriarchy and ethnocentrism influenced the form development took. Indigenous populations had to be "modernized," where modernization meant the adoption of the "right" values, namely, those held by the white minority or a mestizo majority and, in general, those embodied in the ideal of the cultivated European. (Escobar, 1995)

Perhaps the origins of current ecological imbalance result from break of connection people had with the places around them. Remembering that depending on how far we go back, all humans come from indigenous communities. A key factor for many, perhaps all, indigenous groups was a sacred connection they held with the physical places around them; forests and rivers from where life came, fields to grow and eat from, mountains, earth itself, sea, moon and sun. Physical entities that people had a sacred connection with, often called names, that were positioned in folk stories, mythology and founding stories. Entities held in esteem, as gods of sorts, but with a base in the practical function of being a key part of the ecosystem by which the community survived from. Something very much local and tangible. With the advent of monotheistic religions, the sacred moved from the local close at hand, to a distant and abstract mental concept. Often there was a move from a sacred feminine perspective to that of a masculine force that one should be subservient to. In the Quechua speaking peoples of the Andes, the descendants of the Incas and other indigenous groups, *Pachamama* is seen as that which all life on the planet comes from, Mother Earth. She is nourished by *Inti*, the sun, a masculine force, and *Quila*, the moon. These people and their beliefs still exist to various degrees in the mountain communities of Peru, and to a lesser degree in the countries of Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. A multitude of belief systems, languages, cultures, means of organising communities and managing resources have survived the 500+ year cultural onslaught. *Buen Vivir* (good life in Spanish, *sumak kawsay* in Quechua, *suma qamaña* in Aymara, in Bolivia) is a Latin American alternative to Western development (Gudynas, 2011).

The strange Chinese text *Tao Te Ching*, is like a little book of poetry, of 81 very short passages. In a very Taoist joke, possibly accredited to the texts author, it is said “It only takes a half hour to read… Or a lifetime”. It is about 2,500 years old, supposedly written in the 4th century BCE, by Lao Tzu, which translates as “the Old Master or, more picturesquely, the Old Boy” (Mitchell, 1988). It has been one of the most translated texts in world literature, although not so well known in the West. “It can be translated as *The Book of the Immanence of the Way* or *The Book of the Way and of How It Manifests Itself in the World* or, simply, *The Book of the Way”* (Mitchell, 1988). The core idea, the Tao, or Dao, is the natural way of the universe, primarily as conceived in East Asian philosophy and religion, forming the base of Taoism. This seeing of life cannot be grasped as a concept. Rather, it is seen through actual living experience of one's everyday being. The concept is represented by the Chinese character 道, which has meanings including 'way', 'path', 'road', and sometimes 'doctrine' or 'principle'. (Zai, 2015). Originating in China, it influenced Buddhism when it arrived from India to China long ago, helping shape Zen Buddhism, which took hold in Japan, and later the US and the West. In passages 25, the Tao reminds us of our position in this very strange and ever-changing universe.

> There was something formless and perfect
> before the universe was born.
> It is serene. Empty.
> Solitary. Unchanging.
> Infinite. Eternally present.
> It is the mother of the universe.
> For lack of a better name,
> I call it the Tao.

Given the West’s monotheistic roots, and all the troubles concerning how to live according to various interpretations of god, the Tao’s only mention of god in verse 4 is important. It’s very short but prompts deep, almost mathematical feelings, about the paradox of existence and feelings of being alive in this, or these, universe(s). Speaking about the Tao, Lao Tzu says almost playfully: “I don't know who gave birth to it. It is older than God” (Mitchell, 1988).

These viewpoints identify that firstly, a paradigm shift is underway, and secondly it is a cultural phenomenon. Stemming from scientific breakthroughs 100 years ago and demanding immediate attention due to current existential challenge of ecological emergency, old Western value systems are breaking down, enabling humanity connect with the essence of home, again.

2.2. Pathways of Change

2.2.1 Social Movements

A social movement (SM) is a force pushing against something, while also trying to pull its alternative into being. Diani states "SMs are defined as networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities" (Diani, 1992). For James & Van Seters a SM is a community that 'comes together' around a few minimal conditions, "as a form of political association between persons who have at least a minimal sense of themselves as connected to others in common purpose and who come together across an extended period of time to effect social change in the name of that purpose" (James & Van Seters, 2014).

The essence of SMs are political organisations, consisting of grassroots activists, pushing for system change in many forms and at a range of scales, from the local (a street, block or neighbourhood), to the regional, national, transnational and global. Regarding, for example, sustainable consumption and lifestyles, the relevance of SMs is multifold; from communities identifying the complex roots of the ecological and social crises, taking political action to uproot systems that maintain the status quo for short-term power and profit, to creating alternatives that build system change; such as Fair Trade, Eco-Communities, Community Supported Agriculture, and *Buen Vivir* (Good Living), to name but a few. SMs organic, non-hierarchical, open structures, often employing high levels of creativity and spontaneity, sometimes enable very intense and strange sparks of hope to emerge. Writing just eight years after the end of Franco's fascist dictatorship in Spain, Castells noted about the fate of SMs; "they break the old order and inspire a new one that begins to age as soon as it has taken shape. (Castells, 1983).

As long as unfair dominant systems of power, abuse, exploitation, injustice, misery and destruction were to be fought against by oppressed communities, SMs have existed. In the wake of social dislocation caused by the industrial revolution, rapidly expanding English urbanisation, feverish coal digging in the pits and deadly factory jobs (Engels, 1845), militant approaches to improve worker conditions culminated in the 1848 publication of the "Communist Manifesto", by two German immigrants in England, Marx and Engels, impacting growing political movements including socialism, communism, anarchism and nationalism.

The West experienced political upheaval in the 1960s. International SM struggles erupted to oppose injustices; racism and lack of civil rights in the US, war in Vietnam, national liberation movements in the colonized world, radical feminism and to stop global warming and

climate change. Capitalism's threads connected colonialism, imperialism, racism, exploitation and war. Its consequences were pollution, nature destruction and biodiversity loss. Western societies realised their dependence on cheap oil during the 1970s energy crisis. The demise of Soviet Russia, from 1989 onward, led to capitalism's global domination that fuelled increasingly consumerist lifestyles in the US, and soon around the entire planet. Driven by the rapid expansion of neoliberal economics, with its perpetual growth addiction and an insatiable hunger for profit, a new, power hungry, political class carved up the world's finite resources under the banner of free market economic globalisation.

For many, November 30th 1999 was the day that "permanently changed the political landscape of globalisation" (Capra, 2002), when an international globally connected SM, using new communications (email) and radical peaceful activism techniques, successfully shut down the WTO in what US media called the "Battle of Seattle" (Fig 2.14). A diverse coalition of international environmentalists, labour trade unions, women, farmers, community media workers and students used street theatre and direct action to face off riot cops, violence and mass arrest. This anti-capitalist SM, later labelled the "anti-globalization movement", took on corporate globalisation, and for a short moment, won. Weeks after his non-violent participation, Paul Hawken wrote "Police said that they were not prepared for the level of violence, but in fact they were unprepared for a network of non-violent protestors totally committed to one task - shutting down the WTO". He stated "the '60s were primarily an American event; the protests against the WTO are international". He was told *Newsweek* would not use people's and groups names in an article "Because Americans have never heard of them". Hawken finished his testimony incorporating a character from the Indigenous Inuit tradition, Skeleton Woman:

> But Skeleton Woman also showed up in Seattle, the uninvited guest. She couldn't be killed or destroyed, no matter how much gas or pepper spray or rubber bullets were used… Skeleton Woman told corporate delegates and rich nations that they could not have the world. It is not for sale... Hers are deep dreams from slow time. She is patient. She will not be quiet or flung to sea any time soon (Hawken, 2000).

Hawken (2000) later called this "Blessed Unrest", the immune system of humanity kicking in:

> What marched in the streets of Seattle? Slower time strode into the WTO. Ancient identity emerged. The cloaks of the forgotten paraded on the backs of our children. It is not the fast things that will prevail. In the end, that which is slow is powerful



Figure 2.14: WTO Shutdown 1999: L: Skeleton Woman M: Police Violence R: Banner Drop (Wikimedia Commons; Gerald Ford, Steve Kaiser, Citizens Trade Campaign, 1999)

In 1989, US Black woman Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights advocate and a scholar of critical race theory, coined the term intersectionality in her essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics". Intersectionality initially examined the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that women, especially Black women in the US, faced due to their ethnicity, sexuality, and economic background. It arose in reaction to both white feminism and the then male-dominated black liberation movement, citing the "interlocking oppressions" of racism, sexism and heteronormativity (Crenshaw, 1989). It has evolved to be a key feminist framework for understanding how groups' and individuals' social and political identities result in unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. Examples of these intersecting and overlapping factors include gender, caste, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, and age. All factors can lead to both empowerment and oppression. (Zinn & Dill; 1996).

Intersectional approaches seek to find common struggles and challenges among a diversity of groups. Asking what's needed most and listening to those at the margins, is how more privileged SMs can best demonstrate solidarity. European sustainable lifestyle type SMs often tend to be more white, educated, hetero, male and affluent. Engagement demands moving beyond comfort zones to reach marginalised, and often invisible, communities found in all modern cities. Rather than inviting "them" to come to comfortable, NGO funded, or university sponsored spaces, going to their local community organising spaces is sometimes challenging, sometimes even dangerous. But it builds trust and often is only way to really understand a community and do real work. Relationships can form around playing football, washing dishes

or helping kids with homework. Instead of SMs offering quick solutions, it's often better to understand real community challenges, by humbly asking questions, even the hard ones. "Climate solutions" must respond to local challenges first (food shortage, gangs and violence, lack of local leadership…)

Not all SMs agree with each other, sometimes moments arise where united movements disagree, split, divide, even fight against each other, especially on the political left. In the "Civil war within the civil war" in the streets of Barcelona of May 1937, the Catalan anti-fascist movement fighting to defeat Franco's fascist uprising in Spain, split and fought itself. Soviet, Stalinist dominated communist groups, who insisted on increased order and an end to a people's revolution, fought and defeated libertarian, anti-authoritarian, anarchist revolutionary movements. George Orwell got caught up in things, later writing *Animal Farm* (1945) about it. Current ecological movement have dark shadows, with some of the roots of German and British organic farming lying in fascism, when ideas of "Blood and Soil" were connected to ideas about eugenics and nationalism (Toohey, 2018). English nature lover and author Henry Williamson bought a farm in Norfolk to "put the theories of "blood and soil" into practice, becoming, in effect, a demonstration farm for Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists" (Negus, 2022).

SMs often start out disorganized and chaotic, but passionate and intense against something. With time, they get more organized, and sometimes form into formal organizations, some into NGOs and some into civil society organizations (CSOs), some even into political parties. Some of these are active on specific campaigns, some advocate for politicians and law makers to make policy change, or fund local initiatives, others work in communities or the streets, to apply pressure for political, social, or ecological change. Aktaş (2022) notes that before the UN's first Conference of the Parties (COP) climate talk that happened in Berlin in 1995, "around 300 CSOs participated in the preliminary meeting in 1990 in Geneva, and 22,000 delegates from more than 9000 CSOs participated in the Rio Summit (Princen & Fingers,1994:4)". Three main CSO networks formed the Climate Justice Movement (CJM) in the 2000s, with distinctions along lines of ideology, organisation and action strategy becoming visible. Aktaş notes "The scene of the clash of these three CSO networks" was at COP15 in Copenhagen, December 2009:

> the inception of the (CJ) process that made the concept well-known, was the establishment of the umbrella groups of CSOs and SMs that took position against the carbon trade in Kyoto Protocol. The Climate Action Network (CAN), which embodies hundreds of environmental CSOs, had taken an impartial approach to the issue, thus, some CSOs in this group had left and formed the Climate Justice Now! (CJN!) network

> at the COP13 summit in Bali in 2007. Furthermore, in 2008, The Climate Justice Action (CJA) network, which had a more radical stance regarding the current approach to global climate change compared to the CJN!, was established. (Aktaş, 2022)

US academic activists Ruth Reitan and Shannon Gibson participated at this 2009 event. Their work sought "to advance and synthesize leftist political and environmental theory and enhance historical and contemporary understanding of environmental activism, especially related to the movement to halt climate change". They used participatory action research on the internal dynamics and debates among the three main climate activist networks mobilizing there; "those of the reformist CAN, the more marxian-inspired CJN, and the autonomist and anarchistic CJA" (Reitan & Gibson, 2012). Their 2012 article cites Marx's famous 1845 quote "Philosophers have only interpreted the world… The point, however, is to change it". They outline fractious relations existed between CAN and CJN, but that information was shared and some coordinated joint actions happened; "both networks mobilized on 12 December for the permitted march called by CAN members' Global Campaign for Climate Action… where up to 100,000 turned out". They foresaw the CJM's growing radicalization over the next 16 years, where "leftist reformist and especially the more radical currents are engaging with non- or anti-Western indigenous praxis to forge the contemporary transnational environmental movement."

'System Change not Climate Change' was the anti-systemic banner CJN and, the more radical network, CJA marched together behind during COP15. It was also the key title of the *People's Declaration from Klimaforum09* (Fig 2.15), from the alternative climate conference attended by over 50,000 people, held near Copenhagen's train station from 7-18 December. The document, cocreated by many from the CJM, was signed by 295 CSOs. Mathilde Kaalund-Jørgensen and Juan Rojas, as members from Civil Society, presented it to the COP process on 18 December. It demanded a just and sustainable transition, based on four urgent calls to action:

> There are solutions to the climate crisis. What people and the planet need is a just and sustainable transition of our societies to a form that will ensure the rights of life and dignity of all peoples and deliver a more fertile planet and more fulfilling lives to future generations.
>
> We, participating peoples, communities, and all organizations at the Klimaforum09 in Copenhagen, call upon every person, organization, government, and institution, including the United Nations (UN), to contribute to this necessary transition.
>
> For this reason, we call for urgent climate action:

- A complete abandonment of fossil fuels within the next 30 years
- Recognition, payment and compensation of climate debt
- A rejection of purely market-oriented and technology-centred false and dangerous solutions
- Real solutions to climate crisis



Figure 2.15: System Change not Climate Change'. L: Klimaforum Declaration. R: Reclaim Power protest, Copenhagen. (Klimaforum09, 2009; Kopczynski/ Guardian, 2009)

Reitan & Gibson noted that CJA's "new openness was not without its critics even further to the left, so to speak. Evidence of intra-anarchist fracturing existed alongside simultaneous coalescence with the larger climate, indigenous, and global justice movements". Anti-system street protests (Fig 2.15 R) were met by state violence and mass arrests. Overall, COP15 "was judged by all of the networks to be a failure. Both CJA and CJN issued statements not only condemning the Accord as empty and undemocratic, but also heavily criticizing the UNFCCC and Danish and European police for their unprecedented repression of civil society voices".

With culture wars, political polarization and resurgence of ethno-nationalism movements, great care is needed in defining, and defending, SM values and boundaries. White supremacist structures still exist in much of the world, and despite decades of radical progress, are returning to many parts of Europe. Sustainable solutions have to be accessible for everybody. If there is any hope of sustaining human life, it will come from solidarity and action in defending what many indigenous folk have always known and SMs are remembering again: What rebel clown *artivists* (art activists, Fremeaux & Jordan) shared with the world during Paris's COP "Climate Games" in December 2015; "We are not fighting for nature. We are nature defending itself"

The temporary Stirling ecovillage (section 4.2.2.5 & Fig 0.8) was created in 2005 as a base from where SMs tried to shut down the G8 summit in Scotland where alleged war criminals Bush and Blair (Monbiot, 2008) met, coming just two years after the start of the illegal war in Iraq. The camp was the seed for SMs to set up their own examples of the change they wished to see in the world, while also targeting sites of climate destruction. Thus, the climate camp movement[10] was born in the UK in 2006, and beyond in subsequent years. While anti-capitalist momentum was still relatively high in Europe in 2007, Turbulence magazine were distributing free papers to widen discussion; "ideas for movement". For the mobilisation against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in June, they asked 14 groups, collectives and individuals from across the world to confront this essential question; 'What would it mean to win?'.[11]

Irish republican, socialist, and trade union leader James Connolly dedicated his life to fighting to win. An internationalist who learned Italian and German to speak to immigrant workers in New York in 1910, co-founded the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW or Wobblies) in Chicago in 1905 and upon returning to Ireland, helped set up The Irish Citizen Army to defend the picket lines and street demonstrations of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) against police violence during the Great Dublin Lockout of 1913. Writing just 50 years after Ireland's great hunger, he predicted the upcoming bloody future:

> If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle., unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts will be in vain. England will still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs (Connolly, 1897)

He helped lead the revolt of 1916, and was executed strapped to a chair in Kilmainham Gaol for his trouble. His and other leaders' deaths prompted the guerilla actions of Ireland's War of Independence in 1919, by a new way of playing the game where IRA activists set up their own rules of engagement. After forcing the British army's withdrawal and winning independence in 1921, the fallout began: Splits between different objectives, a bloody civil war, thousands dead and political divisions that still shapes Irish politics today. Just one example that shows how although diverse ranges of alternatives to systems exists, not all are compatible with each other.

[10] Camp for Climate Action https://web.archive.org/web/20060927153357/http://www.climatecamp.org.uk/
[11] Turbulence: 'What would it mean to win? http://www.turbulence.org.uk/index.html@p=6.html

Concerning winning, Mark Purcell explores how SM's achieve impact at different scales, through network organisation and including informal urbanism, by "Democracy against, beyond, and without the state" (Purcell, 2015). Working with Lefebvres ideas of urban society, autogestion, and the right to the city (1968), he examines "how urban inhabitants are creating new forms of urban life, forms of life in which they manage the production of urban space themselves, without the State and without capitalist corporations". Where democracy can be:

> an idea that inspires resistance to neoliberalism and austerity, but, more than that, I am interested in how it can help us flee those forms of life, how we can use it to create different forms, new ways of being together, other communities in which people make decisions for themselves, collectively. (Purcell, 2026).

His 2009 label "networks of equivalence" imagines contemporary political movements "as counter-hegemonic articulations of differentiated but equivalent popular struggles", in regard to the "tension between Old Left reductionism and the political fragmentation associated with many postmodern and post-structuralist alternatives. This being the dilemma between centralization and decentralization for how best networks should be organized" (Purcell, 2009).

Leftist positioning tensions exist, in regard to the state, principally between Marxist - taking over the state and control society centrally, and anarchist - local decentralised self-organised communities existing in mutual support through networks. Latter examples include: Bookchin's Social Ecology principles that led to libertarian municipalism (Bookchin, 1991), that inspired Kurds in Rojava within Syria's civil war to develop democratic confederalism (Finley, 2017) as a real democracy, declaring autonomy from the state, based around fractal networks of citizen assemblies or communes: Barcelona, where the 2011 *Spanish Revolution* led to *Barcelona en Comú*'s feminist democratic revolution seeking power only at city level because "beside turning local institutions into mechanisms of self-governance, municipalism also has the potential to feminize politics in a way that action at the national level does not" (Shea Baird & Roth, 2017), followed by creating the global municipalist movement, *Fearless Cities*, in 2017.

Scale matters, hence clarity on what winning means matters. Purcell concludes that although successful small struggles may seem like modest gains, "they are real gains nonetheless. We should not expect to find counter-hegemonic networks of equivalence, fully formed, on a global scale, poised to overrun the current hegemony. We should instead expect to find more modest examples, ones that suggest that this way of thinking about political movements, this idea of a way forward, holds promise" (Purcell, 2009).

2.2.2 Community-Led Initiatives

Action researchers Penha-Lopes & Henfrey (2019) identify Community-led initiatives (CLIs) as "activities that are self-initiated and self-managed by groups of people at the local and regional scale for the sake of actively sustaining, protecting and restoring ecological and social qualities". Henfrey et al (2022) expand the CLI definition to describe CLIs relationships with wider related social structures:

> CLIs are self-organised initiatives of people working together on an ongoing basis towards some defined set of environmental and/or social goals, usually within defined localities or communities of place (c.f. Penha-Lopes & Henfrey, 2019: pp. 11–12). We consider the term roughly synonymous with others in the literature such as Grassroots Innovations (Seyfang & Smith, 2007; Smith & Seyfang, 2013) and Community-Based Initiatives (Celata et al., 2019). Many CLIs form part of translocal networks that seek to strengthen local action via collaboration, collective learning, pooling and sharing resources, and mutual support (Avelino et al., 2019; Feola & Nunes, 2014). CLIs arise and operate independently of government, but are nonetheless inserted in legislative and socio-cultural contexts that influence their development, often in limiting ways (Becker et al., 2018; Celata & Coletti, 2019; Henfrey & Penha-Lopes, 2018).

While the term "community" is ambiguous, the community-led concept "emphasises the role of "communities" as transformative actors and drivers of societal change", referring to:

> collectives of individuals in both rural and urban contexts that intentionally join together to initiate a project that serves themselves, their wider community and their natural environment. It could be a group of committed people from an urban neighbourhood, inhabitants of traditional village communities or workers associations.

The concept of CLIs depicts a wide range of activities. Several defining criteria and common principles can be identified to unify all initiatives that fall under this umbrella term. Most fundamentally, CLIs are: 1) community-driven 2) targeting the restoring of social and ecological qualities 3) operating at the local or regional scale (small-scale and place-based). CLIs' orientation ranges from adaptive approaches to transformative approaches. Adaptive CLIs aim to address specific societal challenges as a direct response to a perceived threat

(Pelling et al, 2015). Transformative CLIs take a more systemic approach, as they do not only address societal challenges, but also challenge the systemic structures and institutions that created those challenges in the first place (Wittmayer, et al, 2017). Other concepts related to CLIs that appeared in scientific literature included: community-based initiatives (CBIs), Transformative social innovation (TSI), Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Grassroots innovation. CLIs as real-world phenomena are as old as humankind and exist all over the globe. In practice these initiatives vary in terms of size, duration, thematic focus, and objectives. In Europe, five major CLI networks and movements emphasized: 1) Transition 2) Ecovillages 3) Permaculture 4) Community Energy 5) Social Solidarity Economy. Two reports from recent years identified CLIs, and assessed their impact: *Europe in Transition* (O'Hara, 2013) and *A Community-led Transition in Europe* (ECOLISE, 2017). Penha Lopes & Henfrey (2019) identified seven basic preconditions for sustainable prosperity in Europe, that CLI networks are building toward:

1. Moving beyond growth
2. Nurturing commons ecologies
3. Eco-social regeneration
4. Solidarity economics
5. Inclusive governance
6. Transformative social innovation
7. Enabling community-led action

Different networks have created various mapping systems to identify active CLIs (Fig 2.16). While maps list CLIs, some in various categories, some linked to related SDGs, not all are still active. The Transition Network[12] began in Britain and Ireland in 2006 and is now an international network spanning 67 countries. Transiscope[13] is a mostly French speaking network of "actors involved in transition and alternatives who have started working on mapping their organizations, actions and ecosystems". CIVICS[14] is the first civic innovation map to be developed on a daily basis by citizens from Ibero-America. *Rede Convergir* (Convergence Network)[15] was a Portuguese sustainable initiatives map. GEN[16] mapped the global ecovillages. Most nodes give a link to the CLI's associated webpage; some also give the social media links.

[12] Transition Network map https://transitionnetwork.org/
[13] Transiscope map https://transiscope.org/map/
[14] CIVICS map https://civics.cc/en/#!/iniciativas
[15] Rede Convergir map https://redeconvergir.net/
[16] Global Ecovillage Network map https://ecovillage.org/ecovillages/map/

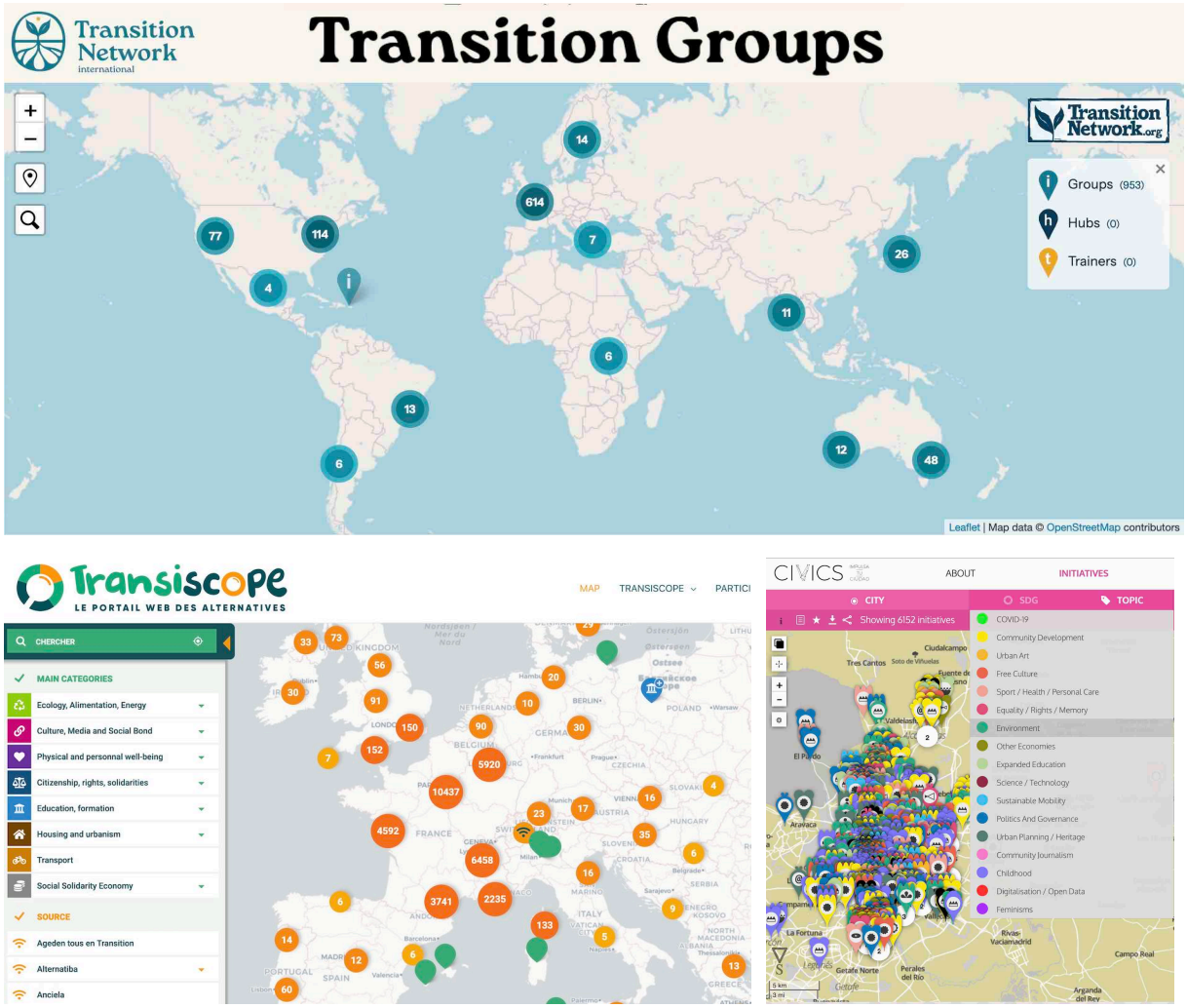


Figure 2.16: Community-led initiative Maps. 1: Transition Network, Global. 2: Transiscope, Europe. 3: CIVICS, Madrid. (Transition Network, Transiscope, CIVICS, all 2025)

It is common for many CLIs to create Communities of Practice (CoPs). These are groups of people who share a common interest, collaborating and learning together about how to develop this interest and apply it in practice. In socio-ecological transition movements, such as permaculture, transition networks and ecovillages, CoPs have the potential to become systems and spaces that have real power and influence.

The historical roots of the CoP concept are accredited to the work of the anthropologist Jean Lave and computer scientist Etienne Wenger-Trayner in their 1991 book *Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. They argued that learning is fundamentally a social process, that learners participate in communities of practitioners and that they move forward in a sociocultural way. They explored a range of different communities such as midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and recovering alcoholics.

Wenger-Trayner states “CoPs are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (1998). From this, three distinct elements are identified as essential to the existence and operation of a CoP:

- Domain: A domain of knowledge creates common ground, inspires participation, guides learning, and gives meaning to the actions of the individuals and community.
- Community: The notion of a community creates the social fabric for learning. A strong community fosters interactions and encourages people to collaborate and share ideas.
- Practice: While the domain provides a shared community interest or goal, the practice is the specific focus around which the community develops, shares and maintains its core of knowledge.

Three concepts relate to the emergence of both CoPs and CLIs in bringing about system change (Fig 2.17); Geels’s 2002 Multi-level perspective on transitions and Wheatley & Frieze’s Emergence Theory (2006) and Two loops model (2015).

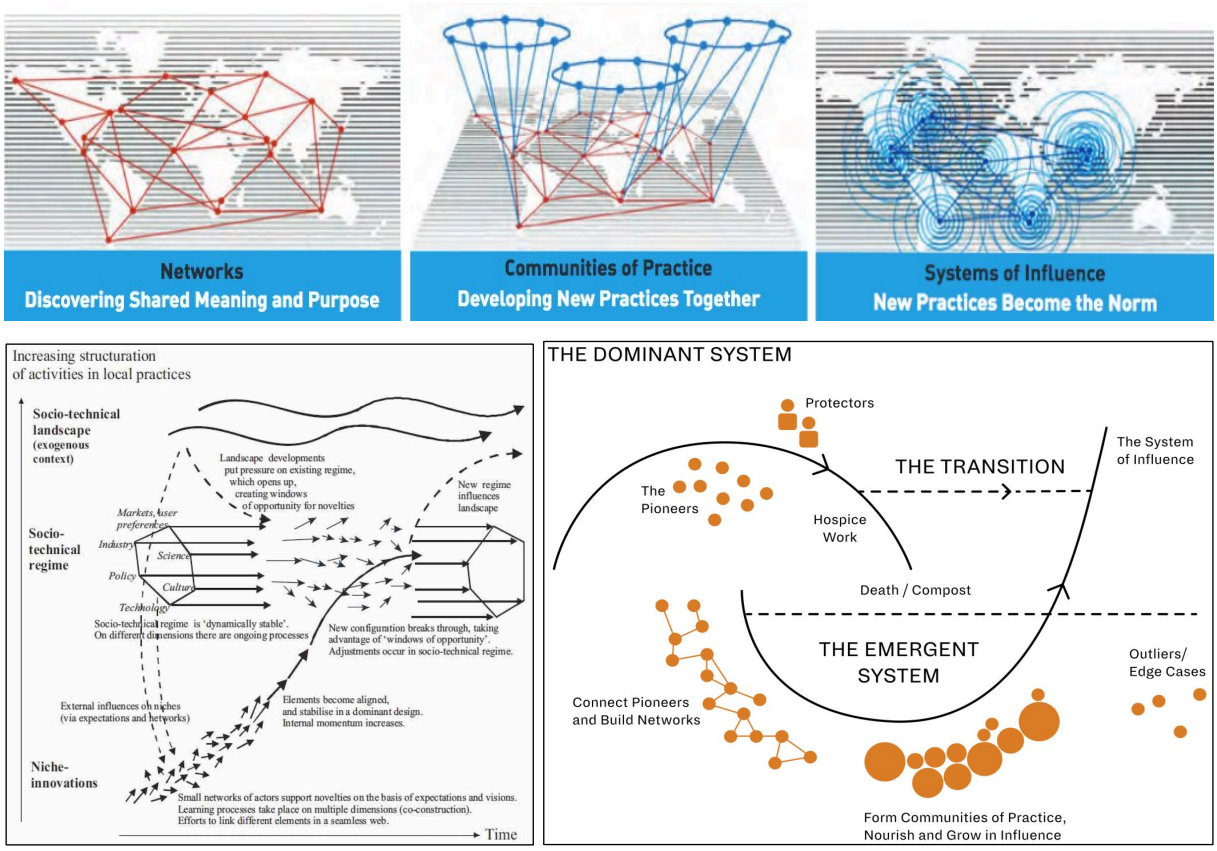


Figure 2.17 System Change. 1: emergence theory 2: Multi-level transitions perspective 3: Two loops model (Geels, 2002; 1 & 3: Wheatley & Frieze 2006 & 2015)

Wheatley & Frieze's core philosophy is to "act locally, connect regionally, learn globally." Their emergence theory incorporates CoPs as a critical second of three steps to bring about systems of influence, adding (2006) "CoPs enable people doing related work or facing similar challenges to share their knowledge and solutions and as a result achieve the greatest good for the greatest number." Their Emergence proposal has three Stages: 1) Networks (Discovering Shared Meaning and Purpose), 2) CoPs (Developing New Practices Together), 3) Systems of Influence (New Practices Become the Norm). Identifying networks as "the only form of organization used by living systems on this planet", they see them grow and transform into active, working CoPs, that enable change, through emergence.

Much academic discussion has grown in recent years in the political and scientific fields around Sustainability Transitions, Urban Transitions and Urban Transformations (Frantzeskaki et al., 2018). Transition is a process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another, Transformation is more a marked change in form, nature, or appearance. Hölscher & Loorbach noted that the terms Transition and transformation become buzzwords, but are not mutually exclusive (Hölscher et al., 2017). Both offer perspectives on how to bring about "radical and non-linear societal change", and that "Their differences may partially result from their etymological origins, but they largely stem from the different research communities concerned with either transition or transformation". Within the world of technological transitions Geels & Schot identified five transition paths, one being Transformation: "A socio-technical regime that changes without the emergence of a monopolising technology" (Geels & Schot, 2007). Geels's earlier 2002 breakthrough work on Multi-level perspective on transitions, introduced the idea of niche innovations breaking into and through existing regimes to create new landscapes (Geels, 2002). In his accompanying diagram (Fig 2.17.2), he states "New configuration breaks through, taking advantage of "windows of opportunity". Adjustments occur in socio-technical regime".

Wheatley & Frieze, of The Berkana Institute[17], first pointed to the Two loops model in their 2006 paper "Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale." The key dynamic at the heart of transformation is "as one system culminates and starts to collapse, isolated alternatives slowly begin to arise and give way to the new." On the usefulness of this model, Commonland[18] state: "What happens when old systems fail, but the new ones aren't fully "born" yet? Welcome to the messy in-between! The Berkana Two Loops Model helps us understand that when one system is in decline, another is already quietly emerging at the fringes".

[17] The Berkana Institute https://berkana.org/
[18] Commonland: https://commonland.com/how-the-berkana-two-loops-model-guides-us-through-system-change/

2.2.3 Regenerative Cultures

Wahl (2016) claims boldly: "Sustainability is not Enough: We Need Regenerative Cultures". Although positive, the growing viewpoint sees sustainability as "doing less damage to the environment" (Reed, 2007), whereas regenerative development transcends and includes sustainability, in a holistic systems approach to "reverse the degeneration of the earth's natural systems, but also to design human systems that can coevolve with natural systems" (Mang & Reed, 2011). The regenerative movement is a growing community that builds upon permaculture (Glanzberg, 1991 & 2017) and living systems perspectives such as working in a nested fashion and at all levels simultaneously (Mang & Haggard, 2016; Wahl, 2016). Regenerative practitioners are active in the fields of building & architecture (Reed, 2007), agriculture & bioregional development (Wahl 2016; Brewer, 2021), cities (Girardet, 2010, 2014), economy (Raworth, 2017), leadership (Hutchins & Storm, 2019) and business (Sanford, 2017). For Wahl, these dynamics contribute to not one uniform culture, but to the plural, regenerative cultures where "Life creates conditions conducive to life." (Benyus, 2002). Wahl (Fig 2.18) adapts Reeds Regenerative Design Framework (Reed, 2007) to identify six incremental stages between degenerative and regenerative systems; from (what was) "business as usual' (conventional practice) to full regeneration (appropriate participation and design as nature), that is positioned beyond and transcends sustainability (not doing any more damage).

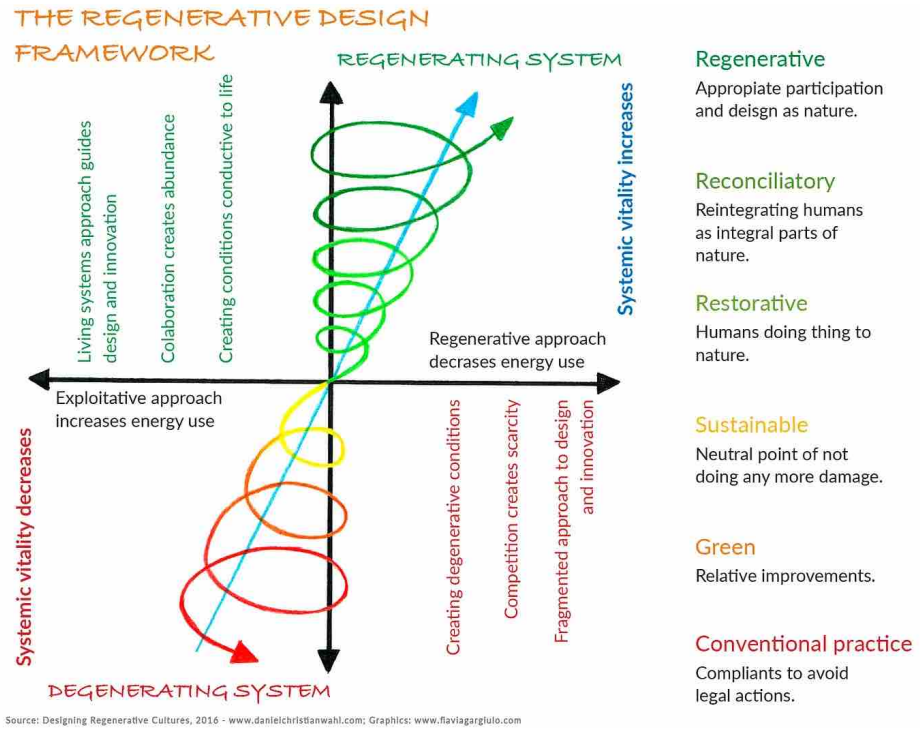


Figure 2.18 The Regenerative Design Framework (Reed, 2007, Adapted Wahl, 2016)

Multiple scale action and bioregionalism

Reed, Mang and others created the regenerative design group Regenesis in 1995, for "Transforming the way humans inhabit the earth". They bring together "pioneering educators in the fields of permaculture and ecological design with thought leaders in the worlds of business planning and organizational development" (Regenesis, 2025). They run a six-month program "The Regenerative Practitioner Series" (TRP)[19]. Europe's cohort is based in Lisbon.

Regenerative design is about sustaining "the underlying pattern of health, resilience and adaptability that maintain this planet in a condition where life as a whole can flourish" (Wahl, 2016). From a systems perspectives, scale is highly important. Wahl states that "Sustainability is first and foremost about systemic health and resilience at different scales, from local, to regional and global". Regenerative work happens fractally, at multiple scales, simultaneously:

> The best way to learn how to participate appropriately is to pay more attention to systemic relationships and interactions, to aim to support the resilience and health of the whole system, to foster diversity and redundancies at multiple scales, and to facilitate positive emergence through paying attention to the quality of connections and information flows in the system. (Wahl, 2016)

Regenerative design and development are unique to place and scale dependent, always living systems and nested systems (Fig 2.19.1), the local, within the wider system, in turn within the next level. A key factor here is bioregionalism. Often specific geographic bioregions are based around river basins. All cities exist within bioregions, like Lisbon on the Tagus (Fig 2.19.3). Within the Tagus, are sub river basins, and within them, more. This is natures pattern.

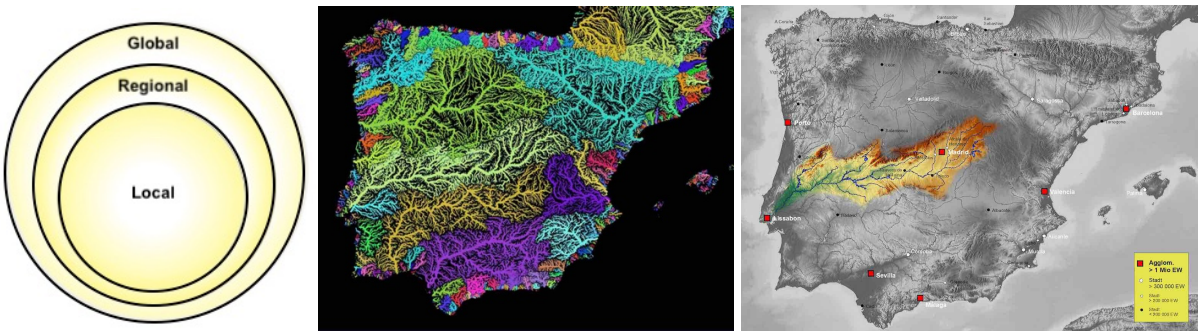


Figure 2.19: 1: Nested System 2: Iberian Watersheds Bioregions. 3: Iberia. R: Tagus River basin (Author, 2025; Grasshopper Geography, 2025; Port(u*o)s, 2007)

[19] Regenesis:The Regenerative Practitioner Series https://www.regenerat.es/trp/

Fractal governance and municipalism

Experiments from Rojava and São Paulo demonstrate citizen-led governance structures working in nested, scaled, multiple levels. Their structures could be replicated globally for expanding ecovillages into municipalities, regenerative planning systems and ecocities. *Ecobairro* (Econeighbourhood) São Paulo aims to create ecological and peaceful communities in Brazil. Rojava stems from a feminist, ecological revolution within Syria's civil war. Arising from a GEN training event in 2004 and incorporating regenerative concepts from Permaculture, transition towns and SDGs, *Ecobairro Brasil* was developed by Lara Freitas in the Vila Mariana municipality (Population: 344.632, size: 26,5 km2), one of 32 municipalities in São Paulo's megalopolis. It incorporates a fractal structure, from micro to macro; individual, home, block, neighbourhood, network (Ecobairro Brasil, 2013) and has eight axes in its DNA: Politics, Education, Culture, Spirituality, Health, Ecology, Economy, Communication. When selected as one of five test pilots for the MiT project, it gained international profile and the Vila Mariana city council began using Sociocracy. The aim of the project is the transition to a local, circular and participatory governance in which community members are encouraged to act responsibly.

Municipalist ideas inspired a revolt for autonomy by Kurdish peoples in Syria. Since imprisonment in 1999 in Turkey, Kurdish independence leader Abdullah Öcalan moved strategy from Marxist-Leninism to democratic confederalism (Finley, 2017), after reading Bookchin's (1991) libertarian municipalist ideas. Due to the political instability in Syria, including the war against ISIS, a giant experiment is underway since 2012 in the mostly Kurdish Northern Syrian region, Rojava. A feminist and anti-capitalist society has been created (Staal, 2016), based around networks of grassroots people's assemblies (Fig 2.20) and co-operatives, or communes, a process called *Tekmîl* (Kurdish for report) (O'Keeffe, 2018; Tekoşîna Anarşîst, 2022). They have declared their autonomy from the state, instead building what they refer to as a real democracy. Society is structured in fractal like fashion where communes form confederations with each other across regions. Typically, one Municipality comprises 5 districts, of 20 neighbourhoods, of 150 communes, of 2500 families. All assemblies have two co-delegates that represent their group at the upper level. Decision making is done through consensus and voting, in a bottom-up process, and women are involved at all levels as equals. Regions elect fellow citizens to represent them at higher levels. Weller (2018) noted there were eleven different committees that facilitate day-to-day running of the Commune: People, Economy, Health, Women, Youth, Art & Culture, Self-defence, Martyrs, Education, Merchants, Communication. Local assemblies elect representatives at the village or street level, these delegates represent their assembly at the higher level of the city or region, and so on.



Figure 2.20: Rojava People's Parliament (Stall, 2016)

Bookchin is credited with the conceptual base of municipalism, which formed the main organising method for his social ecology. Politically, Bookchin advocated anarchism until he broke with it in 1999. For him, all solutions are based around active citizenry:

> To social ecology, politics means what it meant in the democratic polis of classical Athens some two thousand years ago: direct democracy, the formulation of policies by directly democratic popular assemblies, and the administration of those policies by mandated coordinators who can easily be recalled if they fail to abide by the decision of the assembly's citizens. (Bookchin, 2006, p.48).

This living politics that now goes by different names in different locations in today's world, can be seen as a grassroots democracy at a global scale, as Finley (2017) noted:

> A growing number of people in the world are proposing "communalism": the usurpation of capitalism, the state, and social hierarchy by the way of town, village, and neighborhood assemblies and federations. Communalism is often used interchangeably with "municipalism", "libertarian municipalism" (a term also developed by Bookchin) and "democratic confederalism" (coined more recently by Öcalan)

Some of the historically most exciting experiments in this process happened with revolutionary anarchist syndicalist movements in Spain during the lead up to, and the first year of, the Spanish civil war, 1936-1937 (Orwell, 1938; Bookchin: 1994). 75 years later, Spain again was the location of another wave of municipalist experiments. The 2008 economic crisis in Spain led to massive austerity cuts, bank repossessions of housing, rise in suicides and a spike in unemployment with youth unemployment rising as high as 56%. Out of this misery and anger a coordinated day of direct action happened in a network of cities throughout Spain on the 15th of May 2011 (15M). Spanish public squares were occupied by the *Indignados* movement for some months, who demanded a real democracy, based around daily assemblies in squares and a network of working groups. Echoing Deleuze & Guattari (1972), Castells referred to this form of urban action in his native Spain as "A Rhizomatic Revolution" (2012, p. 114), noting how after the initial actions of 15M, the structure multiplied rapidly; "Over 100 Spanish cities following suit, triggering a massive occupy movement that spread in a few days to almost 800 cities around the world". The process erupted beyond Spain's borders, with camps sprouting up around the planet. Real time translocal live connection were tested between nodes, cities united in the same struggle. The live video transmission between Barcelona's square and Syntagma square in Athens was a particularly special moment (Fig 4.33), advancing the concept of Peer to Peer (P2P) to Square to Square (S2S), where two physical communities were able to listen and dream together, to give hope that radical change was possible and coming.

Building on these and more movements, citizen platforms won eight city councils in Spain's 2015 municipal elections, including the two biggest cities; Madrid and Barcelona. All groups were from outside the traditional political party system and they took decisions collectively through local assemblies. This phenomenon was subsequently named Spain's "Rebel Cities". Barcelona saw the election of a woman as mayor for the first time in over 2,000 years; Ada Colau was the leader of the anti-eviction group *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages). The citizen platform she was part of, *Barcelona en Comú* work on a Municipalist only platform, seeking power only at city level, based on a set of related characteristics (Shea Baird & Roth, 2017): 1) Distinctive political organization reflects diversity of local political landscape; 2) Open and participatory decision making processes; 3) Organizational structure is relatively horizontal (for example, neighbourhood assemblies) and guides elected representatives; 4) Capacity for institutional action depends on strong, organized movements in the streets that push elected leaders.

Barcelona's occupation and the subsequent Fearless Cities launch to try to build a feminist democratic revolution is explored in a subsequent Case Study (Spanish Revolution, 4.2.1.4**).**

Sociocracy

Sociocracy 3.0 (S3) is a governance, decision making tool many regenerative European CLIs use today. It is a fractal structure of circles within circles within circles (Fig 2.21.L) offering a direct democratic process, decisions come from the bottom up. Delegates represent their circle at the next level up, a fractal like process. It has grown into an educational social movement in Indian schools. It is used by many ecovillages and the Transition Network. It was a key part of the Municipalities in Transition (MiT) project. Since 2018 ECOLISE started using it and more groups are testing to use it. Fig 2.21.R shows the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN) fractal circles structure. The S3 community[20] describes S3 in a nutshell as a "*social technology* for evolving agile and resilient organizations at any size, from small start-ups to large international organizations", adding how S3 can help groups achieve their objectives and successfully navigate complexity. Organisations can make changes one step at a time, without the need for sudden radical reorganization or planning a long-term change initiative. S3 is free, and licensed under a Creative Commons Free Culture license.

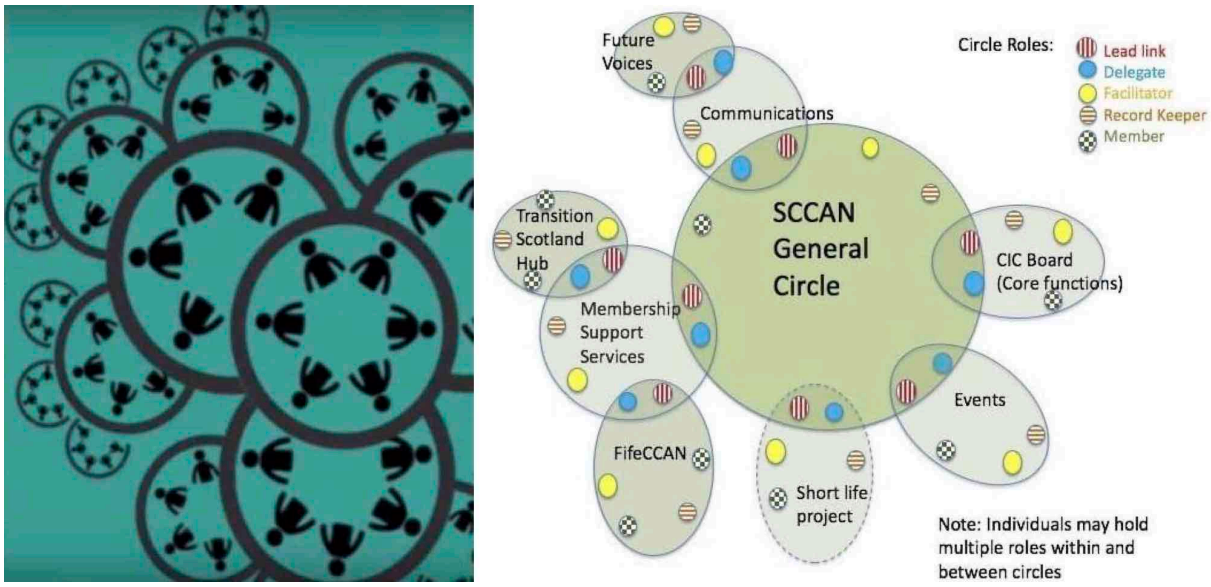


Figure 2.21: Fractal governance. L: Sociocracy. R: SCCAN (Jerry Koch-Gonzalez, 2016 & SCCAN, 2020)

Concerning the meaning of the word and development of the concept, S3 outline the literal meaning of the term sociocracy as ""rule of the companions": *socio* — from Latin *socius* — means "companion", or "friend", and the suffix *-cracy* — from Ancient Greek κράτος (krátos) — means "power", or "rule"". In 1851, Auguste Comte suggested applying a scientific

[20] https://sociocracy30.org/

approach to society where states would be governed by a body of scientists who are experts on society. In 1881 the sociologist Lester Frank Ward used the word 'sociocracy' to describe the rule of people with relations with each other. In 1926, the Dutch reformist educator and Quaker Kees Boeke began experimenting with a decision-making process where both staff and students agreed to take decisions that were acceptable to everyone. Boeke's version of sociocracy was based on Quaker principles and practices. Boeke described sociocracy as an evolution of democracy in his 1945 essay "Democracy as it might be". In 1970 a student in Boeke's school, Gerard Endenburg, created and evolved the *Sociocratic Circle Organisation Method (SCM)* (later becoming the "Sociocratic Method") for his family business. In 1978 Endenburg founded the Sociocratic Center in Rotterdam. Sharon Villines and John Buck's 2007 book "We the People" greatly helped sociocracy become accessible in the English-speaking world, and from there, into several other languages. In 2014 James Priest and Bernhard Bockelbrink came together to co-create a body of Creative Commons licensed learning resources based upon Sociocracy, which resulted with the launch of S3 in March 2015. The community is growing.

S3 uses a very specific series of steps for groups to make decisions[21], (Fig 2.22). A driver is formed, to clearly identify the motive that the group need to respond to. A series of steps enable the full group in a circle to respond and identify proposals for moving forward. Concerns are looked for, which can improve the proposal. With no blocks, a group have made a group decision to move a project forward. A little celebration is encouraged at this critical point. Tuners are selected to help with future steps, or to bring the decision up a level.

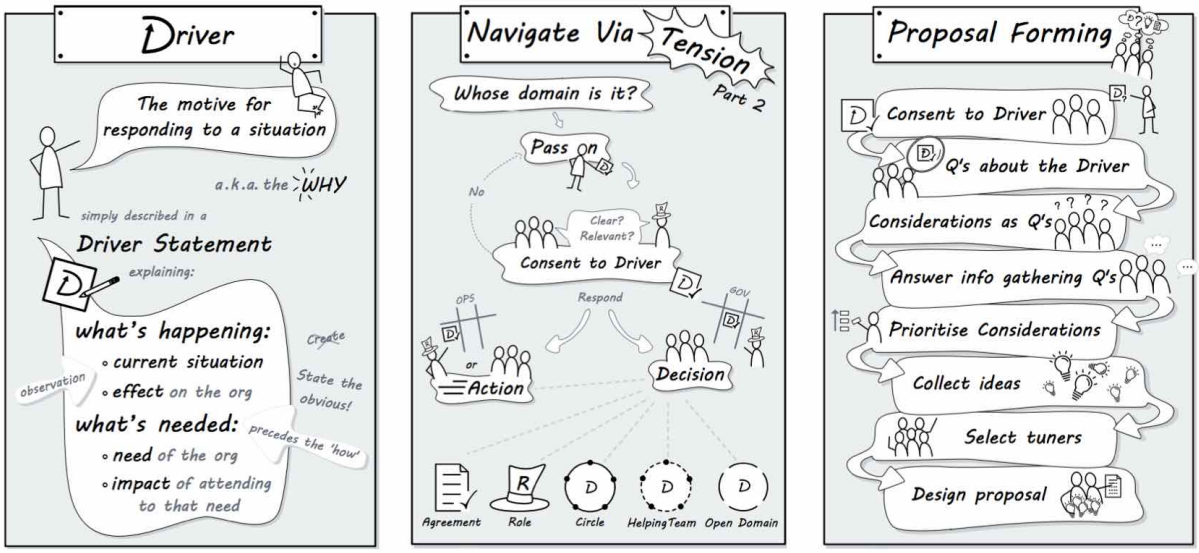


Figure 2.22: Sociocracy Intro Course Posters (Priest, Bockelbrink & David, 2020)

[21] Sociocracy 3.0 Introduction – Posters https://sociocracy30.org/resources/#se-practical-guide

2.3. Healthy Places

2.3.1 Healthy planet

The Western understanding of home, from religious, to scientific and philosophical, has changed much over time: Flat earth, with monsters at the edges; a ball the sun and stars rotate around: Copernican view, The sun at the centre of the universe, around which the earth rotates: A small planet orbiting a sun, just one of the 100 – 400 billion stars that make up the Milky Way, just one of, between 200 billion and 2 trillion, galaxies in the observable universe: A planet in an expanding universe that originated with a big bang, about 10,000 million years ago. Beyond that, more difficult questions arise, like what existed before the big bang, will the universe go on forever, or does it expand and contract indefinitely in an oscillating universe?

Whatever is the true reality of life in this "organic and rhythmically moving cosmos" (Capra, 1975), Western scientific advancement has brought humanity to a place, where Eastern spiritual thought has been for over 2,000 years! Capra notes that the Hindu sages in India had pondered on the complexities of existence, from about the 2nd or 1st century BCE. Their divine play *Lila* has an incredibly huge, cosmic, mathematical unit for an oscillating universe, *Kalpa*:

> They pictured the universe as periodically expanding and contracting and gave the name *kalpa* to the unimaginable time span between the beginning and the end of one creation. The scale of this ancient myth is indeed staggering; it has taken the human mind more than two thousand years to come up again with a similar concept. (Capra, 1975)

A discovery was made in Ireland sometime back, which shows that in Europe, over 5,000 years ago stone age peoples had a sense of the mathematical and astronomical workings of the planet, which helped them understand the seasons, from which the yearly calendar was divided into moments to plant, nurture, harvest and eat. Newgrange at *Brú na Bóinne* (Palace of the Boyne) (Fig 2.23), is described by the Irish Government's Office of Public Works (OPW) as:

> Brú na Bóinne is Ireland's richest archaeological landscape and is situated within a bend in the River Boyne. Brú na Bóinne is famous for the spectacular prehistoric passage tombs of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth which were built circa 3200BC. These ceremonial structures are among the most important Neolithic sites in the world and contain the largest collection of megalithic art in Western Europe. (OPW, 2025)

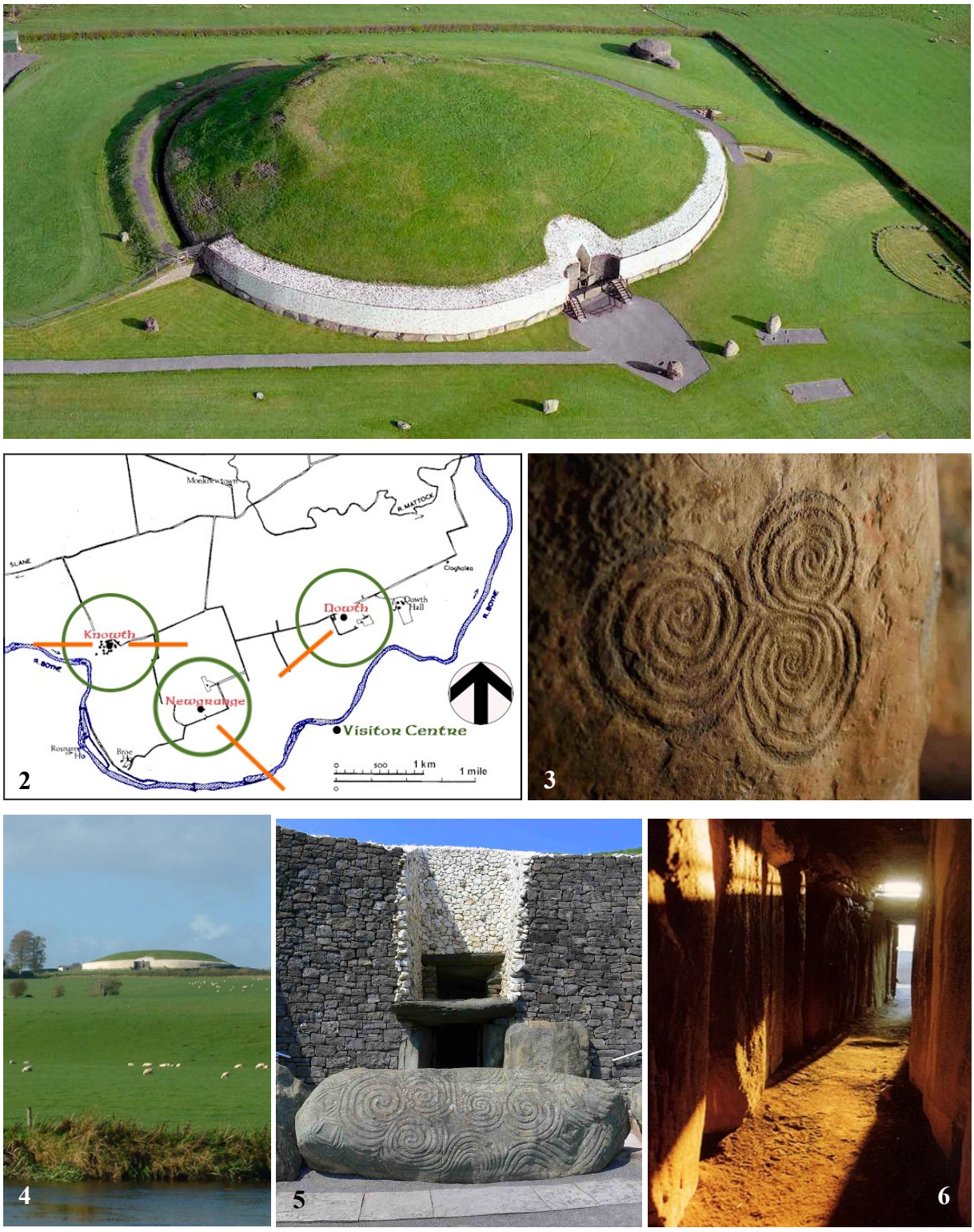


Figure 2.23: Brú na Bóinne. 1: Newgrange Passage Tomb 2: Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth, at River Boyne, sunlight approaches overlayed 3: Tri-spiral, triskelion design chamber. 4: Newgrange from River 5: Newgrange entrance stone and roofbox. 6: Sunlight entering Newgrange on Winter Solstice (1,3; OPW, 2025. 2: O'Kelly & O'Kelly, 1988 & Author overlay, 2025. 4: Newgrange.com, 2025. 5: Dave Keeshan (aka Spudmurphy) / Wikimedia, 2008. 6: Irish National Monuments Service, 2008*)*

The Three circular Passage Tombs were built in a large area enclosed by a bend of the River Boyne (Irish: *Bó fhionn*; White Cow, English) (Fig 2.23.2), about 500 years before the more famous monuments of Stonehenge in England and the Great pyramids of Egypt. Over time the buildings fell into ruin, the entrances were concealed and knowledge of them as important buildings was lost, probably for 100s, perhaps even 1000s of years. In 1699, The Passage Tomb at Newgrange was unearthed during road constructions, considered an oddity by antiquarians of the 1700's and 1800's, but not regarded as very important until the first archaeological investigation and excavation of Newgrange undertaken from 1962 to 1975, by Michael O'Kelly. The full site contains at least ninety monuments including passage tombs, burial mounds, standing stones and enclosures. The mound of the main tomb, Newgrange[22], sits in the middle. 2km up and to its right sits Dowth[23]. 1km up and left of Newgrange, sits Knowth[24]. The sacred sites name, *Brú na Bóinne*, translates as Mansion, or Palace of the Boyne, but perhaps also as Womb of the Boyne (Moane, 2018), which would be apt, as each tomb contains internal passages with specific orientations, marking key moments in time, as dictated by the sun. Newgrange and Dowth have winter solstice solar alignments, while Knowth is oriented towards the March equinox (spring equinox) and the September equinox (Fig 2.23.2).

Brú na Bóinne has much artwork carved into the stones around the three tombs, on the tombs and inside. A recurring symbol is the famous triskelion tri-spiral design seen on the giant entrance stone (Fig 2.23.5) and on a wall inside the Newgrange passage (Fig 2.23.3). Nobody fully understands the meanings, if any, for this recurring art theme. Perhaps they are a map of the sared womb valley, or aides for telling of old mythological stories, or just decoration. Newgrange's entrance facade was built with white quartz cobblestones from the Wicklow Mountains, 50 km to the south, and dark rounded granodiorite cobbles from the Mourne Mountains, 50 km to the north. The most impressive feature was only discovered by O'Kelly in 1967, when what he believed was a lintel, turned out to be a roofbox. This is a window of sorts facing south east, constructed so that the first sun's rays of the winter solstice sunrise enter the entirety of the 19-metre passage and cover all inside in light. Dowth is orientated exactly south west to receive the rays of the setting sun on the winter solstice. Knowth has two passages, one facing directly East, one directly West, to cover the two equinoxes of the year. 5,000 years ago, people had the know-how to build this spiritual place, celebrating the union of Sun and Earth.

[22] Newgrange: (Irish: *Sí an Bhrú*: The Fairy Mound of the womb, English) is 85 metres wide at its widest point, 12 metres high and covers 4,500 square metres (1.1 acres) of ground.
[23] Dowth (Irish: Sí Dubhadh: The Fairy Mound of Darkness, English), 85 metres in diameter and 15 metres high, but with a large crater in the mound after a botched excavation in 1847.
[24] Knowth (Irish: Cnógba. English), 67 metres in diameter and 12 metres high. The real magic of Newgrange

Important visual steps happened from the 1960s onwards, to forward our understanding of, and develop deep feelings for, our home (Fig 2.24), coupled with ideas about how to live more responsibly (t)here. Key actors include; the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), US biologist, photographer and writer Stewart Brand who founded the *Whole Earth Catalog* (1968), Buckminster Fuller and his *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969) and US astronomer, planetary scientist and science communicator Carl Sagan. Brand applied public pressure on NASA to release something very special for all of humanity to see, which had been withheld from the public; the first full-disk "true color" picture of planet Earth taken from space, by communications satellite ATS-3 on November 10, 1967 (Fig 2.24.1).

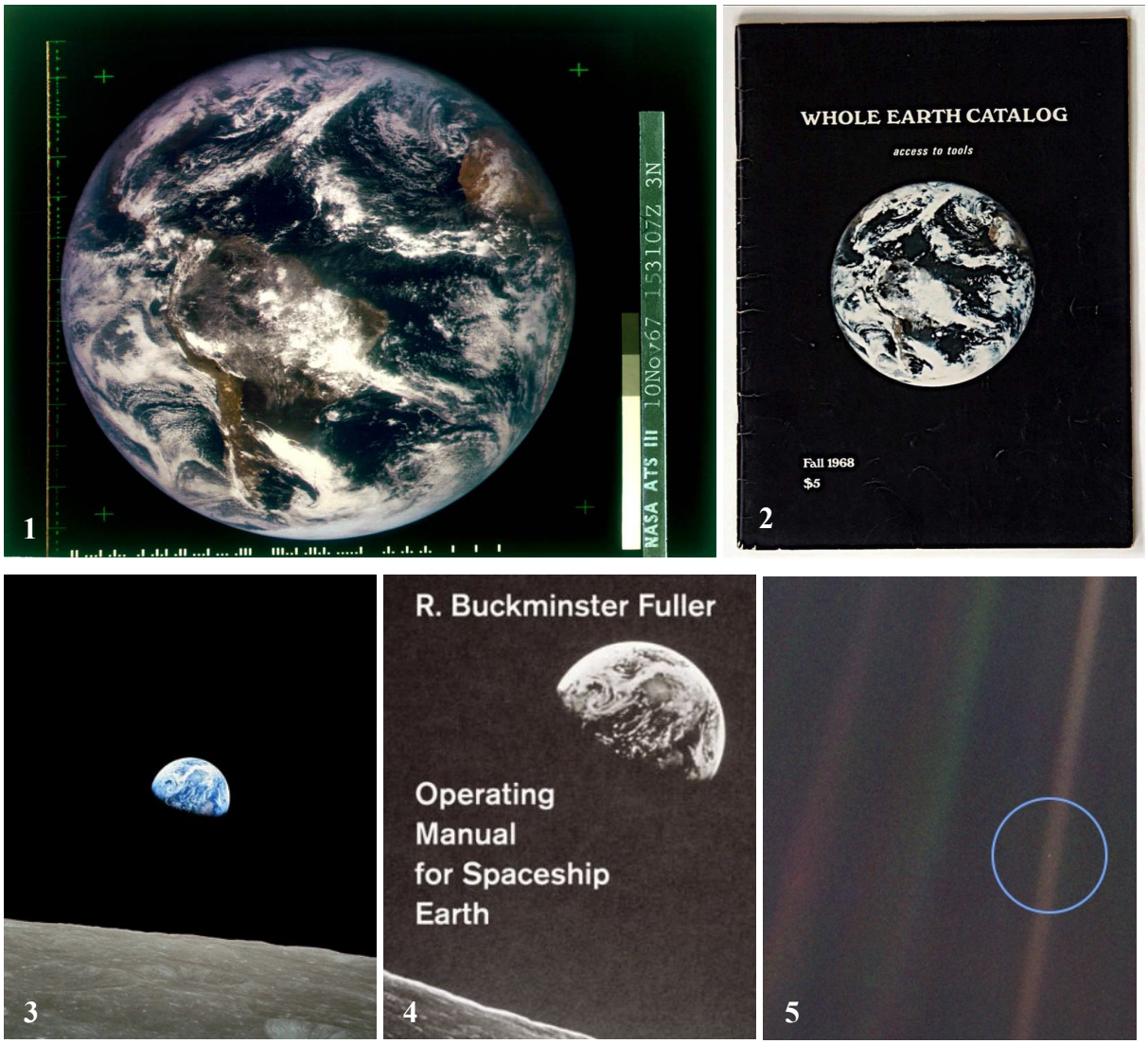


Figure 2.24: Home 1: NASA's 1st colour photo of Earth 2: Whole Earth Catalog 3: Earthrise 4: Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth 5: Pale Blue Dot (annotated) (1: ATS-3, 1967; 2: Whole Earth Catalog, 1968; 3: William Anders, Apollo 8, 1968. 4: Buckminster Fuller, 1969. 5: Voyager 1, 1990, annotated by author, 2025)

The first photograph of Earth taken from space[25] was taken "on 24 October 1946 from a rocket 105 km above the ground that had been launched from the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, USA. The rocket was a German V2, captured by the Americans at the end of World War II" (Lucy, 2017). By 1954, the first color photomosaic of a section of Earth from space was composed of 117 images taken from an altitude of 160 km. From the mid 1950's the "Space Race" began between the Cold War rivals, the US and the Soviet Union, aka *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (USSR), to achieve superior spaceflight capability. USSR launched the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, on October 4, 1957 and sent the first human, the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, into space on Vostok 1 on April 12, 1961. He was the first human to reach orbital velocity around the Earth and to complete a full orbit around the Earth in a 108-minute flight, from launch to landing, at an altitude of 181 - 327 km above the Earth. A month later, newly elected US President Kennedy set a goal of "landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth", by the end of the 1960s, tasked to NASA's Apollo program.

Brand worked in the US military as a photographer between the Korea and Vietnam wars. In 1966 he was living a hippy Bohemian lifestyle with the Beats in North Beach, San Francisco, was friends with LSD evangelist Ken Kesey, and his Merry Pranksters, and later appeared in Tom Wolfe's book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968). During an acid trip on a friend's roof in 1966, he had an "observation that the buildings were not exactly parallel because of the curve of the Earth's surface. I was convinced that seeing an image of the whole Earth would be transformative." (Honigmann, 2010). A week later, he had set up his "All Species" campaign to have NASA release the then-rumored satellite photo of the sphere of Earth as seen from space. He hitch-hiked across the country selling badges he made that said simply "Why haven't we seen a photograph of the whole Earth yet?". In 1967, the ATS-3 satellite photo from about 56,000 km away (Fig 2.24.1) was released. Brand used the powerful image in September 1968 for the cover of the first Whole Earth Catalog[26] [27] (WEC), a counter-culture magazine that promoted the idea of communal living and a self-sufficient lifestyle. Page 8 of WEC's 1st edition included an image of the Newgrange entrance stone (Fig 2.24.5) mentioned above.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1968, US astronaut William Anders took the first color photograph of Earth during the Apollo 8 mission. The image is called *Earthrise* (Fig 2.24.3) and was taken during the first human orbit of the Moon, seven months before the first lunar

[25] Timeline of first images of Earth from space
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_first_images_of_Earth_from_space
[26] Whole Earth Catalog (fall 1968) – complete, archived https://archive.org/details/1stWEC-complete/mode/2up
[27] Whole Earth Catalog – Back Issues https://archive.ph/2BJK9

landing of 21 July. The US photographer Galen Rowell described it as "the most influential environmental photograph ever taken". Brand used it for the cover of WEC's 1969 spring issue. Speaking about the power of Earth's image, Brand said in a 2003 interview "It was motivating for a lot of people, I think, because it gave the sense that Earth's an island, surrounded by a lot of inhospitable space. And it's so graphic, this little blue, white, green, and brown jewel-like icon amongst a quite featureless black vacuum" (Leonard, 2003) Honigmann notes it "had the effect Brand wanted: the planet's evident fragility and unity were a spur to the whole environmental movement. For the first time, as Brand noted with approval, humanity saw itself from the outside" (Honigmann, 2010). Brand met Buckminster Fuller after he posted one of his badges to him. Fuller offered to help him with his projects and helped Brand develop understanding of limits. Speaking about the power of the Earth's image, Brand said Fuller "said people still think the earth is flat because they act as if its resources are infinite. But that photograph showed otherwise. Unless and until we find other flourishing planets, this is all we've got and we've got to make it work. There's no backup" (Leonard, 2003). Later covers of Fullers' *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969) (Fig 2.24.4) used *Earthrise*.

The *Pale Blue Dot* (Fig 2.24.5) is a photograph of Earth from over 6 billion kilometers away. Taken on February 14, 1990 (Valentine's Day), by Voyager 1 (launched 1977), Earth appears as a tiny point of light in the center of scattered light rays (a result of taking the picture so close to the Sun). US astronomer and author Carl Sagan suggested NASA take this image "as the spacecraft was departing our planetary neighborhood for the fringes of the solar system, it turned it around for one last look at its home planet" (The Planetary Society, 2014). In his 1994 book, Sagan interpreted this image as representing humanity's tiny place in the cosmos:

> Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam… The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. (Sagan, 1994)

2.3.2 The Waters

E rere kau mai te Āwanui,
Mai i te Kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa
Kō au te Āwa, kō te Āwa kō au.
The great river flows
From the mountains to the sea.
I am the river, the river is me.

- Proverb of the Whanganui Iwi, Indigenous Māori tribe of Aotearoa (New Zealand)

Despite many setbacks, signs of positive ecological change are happening. In many cases, it is those still most connected with nature who are leading the struggle for change; indigenous communities. Aotearoa is the indigenous Māori name for New Zealand. The country's third-longest river is the Whanganui, it's on the North Island. After a 140 year long legal battle by the indigenous Whanganui Iwi (a Māori tribe), with firstly the British imperialist system and later the New Zealand Government, they won a legal case that officially granted the status of a legal person to the river (Salmond et al, 2019; Kramm, 2020; Macpherson & Turoa, 2025). A previous legal act, the Whanganui River Deed of Settlement, ended in 2014 and was superseded by the *Te Awa Tupua* Act in 2017. Key to this is the spiritual belief the Māori tribe have, as outlined in their *Kō au te Āwa, kō te Āwa kō au* proverb "The great river flows. From the mountains to the sea. I am the river, the river is me". Its core outlines the intrinsic view that they are part of the nature within which they have lived for much time. Kramm (2020) notes:

> The document assigns to the river the 'rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person' and declares two guardians responsible for maintaining the river's 'health and well-being'. One of those guardians is a representative of the New Zealand Government, while the other is a representative of the Whanganui Iwi, which, by virtue of its genealogical origins, exercises the customary rights and responsibilities in relation to the Whanganui River.

Since 2017 there has been an increase in communities requesting natural ecosystems be given similar Rights of Nature (RON) laws. Many of them have been granted legal status, to varying degrees. Most of these cases have been granted due to calls from local indigenous led SMs who have somewhat similar spiritual or religious belief systems to the Māori's. Law

changes outside traditional indigenous communities are starting to emerge too, which gives hope that this legal avenue is affecting real system change. In 2022 Spain's Parliament passed a law to recognize the legal personhood of the *Mar Menor* (Smaller Sea) and its basin, near Cartagena, thus making it the first case of an ecosystem protected by RON in Europe. In 2024 Germanys District Court of Erfurt Recognized RON via the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

It is still early days in this legal process, but it already prompts questions if more river basins and territories, in both indigenous and non-indigenous worlds, can do similar things. Could we start to see more guardian groups speaking on behalf of their river communities, for both the entire land mass through which all tributaries of their rivers flow, and for all the people living there with their various livelihoods, in both indigenous and non-indigenous worlds? Could we see Aotearoa's precedent of the Te Awa Tupua Act rolled out to change local, national and ultimately international law, to where all of the planet's rivers basins, and their sub river basins, and those within are fully protected?

A recurring question in regenerative communities is what would it mean to become indigenous to place again? (Wahl, 2016) Flipping that, we can ask another question: When did peoples in the, so-called, advanced, developed or modern world, actually lose their indigenous connection with place? All humans have come from traditional communities who held sacred connections with the life-giving world they were inherently part of. It is just a matter of how far back we must go, to see when and how these connections were lost. Europe deserves particular attention here, given its lead role in colonialisation and empire building, with horrific uses of power and violence to erode peoples, their languages and, to gain access to and control of their resources. Indigenous people still exist in Europe, the Sámi people still hold on to old ways and language, living in the large northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and parts of Russia. The phrase itself, indigenous people, is even contentious now, given the rise of far-right rhetoric and violent action that is worryingly growing in many parts of Europe and beyond.

The island of Ireland offers insights. As little as 180 years ago, relationships with place existed similar to indigenous Aotearoa's Māoris today, when pre famine communities living at the western (poorer) edges saw their rivers as goddesses (Magan, 2022). These were areas local indigenous groups had been driven during countless waves of colonial ethnic cleansing, led by a host of neighbouring armies. In the 1650's, England's Oliver Cromwell cried "To Hell or to Connaught", as his army drove local people over the island's biggest river, the River Shannon (named after the old river goddess *Sionann*). These Gaelic communities held onto traditions, music, culture, language and spiritual attitudes. Despite being identified as Catholic, they were seen by the Pope in the 1840s as the worst sort, as they seemed to not take much heed of the

rules, had quite an open attitude to sexual relations and held deep connections with place, especially rivers and holy wells that they associated with the sacred feminine (Kennedy & Ní Chinnéide, 2021). All rivers were seen as goddesses, some as gods (Magan, 2022). Condren (2009) argues these are pre-Celtic attitudes, a continuation of old Gaelic ways held since building the neolithic passage tombs of *Brú na Bóinne* (Boyne Valley tombs), on a fold of the River Boyne (*na Bóinne*, river of the white cow*)* over 3,500 years ago, a millennium older than the oldest of Egypt's pyramids. Investigation and disputes are ongoing here, such as at Dublin's 2004 film screening of *The Land of Sex & Sinners*. Calling the 1845-50 period a famine is not correct, as much food existed, about 1 million died and another 2 million emigrated (Woodham Smith, 1962). A contested idea is that Irish people went through a collective trauma in this period (Magan, 2022), resulting in the near abandonment of "old ways" and wholehearted embrace of Catholicism and its rigid rules system. Since this period the Gaelic language died off massively and the connection with rivers was all but lost.

For most people today in Ireland the true meanings of place and people have been lost. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in and learning of the Gaelic language (Magan, 2020, 2022), "The language revival is happening and it is succeeding" (Higgins, 2016). With a delicate Peace Process in place in the North since 1998, this includes people from both sides of the border and the old political divide; old indigenous Irish, or Catholic, and some from the traditionally Protestant, Unionist Loyalist (PUL) communities, like Linda Ervine "working in the heart of loyalist East Belfast" (Ervine, 2014). With this cultural regeneration underway, some are questioning if people living in Ireland are becoming indigenous to place again? What does this mean, and how it reflects with the core basest values of spiritual connection to rivers and water (Magan, 2022; Nairn, 2023; Beer, 2022). Most place and family names in Ireland today are in the English language, but their meanings come from the Gaelic Irish language. Dublin city's name in the Gaelic language, Irish, is *Baile Átha Cliath*, which translates as "the town of the hurdled ford", referring to a fording point of the cities river, the Liffey. Dublin is the anglicisation of *Dubh Linn*, which translates as the Black Pool, and is where the Poddle River joined the Liffey, where boats could be tied up. Further downstream, just before the river enters the Irish sea is the River Dodder, *An Dothra*, in Irish, which means turbulent. Here the low flying, amazing electric blue, quick Kingfisher birds can be viewed in certain sections near where they nest in the river banks. After Magan's *Thirty-Two Words for Field. Lost Words of the Irish Landscape* (2020) he went further sharing insights about the wisdom from the waters in *Listen to the Land Speak. A journey into the wisdom of what lies beneath us (2022):*

> There's no doubt that rivers were considered to have an elemental power and that they contained access to wisdom too… There are vast realms of experience, consciousness and wisdom contained within the land and its river systems. Just as a fractal can be limited to a finite area and yet is infinitely magnifiable, so too is Ireland host to an infinity of wisdom and wonder (Magan, 2022)

Magan finds insights from old mythology relevant to responding to the challenges humanity faces today with CB, for him "So much of mythology is about breaking free from the stranglehold of society and our conditioned mind to embrace wider possibilities". He finds there is "a potency to our rivers and that we should perhaps turn to them when seeking insight and answers". In this era of rising sea levels and climate change he writes that (Magan, 2022):

> The relevance of these rivers of inspiration for us today is that were living in an age that is crying out for fresh thinking and new insights. There is a need for discoveries and new possibilities, and it can be heartening to know that there is an ancient source of wisdom that we can access through another world of imagination and creativity.

In 2005 a young Dutch woman from Rotterdam, Li An Phoa, canoed the full length of the Rupert river in Canada, spending much time with indigenous communities of the Cree Nation. At all times drinking fresh water straight from the river. Li returned three years later, to an extremely upsetting change of events, possibly brought on by elements of global "progress" and "Sustainable Development"? The river was polluted and poisoned as a result of dams and mining. Fish died and indigenous people were getting ill. The delicate balance in the ecosystem was destroyed. Nobody could drink directly from the river again. From this traumatic experience, Li found her life's mission; to make all rivers drinkable again. The Rupert became her teacher and she set up a not-for-profit organization called Drinkable Rivers[28]. She organises community walks along rivers, from source to sea. Li contacts all the city and town mayors in the rivers catchment area, as well as local community groups and schools, to ask how can they make the river drinkable again. Li has walked over 15,000km along a host of different rivers in different continents. Speaking as an ecological philosopher, Li points out that water is like a mirror of how we are living on a daily basis, she reminds us that our current relationship with water is broken, that we ought to relearn the wisdom of our ancestors. She reminds us of the

[28] drinkablerivers.org

magic of this strange substance that is the essence of life, that has nourished every single thing that has ever lived on this blue planet of ours. Having been here for over 4 billion years, there is not a single extra new drop since the world began. We constantly reuse it, it constantly regenerates itself, it never runs out, it's what gives life to this planet and all life on it. All old cities grew because of direct access to fresh water, for their citizens to drink and use for planting food. Why can't we simply drink the river water that our cities located themselves on and around, again? Li's Drinkable Rivers group does three things; 1) River Walks: Walking along rivers to engage with people and activate them to care for river. 2) Citizen Science: Engaging people to experience rivers by doing citizen science on water quality. 3) Action Communities: Building networks in watersheds to initiate actions towards drinkable rivers. The Action Communities include Youth for Drinkable Rivers, Mayors for a Drinkable Meuse, Swimmable Rivers and Swimmable Cities. The Citizen Science community has 80 organisations, organized in hubs, in 24 countries, in 4 continents. They monitor the health of their river by inviting their communities to engage in citizen science, learning and using scientific methods for data collection. Having schoolkids regularly check the local water quality is great way to connect them with the wild nature around them.

The 1960s were perhaps the worst period for rivers in the "developed" world, when there was little or no regulation as to what people were allowed to dump into rivers. As understanding of the health impacts from pollution grew, new bodies such as Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs) were set up, beginning with the US EPA in December 1970, followed by more national EPAs in Europe to protect people and the environment from significant health risks, sponsor and conduct research, and develop and enforce environmental regulations. Writing about Switzerland in the 1960s, Phoebe Weston noted:

> Switzerland had among the dirtiest water in Europe, blighted by mats of algae, mountains of foam, scum, and dead fish floating on the surface. For decades, swimming was banned in some rivers such as the Aare and Limmat on health grounds, and people could get ill if they swallowed the water. Raw sewage and industrial wastewater flowed directly into water bodies – in 1965 only 14% of the population was connected to a wastewater treatment plant. (Weston, 2025)

A typhoid outbreak in 1963 led to three deaths and over 400 people left seriously ill. This prompted the government clean up Swiss waterways and in 1971, treating wastewater was written into Swiss law. Today 98% of the Swiss population are connected to wastewater

treatment plants. This action has led the country to having a reputation for pristine swimming waters, which includes city centre locations. Now all along the much-loved coast of Lake Geneva there are many swimming clubs, that are enjoyed all year round, by people from all walks of life.

The Danes have a long tradition for beautiful design, but also for doing things very playfully. In the early 2000's Copenhagen began its harbour baths and beaches project. These are free and free-floating public swimming pools, located in a harbour or on a fjord, staffed by lifeguards in the city centre. The first harbour bath, Islands Brygge, opened in 2002. In 2003 it was towed to the other side of the harbour and set up at Fisketorvet, and Islands Brygge got an iconic, larger and permanent bath (Fig 2.25) designed by now famous architecture firm Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), for which they won the 2004 European Prize for Urban Public Space. Their essence of the project was:

> Copenhagen's harbour is in the midst of a transformation from an industrial port and traffic junction to being the cultural and social centre of the city… Rather than imitating the traditional Danish indoor swimming bath, the Harbour Bath offers an urban harbour landscape with dry-docks, piers, boat ramps, cliffs, playgrounds and pontoons. As a terraced landscape, the Harbour Bath completes the transition from land to water, making it possible for the citizens of Copenhagen to go for a swim in the middle of the city. (BIG, 2003)



Figure 2.25: Islands Brygge Harbour Bath, Copenhagen, (Lauge Elkær Furhauge, 2003)

The Dutch city of Utrecht has seen one of Europe's most celebrated waterway transformations take place. In 2020 the cities 900-year-old moat, the Catharijnesingel, was lovingly restored after 40 years since the canal was covered in by concrete to create a 12-lane motorway. In 1969 a major section of the canal was partially drained to allow cars better access to Utrecht's shopping district in the 1970s. This and similar projects had disastrous consequences for the public space in the city centre. In a 2002 referendum the citizens of Utrecht voted to restore the Catharijnesingel, to remove cars, to bring back water, to rewild a new public space for the city and make it accessible for cyclists and pedestrians. OKRA's project won the 11th European Prize for Urban Public Space. Before and after images of the same stretch (Fig 2.26) seem from different worlds, one dead, one totally alive.

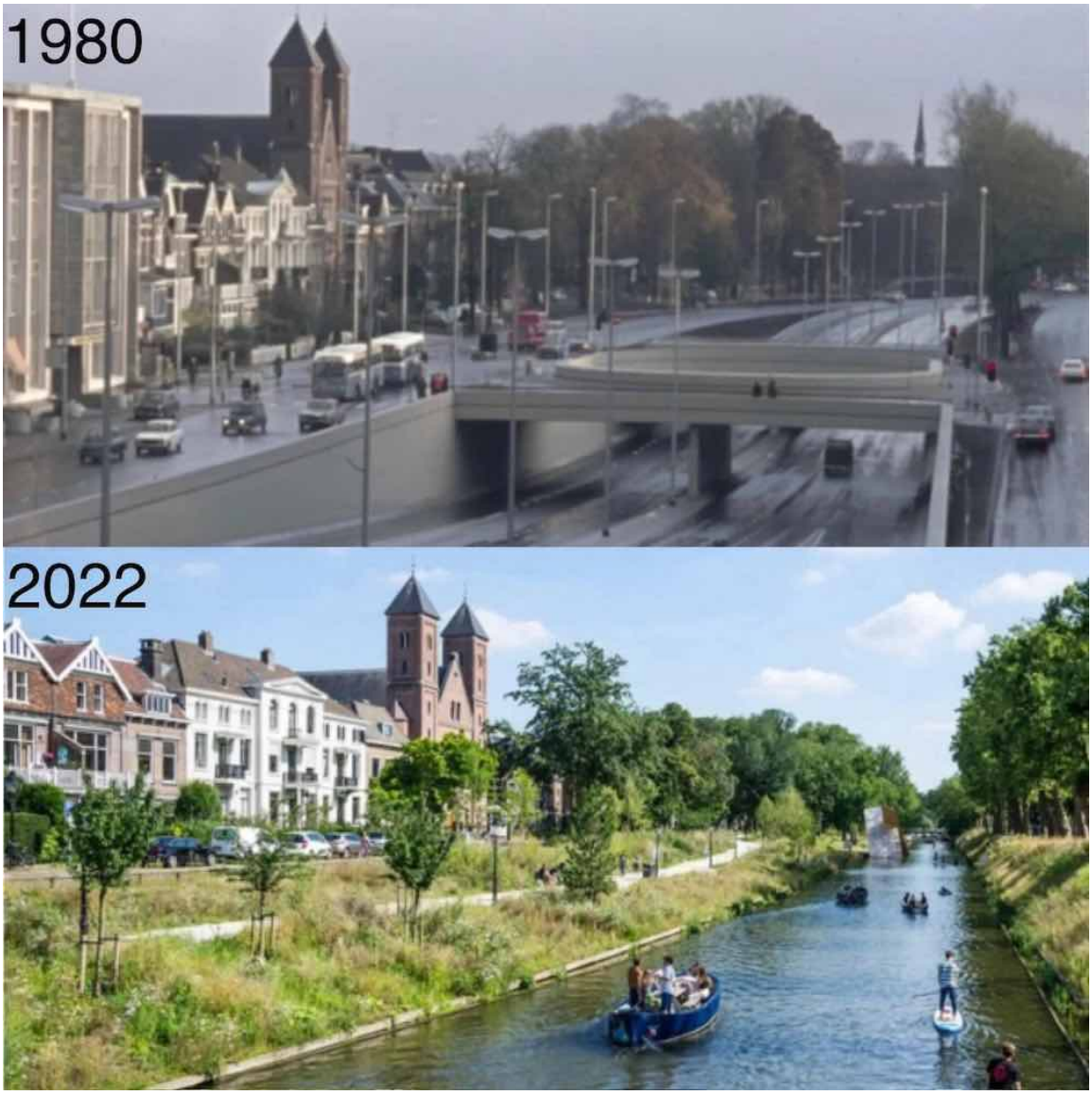


Figure 2.26: Utrecht's Catharijnesingel, Before and After (OKRA Landschapsarchitecten, 1980; CCCB, 2022)

2.3.3 The Wilds

The wilds of this planet include both the physical areas left still relatively untouched, to new spots that are being rewilded in attempts to allow nature to just be. The essence of the regenerative approach goes beyond sustainability to design systems to "reverse the degeneration of the earth's natural systems, but also to design human systems that can coevolve with natural systems" (Mang & Reed, 2011). Currently damaged territories and natural processes can be healed, fixed, or brought back to natural state, but with some parts of ecosystems missing due to severe species extinction underway, as part of the biodiversity emergency. Another key factor is contemporary human connection with place, where humans are not seen as apart from a natural system, but being part of it and acting as guardians in ways to help nature along, like removing invasive plant species from where they don't belong.

The *Global Charter for Rewilding the Earth* (2020) (WILD) was developed by experts within the global conservation community for the 11th World Wilderness Congress (WILD11), scheduled to convene in Jaipur, India, 19–26 March 2020. This was postponed due to COVID. The charter was later approved by the WILD11 Resolutions Committee on behalf of the delegates and officially launched in April 2020. 100+ organisations from across the world have endorsed the Charter, representing a network of +3500 partners covering local communities, landowners, Indigenous Peoples, communities, land trusts, multinational development banks, private banks, NGOs, philanthropists, agencies, corporations, international organizations, and research institutions. WILD states that "Planet Earth has produced the conditions for human consciousness to emerge, and our collective conscience now calls us to defend and repair the natural systems upon which all life depends". WILD's vision is:

> We believe that the world can be more beautiful, more diverse, more equitable, more wild. We believe that nature's innate resilience, bolstered by human care, can initiate an era of planetary healing. In that future time when the world is whole and healthy, undammed rivers will run to the sea, their estuaries teeming with life. Following ancient patterns, whales and warblers will migrate unmolested through sea and sky. From tiny phytoplankton to tallest redwoods, all Earth's creatures will be free to pursue lives of quality, and humanity will thrive amidst nature's abundance. (WILD, 2020)

For WILD, "Rewilding means helping nature heal. Rewilding means giving space back to wildlife and returning wildlife back to the land, as well as to the seas". Rewilding initiatives are gaining ground through various formats, and at different scales. Chinese American film-maker

and ecologist, John Liu, founded Ecosystem Restoration Camps (ERC)[29] in 2017, a worldwide movement that aims to restore damaged ecosystems on a large scale, which he claimed was 'the Great Work of Our Time'. In the 1990's Liu got involved in the restoration of China's Loess Plateau, a roughly 250,000-square-mile area across north-central China (nearly the size of Texas) that had been reduced to barren sands as a result of overgrazing and improper farming. Through a project of tree-planting, tiered agriculture, and setting land aside, the erosion was stopped and the area became fertile again. In February 2017, ERC was registered as a Dutch charitable foundation. ERC's first camp is in Murcia's Altiplano region, in Spain's south-east. Globally ERC have 98,000+ hectares under restoration, run by 80+ Initiatives in 40+ countries.

In Brazil, famous photographer Sebastião Salgado and his wife Lélia Wanick created the *Instituto Terra*[30] (Earth Institute) (IT) (Fig 2.27.1) in 1998 to reforest the Bulcão Farm in Minas Gerais. Salgado lived on this farm as a child with his family, cattle ranching led to deforestation. The Bulcão stream, a tributary of the Doce River, runs through hills in Brazil's Atlantic rainforest biome. Further downstream is Mariana, where the 2015 ecological disaster happened, when an iron ore mine dam collapsed, causing death and destruction. By 2024, with employees and volunteers, IT has planted over 3,3 million trees, from 300+ seed species collected within a 200 km radius, resulting in the return of 235+ animal species. They created a new forest and the site has 293 species of plants, 172 species of birds, and 33 species of animals, some of which were on the brink of extinction. IT's area is currently 2,347 Ha, growing from 700Ha in 1998, gaining 344Ha extension in 2023 and another 1,293Ha extension in 2024. IT is dedicated to reforestation, conservation and environmental education. Salgado died in 2025, IT carries on his dream to turn Brazil's most degraded region into its most biodiverse.

Many Rewilding programs are underway in Europe. In Ireland a few small, island wide, rewilding initiatives are attempting to bring back the indigenous Atlantic rainforest, along Ireland's west coast, including Hometree[31], based in West Clare, and Eoghan Daltun[32], the author of the award-winning bestseller *An Irish Atlantic Rainforest* (2022) who lives for the last 16 years on 73 acres of wildland in Beara peninsula, West Cork. Their work forces local Irish people, including farmers, to question what really is an indigenous landscape, what constrains it from growing, and offers tools, including grant programs, for community-led transformation.

[29] Ecosystem Restoration Camps https://www.ecosystemrestorationcommunities.org/
[30] Instituto Terra (Earth Institute) https://refloresta.institutoterra.org
[31] Hometree https://www.hometree.ie/
[32] Eoghan Daltun https://www.instagram.com/irishrainforest + https://bsky.app/profile/irishrainforest.bsky.social



Figure 2.27: Instituto Terra, Brazil 2001 & 2019. 2: Wild wooded island, Ireland 3: Native Irish Woods, Kerry. 4: Non-native Sitka spruce “forest”, Ireland 5: Wild woods, Ireland (1: Instituto Terra, 2001 & 2019; 2: Hometree, 2025; 3,4,5; Eoghan Daltun, 2022 & 2024)

Nearly 40% (38,62%) of the EU is forested (EC, 2022). Hometree point out that "Ireland was once a land of forests. At one time, up to 80% of the country was covered in native wildwood. Yet today, Ireland is the most deforested country in Europe. Just over 1% of that original forest cover remains" (Hometree, 2025). The EU's official figure states Ireland has only the 3rd lowest forest cover, after Malta (1,46) and Netherlands (9,73), at 11,56%. Daltun takes apart "the big lie about Irish 'forests'" (2022). In response to the Department of Agriculture claim that "Irish forest cover at its highest level in 350 years" (2019), he states "Sounds wonderful, except around 90% of that is monoculture plantations, mostly of alien species like Sitka spruce" (Fig 2.27.4). "It would be easy to think of a forest as just a big bunch of trees, but nothing could be further from the truth. A real forest is instead made up of 1,000s of different species that co-evolved over very long periods of time to function cohesively as an ecosystem". In an Irish temperate rainforest (Fig 2.27.5) flowing streams allow conditions for ferns, fungi, mosses, wild flowers and native trees to thrive (Daltun, 2022, p. 35):

> Every surface of tree or rock exposed to rain was clad in thick, lush, spongy layers of mosses up to 12 centimetres deep, as well as a profusion of ferns and lichen. I had never before laid eyes on anything remotely like this wild, verdant and primeval landscape, and had no idea that such places existed anywhere in Europe, never mind in Ireland.

Hometree began from a small community garden project in the winter of 2014, their "vision is the restoration of Ireland's ancient wildwood. Through conservation, afforestation and education, we aim to create a landscape in which people and forests flourish, together". Wooded islands like this one in Cloonaghlin lough, Iveragh Peninsula, Kerry (Fig 2.27.2) show what used exist. What is considered "natural" on the shore is a result of the constant eating away of any nutritious shoots of new species seedlings, by feral goats, sika deer (introduced into Ireland from Japan 100 years ago) and sheep. Forests are unable to regenerate themselves. Their *dinnseanchas* (topography) project is working in six communities on the west coast, where coastal upland communities are suffering depopulation, reduced farm incomes and the loss of the Irish language. Their Iveragh Woodlands European Innovation Partnership (EIP) has received funding to restore, conserve, and expand native woodlands in the uplands of the Iveragh Peninsula in County Kerry using a landscape-focused, farmer-centred, and ecologically coherent approach. The four-year initiative has "an estimated target of 300 hectares, the Iveragh Woodlands EIP will focus on restoring old-growth remnants, facilitating natural regeneration, and, where needed, planting local provenance native saplings". Their work grows steadily.

2.3.4 Catalysts for change

Catalysts cause change. Projects, places, even brief moments, can spark wider transformational change, in both rural or urban contexts at all scales. The aim of the Chinese traditional medicine of acupuncture is to improve the flow of the human body for increased health, similarly in urbanism, there exists the concept of urban acupuncture. For Catalan architect Manuel de Sola-Morales this meant “The skin of the city has to be observed with the attention of a detective who scrutinizes the tiniest clues in its wrinkles and their apparent lack of connection” (2008) and Finish artist, anarchist architect, Marco Casagrande (2008) explored the idea in his “Third Generation City” ideas for Tapei (2003-2010), as a biourban theory combining sociology and urban design, focused on tactical, small-scale interventions in the urban fabric, that ripple effects and the transformation of the larger urban organism. In Brazil, architect, urban planner, and ex-mayor of Curitiba, Jaime Lerner summed up his work under this theme, where “successful urban planning involves triggering healthy responses within the city, probing here and there to stimulate improvements and positive chain reactions” (2003).

These inserted points can come from both top down, or bottom-up architecture and planning processes. Sometimes they can arise from an abrupt shock that provokes a reaction, that can go against past structural organisation of a system, to create something totally new and fresh. They can be a series of probes, interconnected in both time and space that can help generate momentum for change. They can be translocal and scalable, so others, beyond, can replicate.

Energy and food are critical factors of the resilient / regenerative city, in regard to systems that use less oil in both the production process (agrotoxic, non-organic fertilizers destroying soils) and distribution system (lowering the food miles, the fuel required to move the foods from the field to the plate) (Hopkins, 2008; Girardet, 2014). Cuba is an example of what happens when a society is confronted by Peak Oil. Due to the demise of the Soviet Union, Cuba’s oil levels were radically reduced which resulted in major urban shifts, one of which was a massive increase in a programme of urban agriculture, which was supported and assisted by Australian Permaculture activists. Roof areas were converted into farms, open spaces were turned into community gardens (Fig 2.28.1) and a network of informal and decentralized economic markets sprung up organically. Health levels improved due to citizens cycling and climbing stairs. The 2006 documentary *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil* is a positive exploration from examples on the ground from 2003 – 2006, of how a people and country adapted to "The Special Period", transitioning from a highly mechanized, industrial agricultural system to one using organic methods of farming and local, urban gardens.

Cuba's urban transformation inspired UK architects Katrin Bohn & André Viljoen to developed the *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes* (CPUL) model in 2005, for linear food production strips in modern cities, like a thread that weaved together derelict spaces turned into small urban farms, coupled with community areas (sport, recreation), as base for Sustainable Cities. They designed plans for London that inspired similar local eco urban food farming projects, such as Dublin, Ireland (2005). In 2007, they were invited by Middlesbrough city council to participate in the Designs of the Time, where they developed the urban proposal "Middlesbrough Urban Farming Project" (Fig 2.28.2). A series of community projects in the large Northern English post-industrial town "explored how design can improve our lives in meaningful ways". The architects analysed and mapped the city, proposed a CPUL design, with 80 locations becoming productive growing points across the city. The council's cultural education and health programme for nearly a year generated great levels of public participation, including gardening skills, resulting in a great big communal feast. A subsequent report in a UK paper outlined the success of this deeply collaborative and educational food project:

> All over the town, disused urban spaces were turned into fertile corners bursting with freshly grown fruit and vegetables as more than 1,000 residents took part in a project aimed at changing the way they think about food. The idea of the urban farming project was to make people more aware of food miles, improve health and aid regeneration of the borough, which contains the ninth most deprived area in the UK. Groundwork South Tees advised schools, mental health hospitals, residential care homes and retailers on planting and growing many varieties of herbs, vegetables and fruit. Containers of different sizes were used so people could cultivate whatever space they had. Middlesbrough borough council turned over parkland, town-centre planters and other landholdings for fruit and vegetable growing. The eight-month project culminated in a town meal outside the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, where up to 8,000 people shared meals from the food that had been grown. (Early, 2008)

Financial cost is a normally a key factor, but not always. Political eruptions, can open a space where humans connect, a collective dream forms and people learn skills to make the change, like the Spanish Revolution (explored below). Other examples are: Dublin (Fig 2.28.3) bike rides and squatting of land to make a community garden, 2005-6, or Lisbon degrowth's volunteer organised neighbourhood walk or open discussion in a local social space (Fig 2.28.5 & 6), or exploring the magic of rivers and food growing with friends (Fig 2.28.4 & 7).

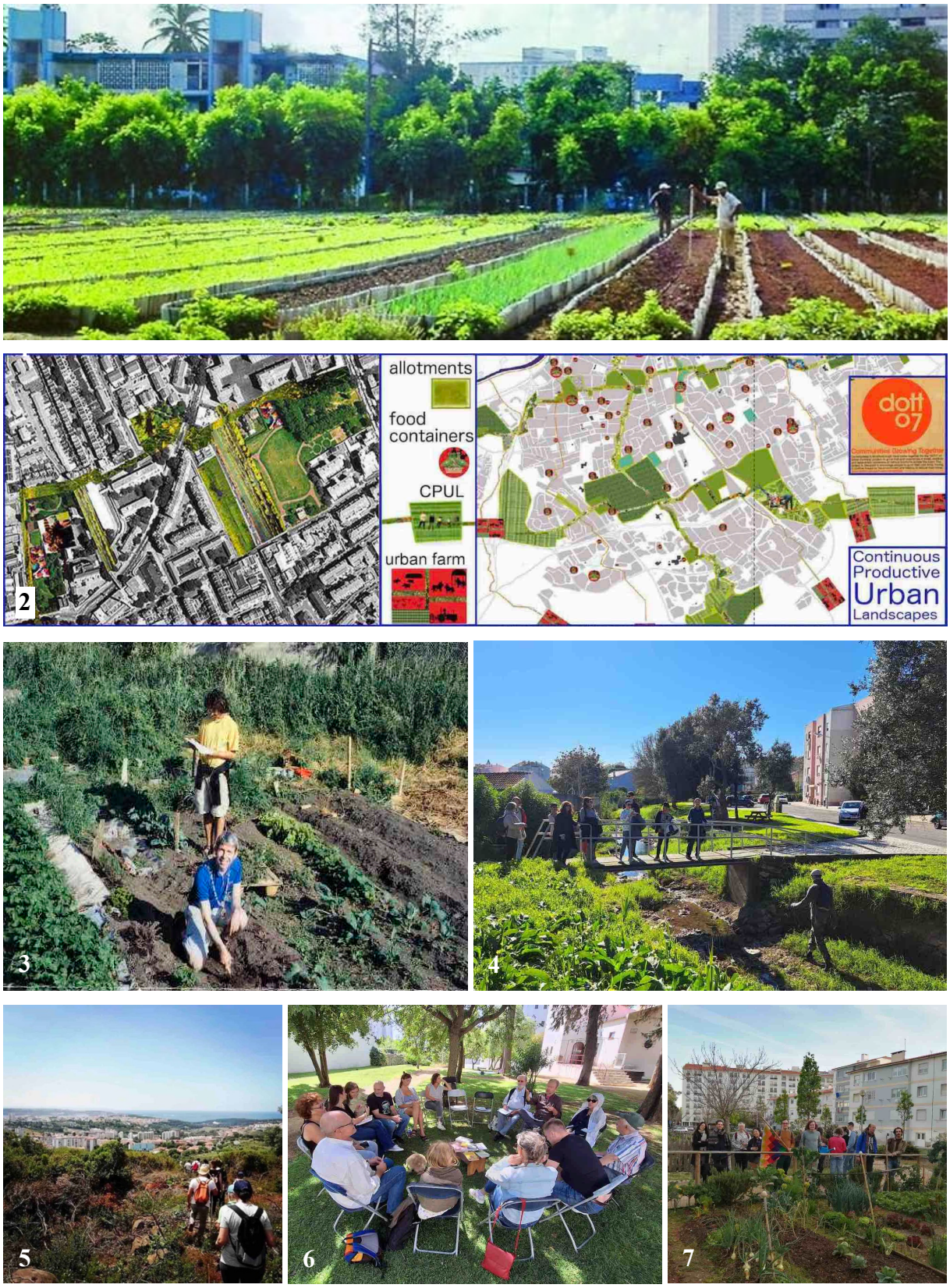


Figure 2.28: Catalysts for change. 1: Havana Urban agriculture 2: Middlesbrough CPUL proposal. 3: Dublin community garden 4: Marianas river walk, Parede 5: Lisbon Degrowth walk 6 Lisbon Degrowth talk 7: We are nature walk (1: Power of Community, 2006; 2: Bohn & Viljoen, 2005; Author, 3, 4, 5 & 7: 2006, 2023, 2019, 2022; 6: CASA, 2025)

2.3.5 Ecovillages

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) formed in 1995 at Findhorn ecovillage in Scotland, after the first international conference of an evolving informal ecovillage (EV) network entitled "Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities for the 21st Century". 30 Years active now, and still growing, they have about 15,000 communities in their network, including some traditional communities in the Global South. Although initially rural, by 2017, GEN's EV description incorporated urban communities, where an EV was an "Intentional, traditional; rural or urban community that is consciously designed through locally owned, participatory processes in all four dimensions of sustainability (social, culture, ecology and economy) to regenerate their social and natural environments" (Joubert, 2017). GEN's current EV description reads:

> An ecovillage is more than a place; it's a consciously and collectively designed community, where individuals come together to create a home with a shared vision. Ecovillagers strive for conscious relationships with one another, their immediate surroundings, and the global ecosystem. Ecovillages seek to integrate environmental stewardship, social cohesion, alternative economies, and regenerative culture into their daily coexistence. (GEN Europe, 2025)

Long before the now widespread use of the term EV, people referred to such places as Intentional Communities (ICs), or to a lesser extent "utopian community" or "communal society" (Shenker, 2011). Metcalf suggests "ICs can be found throughout most of recorded history" and points to Homakoeion community developed by the Greek mathematician Pythagoras in Southern Italy in 525 BCE, other point to the Ashrams communities of India since before 1500 BCE. In *The Findhorn Book of Community Living*, Metcalf describes ICs as

> Five or more people, drawn from more than one family or kinship group, who have voluntarily come together for the purpose of ameliorating perceived social problems and inadequacies. They seek to live beyond the bounds of mainstream society by adopting a consciously devised and usually well thought-out social and cultural alternative. In the pursuit of their goals, they share significant aspects of their lives together. Participants are characterized by a "we-consciousness," seeing themselves as a continuing group, separate from and in many ways better than the society from which they emerged. (Metcalf, 2004)

After the horrors of World War 1 a worldwide peace movement developed in Europe, which included the formation of new European ICs. In Germany, many were based on leftist, anarchist or communist philosophies. The Foundation for ICs website[33] stated (2017):

> They were mostly rural settlements, usually trying to get away from the war-torn capitalist system, live a natural life, and achieve some form of self- sufficiency. They were often also an attempt to heal the earth after the mass destruction caused by the war.

The 1960s and 1970s saw great changes in Western Society stemming from "a combination of optimism in the power of social experimentation and cynicism in the ability of social institutions to make the world we live in a better place" (Shenker, 2011). This included an interest in communal societies, By the late 1960s several spiritually based projects were initiated in different parts of the globe: Findhorn in Scotland, The Farm in Tennessee, USA, Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka, and the NAAM movement in Burkino Faso. The Danish-based charitable association Gaia Trust founded in 1987 to "support the transition to a sustainable and more spiritual future society". They funded an "Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities" study in 1991 that found that although many interesting EV projects existed, the full-scale ideal EV did not yet exist. Robert Gilman's EV definition of the late 1980s became the standard for many years: "Human-scale full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future" (Gilman, 1991). Speaking about the 1995 Findhorn conference, leading EV elder Ross Jackson wrote "The conference was attended by over 400 people from forty countries, while another 300 who wished to be there had to be turned away. It was clear that the EV concept had hit a sensitive nerve with a lot of people". By 2001, GEN had obtained consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with May East, a Brazilian woman living in Findhorn, advising UN groups along GEN principles and helping form urban policy. Former GEN president, Jonathan Dawson, outlined the main five EV principles In *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability* (2006) as (Table 3):

Table 3*:* Dawson's outlined 5 Ecovillage principles

#	Ecovillage Principles
1	They are not government-sponsored projects, but grassroots initiatives.
2	Their residents value and practice community living.

[33] Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC) https://www.ic.org/

3	Their residents are not overly dependent on government, corporate or other centralized sources for water, food, shelter, power and other basic necessities. Rather, they attempt to provide these resources themselves.
4	Their residents have a strong sense of shared values, often characterized in spiritual terms.
5	They often serve as research and demonstration sites, offering educational experiences for others.

From the beginning, "GEN's second goal was to create global services, like an education network... We are only now getting to this point in the spring of 2004 of creating a global educational network and a common educational curriculum" (Jackson, 2004). Since 1995, this process led to the creation of the network of Global Ecovillage Educators for a Sustainable Earth (GEESE), who first met in 1998 in Fjorvang, Denmark. They formulated a transdisciplinary approach to education for sustainability that went on to establish the common ground for the development of the ecovillage design curriculum. Their programme Gaia Education Design for Sustainability (GEDS) was formally launched in October 2005 at GEN's 10th anniversary conference at Findhorn. This Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) innovative curriculum consisted of four dimensions of sustainability: Social, Ecological, Economic & Worldview. "GEN and Gaia Education have worked very closely together, but as two separate entities. The first "product" was a four-week course called Ecovillage Design Education (EDE), which continues to be taught all over the world" (Pais, 2015). In 2008 GAIA's GEDS online programme launched in partnership with Open University of Catalonia (UOC). Initially offered in Spanish and English, the course attracted students from both developed and developing countries, on all five continents, including marginalized communities, such as Brazilian *favelas*. Since 2005, GEDS has taken place in 55 countries and helped train more than 25,000 people.

GEN EVs are rooted in local participatory processes, where participatory governance and decision-making methods use consensus or Sociocracy. "They value the voice of each member of the community and aim to make decision-making fair, transparent, inclusive and accountable. Participation and integration of different voices is seen as an added value: something that makes the community a better place for everyone". GEN were a founding member of ECOLISE in 2014. EVs are very diverse communities, some having shared spiritual practice, others none. In recent years GEN clarified its values and created a "statement of tolerance" to actively distance itself from individuals and groups promoting harm to other individuals or groups, including: 1) Far right and extremist political groups/movements 2) Individuals or groups that practice or espouse discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexuality or gender identity 3) Individuals or groups that engage in anti-democratic practices.

Professor Karen Litfin is a professor of political science and environmental studies at the University of Washington. After writing two books about green issues, she undertook a nine-month trip, starting September 2007, to visit and live with fourteen different EVs around the planet "From rural to urban, high tech to low tech, spiritual to secular, she discovered an under-the-radar global movement making positive and radical changes from the ground". This resulted in her 2014 book *Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community* and corresponding website[34]. For her "EVs are not utopias; they are living laboratories" (Litfin, 2014) and "that choosing to live in a hotbed of learning is not necessarily an easy path. It is a path of adventure". Some experiments were successful, others not, but "the people I met in these living laboratories seemed infinitely more interested in learning than in comfort, convenience, and security". They commit to learning:

> from one another from other communities, from the larger world – is a big part of what sharing means to them. Ecovillages share information about conflict resolution, consensus training, straw-bale construction, wastewater treatment, and so much more. In this sense, ecovillagers are like applied scientists, running collective experiments in every realm of life: building, farming, waste management, decision-making, communication, child rearing, finance, ownership, aging and death. (Litfin, 2014)

Her tour included three Global South countries (Senegal & The Gambia, India, Sri Lanka) and eleven Global North, including Damanhur in Italy, that's going since 1975 (Fig 2.29).



Figure 2.29: Damanhur Ecovillage. L: software engineer lives in tree house. R: Complementary currency, the *credito* (Litfin, 2014)

[34] Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community https://ecovillagebook.org/

Damanhur EV had one of Litfin's favorite "high-lo tech" finds: the computer programmer who lives in a tree house. She said this EV "may be the world's most fast-paced, high-tech EV. It may also be the world's most fanciful, beautiful, and prosperous EV". She describes it as:

> A spiritual community in the foothills of the Italian Alps, Damanhur has its own molecular biology lab for testing for genetically modified food and a smartphone for every member… About 600 Damanhur residents live in 30 communities, called "nucleos," spread across a spectacular subalpine valley, each devoted to a specific field: solar energy, seed saving, organic meat production, education, healing, and so on.

Several EVs had their own internal currencies including Earthaven's *leaps* and Findhorn's *eko*, but the most dynamic and lucrative complementary currency she encountered was Damanhur's *credito*. Damanhur resident Macaco Tamerice explained the two purposes of this currency: "Philosophically and spiritually, it is clean money. Because it's not based on violence and greed, we can use it to create a sustainable world. The second purpose is very practical. It allows us to keep the money inside a circuit and so helps to develop our professions and services". The logic behind these local economic trading systems called complementary currencies "mirrors a basic principle of right livelihood: the more circulation money has locally, the stronger the social and ecological relationships. Complementary currencies take this principle one step further by introducing a local medium of exchange" (Litfin, 2014).

Not all EVs are successful, or are seen as having positive or socially just impacts on the local populations where they base themselves. Esteves (2017) explored dynamics of social exclusion in her native Portugal, between Tamera EV community and the wider municipality of Odemira, in rural southwestern Alentejo. A mostly German group, keen on alternative forms of love and free sexuality, set out in 1995 to develop a commons-based livelihood based on permaculture, renewable energy technologies and the decommodification of access to water, food and energy. By 2015 they had 170 permanent community members, of which only seven were Portuguese. A Portuguese member felt language dynamics gave the impression of a "German bubble that is hard to burst." Esteves concluded that Tamera "transplanted and developed an 'ideal type' Healing Biotope model" but it became what "Anzaldúa (1987) calls a "borderland"", where an estrangement exists and grows "between the post-materialist values of the middle and upper classes of Central Europe and other parts of the industrial world, and the predominantly heteropatriarchal, socially conservative culture of the impoverished villages of the region". Section 4.3 examines several specific EVs the author visited personally in detail.

2.3.6 Ecocities

The term "eco-city" became popular in the 1970's (Roseland, 1997) and was first noted academically in Richard Register's 1987 book *Ecocity Berkeley: Building Cities for a Healthy Future*, followed by the first International Ecocity Conference in 1990 at the university town of Berkeley, outside San Francisco. This network grew into Ecocity Builders[35] (EB) and they continue to have biannual world summits, switching between global north and south locations. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the Ecocity concept seemed somewhat vague: "a collection of ideas and propositions about sustainable urban planning, transportation, housing, public participation and social justice, with practical examples relatively few and far between" (Joss, 2010), that changed quickly in the mid-2000s, when (Joss, 2010):

> The phenomenon appears to have become increasingly global and mainstream, against the background of the international recognition of the scale and severity of climate change and rapid urbanisation, particularly in the developing world... with countries and cities competing to take a lead in developing and applying new socio-technological innovations and thus bringing about the next generation of sustainable towns and cities.

The two grandest Ecocity projects that were boldly announced as heralding a new age for urbanism were Dongtan (launched 2005, by Arup), on Chongming island adjacent to Shanghai, China, and Masdar City (launched 2006, by Norman Foster), a 6 km^2 urban community in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) petrostate. Both projects were motivated by financial and political gain and supported by elite power structures in the UK, China and Abu Dhabi (Sze, 2015). Both projects had British design groups. Twenty years on, not much is built and both are seen as spectacular failures (Pow & Neo, 2010; Cugurullo, 2013; Sze, 2015).

EB's ecocity definition is vague; "a human settlement modeled on the self-sustaining resilient structure and function of natural ecosystems." Their extended 2010 definition adds:

> The ecocity provides healthy abundance to its inhabitants without consuming more (renewable) resources than it produces, without producing more waste than it can assimilate, and without being toxic to itself or neighboring ecosystems. Its inhabitants' ecological impact reflect planetary supportive lifestyles; its social order reflects fundamental principles of fairness, justice and reasonable equity. (EB, 2010)

[35] https://ecocitybuilders.org/

Without strict clarification as to what constitutes an ecocity, many viewpoints are worthy of exploration. The community-led ecocity idea builds on the simple hope of GEN ex-president, Kosha Joubert, where “Ideally, every village and every city on this planet would become an ecovillage or a green city, with eco-neigbourhoods” that would be governed by, or “consciously designed through locally owned participatory processes” (Joubert & Dregger, 2015).

In 1800, only 3% of the world’s population lived in cities. In the beginning of the 20th century, 10% did. In the beginning of this century over 50% of humans lived in cities, for the first time (UN, 2010). The proportion is projected to increase to 70% by 2050. According to the UN, up to 3 billion people worldwide struggle to afford a place to live, and 1.12 billion live in slums or informal settlements without basic services. Over 85 per cent of slum dwellers are concentrated in three regions: Central and Southern Asia (334 million), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (362 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (265 million) (UN; 2025). Neuwirth (2005) calculated “Today: a billion squatters, one in six people on the planet. 2030: two billion squatters, one in four people on the planet. And the estimate is that in 2050, there'll be three billion squatters, better than one in three people on earth”. Cities today occupy just 3% of the Earth’s land, but account for 60-80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emissions. (UN; 2025). Sustaining these growing populations leads to rapid expansion of resource extraction and ever-increasing use of oil to transport them around the planet, what Lefebvre referred to as the “complete urbanization of society” (1970) and what is called planetary urbanization (Merrifield, 2013) today, which escalate CB and biodiversity emergency. As O’Meara notes “the struggle to achieve a sustainable balance between the Earth’s resource base and its human energy will be largely won or lost in the world’s cities” (O’Meara, 1999, p.7).

The UNs Conference on the Human Environment, the Stockholm Conference, took place in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 and was the first global conference to address environmental issues. The “Brundtland Report” (1987) proposed the model of sustainable development based on the three pillars of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equality, which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Agenda 21 was launched at the UN’s Earth Summit that happened in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, with the aim to achieve global sustainable development by 2000. US architect William McDonough and German chemist Dr. Michael Braungart prepared “The Hannover Principles: Design for Sustainability” in 1992 for Expo 2000, The World’s Fair. They were 9 principles about designing buildings and objects with forethought about their environmental impact and offered a template on how to create sustainable communities: 1) Insist on rights of humanity and nature to co-exist 2) Recognize interdependence 3) Respect relationships between

spirit and matter 4) Accept responsibility for the consequences of design 5) Create safe objects of long-term value 6) Eliminate the concept of waste 7) Rely on natural energy flows 8) Understand the limitations of design 9) Seek constant improvement by the sharing of knowledge. In 1995, British architect Richard Rogers delivered The Reith Lectures, focusing on the Sustainable City, which he developed into the seminal *Cities For A Small Planet* (1997). From 2001-2009, he served as Chief Advisor on Architecture and Urbanism to the Mayor of London. Critical of oil dependant urban growth models, Newman & Kenworthy launched *Sustainability and Cities: Overcoming Automobile Dependence* at the White House in 1999 and Girardet's *Sustainable Cities* (1999) advocated the need to dramatically reduce resource and energy consumption levels due to fossil fuel dependence, because oil was running out.

McDonough & Braungart's 2002 essay "Buildings Like Trees, Cities Like Forests" challenged the modernist industrial urban vision where "one-size-fits-all buildings employ the "engineer's aesthetic" to overcome the rules of the natural world", as epitomized by Le Corbusier, from whom "the city was "a human operation directed against nature" and the house was "a machine for living in." Their alternate "Human Leaf" vision had three principles: 1) Waste=Food 2) Use current solar income 3) Celebrate diversity. Their poetic vision is a call to regenerative action, where good design offers the "possibility of developing healthy and creatively interactive relationships between human settlements and the natural world":

> But what if buildings were alive? What if our homes and workplaces were like trees, living organisms participating productively in their surroundings? Imagine a building, enmeshed in the landscape, that harvests the energy of the sun, sequesters carbon and makes oxygen. Imagine on-site wetlands and botanical gardens recovering nutrients from circulating water. Fresh air, flowering plants, and daylight everywhere… We would see buildings like trees, alive to their surroundings and inhabitants, and cities like forests, in which nature and design create a living, breathing habitat. Vital threads of landscape would provide connectivity between communities, linking urban forests to downtown neighborhoods to riparian corridors to distant wilds. Cities and towns would be shaped and cultivated by an understanding of their singular evolutionary matrix, a new sense of natural and cultural identity that would grow health, diversity and delight, and set the stage for long-term prosperity (McDonough & Braungart, 2002).

Developing their "Waste = Food" concept further, they merged design and science to create their Cradle to Cradle (C2C) design concept which uses a biomimicry approach for the design

of products and systems to eliminate wastes by constructing things, including buildings, so that they can be broken up after use into technical and biological nutrients to be re-entered into circular cycles. In 2002, they published *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things,* their manifesto for C2C design and began a certification process. The book itself (Fig 2.30.L) was an example of C2C design, a technical nutrient in the lifecycle development system. The pages were not paper, but rather synthetics created from plastic resins and inorganic fillers. The book was more durable and stronger than traditional paper, waterproof, and upcyclable.



Figure 2.30: L Cradle to Cradle, book R: Rooftop Farming Concept, Ecocity proposal for Liuzhou, Guangxi, China (McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Mc Donough & Partners, 2005)

In 2005, McDonough was commissioned to build 12 ecocities for the Chinese government. Based on C2C as templates, the assignment was to develop protocols to house 400 million people in 12 years. He outlined his ambitious urban plans, including the introduction of rooftop farming in Liuzhou (Fig 2.30.R), in his 2005 TED talk “Cradle to cradle design” based on what buildings and products would look like if designers took into account "all children, all species, for all time". Solutions at the 10 km^2 hi-tech park in the southern city of Liuzhou in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, in cooperation with the China-US Center for Sustainable Development (CUCSD), included: Urban design based on hydrology, ancient biota winds and sun. Everybody gets fresh air, fresh water and direct sunlight in every single apartment at some point during the day. Parks laid out as ecological infrastructure. Building areas include commercial and mixed use so people have centres and places to be, including 24-hour street. Everybody's within a five-minute walk of transportation. Connected municipal waste systems

collects and sends human faeces to sewage treatment plants and fertilizer factory that makes natural gas which fuels the cities cookers. Wastewaters sent to wetlands for habitat restorations.

Worth examination is the relatively recent, but rapid and massive changes in China, in the areas of population, urbanization, economic growth and sustainable development, including plans, successes and failures of ecocity projects. The speed of urbanization in China increased following the initiation of the reform and opening up policy, since the 1990s. By the end of 2024, the country had an urbanization rate of 67% and is expected to reach 75–80% by 2035. It is currently the world's second-largest economy by nominal GDP, after the US, and since 2016 it has been the world's largest economy when measured by purchasing power parity (PPP).

In 2000, China's population was 1,263 billion inhabitants (over 20% of the global total) and its 36% urbanization rate was rapidly growing. In 2001, China announced their goal to build 400 new cities of 1 million inhabitants each by 2020, or 20 new cities a year for 20 years (Mars, 2008). "In what geographer David Harvey characterizes as the "largest mass migration ever seen in human history," (Harvey, 2005) approximately 16 million Chinese residents move from rural areas into cities each year" (Lin, 2014). In his 2006 article "The Great Green Leap Forward", Sullivan noted "China's spectacular economic growth over the last 10 years has only been possible with the strong, guiding hand (and sometimes the fist) of the communist state". Dongtan was China's flagship project, Arup stated "Dongtan represents the quest to create a new world" (Sze, 2015). It was boosted as the world's first carbon-neutral ecocity and was endorsed by Chinese and British central governments (Lin, 2014). Arup's ambitious agenda to use the latest environmental technologies was outlined by Peter Head, Arup's Director and Head of Global Planning Business, interviewed by Architectural Design's Helen Castle in 2008:

> The goal was to use 60 % less carbon footprint than in conventional Chinese cities, and to achieve 66% reduction in energy demand. When built, Dongtan would run on 100% renewable energy, including 40% of the energy supplied from bioenergy. The city would recycle and reuse all wastewater. Landfill waste would be marked down by 83%. No fossil-fuel transportation would be allowed, with only hydrogen and electric vehicles permitted within the city. Visitors coming with conventional petrol-fuelled cars would have to leave their cars outside Dongtan and take public transit. (Lin, 2014).

China presented Dongtan as their purpose-built ecocity at the Third World Urban Forum, an international urban sustainability event facilitated by the UN's Human Settlements Programme (UNHABITAT), in Vancouver in 2006. Girardet (as Environmental Consultant and Senior

Adviser to Eco-City Dongtan) described the project as “a proposed city for 500,000 residents, where environment was envisaged to be at the core of the city’s development and was expected to integrate concerns of liveability and sustainability”. Meeting notes record two critical concerns that were raised, the “extent to which both the planning process and the Eco-City itself would be inclusive and pro-poor” (UNHABITAT, 2006). Dongtan was planned to house half a million people on a 630-hecture site on an ecologically sensitive wetlands at the tip of Chongming Island, an alluvial island in the mouth of the world’s third-longest river, the Yangtze River, adjacent to Shanghai city (The Greater Shanghai population was nearly 25 million inhabitants in 2023). The 2008 worldwide recession raised concerns if the high building costs for the project could be afforded. The city boss Chen Liangyu was sentenced to 18 years in prison for bribery and abuse of power in the same year. Running into difficulties, the project was cancelled in 2009. By 2009 articles such as “Greenwash: The dream of the first eco-city was built on a fiction” (Pearce, 2009) were appearing in British media. Sze notes “The desires that Dongtan represents are those of green or sustainable capitalist discourse, which suggests that capitalist means are the best solution to environmental problems” (Sze & Zhou, 2011).

Things fared somewhat a little better in Abu Dhabi. In 2006, the UAE government announced that it intended to spend $22 billion to build the new ecocity of Masdar city to house 40,000 residents, which would rely entirely on solar energy and other renewable energy sources. It was a 6 km^2 urban block on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi. Progress was slow, with many developments put on hold. By 2023 less than a sixth of the area has been developed and only 5,000 residents live there. Cugurullo (2013) argued that sustainability was not the real aim of Masdar and that the image of the ideal sustainable city was used to boost the local economy and fulfil the political interests of the ruling class. He labelled the project, and others like it, *Frankenstein cities* (2016), an example of “(de)composed urbanism”, a metaphor for experiments generated by forced union of different, decaying parts, to form “a “patchwork” of different pieces of urban fabric produced by different clean-tech projects” (Cugurullo, 2016)

A more successful Chinese project is Binhai Eco-city in Tianjin, full name Sino–Singapore Tianjin Eco-City (SSTEC), also known as Tianjin Eco-city. (Fig 2.31). Developed jointly in 2008 by the China and Singapore governments to transform a 30 km^2 desolate, toxic and uninhabitable wasteland into a model sustainable community for 350,000 people by 2020. It is located forty kilometres to the southeast of China’s fourth largest city, Tianjin (14 million people in 2020), on "non-arable" land with a "water shortage", where the Yongding New River joins the Bohai Wan Sea. By 2019, SSTEC had only managed to house 100,000 residents and by 2024 SSTEC claims to have over 170,000 residents (still less than half of the 2020 planned

target population of 350,000) on a built-up area of 22 km^2. In 2017 Landscape architects Grant Associates won an international competition to create a new 41-hectare city park (Fig 2.31.M) alongside the city's Gu Dao Canal water edge, having previously won a competition to design the Bay South Gardens in Singapore that opened in 2012. Their original masterplan was significantly refined to just the Sino-Singapore Friendship Park; "Originally, the master plan included a Conservatory with five glass biomes. However, our appointment after the master planning phase focused solely on the park" (Grant, 2025) (Fig 2.31.R). To design a park that harmonizes with an evolving yet incomplete urban fabric, fostering a sustainable relationship between people and nature, Grant integrated a robust Sponge City strategy through a network of functional water bodies. In 2018 SSTEC's Southern District won the Sustainable City Grand Prize at the 6th Green Solutions Awards, "recognizing its comprehensive urban development, ecological environment construction, and smart city initiatives" and a biodiversity plan for the city to foster 469 animal and plant varieties as of 2013, including 332 animals and 137 plants.



Figure 2.31: Sino–Singapore Tianjin Eco-City. Top: 2024 view. L: Proposed apartment living. M: Proposed 41-hectare city park. R: Constructed Sino-Singapore Friendship Park (Tianjineco-city, 2025; Surbana Urban Planning Group 2011; Grant Associates 2017 & 2025)

Analysing SSTEC, Caprotti et al. (2015) ask the critical question: 'Eco' for whom?, exploring "whether Tianjin eco-city will become, like Masdar, a non-place (Cugurullo, 2013) characterized by grand corporate urban planning and environmental-economic visions, but devoid of an organic society- a city stillborn" (Caprotti, 2015). His findings point to the creation of modern apartments as bubbles or containers for eco living, disconnected from the public realm and void of a sustainable, socially resilient community in the eco-city, with much of the process of construction based on the marketing of a lifestyle of comfort (Fig 2.32.L), few

Chinese could afford, as much as a programme that seeks to positively affect the environment. The projects levels of artificialness went as far as having fake leaves tied onto a whole avenue of bare trees (Fig 2.32.R), which "seemed to point metaphorically to the strained marketing of a 'harmonious' and 'ecologically friendly' city as an artificial and ultimately misleading foil for yet another new-build luxury residential project" (Caprotti, 2015). It seems these projects are not designed for the many, but the select few of China's new hoped for wealthy urban elites.



Figure 2.32: Tianjin eco-city: L: comfort R: Fake leaves (Springer, 2011; Caprotti, 2013)

For McDonough's planned ecocities, things did not work out to plan in China. Having being awarded Time magazine's "Hero for the Planet" in 1999, by 2008 criticism about him and his work grew, exemplified by *Fast Company* magazine's 2008 article "Green Guru Gone Wrong". Sacks (2008) claimed that C2C had made very little real impact, McDonough's own suburban lifestyle was unsustainable, and that the much-hyped planned ecocity projects came to nothing, after the failure of his and China's first "ecologically sustainable" model village, Huangbaiyu.

McDonough co-founded CUCSD in 2002, its stated purpose was "to promote sustainable development design principles through a unique network of public-private partnerships". (May, 2008). Two years later "McDonough and his team hammered out a way to bring the concept of sustainable cities to China, a process that culminated with a 2004 agreement and 2005 announcement of the Huangbaiyu Model Eco-Village" (Best, 2010). It seems processes tried there were to be replicated at the larger scale elsewhere. US anthropologist Shannon May was sponsored to live in the village for a year to monitor the transformation, she notes CUCSD "prioritized the development of a demonstration sustainable village based on C2C design principles as a scalable model for the revitalization of China's rural communities". May covered all aspects of the process, including failures, on her blog[36] and subsequent articles. The first

[36] Shannon May: Huangbaiyu http://www.shannonmay.com/Huangbaiyu.html

phase of houses was underway by July 2005, but the project was already facing significant challenges, especially around rising costs to build. Despite McDonough's clear planning outline and promises "We're doing everything with nothing," (Schafer, 2005), Hald (2009) notes "Of the first 42 houses that were completed in late 2006, only three used eco-friendly bricks and only one house had solar panels. None faced south and the new eco-dwellings had garages, although not a single villager in Huangbaiyu is anywhere close to being able to afford a car". Rob Best visited the failed Chinese ecocity and model village sites in 2010, noting "As if an omen of the future of the model village and its tumultuous past, all references to the site have been scrubbed from McDonough's website and that of the China-US Center for Sustainable Development". (Best, 2010). Two ecocity project pages from McDonough and Partners old site were archived (Tangye, Jinan[37] & Guantang, Liuzhou [38]), along with two CUCSD news pages. Larson (2009) noted that with increasingly critical ecocity coverage in the press, McDonough's firm downplayed its involvement in China, with their director of communications saying "While we have in the past done some very limited conceptual planning work in China, we are not doing any community design/planning work there at this time." In 2010, only one of Huangbaiyu's 42 homes were lived in, some buildings were filled with cattle or donkey waste and new structures were deteriorating. May later slammed the Huangbaiyu process, labelling it "A Sino-US Sustainability Sham" (May, 2007). Regarding citizen involvement in the creation of sustainable communities, Flanery noted (2013) that "according to a PBS documentary on the village, there was only one meeting between McDonough + Partners and local residents", that included 31 village committee members. Best adds that "the plan was brought before the village council for ratification, the residents added a few more stipulations of their own. They demanded that industry be arranged to enter the town and provide jobs".

Despite some successes in SSTEC, China's supposed green transition drew much criticism. Reuters's (2015) "China's eco-cities are often neither ecologically friendly, nor functional cities" estimated only one in five of China's ecocities actually match low-carbon or ecological ideals, Huangbaiyu was empty and rotting and SSTEC may not be any more ecologically friendly than some of the world's traditional urban centres. As to why China continues to crank out eco-cities, Shepard wrote "The answer is simple: They make money", because "If a place

[37] Tangye New Town Concept Master Plan, Jinan, Shandong Province: https://web.archive.org/web/20071207235237/http://www.mcdonoughpartners.com/projects/tangye/default.asp?projID=tangye

[38] Guantang Chuangye Sustainable Development Demonstration Project, Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region: https://web.archive.org/web/20071215033006/http://www.mcdonoughpartners.com/projects/liuzhou/default.asp?projID=liuzhou

has eco elements the price [of real estate] is bumped up. This is encouraged from the top-down by China's central government, which is currently pumping massive amounts of subsidies into developments, buildings and technologies that carry the "green" label". For Lin (2014) Dongtan and SSTEC "represented top-down governmental initiatives as wholesale introduction of cutting-edge ideas of planning and technologies. They aimed to establishing examples to guide new town developments in the decentralization of many major cities across the country". Larson (2009) noted "China's eco-cities were intended to be models of green urban design. But the planning was done with little awareness of how local people lived, and the much-touted projects have largely been scrapped". For her the lack of understanding of local needs was to blame, along with lack of sound oversight "no one effectively ensured that plans on paper were consistently translated into projects on the ground". Regarding project failure, she quotes Wen Bo, a Beijing-based environmentalist who feels experienced international firms involved in planning them "should share some of the responsibility for any problems encountered". In "Social Justice and Eco-city Development in China: Building for whom?" Romano (2015) wonders for whom sustainable urban development is done, and what are the true aims of such projects. Advocating a process to replace current practice with greater equity, she writes "it is very important that each locality offers itself the opportunity to be able to 'learn to become sustainable', in order to tackle also the important question of equity". Flanery concludes that "The recognition that capitalist economic globalization coincides with anti-democratic political processes suggests the possibility of a revival of democratic participation in a variety of fields and disciplines, including urban sustainability". Hald's 2009 analysis builds upon Harvey's assessment of "the relationship between power, space and urban form, revealing cities as spatial expressions and manifestations of social relations based on power, particularly economic power (Harvey, 1978)", which returns to the "crucial, bottom-line question in the spatial politics discourse 'In whose image and to whose benefit is space to be shaped?' (Harvey, 1989)." (Hald, 2009). She concludes that Chinese ecocities were examples of spaces that can be viewed as social processes that were shaping the transition China was going through. Similar to Shepard, she finds that "eco-city's vague and varied definitions have been a weakness when it comes to actual planning and implementation". She agrees on the need "to develop new approaches to urban planning to help achieve truly sustainable cities on a world-wide basis and Dongtan and Tianjin are examples of such an attempt". But "to create the Chinese eco-city, communities, NGOs and local public agencies need to operate synergistically and with the government and other stakeholders. Goals and priorities need to be defined and agreed upon at an early stage so that expectations can be met and to diminish a fuzzy, uncertain planning environment".

Without a clear ecocity definition, many recent urban initiatives need further observation. The theme of EB's last Ecocity Summit in 2023 was "Connecting Communities". It is clear the diversity, or contradictions, within the ecocity definition spectrum are still a problem. In his article "Ecocity World Summit: squaring the circle of sustainability", participant Paul Lincoln wrote "There was however a major contradiction at the heart of the Summit. There was no consensus or even the beginning of an agreement on what a built environment practitioner had to do to effect genuine change" (Lincoln, 2023): In a keynote speech British architect Norman Foster said he believes giant towers of concrete, steel and glass are sustainable. The following day, the humanitarian architect based in Pakistan, Yasmeen Lari (Pakistan's first female architect and the 2023 winner of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Royal Gold Medal), explained how she had abandoned capitalist modes of production and was committed to zero cement, zero concrete, zero steel and zero glass. Lincoln concluded "It was not clear from the summit what efforts could or would be made to reconcile these opposing positions".

The UN's adoption in 2015 of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proclaimed "that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" (UN, 2015). With the resilience concept gaining value and traction in the early 2000s, both key terms were included in SDG 11: *To make cities Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.* All forms of Sustainable Development are driven by green growth theory, which is "a misguided objective that policymakers need to look toward alternative strategies to" (Hickel & Kallis, 2019).

April 8th 2020 the Amsterdam City Doughnut was launched "which takes the global concept of the Doughnut and turns it into a tool for transformative action in the city of Amsterdam" (Raworth, 2020). The question "How can Amsterdam be a home to thriving people, in a thriving place, while respecting the wellbeing of all people, and the health of the whole planet?" is regenerative and scalable, it can be applied to any city, region, indeed country. Time magazines February 2021 article "Amsterdam Is Embracing a Radical New Economic Theory to Help Save the Environment. Could It Also Replace Capitalism?" highlighted community responses:

> Amsterdam's ambition is to bring all 872,000 residents inside the doughnut, ensuring everyone has access to a good quality of life, but without putting more pressure on the planet than is sustainable... Meanwhile, some 400 local people and organizations have set up a network called the Amsterdam Doughnut Coalition—managed by Drouin— to run their own programs at a grassroots level. (Nugent, 2021)

2.4. Literature Review Conclusion

To explore how best humanity can respond to ecological emergency, a three pillared approach examined the root causes of the problem and community responses to it, by exploring: 1) Why is the work happening 2) How change happens 3) What is emerging from the work.

From examining ecological emergency, in five constituent parts, it is clear that an ever-worsening crises threatens human existence. Paris's 1.5°C limit passed in 2024 (Copernicus, 2025), and Hansen (2025) declared 2ºC dead, due to burning of fossil fuels and CO2 released into the atmosphere since the 18th century (Bookchin, 1964; McKibben, 2009). A temperature rise between 2.7º-3º will result in the death of nearly 2 billion of the world's poorest people (Hickel, 2024): Yet another form of climate colonialism that climate justice fights against (Sultana, 2023). The solution is simple; stop fossil fuel use to cool the climate, and allow nature return (WWF, 2024): Inverting Hawkins's climate stripes (2018) & Richardson's biodiversity stripes (2022), to make the world blue and green again. All citizens have a role to play. Current situation is stark: "We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide" (Guterres, 2022).

With political will, the situation can be remedied. Today's economic logic rejects what is badly required: "Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war" (Klein, 2014). Solutions must respect Earth's limits to growth (Meadows et al, 1972), to envisage and create a post-growth and post-capitalist world (Kallis et al, 2025). Degrowth criticizes sustainability's relationship to perpetual quantitative growth on a finite planet (Hickel, 2020). Permaculture's post carbon pathway (Holmgren, 2009) shows us where we must go. Doughnut Economics (Raworth, 2017) gives us the compass to get there. The challenge is how to activate, support and enable organised communities to enable an eco-social just transition (Corpwatch, 1999).

Social movements of grassroots activists are "defined as networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities" (Diani, 1992). Climate justice movements led by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions integrate more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations (Sultana, 2023). Asking 'What would it mean to win?' (Turbulence, 2007) focuses reflection upon objectives and scale. Many goals are not compatible between movements. In leftist positioning, tensions exist in regard to the state; principally between Marxist – taking over the state and control society centrally – and anarchist - local decentralised, self-organised communities existing in mutual support through networks. Arguing the latter, Purcell proposes "democracy

against, beyond, and without the state" (2015). In his "networks of equivalence" (2009) local victories are "modest examples" and "an idea of a way forward". Their aim is not entire global system change (Klimaforum, 2009), because "We should not expect to find counter-hegemonic networks of equivalence, fully formed, on a global scale, poised to overrun the current hegemony" (Purcell, 2009). A challenge is how to integrate full range of local solutions in ways that politically challenging polluters, corporations and governments resisting radical change. Moments of revolt can inspire a rhizomatic form of revolution (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972; Castells, 2012), where similar spatial, political reorganisations unfold elsewhere. Past moments include: 1) The day that "permanently changed the political landscape of globalisation" (Capra, 2002) when activists shut down Seattle's 1999 WTO talks. 2) Climate justice movement's failed attempt to "reclaim power" in Copenhagen 2009 that radicalised Global North movements and increased solidarity with indigenous peoples struggles (Reitan & Gibson, 2012). 3) Rojava's feminist, anti-capitalist revolution that has declared autonomy from the Syrian state since 2012.

"Community-led Initiatives are self-organised initiatives of people working together on an ongoing basis towards some defined set of environmental and/or social goals, usually within defined localities or communities of place" (Penha-Lopes & Henfrey, 2019). Emergence sees an old system in decline, and the new world already quietly emerging at the fringes (Wheatley & Frieze, 2006 & 2015). Sustainability does "less damage to the environment" (Reed, 2007), whereas regenerative development reverses the degeneration of the earth's natural systems and designs human systems that can coevolve with natural systems (Mang & Reed, 2011). It builds upon permaculture (Glanzberg, 2017) and living systems perspectives, such as working in a nested fashion and at all levels simultaneously (Mang & Haggard, 2016). Bioregionalism seeks to unite all communities within river basins, or related territories, to work for the change that the place requires. One challenge is to move beyond the artificial constructs of national borders.

The solutions required to respond to ecological emergency already exist, many are below the radar. More work needed to identify them and support wider replication. Translocal learning and communities of practice assist transformation. Rewilding initiatives include: Brazil's Earth Institute that planted 2,347 Hectares with 3,3 million local trees: Ecosystem Restoration Camps restoring 98,000+ hectares of large-scale damaged ecosystems in 40+ countries. Irish groups working to bring back the indigenous Atlantic rainforest along Ireland's West Coast. Rights of Nature are inspiring people to legally transform their local worlds after a Māori tribe were granted the status of a legal person for their sacred river, the Whanganui, in 2017: *I am the River, the river is me.* Good governance is the key to healthy places; Brazil's eco neighbourhood in Vila Mariana , São Paulo, the City Council use sociocracy for participative decision making.

CHAPTER 3.

Methodology

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild

William Butler Yeats, 1886

3.1. Autoethnography. Activist as Scientist

The chief methodology used for the core work of this PhD thesis is autoethnography, which sees me telling you the story of what has been going on in the communities I have been part of, who have been taking many different forms of action to respond to ecological emergency. Having been a grassroots activist for 30 years, I now compliment that by adding the role of the academic; to use the scientific tool of qualitative research to identify key moments from that period, critically reflect on them and try to identify links between, what some would say, are very disparate groups, viewpoints, worldviews, movements or communities.

Autoethnography, also called Self-Ethnography, is a form of ethnographic research in which a researcher connects personal experiences to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings. It is considered a form of qualitative and/or arts-based research. It can be seen as the opposite of the form of cold and objective research where concepts or projects are explored from afar. Ellingson and Ellis (2008) come from the social constructionist world that challenges fundamental dichotomies "not only those in society in general but also those that structure traditional approaches to research". For them autoethnography is a tool that rejects the deep-rooted binary oppositions between the researcher and the researched, objectivity and subjectivity, process and product, self and others, art and science, and the personal and the political. For them "Autoethnography becomes a space in which an individual's passion can bridge individual and collective experience to enable richness of representation, complexity of understanding, and inspiration for activism" (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). This methodology builds on my previous work and academic research using Participative Action Research, where I wrote about the movements, projects and communities that I was, or still am, part of, and where the act of writing itself could be a further step where I, as both eco-activist and academic, sought to help bring about wider system change. A growing

message in many of the groups I work with is a call for better storytelling, hence selecting this methodology for the thesis, because, as Poulos says "Autoethnographers seek to craft compelling tales" (Poulos, 2021).

There is still much debate in the academic community about different aspects of autoethnography, what exactly it is, or is not, and how effective it is within academic process. Some even going as far as to rise concerns about autoethnography devolving into narcissism (Krizek, 2003). While many descriptions of autoethnography exist, I feel that Poulos's is most aligned to the aims of this PhD:

> Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of academic writing that draws on and analyzes or interprets the lived experience of the author and connects researcher insights to self-identity, cultural rules and resources, communication practices, traditions, premises, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions, values, and larger social, cultural, and political issues. Autoethnography involves the writer or researcher in crafting creative narratives shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture and addressed to varied (mostly academic) audiences. In sum, autoethnography is a qualitative research method used by researchers interested in narrative descriptions and evocations of the richly textured nature of lived experience. Autoethnographers seek to craft compelling tales that shed light on particular phenomena encountered in the research scene. Autoethnographers can trace their roots back to a range of philosophical and epistemological orientations in human social theory—notably, existentialism, phenomenology, narrative theory, and symbolic interactionism and social constructionism. (Poulos, 2021)

Ellis, Adams, & Bochner (2010) say the autoethnography method "is both process and product". As to the etymology of the word itself, what it means exactly, Ellis et al, define it as:

> Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experience ("auto") to describe and interpret ("graphy") cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices ("ethno"). Autoethnographers believe that personal experience is infused with political/cultural norms and expectations, and they engage in rigorous self- reflection—typically referred to as "reflexivity"—in order to identify and interrogate the intersections between the self and social life. (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017)

Chang adds to this: “Keeping in mind the triadic balance, I argue that autoethnography should be ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation”. (Chang, 2008)

In the definitive book on the subject, simply entitled “Autoethnography”, Adams et al (2015), share a 6-point system for autoethnography, as a qualitative research method that:

1. uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences;
2. acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others
3. uses deep and careful self-reflection—typically referred to as “reflexivity”—to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political
4. shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles
5. balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity
6. strives for social justice and to make life better.

Poulos, who has been using autoethnography as a research tool for over 25 years, still finds himself asking:

> “How could a researcher write about direct experience of the world, write reflectively, write from memory, write about social or cultural phenomena from a singular ‘first-person’ perspective, and call that research?” Can I really write about myself? Does that count? (Poulos, 2021)

Why use Autoethnography in architecture? For Poulos, it is because “Autoethnographers seek to craft compelling tales”, which chimes strongly with what has been coming through in feedback from ecological movements, the need to “tell better stories”. Poulos adds:

> Autoethnography involves the writer or researcher in crafting creative narratives shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture and addressed to varied (mostly academic) audiences… “Poulos, 2021)

Witkin, whose area of work is social work, points to areas that this thesis work very much aligns to, as well as its potential for radical change. For him:

> Autoethnography was oriented toward revealing cultural and societal contexts of meaning and the relational dynamics that construct and regulate our lives. It provided a potentially valuable window into marginalized lives and unnoticed stigma and amplified silenced voices. In short, it had transformative potential. (Witkin, 2022)

For Chang (2008) the benefits of autoethnography lie in three areas:

1. it offers a research method friendly to researchers and readers;
2. it enhances cultural understanding of self and others; and
3. it has a potential to transform self and others to motivate them to work toward cross-cultural coalition building.

But she also warns autoethnographers of pitfalls that they should avoid in doing autoethnography:

1. excessive focus on self in isolation from others;
2. overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation;
3. exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source;
4. negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and
5. inappropriate application of the label autoethnography

Regarding one of the key parts of the autoethnographic practice, Chang warns about reflexivity:

> Despite the long-standing interest in self in anthropology, self- reflexivity has not been readily embraced by some anthropologists and social scientists. Salzman (2002) is one of the critics of reflexivity. He argues that the postmodern obsession with self-reflexivity and with ethnographer subjectivity stalls the progress of anthropology. His critique illustrates the existing tug of war between two positions- objectivity vs. subiectivity in social science. The objectivity position promotes the "scientific," systematic, approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation that can be validated by more than re- searchers themselves; on the other hand, the subjectivity position allows researchers to insert their personal and subjective interpretation into the research process. (Chang, 2008).

To close on this overview of the definitions of autoethnography, we have looked at some of the key issues about what it is and how to carry it out, but like the 3-pillar structure of the thesis, we have not focused enough on the why. For that, I close with the wise words in "Why Autoethnography?" from two of the leading people in the field, the US couple Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis:

> Autoethnography addresses the need and desire to make the human sciences more human by writing in ways that are more poignant, touching, vulnerable, and heartfelt. Since social work is a field not only of facts but also of meanings and values, researchers should not be obliged to cling to a narrow range of methodologies and writing genres that may be scientifically acceptable but poorly suited to the broad objectives of the field. Concerned more with evocation than information, autoethnography enables researchers and practitioners to address what it feels like, and what it can mean, to be alive and living in a chaotic and uncertain world, and to show others how they might endure it and move forward. As we developed evocative autoethnography, we not only questioned the boundaries between social sciences and humanities, we tried to stretch and cross them in ways that would create new practitioners and new genres for representing lived experience appealing to the hearts and senses of readers as well as their intellects. (Bochner & Ellis, 2022).

3.1.1 Introduction to the author

My name is Duncan Crowley. This is the anglicised version of Donnchadh O'Cruadhlaoich that means, roughly, "Dark Warrior, Son of a Tough Warrior", in our Gaelic Irish language. Sadly today, many Irish people and place names in the English language are meaningless. But in Irish, they are rooted from our deep history. Thankfully, our old ways were never fully killed off.

I am an Irish architect who has had a somewhat strained relationship with the conventional world of architecture, and so found myself "doing architecture" in different ways, in different places, with different communities for over a quarter century. This journey has resulted in me learning different languages while moving to live with, learn from and participate with an array of peoples, projects and communities during three major moments; Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain) (2006-2013), Curitiba, Brazil (2014-2018) and Lisbon, Portugal (2018-present). Other, shorter, but intense moments include architectural experiments in Ireland, England, Scotland, Croatia, Bosnia, France, Denmark, Italy and Peru. Other valid architectural moments also happened in the virtual realm.

I graduated as an architect in 2005 from what was then called DIT Bolton Street (Dublin Institute of Technology) and is now call Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), doing a thesis about an 18km greenway with community gardens for Dublin city, that involved real world experimentation and implementation[39], it is explored in the architectural moments section below. During breaks from my university period, I worked for some years with the Traynor O'Toole Partnership, now called TOT Architects. This included being lead designer of Haven House, a public shelter for homeless Dublin women and their children.

I travelled to Barcelona and worked as an architect in a multidisciplinary ecological consultancy office called Eco Intelligent Growth (EIG) that carried out Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and Cradle to Cradle (C2C) certification in Spain, as well as collaboration with US architect and C2C co-founder William McDonough, until the fall out of the 2008 economic crisis in 2009. In this time, I co-authored "Towards a healthier, happier, eco-effective Barcelona", as part of a White Paper for the Advising Board for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS). I travelled to Curitiba, Brazil, to understand if the city was as green as was rumoured. To see how well it had dealt with the social challenges of extreme poverty and to examine how well urban transformation held up to a quickly growing city. I attained my Masters in the Environment and Development course called MADE (Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento) from the Federal University of Parana (UFPR) in 2018, in a multidisciplinary course focusing on Urban Sustainability and Citizen Participation40. I returned to Europe, and Lisbon city, to begin my PhD in 2018, hearing positive news of sustainability, community and urban developments in Portugal. Other factors were Portugal's safety and security levels, coming from Brazil's increasingly politically violent culture in lead up to Bolsonaro's elections, and the desire to live closer to the mighty Atlantic Ocean again.

This thesis is the result of work using action research for a PhD in the "Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories"[41] course in ISCTE University in Lisbon, Portugal, within the "Cities and Territories" line. My choice of supervisors, relates to the two main linked questions of the thesis that respond to ecological emergency; with Teresa Marat-Mendes, Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at ISCTE, I explore WHAT is being created; the emerging urban and architectural forms and processes. With Roberto Falanga, Assistant

[39] Architectural Thesis, 2005: CATALYST @ Botanic Spine https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327078823_CATALYST_Botanic_Spine
[40] Masters Thesis, 2018: Constructing a Sustainable City through Citizen Participation: Local Responses from Civil Society groups in Curitiba, Brazil http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35821.23525
[41] PhD in Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories, ISCTE https://www.iscte-iul.pt/degree/code/085/doctorate-degree-phd-in-architecture-of-contemporary-metropolitan-territories

Researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS), I explore HOW communities are organizing and responding. While doing my PhD with ISCTE, I am an assistant researcher in the Cities and Territories research group of DINÂMIA'CET (Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies). From my involvement with UrbanA (2019-2022), I became a contracted worker with the Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Changes (CE3C) at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon (FCUL) and I remain with them as an external collaborator with the Plant-Soil Ecology (PSE) group. Much of the meetings with my supervisors and thesis writing happens between these three locations in the University City campus in the Campo Grande region of Lisbon: FCUL, ISCTE & ICS.

My involvement with ECOLISE began in 2019 when I began work on the UrbanA project, and thus was contracted by FCUL, a member of the ECOLISE network. Later that year, I joined ECOLISE's General Assembly (GA) and was invited to participate in their climate delegation that went to the COP21 in Madrid, part of the wider climate network they are part of; Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe. In 2020 I began participation on the Erasmus+ project Ecovillage Transition in Action (ETiA), which involved collaboration with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), and I began collaborating on the Transformative Cities initiative, which ECOLISE was a co-member of. I was the FCUL delegate at the 2021 GA tasked to vote on various point, I also stood for the ECOLISE council elections and was selected. I was twice selected as one of two co-presidents of the ECOLISE council (2021 & 2022). I stood down to begin work with ECOLISE for 2,5 years from July 2022 till December 2024, firslty in communications and later on the Horizon European project Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas (FLIARA) and two more smaller Erasmus+ projects: Regenerative Communities for All (REGEN4ALL), again in collaboration with GEN, and We Are Voices of Ecology (WAVE). I was also ECOLISE's Portuguese National Contact Point (NCP) for 2 years for the European Day of Sustainable Communities (EDSC) program in 2022 and 2023.

As a young boy of about 8 or 9 years old, my Dublin Grandparents, my father's parents, took me to Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin city. This was where Irish revolutionaries were imprisoned and where the rebel leaders of Ireland's 1916 rebellion were executed, including James Connolly strapped to the chair. This strange mix of poets, teachers, Irish language lovers and revolutionary socialists led to our people's freedom from the British empire, after 700 years of occupation, oppression and famine. But we are still a still divided island and people. When I had to do my first school project in 3rd class, I remember classmates did theirs on spiders, football clubs and the like, but I strongly remember drawing carefully the face and writing the short bio for each of the seven signatories of the proclamation of Independence, the feminist

manifesto that called for political change in Ireland, on my A1 board. This was the beginnings of my political journey, which has led me to undertaking this PhD.

That Grandmother, originally Kathleen Cremin, was from Cork city. She went off in the 1940s to improve her Irish language, *Gaeilge*, in *Baile an Fheirtéaraigh* (Ballyferriter) outside Dingle, in County Kerry, one of the last few *Gaeltacht* areas on the island, areas where the Irish language is still the main language used. My grandparents were Irish culture and language enthusiasts, both were involved in the world of education, both committed to improving their country, then just over 20 years a free and independent, but poor and struggling state. There she met Paddy Crowley, an orphan from an early age, who had somehow been reared by his older brothers. They fell in love and agreed to marry. When my Granny told her parents in Cork, they asked where he was from, to which she responded the village of Labasheeda in South Clare. Their response was to not to give their consent to such a marriage, saying famously in our family "They're all mad west of the Shannon". Being strong minded feminists and republicans of sorts, they paid no heed to this lack of consent, eloped and moved together to the capital city Dublin to start a new life.

The River Shannon is the longest river on either of the islands of Ireland or Britain and it is where one of the fiercest chapters of ethnic cleansing happened in Ireland, when the English sent Oliver Cromwell over to sort the "Irish problem" in 1650. Under the call of "to Hell or to Connacht", droves of indigenous Irish who resisted colonial conquest were either converted, killed in battle or massacre, or driven across the great river to the areas of rocky lands difficult to grow and cultivate food. 300 years later, my great grandparents still believed that people from that region, with Clare in the southern most section, were mad and wild.

My father Finbarr was born in Dublin. He later met and married a Clare woman, Brega Shannon, who had come to Dublin for work. My mother was from a typical enough Irish scenario from some time back, when Ireland was poor and emigration was rampant. She was from a very small farm, there were 5 kids, four girls and one boy. The first girl emigrated to the US, the 2nd to Canada, the 3rd to England, my mother was sent up to Dublin and the only boy stayed at home to later take over the farm. My parents married and settled in Dublin.

When we were young, most times when not in school in Dublin, were spent with family down in West Clare, in my mother's small village, Lahinch, 10 km down from the mighty 120-metre-high Cliffs of Moher, at the edge of the old world, on the lively shore of "white horses" (waves) of the wild Atlantic Ocean. During summers we kids would help in the *Meitheals* that still existed then. *Meitheal* is the Irish word for a work team, gang, or party and denotes the co-operative labour system in Ireland where groups of neighbours help each other (Robinson,

2025). We would help "take in" the hay in June, when the meadows were cut for animal feed over the winter months. We would work all day taking in bales of hay into the shed by tractor and trailer with my Uncle Pat, Granddad Pappy Shannon and his wider family like Jimmy Shannon and some of his kids and other pals from the village like Willy Stackpool and his kids, the twins Joe and Liam. At times our American, Canadian or English cousins would also be back. With us and our Lahinch cousins, there was plenty of jobs to be done. After a long day's work, a "spread" would be put up on the kitchen table of the small farmhouse by my Granny, Maize Shannon, of sandwiches, cake and tea. They were beautiful, pure and innocent times.

I was slagged for being a "Jackeen", because I was from Dublin and had my accent, strongly different from the West Clare one. A Jackeen is a derogatory nickname for the Dublin people, coming from the Unionist past when Britain's flag, the Union Jack, was flown. Many areas around Lahinch reminded us of the recent colonial past; zones of combat during the Irish war for independence of 1919-1922, like the successful Rineen Ambush on British troops and the subsequent Black and Tans burning of Ennistymon town and murders on the bridge. Also, the starkest of reminders, the field of stones behind what was the old workhouse, a mass grave of many who died during *An Gorta Mór* (The Great Hunger) from 1845-50, what is incorrectly referred to as "the famine" globally, when despite much food existing, about 1 million native Irish died and another 2 million emigrated (Woodham Smith, 1962), followed by a constant stream of Irish emigration ever since.

Steeped in our people's history of place, much of the play time in Lahinch we kids enjoyed alone was spent at war games, practicing with hay forks or hurls (sticks for old native Irish game with a ball) as guns, creeping through corn fields to attack imagined English barracks. Then, in the 1980s, a full-scale war was going on in the deeply divided, very dangerous and sectarian North of the island, with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) demanding the full departure of British forces and full reunification of the island, being opposed by loyalist paramilitary groups and the British state. "The Troubles" led to 3,500 deaths, 50,000 causalities and generations traumatised by war.

I elaborate here in this section for three reasons; understanding my families move from the village to the city, remnants of older ways to inform part of today's regenerative movements and the political nature of certain Irish upbringings. As to my Great Grandparents statement that "They're all mad west of the Shannon": upon reflection, I am in agreement. They are.

Those West of the Shannon, my People, are indeed mad, but it is not a bad mad, it is the best type of mad: Those that have never forgotten who they are and where they have come from. Those who never fully lost their old connections with the magic of people and place.

3.1.2 Architecture as a political act

From working for a number of years in various types of architectural offices, from various scaled projects with TOT Architects in Dublin, to small and very local in Galway (Ireland), to Ireland's largest urban firm in Dublin before leaving Ireland in 2006, I got an understanding of the professional side of the trade. My personal journey led me to finding means of doing architecture in different ways, with different communities and in different places.

From 2001 to 2004 I was the Irish National Contact for the European Architecture Student Assembly (EASA)[42], which led self-organised summer schools in various European locations since 1981 in Liverpool. Normally about 400 students and tutors live together for 2 weeks, carry out experimental projects, buildings and interventions, and party hard. I participated in the legal occupation of a derelict army barracks on the Croatian island of Vis in 2002, just after the war. In 2003, we lived in Frilande ecovillage, outside Aarhus in Denmark, and helped build some buildings with the community there. In 2004 we lived in and helped transform *la Condition Publique*, an old Industrial factory complex in Roubaix, Lille, France, under the guidance of Patrick Bouchain, "a French architect who designs situations as much as he designs buildings" (Spatial Agency, 2025). I also participated in a national contacts meeting on the Danish Island of Bornholme during which we fully designed and built a small straw bale construction for a Danish outdoor school over one week in early 2003. Later in 2003 I participated in a smaller gathering in the capital city of the Serbian region of Bosnia, Banja Luka, my 1st eco city project.

After EASA, I reconnected with Patrick Bouchain and his EXYZT collaborators during the 2006 Venice Biennale. His crew transformed the French Pavilion from an exhibition space into a living system, a sort of autonomous pirate ship, where a crew of about 30 people from all over the world, lived together, ate, held talks, did interventions and much more over a 4-month period (Fig 3.1). I was invited to join their space for 2 weeks and to interact how I saw fit[43].

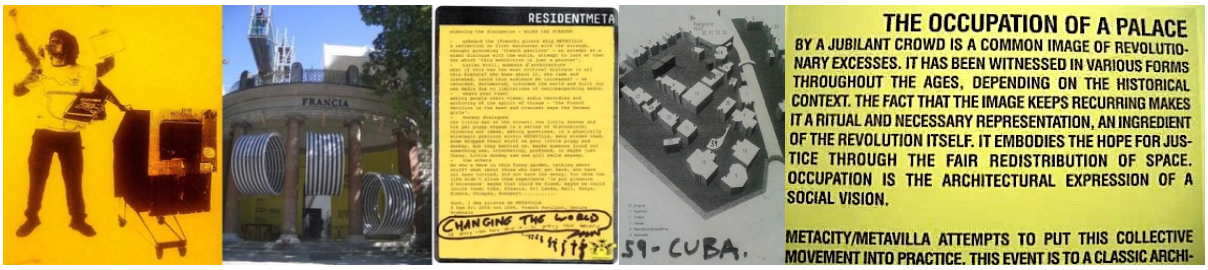


Figure 3.1: Onboard METAVILLA (Author, 2006. Text: EXYZT)

[42] EASA (European Architecture Students Assembly) https://www.easanetwork.org/
[43] Onboard METAVILLA https://itsafunnyoldworld.wordpress.com/2006/09/24/metavilla/

I also worked on a number of building sites since 1995 in Ireland, Germany and the US over summers and half year periods to earn money. These sites included many different types; new suburban housing estates outside Dublin, to knock and rebuild of an old urban block in Galway, to huge building refitting systems in Germany including Munich's Hilton Park. Working with, and at times living with, teams of builders thought me different aspects of the architectural process: The sheer act of architecture is violent destruction of the old coupled with brute force to build the new; Social dynamics about working with men, and women also on sites in Germany in 1999, respecting your place in the system, being able to chat to people from all walks of life and learning quickly on your feet to avoid exploitation; Developing the physical strength for tough manual labour. Architects can benefit greatly from a bit of humble site work.

Ultimately architecture is about solving problems. A challenge is given, within certain parameters, from which an infinite number of responses can be created. This can be a small building, a big building, an urban block, a tiny public square, a large urban park, a natural landscape involving flowing water and wild areas. Architects have branched out into other areas of design, and other creative fields, too: civil engineering, furniture design, eating utensils, new inventions, and ephemeral things like art, communications, events, games and film. Often, in my world, it seemed architects were mostly concerned about getting their buildings featured in glitzy architectural magazines, one step beyond the empty world of fashion, forgetting architecture's primary concern was for the creation of quality spaces for people to exist in, that ultimately, contributes to the shell where all humans can live their best possible lives. Finding a staleness in my own education, led me to taking work-travel breaks, seeking deeper meaning.

Since a shift of sorts during my first summer working abroad, after my first year of university in 1996, I returned to university intent to begin deeper explorations into things. This led me to getting involved in ecological, peace and political work, as well as seeking to connect deeper with nature. My alternative education process involved climbing mountains, studies of eastern philosophies, visiting and getting to know life in a still divided Belfast, getting involved in online community journalism and seeking out wild nature; where salmon jumped up the falls of the river Dargle, outside Dublin. In 1999, after completing my university's junior cycle, I took a yearlong break, working for half, travelling for half. I went overland from West Clare to the mountains of India, to visit and learn the realities of different peoples and cultures, in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and the many cultures of India.

Since the "Battle of Seattle" happened in the US city to shut down the World Trade Organization (WTO) in November 1999, a globally connected, anti-globalization movement came into being. Thanks especially to emerging forms of new communications, principally

email and the internet, it changed the political landscape of globalisation forever (Capra, 2002). It united trade unions, ecology, indigenous and climate movements and radical urban anti-capitalist movements. This movement led to Critical Mass bike rides and Reclaim the Streets happenings on the streets of Dublin, as punks, ravers, freaks and people from various political groups aimed to take control of the streets to highlight the council's urban planning preference for the car over healthy and safe pedestrian spaces. In many instances the police responded with heavy use of violence to clear the streets to let the traffic flow again.

Living in England for the year when the illegal war broke out in Iraq was a major learning curve in political organisation, direct action and understanding the strong relationships between architecture and power. Faced by a growing threat of war, communities organised politically. On the day of war on March 20th 2003, the peace groups I was part of in Oxford succeeded in shutting down the city, temporarily. Again, riot cops were sent in to violently disperse the peace activists of all ages. Big marches happened in the big cities, to little effect. I got involved with the growing global community-led independent media network, Indymedia, to tell our truths. Radical peace groups, horrified by war, encouraged communities to rise up and non-violently destroy the infrastructure of the war machine; to pull down the fences and shut down the war ports where the US B52 bombers left from to fly to Iraq to blow up men, women and children.

On returning to Ireland in September 2003, and despite it being a neutral country, Shannon airport was being used to ferry US troops and ammunitions to Iraq. This illegal activity of a neutral country's airport is still unresolved today, and is contended by socialist and republican political parties who have never been in government. I have been involved with many other moments in various countries where the power of space is challenged and an alternative narrative is shared about how a place can be, some are explored as case studies below.

Communities can, and I would argue should, fight for a better world. How they see best to do so, is their choice. I work with non-violent groups. Many forms of urban space organisation have been improved since the early 2000's, but things can go further. Architecture is a political act, and everybody should be able to participate in the process to dream about an improved, dignified, peaceful and equitable future for their world. What we are seeing in many cities, especially in Lisbon currently, are the growing forces of Neoliberal capitalism run riot, where communities are driven out, as foreign investors are able to buy up real estate, to maximize profit. The urban realm has increasingly become a battle ground.

The work presented here comes from a place of Peace, Love and Rage! Since late 1996, my "work" has tried to make sense of, and respond positively to, a very strange and dark notion; that humanity increasingly finds itself in a multi-folded ecological emergency that threatens our

collective existence. This is not a theoretical exercise. From the regenerative and activist sense, it means living these values. It means finding ways to live my daily life well, while fighting for an ecologically sound and socially just world.

This has led me to moments participating with different sorts of "communities" that I believe are responding to the range of intertwined challenges our family, the human species, collectively face, as we just about cling onto life in our seriously undervalued, underappreciated, much exploited and damaged home. I have sought pathways to understand how to live and work in ways that contribute to a healthy planet and fair society. I have explored, and continue to explore, what such a utopian vision means, practically: How space and resources are shared fairly. Who has access to the tools and processes of decision making so that space is organised in a fair and democratic way. What are the true impacts of the work we all do and lives we all live. Why are we living in such an unhealthy and disconnected way.

Peace and Love reflects the hippy attitude; sit back, feel part of the universe, let love work things out. That meditation can bring people together to remedy the ills of the world. A naïve hope that love alone will work things out. Love and Rage reflects a more punk attitude, inspired by the North American "Love and Rage" anarchist organization active from the 1980s till 1998. They published newspapers and supported the indigenous Zapatista's uprising since 1994 in Mexico. Their politics emphasized intersectional anarchist communism across multiple currents including anti-racism, anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, feminism, queer and youth liberation. Many anarcho-inspired movements today still sign communications off with - Love and Rage - The rage is against global systems of destruction and oppression. At the extreme, many groups support the elimination of these systems through revolution by armed insurrection.

To be clear, my own choice to use - Peace, Love and Rage! – is intentional. The rage is necessary. Vandana Shiva declared in 1988 "The earth is rapidly dying". The earth is not dying, it is being killed. Powerful dominant economic and political systems have created this ever-worsening ecological emergency, and continue to maintain it for their greed. They have chosen to destroy our future, for their profit. Many of us see their position as a declaration of war on our home and our shared future existence. But we do not have to fight back with violence. Since 1996, I have chosen the path of non-violence, following the paths of Gandhi, Bhave, Kumar and many more. The projects presented here are all explicitly peaceful. Many of us not only hope that we will achieve our goals, but deeply believe these wild dreams will become realities.

We fight for a world where the human species finds its humanity again, where social justice ensures equality for all. We fight for a world that lives in harmony with the natural systems we are all part of. We fight for a world that has learned to love our home again. We fight to live.

3.1.3 Becoming an Engaged Researcher

The engaged researcher means I became employed to work professionally in the areas, projects and communities that I had participated with to varying degrees since 1996. A new pathway, or a magical window of opportunity, opened for me in March 2019, thanks to my friend Gil.

Since before arriving in Portugal, I had begun to investigate what local Transition, Permaculture and related projects existed in the Lisbon area and from late 2018, when I began my PhD, I began searching for written academic work from people involved with local projects. I learned about ECOLISE and the action research work Gil Penha-Lopes[44] and Tom Henfrey had been doing to support CLIs. In February 2019 I met Gil at the Permalab (Permaculture Living Lab), a permaculture inspired community-based project. It is a wonderful community garden, mini forest and scientific research experiment, run by people working and studying at FCUL. It is a public transition project, with fruit trees, a pond, various systems of compost, 2 greenhouses with lots of seedlings and a social area for the people care side of things. It is the continuation of the earlier HortaFCUL (FCUL garden)[45] project that started in 2009, with support from CE3C. I met Gil there in March 2019, he showed me around and we spent a few hours in the afternoon working together, trimming cherry blossom trees, while discussing our shared journeys and similar interests. He said he was working on an urban project and asked if I might be interested in getting involved, seeing as it was very much aligned to my urban activist background and line of investigation of my PhD. His suggestion was that I would be able to support in a stacking way, where the work I would do could feed into the UrbanA project, which in turn would feed into the ongoing work of ECOLISE, which would also feed into my PhD research and lastly all this could feed back into the work I had begun with urban communities and projects in Lisbon, to hopefully assist in bringing about real change on the ground.

He later shared the initial outline report about the UrbanA project, I explored it, it looked like an amazing opportunity and I agreed to join the team. It took some time to sort the bureaucratic side of things, but I was soon part of the UrbanA Portugal team. That day in a wild little corner of Lisbon, just off the main motorway to the airport and behind a public park where a family of wild peacocks live and squawk, a massive window of opportunity opened. I was not to know it then, but by working, chatting, listening and sharing stories with this generous man, a whole new pathway was about to open for me, in life, academia and friendship.

[44] Gil Pessanha Penha-Lopes on CE3C / FCUL: https://www.ce3c.pt/research/research-groups/towards-sustainable-and-resilient-ecosystems/plant-soil-ecology/gil-pessanha-penha-lopes
[45] HortaFCUL on FCUL https://ciencias.ulisboa.pt/pt/horta-fcul / Linktree https://www.instagram.com/hortafcul

3.2. Application of Autoethnography to the PhD Thesis and the Field of Architecture

The chief aim of the thesis is to examine how "the" ecological community are responding to the ecological crisis, but as has been outlined in the Literature Review, there is not one unified group, there are a wide array of many, many, different groups, all with different critiques of the problem and even more solutions to it. Sometimes, there is often little or no interaction between groups that an outsider might reckon collaborate widely together. For this, the PhD seeks to explore the small area in which I have worked over the years, with a particular focus on the work done during the PhD period 2019 – 2024. Using the autoethnographic method allows me to identify what was done in different periods, with groups, projects, movements or communities, and to critically reflect on things, from a later date. As someone who has been a climate activist for over a quarter-century, I see my work as building bridges between different communities, languages, movements, and peoples. With that, I have outlined a structure that seeks to make academic arguments through the Literature Review, that can be backed up through the careful selection of key moments from those 30 years which appear in the Case Studies, especially in the 2 main projects explored UrbanA and ECOLISE. They are all explored further in the discussion areas below. I seek to use the writing process to see if links can be made between people, projects and communities, as well as identifying common blockages.

The 30-year period under exploration is fitting as it comprised of four seven-year cycles, where seven years was seen as a circuit of sorts in many spiritual and scientific worlds, including the ecovillage world. The work aims to assess and make sense of 30 years of activity in what is now deemed climate action and explore relationships with architecture. This timeframe starts from the summer of 1996, when a shift of sorts happened, until the end of 2026, just over 4 periods of 7 years. The corresponding periods are from the work and activism in areas I have lived, with some breaks between. The rough timeframe is below (Fig 3.2)

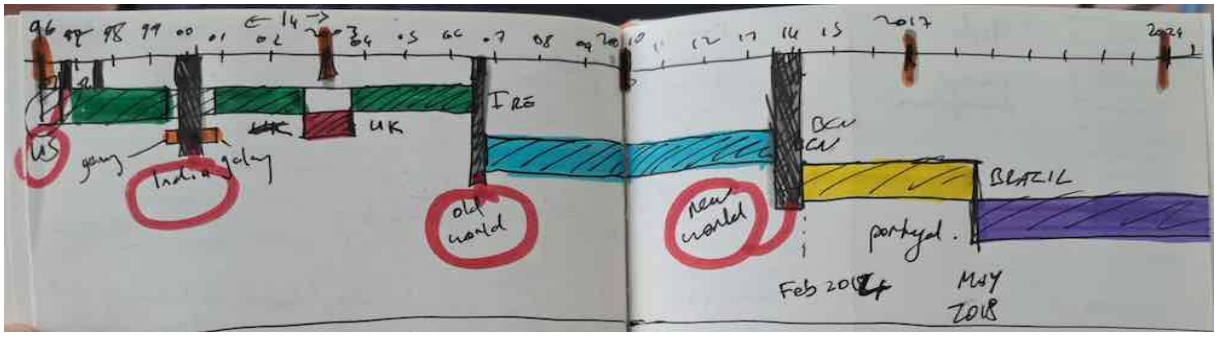


Figure 3.2: Authors timeframe 1996 - 2024 (Author, 2024)

- Ireland, 1996 – 2006 (with a smaller moment in England, 2002-2003): 10 years
- Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, 2006 – 2013: 7 years
- Curitiba, Brazil, 2014 – 2018: 4 years
- Lisbon, Portugal, 2018 – 2026: 8 years & counting.

As has been discussed in the thesis earlier, scaling and the zoning of work matters. In regenerative design we have a nested systems approach to work and in permaculture there is a zoning system, from the inside to the external edge. I have applied this thinking to where the work has happened, in the examples explored in the Case Studies below. Also in the regenerative world is the notion of becoming more connected to place. In my case I am now living in the neighbourhood of Parede, in the *Junta de Freguesia* (Local Council) of Carcavelos & Parede, in the municipality of Cascais, in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (AML), in Portugal and Europe. Also, having moved to Lisbon in 2018, I now live in my third location, previous to Parede I lived in the neighbourhood of Ajuda in the Lisbon municipality and on first arrival we lived in Rio do Mouro, in the Sintra municipality, also in the AML. When it comes to the scale of my work, I use the Regenerative Development & Nested Systems approach, as outlined below (Fig 3.3). Many of the ECOLISE work happened at the "Whole" level, whereas the SOS work happens at the "Local" level, but sometimes a community can be active at all levels at the same time. This difference of scale is explored again below.

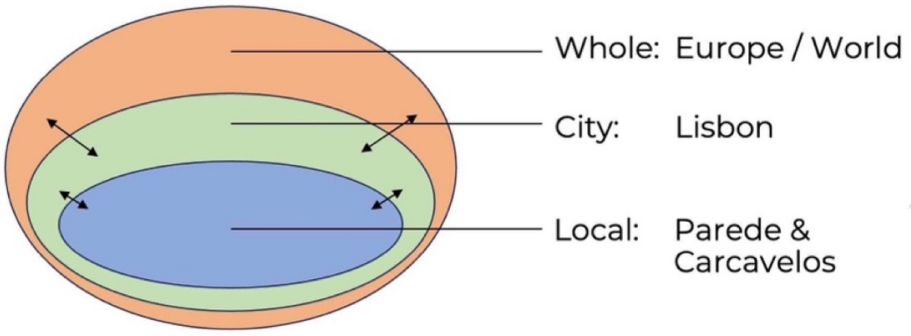


Figure 3.3: Regenerative Nested Systems approach for PhD structure (Author, 2025)

The resulting discussion is a reflection of the work done, to assess what worked, what did not, and identify areas for future work, for both engaged research and action for social movements and grassroots activist groups and projects. Also, there is the attempt to reflect upon how this affects the world of architecture, the built environment, landscape and engineering. Responses from the field can be assessed from a series of regional levels too.

3.2.1 Guidelines for Case Study selection and analysis

The projects and communities examined in the Case Studies are what I had direct involvement with, to varying degrees, between 1996 and 2026. The Case Studies are divided into two sections; and "Engaged Research" (2019 – 2024) and "Grassroots Activism" (1996 – 2026). "Engaged Research" covers the two main case studies of this thesis, UrbanA and ECOLISE, with whom I worked professionally during my PhD period, from 2019 to 2024.

The "Grassroots Activism" section is further divided into two subsections: "Architectural Moments" and "Ecological Communities". "Architectural Moments" identifies a series of six key activities of architectural activity that I was directly involved with between 1996 and 2026. A short overview of each is shared, where possible links are given to further reporting, sometimes including videos, audio files, photos, blog posts etc. Each case study is explored from the self-ethnographical approach to critically assess their logic, impact, and to search for helpful insights. Their later selection intends to weave together a narrative about spatial organization and architectural approaches that, to varying degrees, have contributed to responding from a community-led and regenerative approach to Ecological Emergency.

The subsection "Ecological Communities" examines five ecovillage projects I visited or engaged with in different periods (A further 2 more of lesser importance are in the Annex) since 1999. The first three were examined during the PhD process, the rest beforehand. The relationship with each and how it fed into wider work is described in that subsection.

The final part of this subsection is "Ecocity World Summits". Weaving throughout the thesis are insights from Ecocity work. This does not claim that all case studies examined are actually ecocities, as the term itself is still a contested term. It explores physical places and communities I had direct involvement with. Ecocity Banja Luka, Bosnia, was a week-long EASA project I participated in, in 2003. Dublin, Barcelona and Curitiba were places where I lived for some years. I set up ecocity groups in two places to engage in various activities with communities, in Barcelona I wrote an eco-urban paper when working in an eco-consultancy. Ecocity Builders oversee global ecocity discussions and activity. I describe my initial interaction with this group in 2017 for the Curitiba festival I co-created in Brazil followed by my collaboration in their Ecocity Builders Virtual World, with UrbanA in 2020. I participated and had posters displayed at their last two bi-annual World Summits, the posters are included below. Firstly Rotterdam, moved from 2021 due to COVID, and the 2023 Summit in London. For the first I only watched parts of the discussions online. I had a poster displayed and was an invited speaker in 2023. In the discussion and conclusion sections the idea of Community-led ecocities is explored in greater detail.

3.2.2 Case Studies under reflection: Part 1: Engaged Research

This section of Engaged Research covers a six-year period from 2019 until the end of 2024, during which time I worked in various capacities with two projects: UrbanA and ECOLISE. The methodology used for this thesis is autoethnography, where I reflect on past actions with a range of communities that I have been part of, participated with and whose vision of change I agree with, support and work toward. In this sense, I am not a neutral, cold, unattached observer. The autoethnography reflection process allows for a critical assessment of a small area of the work of CLIs to respond to ecological emergency, what was tried, what worked, what blockages existed and what might enable advancement in these dark times.

Both Case studies were selected for the critical work they are doing to respond to ecological emergency. ECOLISE from work to build up the regenerative movements in Europe that works to affect policy decisions within the EU. UrbanA critically examines issues of climate injustice in the Global North, where disadvantaged and minority communities often are affected by new forms of sustainable development, that include forms of gentrification and urban displacement. Each case study is explored separately. Firstly, my work during PhD period with ECOLISE (European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability) and then with the EU funded Horizon project UrbanA (Urban Areas for Sustainable Just Cities), from March 2019 until December 2024, and was very much an ECOLISE led project.

The first stage of this work began when I was invited to participate with UrbanA, March 2019 till December 2021. This was followed by a second stage when I was hired as the network weaver to support the project, renamed to UrbanCommunity, from January 2022 till April 2023. UrbanA was very much an ECOLISE led academic project, of the 7 partners in the consortium, there was ECOLISE and 3 very active members of the network; DRIFT, FCUL, and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI initially stood for "International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives"). Since beginning this work, it was clear there was a strong layering of the work, which has both positive and negative dynamics; the work I began to support could feed into UrbanA, ECOLISE, my PhD research and the communities we were supporting and interacting with on the ground. A negative side of this, which is common to many people's experiences working with social movements and action research, is there is a messiness, where it can become unclear where the lines are drawn between projects, where work stops and life begins. As I increased engagement with ECOLISE, from late 2019, I began to assist in their work to create, support and develop Communities of Practice (CoP), one of which was the "Sustainable Just Cities" CoP with UrbanA.

The main academic approach I have used since the masters I undertook in Brazil in 2016 has been Participatory Action Research, which is inspired by Social Ecology principles, seeking to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection, with the author learning about, with and from groups they engage with. Action researchers often seek out the ideas, communities and solutions that exist at the edges. They were a key part of the original group that created ECOLISE in 2014. The hope was to try to take the ideas and solutions from the edges and bring them more into the mainstream, in both academia, but more so in the real world, so that methodologies such as GEN became more recognized, also that they challenged many of the mainstream narratives and key values. A secondary reason for action research was that a fair exchange of sorts can also be created, where the act of such engagement can bring resources to such groups, many of whom increasingly struggle to keep going. Many of the early action researchers who created ECOLISE were either practitioners, already living in or experimenting with living in such communities, or already convinced that the regenerative solutions they were creating carried the seeds for what the world needed to counter ecological emergency. FCUL was one of the key academic points supporting this work.

The UrbanA project explored how best the bottom-up world of grassroots initiatives, social movements and CLIs could better interact with the top-down world of power, municipalities, local government, mayors and national government to bring about urban transformation. It being an ECOLISE led project, it fed into the deep work ECOLISE has been doing since 2014.

ECOLISE placed further emphasis on how best the various members of its now 50+ member network could communicate better together, to develop policy recommendations together, to discuss them and try to have implemented in the EU. Included in these ECOLISE discussions was much ideas around the call of “System change, not climate change”, which incorporates how Europeans social justice groups can best respond issues of climate justice where previously unseen core values of the Global North and EU actively contribute to ongoing forms of exploitation, repression and violence in the Global South. ECOLISE seeks to identify, work with and support regenerative communities active on the ground at different scales.

3.2.3 Case Studies under reflection: Part 2: Grassroots Activism

- **Architectural Moments**

The six architectural moments (Table 4) are selected from a list of 40 (Annex B, Table 16) from a period since 1996, covering a diverse range of community-led interventions, bringing together the artistic, architectural, technological, cultural, ecological and political, of various projects, communities, building projects, political occupations, direct actions, even theatre pieces.

The six best relate to the thesis theme, each happening in a different city and country, five in Europe and the Global North, one in the Global South. A core exploration of this thesis is the need for CLIs to become better organised, and to, like football, play both home and away. This means some work, actions, or urban moments will happen away from home, in attempts to fight for, or against, something. This is the realm of social movements being in conflict against a force, decision, power, or immediate situation. The home game is where social movements attempt to move from being against, to being in favour of the alternative and try to implement it. This is what we loosely call CLIs, but the scale of the zone of activity can differ; it can be a small urban community trying to create a local park and kids' playground, to the larger scale an ecovillage, or even larger still where a series of actors work together translocally in a Bioregion, for example where community groups work to improve the water quality of their shared river. Some interventions are short lived, but can assist in bringing about wider change. Others are a hopeful experiment, trying to implement change, knowing an action has a precarious future. Others act as a spark, to catalyse a new chapter, new ideas of how to use space, or organise and it brings a new, or more diverse range of communities together, from which other sparks can happen. Some groups refer to this as the wider community ecosystem.

Table 4*:* Six Architectural Moments

Project Name	City	Country	Action Date
Eco City Banja Luka	Banja Luka	Bosnia	March 2003
Botanic Spine & Dolphins Barn Community Garden	Dublin	Ireland	2005 - 2006
Reclaim Power	Copenhagen	Denmark	December 2009
Spanish Revolution - Barcelona	Barcelona	Spain	Summer 2011
Cyclists Square	Curitiba	Brazil	2014
The English Estate	Lisbon	Portugal	2022 - 2026

The term "architectural moments" is inspired by the work and philosophy of Belgian architect Lucien Kroll. He set up Atelier d'Architecture in the 1960s with his wife Simone. They were seen as founders of participatory architecture and led a consultative and immersive approach to the design of the built environment. In 2006, he was invited by Patrick Bouchain to lead a week-long exhibition and series of dialogues at the French Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, METAVILLA, which is where I had the pleasure to meet him, participate in and record some of the dialogues and upload them to the EASA blog. This lovely time was called "Moments D`Architectures" (Architectural Moments)[46]. Kroll called himself an *anarchitect*

[46] Moments D`Architectures, EASA blog, October 2006 https://easa.antville.org/stories/1488710/

(anarchist-architect) because of his stated desire to embrace the complexities and contradictions of the communities his architecture served, rather than serve governmental or economic powers.

- **Ecological Communities**

Although this section contains only insights from moments with seven ecovillages. It feeds into wider work that appears throughout the thesis; the ecocity concept builds on methodologies and value from the ecovillage network GEN. Some proposals were made for three Ecocity World Summits, organised by Ecocity Builders. The final list of Ecovillages under investigation in the Case Studies are 1) Findhorn 2) Cloughjordan 3) Schloss Tempelhof 4) Christiania and 5) Sterling (temporary) ecovillage, the o ther two (Friland, Denmark & Auroville, India) are also covered, but have been moved to the Annex (F). The full list of projects combined that make up this full section are outlined in Table 5:

Table 5*:* Ecological Communities

Project Name	City / Area	Country	Action Date
Ecovillages			
Findhorn	Moray	Scotland (UK)	May 2022
Cloughjordan	Co. Tipperary	Ireland	2020 & 2017
Friland	Aarhus	Denmark	2003
Schloss Tempelhof	Baden-Württemberg	Germany	Feb 2020
Christiania	Copenhagen	Denmark	1999 & 2009
Auroville	Tamil Nadu	India	2000
Sterling (temporary) ecovillage	Sterling	Scotland (UK)	June 2005
Ecocity Projects			
Ecocity Banja Luka	Ecocity Banja	Bosnia	April 2003
Dublin Ecocity Group	Dublin	Ireland	April 2005 - 2006
Towards a healthier, happier, eco-effective Barcelona	Barcelona	Spain (Catalonia)	2006 - 2013
Curitiba Ecocity Group	Curitiba	Brazil	2014 - 2018
Ecocity Lisboa	Lisbon	Portugal	2018 - 2020
Ecocity World Summits			
Curitiba	Curitiba *	Brazil	2017
Online - Virbela	Online		2020
Rotterdam	Rotterdam	Netherlands	2022
London	London	England (UK)	2023

3.3. Case studies & methodological plans for described projects

Participative Action Research

The Participative Action Research (PAR) (Walter, 2009) approach is inspired by Social Ecology principles, seeking to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection, with the author learning about, with and from groups they engage in research and action with. Some work employed this methodology as a bridge between academia and community activism, whereby the author acts as both observer and participant in that which is being investigated. Some misunderstanding and tensions exist between both worlds, but opportunities for improving mutual support also exist. The work seeks to identify and share helpful understandings, perspectives, criticisms and questions from activism and communities to the academic side, while offering the service of the academic process as a practical tool for communities to move forward in better reaching their objectives. Academic outputs also give greater scientific knowledge-based support for community claims.

Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA)

The origins of NVDA are extremely ancient. Gandhi popularised the approach and others built on his actions. His concepts of *Satyagraha* (holding firmly to truth) and *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence) have their origins in the ancient Jain religion found in India. There are also influences from Buddhist doctrines. Gandhi developed his movements as part of the anti-colonial movements for India's independence from the British empire. Martin Luther King was inspired by Gandhi and used non-violent means to challenge the racist, apartheid, white supremacist political domination in the Southern US in the 1960's. The call for "One man, one vote" from that period influenced the Irish communities in "Northern Ireland", to reform the apartheid state for better access to Housing. Many modern social movements use explicitly non-violent means to achieve their objectives, as opposed to taking up arms or attacking police and army forces while trying to bring about system change. When responded to by police violence, group education and the ability to remain calm are important. Many groups feel that embracing violence turns many would be activists away from political movements. Much time goes into NVDA training, to prepare for direct actions, which seek to shut down roads, weapons factories and war airports.

Open Space

Open Space is used much in Transition movements. Hopkins outlined ideas that often in official conferences many people felt the best moments happened in between the main programmed

events; like chance meeting, a quick chat with a stranger over a coffee, or arriving to a full talk and going to something different and learning differently. An Open Space brings a group together. It has a central communication space. It has set rules about timing and agreements. The facilitator(s) lead the dynamic. Time slots are clearly outlined. People are asked if they would like to lead a conversation, or dynamic: If they say yes, rule is they must "hold" that conversation. The group are asked to write any proposed topics. Sometimes facilitators will cluster identical or similar topics. For each section, a number of simultaneous moments happen. Each talk has a paper, on which all are encouraged to contribute and write things on. After each session ends, all participants return and give feedback from their sessions. Other rules includes law of two feet, whereby people can drift between sessions. People can act as butterflies to go between sessions, thereby cross pollinating the discussions.

World Café

World Café's are similar in structure somewhat to Open Space. A world café will have a set number of rounds and tables. Each table has a different theme or question. The whole group of participants will visit each station, where they contribute to ongoing discussion. A host sits to hold each topic. After a rotation, they must inform the new group of a quick summary of earlier points discussed. The idea is that in smaller groups, more interesting discussions can happen, where everybody has a voice and the facilitator has skills to ensure everybody in included.

Constellations

Constellation work is a communication tool, where the chief actors of a conflict or tension point are examined through diverse mechanisms. A skilled and trained facilitator will lead a group to outline a situation, this could be work, family, an organisation or a more abstract situation such as a political system. Different chief characters are identified. Normally objects are used to hold the space of each "character". Different people can also take the place for each "character", a form of being in character. The chief protagonists are asked to speak truthfully and not hold back from feelings or insights that emerge. The current situation is played out. Each character is given a space to move and later speak, from the perspective of the character. A series of moves can happen, which allows for people who have no connections with their character moving as they feel fit. This can include putting themselves into different positions on the floor. After each move, they explain what moved. Through various rounds, this process can open up breakthroughs and allow main protagonists and wider community see group dynamics in a different way. Key breakthroughs often emerge, even for the most sceptical participants.

Meet the Ancestors

This is a special dynamic for allowing new groups to bind. An ice breaker where each person is invited to say as much or as little about their origins. They can go back a few generations, or in some cases hundreds or thousands of years. It helps identify peoples value systems.

Fishbowl

A fishbowl conversation is a form of dialogue that can be used when discussing topics within large groups. Fishbowls involve a small group of people seated in a circle who have a conversation about a specific topic. They are surrounded by a larger group of observers, seated in an outer circle. Normally there are only 5 chairs in the inner circle, with one chair always left empty. The outer circle listens and observes. If someone from the outer circle wants to participate, they move to the inner circle. If all 5 chairs are filled, a participant from the fishbowl must free a chair and move to the outer circle. Best used in conferences, workshops and town hall-type meetings, the Fishbowl focuses the entire group's attention on a discussion among 3 - 6 people. This method requires a facilitator. It is a good tool to discuss difficult topics.

Walks

Walks are either urban or rural, which can be in the countryside or deep in the wilds of nature. They need a leader, or team, to organise, liaise with partners on occasions, and to help guide the walk, ensuring all participants are safe and enjoy the walk. They have many formats. For all walks, a clear design is required, so participants know the duration of the tour, what they will expect, starting and end points. For urban tours, it is possible to identify a number of points to visit on the route, if possible, speakers from those locations, projects or communities can be invited to tell their stories. They can also be asked beforehand if there are certain places they would like to bring the tour group. If tours are difficult or longer than normal, it is essential to inform participants. For tours in nature, there can be a number of durations, from a few hours, to a full day tour, to days, weeks, even months (like Camino routes). Participants need to be given clear guidance about what essential things they should bring with them (hat, rain gear, sun cream). For longer walks, a leader group is best, one person leading at the front, one keeping at the back. Some nature tours lead to a river, where people are invited to enter the water where a discussion takes place. Before this, an option is to have a silent walk with a leading intention. People gather at the start. The guide outlines the walk and invites people to be silent, focus on the experience of walking, listening to nature sounds, allowing peace to listen to themselves, or just to focus on breathing. At any walks end, it is good to celebrate the groups achievement.

CHAPTER 4.

Case Studies

Sustainability is not Enough:
We Need Regenerative Cultures.

Daniel Wahl, 2016

4.1. Engaged Research

4.1.1 UrbanA

UrbanA[47] was a three year (January 2019 to March 2022) European funded academic project that revolved around four "Urban Arenas", each one explored specific themes with a range of "City-Makers" to better understand how to create Sustainable and Just cities. The term UrbanA was the abbreviated form of the full working title "Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities", which was slightly adapted from the originally approved title that received Horizon 2020 EU funding; "Urban Arena for sustainable and equitable solutions". The projects logo (Fig 4.1) represents a multi-layered colourful arena. The CORDIS[48] project outline was:

> Many EU-funded projects have generated valuable knowledge and identified interventions related to societal challenges. The EU-funded UrbanA project synthesises and organises this knowledge in relation to urban injustice and unsustainability. The project supports city-makers in remodelling European cities into just and sustainable environments. UrbanA uses a transdisciplinary approach to map urban sustainability interventions, assess their potential to improve urban social equity and inclusion, and detect appropriate means and agents to transfer them across governance contexts. The UrbanA Community of Practice, a diverse group of city-makers, gathers in translocal urban arena events and online community conversations to learn, share and discuss solutions that are disseminated to key actors at local and European levels.

[47] Initial website, stage 1: https://urban-arena.eu/ (Closed down December 2024)
[48] CORDIS: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/822357



Figure 4.1: Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities (UrbanA, 2019)

UrbanA was led by a consortium of seven partners, which was strongly defined by ECOLISE dynamics and objectives. ECOLISE was one partner, three others were ECOLISE members; the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT) based in Rotterdam, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI initially stood for "International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives") based in Freiburg, Germany and FCUL, the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon, based in Lisbon. The remaining three partners had strong academic interests in these areas of urban justice and sustainability, as well as strong alignment from previous work with partners: The University of Freiburg where ICLEI were based, The Central European University originally based in Budapest, Hungary, who added an important East-West component to the process and the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability (BCNUEJ), which is part of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) in Barcelona, which is one of the leading institutions of the global Degrowth movement. Under the guidance of Matthew Bach and his team, ICLEI led the UrbanA project.

Like all things in early 2020, the project was greatly affected by COVID. The consortium had already planned for hybrid participation in the Arenas, and full online participation for the Community of Practice (CoP), building on both online and social remote ready technologies already being explored, tested and refined by the ECOLISE network. So, the UrbanA team and project were resilient enough to adapt to changing circumstances, the 1st Arena happened physically in Rotterdam and the remaining four were fully online.

The CoP developed well during the project and grew beyond the initial group of UrbanA people. With online social media using the #SustainableJustCities hashtag, interest grew in the project and more people joined the growing CoP. When the academic stage of UrbanA ended in December 2021, funding from the Robert Bosch foundation allowed the CoP continue for another year. This group were a founding partner of ICLEI in the past. I joined UrbanA from

April 2019 till its end in December 2021. He was asked to join the second stage[49], called Urban Community, as the "network weaver", to continue the work of connecting people, projects, communities and ideas, from 2022 till early 2023. Stage 2 was also led by ICLEI.

Cities play a key role in responding to the great challenges of our time. However increasing poverty and inequality, exacerbated by the recent financial and housing crises, are putting the social cohesion and resilience of European cities to the test. Many researchers and innovators have focused on understanding urban social inequality and ecological unsustainability and have identified numerous ways of making cities more just and sustainable. This knowledge and experience needed to be further consolidated and effectively communicated. UrbanA took up this challenge by:

- Distilling and sharing knowledge generated by research and innovation projects and translating it into action.
- Facilitating interaction and knowledge exchange.
- Empowering UrbanA participants to apply this knowledge locally.
- Influencing policies in favour of sustainable and just cities.

The intention was to create hybrid events for each Arena, merging online and physical participants together in a blended format. This happened for the first event, but due to COVID, the final three were all online. The first DRIFT-led Arena focused on mapping approaches to urban sustainability and justice, the second (BCNUEJ-led) explored (in)justice challenges in urban sustainability, the third (FREI-led) focussed on governance arrangements for sustainable and just cities, and the fourth and final (ICLEI-led) centred on policy actions for sustainable and just cities. Each Arena event had between 50 and 100 participants, including the consortium team acting as facilitators and a core group of 25 UrbanA fellows, who were a diverse set of European based "city-makers" who agreed to participate in each Arena and contribute somehow to the wider ecosystem during the 3 years.

Alongside this macro process, the Lisbon team led a similar micro local process, bringing together participants from nearly 30 different urban groups to explore what the project theme meant in a city that in 2019 had been deemed by some commentators the new European capital of gentrification and evictions (Rodríguez 2019). A co-created walking tour led by local housing activists through streets recently cleared of local families finished in a municipal resource centre for an afternoon of group dynamics and dialogues to identify common ground.

[49] Urban Community – Stage 2: https://sustainablejustcities.eu/urban-community-sustainable-just-cities

Artistic graphic capture processes harvested insights from the dialogues on a giant canvas, a process that was to be developed further in each Arena. These insights fed into the first Rotterdam Arena in the following days. Lisbon findings were shared through academic publication (Crowley et al. 2021) and UrbanA social media communications.

With ECOLISE leading the communications side of the project, accessibility and a strong visual identity were key UrbanA concerns. Care was taken with language, so as not to alienate more non-academic audiences, whom the CoP worked with locally.

UrbanA's final output was the creation of 17 keys to unlock Sustainable and Just Cities, which were divided into 4 clusters. Working alongside artist Carlotta Cataldi[50] since the Barcelona Arena, each key got its own image and story that appeared on the new ICLEI created site. With the leading themes explored in each Arena being degrowth and feminism in Barcelona, doughnut economics in Berlin and intersectionality in Brussels, the 17 keys (Table 6) are an accurate and vibrant representation of this wonderful three yearlong discussion.

Table 6*:* UrbanA keys

#	Hashtag	Key
Honest		
1	#ResearchAndInnovation	Justice is hardwired into research & innovation projects on urban sustainability
2	#Economy	The economy benefits people and the environment
3	#Power	Power dynamics are identified and dismantled for more equitable structures
4	#Technology	Digital tools can serve everyone
5	#Responsibility	City-makers take responsibility and are held accountable
Caring		
6	#Solidarity	Solidarity is fairness in action
7	#Accessibility	Green is for everyone
8	#Diversity	Inclusion starts by embracing diversity
9	#Nature	Nature creates living and breathing cities
Regenerative		
10	#Regional	Regional integration makes cities stronger
11	#Art	Art creates a sense of belonging, and has the power to transform places
12	#Participation	Meaningful participation is empowering
13	#Adaptation	Change is inevitable, and adaptation essential
Informed		
14	#Finance	We need new ways of funding

[50] Carlotta Cataldi https://carlottacat.com

15	#Knowledge	Knowledge is owned and managed by the community
16	#Translocal	Sharing local learning brings transformative change
17	#CivilSociety	Anybody can be a change-maker in their community

The final output of this process, ICLEI's "Handbook for sustainable and just cities"[51], was published in 2022. This very well-designed document uses striking artwork of a series of characters, mostly young women, of different colours, some super heroes who embody the keys. One page is devoted to each key, with three written sections: About the key / Questions / Avenue for action. Figure 4.2 shows the Handbook cover and detail of the Civil Society key.



Figure 4.2: Sustainable and just cities handbook. Cover & Civil Society Key (ICLEI, 2022)

The accompanying ICLEI site[52] has a video for each of the 17 keys. ICLEI state that the keys are 17 elements which have the potential to unlock sustainable and just cities. They summarize:

What is a sustainable and just city?

In a sustainable and just city, the economic, political and social choices which created unsustainable and unjust structures are put under the microscope. Sustainable and just city-makers examine the roots of injustice and ecological unsustainability. They actively and openly address the tensions between justice and sustainability. They don't focus on fixing

[51] ICLEI - Handbook for sustainable and just cities https://sustainablejustcities.eu/resources/publication-handbook-sustainable-and-just-cities
[52] 17 keys: https://sustainablejustcities.eu/keys

symptoms. They look at marginalisation and inequality, overconsumption and pollution. They address these challenges through honest and, at times, uncomfortable conversations. They shape their behaviours through the lens of justice and take concrete action, for example on climate adaptation and mitigation. The 17 keys help city-makers in this endeavour.

In 2021, UrbanA won the Integral City of the Year Award[53] adding that "UrbanA through the work of convening, researching, collaborating and curating over the last 3 years culminating with the 4/17 Key Sets is a significant contribution to the Intelligences of a whole region of cities".

UrbanA Knowledge Commons

A key early decision in the implementation of UrbanA was to organize the knowledge co-creation process as a knowledge commons that could potentially persist beyond the lifetime of the project. Commons are resources of some kind that are shared and governed in common, via a set of social and relational processes known as commoning (Euler 2018; Federici 2018), whilst knowledge commons are shared information resources, governed by a community of users according to an agreed set of rules, conventions and procedures (Hess and Ostrom 2007). In the case of UrbanA, the resource was translocal knowledge on sustainable and just cities compiled and synthesized over the course of the project and beyond. As a platform the consortium adopted MediaWiki[54], a well-supported and widely known open-source software application for online knowledge co-creation in wiki format (through its association with the Wikipedia knowledge commons, for which MediaWiki was originally developed). The user community initially consisted of members of the UrbanA consortium who developed the first release of the approaches database based on the mapping process, later opening up to the wider UrbanA CoP. Rules-in-use were developed emergently over the course of mapping by members of the UrbanA consortium. They included the editing guidelines of the Wiki on Sustainable Just Cities[55], as well as facilitation methods and conversational principles during the community conversations, meetings and Arena events. Consortium partners introduced other CoP members

[53] Integral City Region of the Year 2021 https://integralcity.com/2021/12/16/integral-city-association-of-year-2021-urbana-urban-arenas-for-sustainable-and-just-cities/
[54] MediaWiki https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki
[55] Wiki on Sustainable Just Cities https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/UrbanA_Community_of_Practice

to the wiki and clarified rules-in-use at the first Arena event, and at several dedicated online workshops[56] both in the run-up to the event and following it.

The decision to create a knowledge commons was both ethical and methodological. Commons are increasingly recognised, in both theory and practice, as having greater potential to promote, and embody sustainability and justice, when compared to state-led and market-oriented mechanisms, both in general and specifically in cities (Bollier/Helfrich 2019). Creating a knowledge commons, in the context of UrbanA, was in part a response to contradictions between their commitment to sustainability and justice, and the constraints they observed and experienced as a consequence of pressures associated with the professionalization – and hence commodification – of knowledge production (Bollier 2007). By creating a resource that was not necessarily limited by the time boundaries of UrbanA itself, they hoped not only to map knowledge from previous research, but at the same time to create a legacy for their work that could persist into the future.

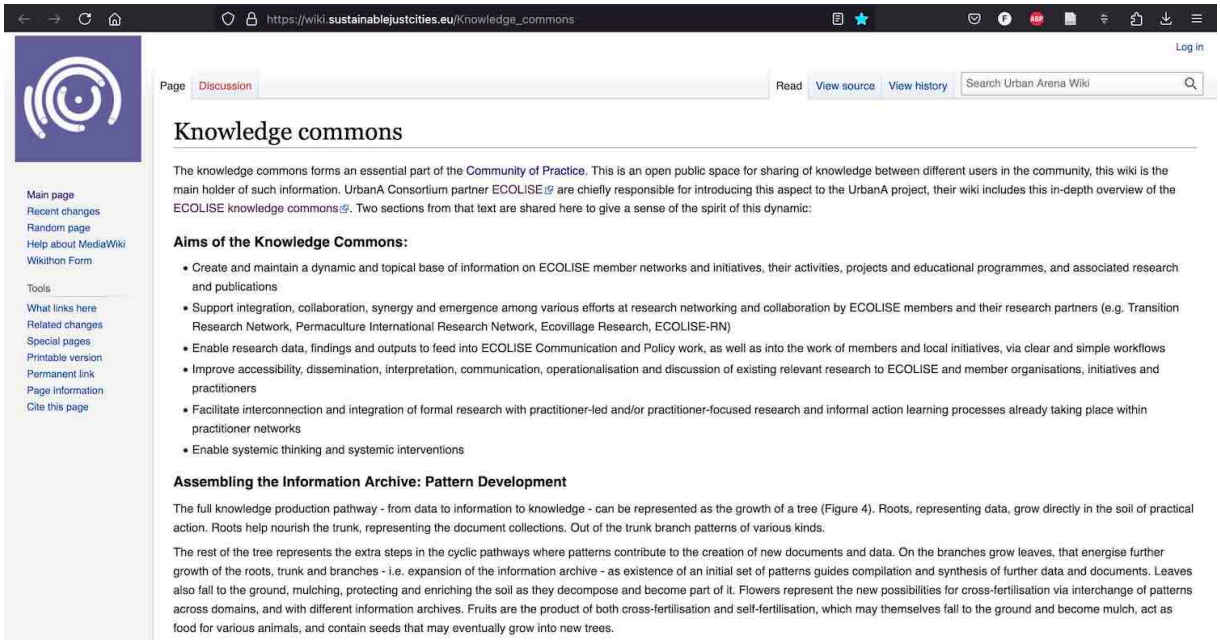


Figure 4.3: UrbanA Wiki page; Knowledge commons (UrbanA, 2025)

The Knowledge commons wiki page (Fig 4.3) outlines ECOLISE were chiefly responsible for introducing this aspect to the UrbanA project, where the full knowledge production pathway, from data to information to knowledge, can be represented as the growth of a tree.

[56] UrbanA blog post: Everyone can Wiki — online meeting provides practical hands-on experience https://medium.com/urban-arenas-for-sustainable-and-just-cities/everyone-can-wiki-online-meeting-provides-practical-hands-on-experience-95ec2c529d7d

Commoning and peer-to-peer exchange among and within different circles of the CoP allowed these circles to create and distribute shared value, at the same time opening the possibility for new cycles of commons-based knowledge production through new and wider dissemination, uptake, application and further development of UrbanA findings (e.g., by CoP members). By adopting a commoning approach to knowledge co-creation, to the degree possible within the remit of the project, the wiki could easily be duplicated, transferred or shared to enable longer-term co-creation and database-making for the CoP and other communities focused on the intersection between sustainability and justice in cities. To enable this, the consortium agreed to license wiki content for free re-use and remixing under Creative Commons, one of a number of mechanisms for legal recognition of intellectual property as a common resource (Bollier 2015). At this time of writing, the UrbanA Wiki on Sustainable Just Cities has seven co-created databases of: Approaches, drivers of injustice, governance arrangements, projects and initiatives, people, resources and keys. For stage 2 of UrbanA, the wiki transferred to the new website host maintained by ICLEI.

UrbanA Community of Practice

UrbanA centred around the four co-creative spaces, the Arena events. Complimentary to the Arenas was the creation and development of the Community of Practice (CoP). A key part of the CoP was the Knowledge Commons, in the form of a co-created Wiki.

A key component of UrbanA's endeavour was the establishment and nurturing of its CoP, an open network of individuals committed to taking constructive action on urban social inequality and ecological unsustainability in the ambition to create more just and sustainable cities. Wheatley & Frieze (2006) inspired UrbanA's CoP, which is driven by their philosophy to "act locally, connect regionally, learn globally."

UrbanA's CoP had varying levels of engagement, represented as a series of concentric circles (Fig 4.4); project consortium members, UrbanA Fellows (who committed to attend all four Arenas and who contributed by writing blog posts, or hosting online events), other Arena participants; those following the project and its outputs, and finally, all those whose lives are indirectly touched by UrbanA's contributions to urban sustainability and justice.

The focus of the CoP extended beyond the needs of the group to include an explicit commitment to advance the field of practice and share findings, resources and knowledge more widely, especially with those doing related work. Accordingly, UrbanA emphasized the use of co-creative processes to share knowledge widely and in an accessible way, including the

UrbanA publication "URBANA City Zine" (2019)[57], monthly newsletters, a LinkedIn group[58], a blog on Medium, multiple social media channels, and 17 podcast episodes. It also began a series of 12 Community Conversations (CoCos): Participatory online events to bring together people with a passion for urban sustainability and justice to connect, learn and discuss, as well as local side events that engaged the CoP with situated struggles and initiatives in specific local communities. DRIFT and Rotterdam based partners created two film nights followed by a World Café: "PUSH", a film about the global housing crisis and "Tomorrow" about ecological solutions from sustainable communities. Five side events were "nested events", where UrbanA invited the CoP to participate in wider conferences, festivals and movements including the "The Nature of Cities" Festival and the "Cities for Change" summit, organised by Amsterdam city council. Eight communities, or projects, came together for this last event (explored in greater detail below) to explore questions about regeneration, including Global Ecovillage Network, UrbanA, Fridays for Future, Communities for Future, Degrowth, Transition Network, Doughnut Economics & Regenerative Practitioners. Figure 4.5 shows images of the CoP at the first Arena in Rotterdam, as shared in the UrbanA Zine, published in January 2020.

Due to the arrival of COVID in early 2020, the 2nd Arena that had been planned as a physical event in Barcelona, was moved to a fully online process. The organising team did great work. During this time, the group requested a space to just share and listen together, not about the work, but about personal challenges, worries or fears that people were experiencing.

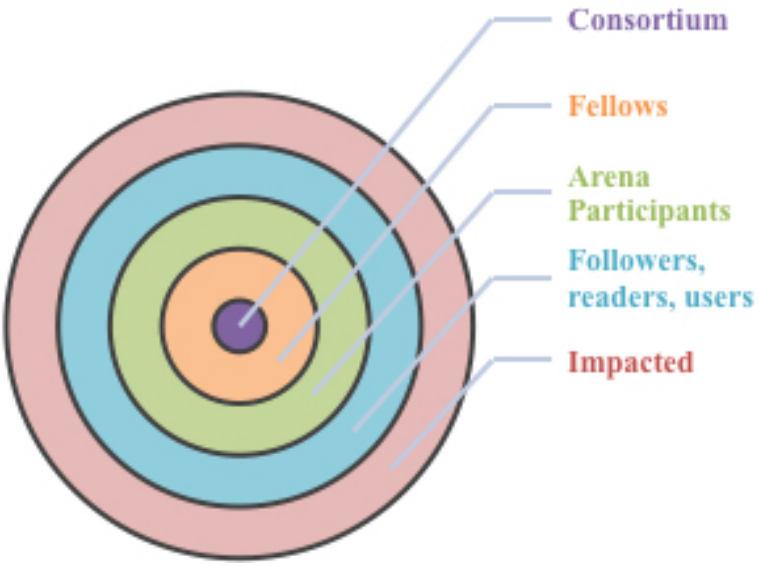


Figure 4.4: UrbanA Community of Practice Structure (Tom Henfrey, UrbanA, 2020)

[57] URBANA City Zine (new link) https://tinyurl.com/evrn9yz2
[58] UrbanCommunity for Sustainable and Just Cities https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13794274/



Figure 4.5: UrbanA CoP in Rotterdam (UrbanA, 2020)

Urban Community Network Weaving

With the academic stage of UrbanA ending in 2021, funding from the Robert Bosch foundation, a founding partner of ICLEI, allowed the CoP to continue for another year. A call was put out for micro-funds and peer-learning. From 110 applications, 9 European projects were selected to engage in experiments together to exchange and connect on themes such as community engagement, intersectionality or conflict resolution. The CoPs communication space on LinkedIn is still active and has 600+ members (Feb 2025) and the CoCos continued until Spring 2023. I was hired to act as the Network Weaver. This work is and more CoP moments and outputs are explored in greater detail in the discussion section, Chapter 5, below.

UrbanA Community – Dealing with COVID together

When COVID emerged in early 2020 everybody was affected and, like most of the world, nobody really knew what to do. The 2nd Arena had been planned as a physical event in Barcelona, the organising team did great work to move the whole process online.

For the consortium group, most people were living in cities and under lockdown, to varying degrees depending on local decrees. Some consortium members had young and very young children so the ability to keep working remotely while balancing all other life tasks was very challenging. Different people had their own supports and means of dealing with things. After a year into the project, strong bonds had been formed. Some members knew each other from before the project, due to many being from the ECOLISE network. Also, due to the dynamics employed from the projects start, as is usual with ECOLISE communities, where check-ins and check-outs begin and end each meeting, perhaps greater understanding and personal bonds formed in the group. In the midst of intense workloads to pull things together for the upcoming Barcelona Arena, the group requested a space to just share and listen together, not about the work, but about personal challenges, worries or fears that people were experiencing. This space happened on zoom, but assisted those who needed such a space or moment.

Developing UrbanA's Community of Practice for Sustainable and Just Cities

UrbanA Community Conversations

The core part of the UrbanA CoP was our Community Conversation (CoCo) series, which ran from April 2020 to February 2021. This series of 12 (nearly biweekly) online events (Table 7) aimed to "bring together people with a passion for urban sustainability and justice to connect, learn, discuss and have fun". Each CoCo involved one or more short presentations of the work of an UrbanA fellow, followed by a participation section for guests to explore the themes explored, in ZOOM breakout rooms, to maximize participation. All CoCos slides, related info and links were shared on the wiki[59]. Event reports with videos were shared on Medium, and sent deeper into the public realm using the hashtags we created, #SustainableJustCities and #UrbanACoCo, on social media (Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook).

Table 7*: UrbanA Community Conversations*

#	Title	2020-2021	Participants	Speaker(s) / Group(s)
1	Designing a local climate adaptation plan	April 7	30	João Dinis, Cascais Ambiente (Portugal)
2	Everyone can Wiki — online meeting provides practical hands-on experience	April 21	30+	Tom Henfrey, UrbanA & ECOLISE
3	Transformative Cities: linking local and translocal perspectives on sustainable and just cities	April 28	40	Emma Erwin, Transition Stirling (Scotland) & Sol Trumbo Villa, Transformative Cities & Transnational Institute (Amsterdam)
4	Is Lisbon a Sustainable and Just City? Perspectives from Europe´s 2020 Green Capital	May 26	60	Facilitator: Constança Belchior, UrbanA Portugal. Rafael Calado, Fablab Lisboa, Luís Matos, Rés do Chão & Patrícia Robalo, Morar em Lisboa
5	How governance arrangements foster both urban sustainability and justice	June 23	44	University of Freiburg UrbanA team
6	Addressing poverty via food solidarity in cities	June 30	20	UrbanA Fellow Marcelline Bonneau, URBACT & Urban Innovation Actions initiative
7	Feminist perspectives for sustainable just cities	July 21	70	Sara Ortiz Escalante, Col·lectiu Punt 6 (Barcelona)
8	An Avantgardenist Approach, Creating Peace Gardens in the Urban Realm	Sep 15	30	UrbanA fellow Burcu Eke Schneider, Wuppertal urban garden
9	Municipalities in Transition, how can citizens and municipalities work better together?	Sep 29	60	Cristiano Bottone, Municipalities in Transition

[59] UrbanA Community Conversations https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/UrbanA_Community_Conversations

10	Planning Eco-inclusive Districts	Nov 10	35	UrbanA fellow Maarten Markus, AM (Utrecht)
11	Co-creating Just and Sustainable Cities with Children	Nov 24	65	Kitti Baracsi & Tuline Gülgönen.
12	Participatory challenges – Committing local businesses to climate action	Feb 16 2021	30	Stephan Rath, Gelsenkirchen Science Park & Ying-Chih Deng, ICLEI World Secretariat

The work developed between the 1st and 2nd arena during growing uncertainty, fear and challenges, both for many people in the network and consortium, individually, but also for the functionality of projects, due to spread of the COVID pandemic and lockdowns. Soon after, our CoP team proposed setting up regular meetings, to keep the community together and to explore how best to connect together. Sometimes the UrbanA team created a poster, but we often requested an image from our guest speakers, which we dropped into our branded format, like CoCo number 7 below (Fig 4.6). Using zoom and developing social methodologies for hybrid events was one of the UrbanA core objectives, this was a means to experiment, build a community and widen the group. Zoom breakout rooms were used to enable more intimate group moments to discuss specific CoCo questions together. This also helped participants bond.

CoCo's were usually 1,5 hours long. The final section of the CoCo was where feedback from each of the breakout rooms would be shared with the full group in the main space, what we called the plenary space. After this some closing comments or takeaways were shared by the guest speaker. Links were shared with the audience to follow up on social media, the blog post and for those that wished to, they could seek to join the editing team of the knowledge commons. They were also invited to join the UrbanA LinkedIn group where the public were encouraged to continue the discussion about Sustainable and Just Cities[60]. To join the group people needed a LinkedIn account and had to request to join the group. UrbanA admin had then to ok their request. This group is still active and has currently 625 members (October 2025).

For each CoCo a blog post was published with the video, presentation slides and insights harvested from the open discussion. A summary with relevant links was added to the wiki. Participation was encouraged, as time went on engagement levels dropped, probably due to zoom fatigue. The first CoCo was with João Dinis from Cascais in Lisbon AML. Our highest attended CoCo had 70 participants, with Sara Ortiz Escalante from the *Col·lectiu Punt 6* cooperative in Barcelona (related Medium post[61]), which I will now explore in greater detail.

[60] UrbanCommunity for Sustainable and Just Cities https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13794274/
[61] Feminist perspectives for sustainable just cities https://medium.com/urban-arenas-for-sustainable-and-just-cities/feminist-perspectives-for-sustainable-just-cities-the-last-urbana-coco-before-the-summer-f3cd4ab8a731

Feminist Perspectives for Sustainable Just Cities (CoCo #7, July 21, 2020)

Sara Ortiz Escalante is a sociologist and urban planner who works at *Col·lectiu Punt 6* (Point 6 Collective) cooperative in Barcelona. She spoke about the relevance of gender perspectives to create sustainable and just cities. Punt 6 is a cooperative engaged on feminist urbanism to "make our cities more inclusive and make the people who inhabit them the experts of the spaces that surround us". The Cooperative's aim is to build a "feminist city", based around four pillars:

1. An intersectional gender perspective
2. Community participation
3. Sustainability
4. Solidarity economy



Figure 4.6: UrbanA Coco: Feminist perspectives for sustainable just cities (Col·lectiu Punt 6, UrbanA, 2020)

Sara began with a half hour presentation and took some initial questions (Fig 4.7). This section was videoed and later shared publicly in the blog post and the social media. She addressed the following questions in her presentation:

- How have cities reorganized work and what have been the gender consequences of the Covid-19 crisis in the distribution of care?
- How have cities supported care of dependents in the Covid-19 crisis?
- How have cities responded to the diversity of needs, households and people?
- What can cities change to place care and people's life at the center in the new scenario post-Covid?

Feminist urban planning suggests to put people's diversity and everyday life at the centre of urban planning decisions. Sara said that a major way to do this is by:

> Breaking the barrier that exists between the experts, such as urban planners and architects, and residents. We believe residents are the experts of their territory, they live them on an everyday basis. They know what the needs are. That is why community participation in planning is essential.

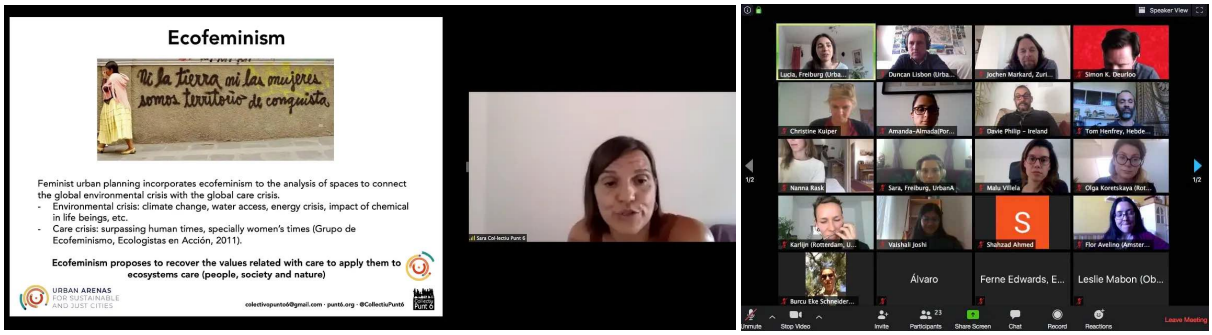


Figure 4.7: CoCo underway. L: Sara outlines Ecofeminism. R: Participants (Col·lectiu Punt 6, UrbanA, 2020)

All CoCo's stressed the importance of active participation and participants were asked to go into breakout rooms for the 2nd section of the event. Normally there were about 4 or 5 guests in a breakout room. There was a common google documents link shared for people to add their inputs in an ordered way, what we referred to as harvesting ideas. The smaller number of people in each room enabled a greater flow of discussion at the smaller scale. If people needed technical support, members of the UrbanA CoP team remained in the main space to assist. After Sara's presentation, participants discussed some of the following questions in breakout rooms:

- *Do you know examples of cities implementing feminist perspectives / "city of care" models?*
- *How do cities respond to the diversity of needs, households and people?*
- *How have cities reorganised work and what have been the gender consequences of the Covid-19 crisis in the distribution of care?*
- *What can cities change to place care and people's life at the center in the new scenario post-Covid?*

Some material harvested from participants fed into a Feminist Urbanism page on the Wiki[62].

[62] https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/index.php?title=Feminist_perspectives_for_sustainable_just_cities

UrbanA Side Events

UrbanA side events[63] were another part of the UrbanA CoP. They started out as special events before each of the main UrbanA arenas, but soon evolved into diverse investigations of UrbanA findings with local communities in consortium member cities. Originally, they were planned to be physical, but with COVID some were purely online, some were blended. Some side events happened before Arenas as official UrbanA Community Conversations, some were public, some were just for guests of the upcoming Arena. Other side events happened as fully public Open Webinars, within an Arena. Later side events developed relationships formed in the CoP to further expand CoP activities, including film nights and urban walking tours. Others were "nested events", where UrbanA invited the CoP to participate in wider conferences, festivals and movements, thereby diversifying both the community and themes being explored.

The core UrbanA CoP team was made up of Lucia from ICLEI, Tom from ECOLISE, and myself from FCUL. In time, the two core CoP activities of the CoCos and the side events could be seen, to use football terminology, as going from playing home to away games. Some side events engaged the CoP with situated struggles and initiatives in specific local communities, such as when DRIFT and Rotterdam based partners created two film nights followed by a World Café for "PUSH – The Film" about the global housing crisis, and "Tomorrow" about ecological solutions from sustainable communities. I organised the five "nested events", where UrbanA invited the CoP to participate in wider conferences, festivals and movements including "The Nature of Cities Festival" (TNOC) and the "Cities for Change" summit, organised by Amsterdam city council explored in greater detail below. This required firstly being accepted or invited to speak at such events, then requesting special permission for us to invite our wider CoP network to participate. As ever, this was an attempt to further open up doors to increase accessibility, especially for citizens or community activists who were not familiar with these, at times, more academic processes. Equally, we felt such events could be improved by a more diverse participant base. Table 8 lists the 11 side events, from November 2019 till May 2021.

Table 8*: UrbanA side events table*

#	Title	2019-2021	Participants	Speaker(s) / Group(s) / Event type
1	Local Arena Mouraria (Lisbon)	Nov 12, 2019	15 / 30	Walking tour, 15, Workshop 30. UrbanA Lisbon team

[63] UrbanA side events, wiki entry: https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/UrbanA_side_events

2	Covid19, justice and sustainability in city (Barcelona)	June 5 2020	150?	3 speakers are from Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability. Public part of the 2nd Arena.
3	PUSH (Film + World Café)	June 17	100?	Vital Cities & Citizens (VCC) initiative of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam + Rotterdam UrbanA team, DRIFT
4	How governance arrangements foster both urban sustainability and justice	June 23	44	University of Freiburg UrbanA team
5	Eco City Open Campus	Sep 8	50?	Ecocity Builders, VirBELA platform. Institute of Wellbeing & Work for a Better Bangladesh.
6	From Green to Blue. UrbanA Lisbon walking tour	Oct 10	5	UrbanA Lisbon, part of UMUNDU festival
7	UMUNDU festival Lisbon	Oct 10	20	UrbanA Lisbon, part of UMUNDU festival. Hybrid event
8	Tomorrow (Film + World Café)	Dec 1	125	As #3 above
9	Communities for Future: Communities of Practice, leveraging impact by learning together	Dec 2	55	Three CoPs from the ECOLISE network: BLAST (Blended Adult Learning for the Social-ecological Transition), Municipalities in Transition (MiT) & UrbanA.
10	The Nature of Cities Festival (TNOC)	Feb 21 2021	25	UrbanA + ECOLISE, Participating in wider Urban Conference.
11	Cities for Change	May 26 2021	37	ECOLISE invited 8 communities to respond to 4 specific questions about Regeneration; Social, Cultural, Ecology, Economy, including UrbanA

As these CoP events continued alongside the main four European Arenas, the UrbanA project was sharing more interesting content, especially as the podcasts started being published. The ECOLISE team were responsible for the communication side of the project, which included the social media. Initially the channels were just used to share the medium publications, without any real interaction. Having experience in community media and social media engagement, I offered to assist the social media channels in mid 2021. This was welcomed by ECOLISE, who were going through a difficult internal situation, unknown then to the UrbanA team. I began engaging with people, sharing content from various people and projects within UrbanA's CoP. We also started to increase the use of the #SustainableJustCitiets hashtag. This enabled the CoP to be somewhat more dynamic and, perhaps, attract more people to the side events, join the LinkedIn group, and more importantly, begin to participate. Some moments went behind the confines of Europe and we even had people from Brazil tuning in and joining the CoCos and later, joining in the nested events. I will give short overviews of four nested events, to show the diversity of what we were experimenting with. I explore the fifth one deeper in a later section.

UrbanA CoP - Nested Events

- **Eco City Open Campus (September 8-10th 2020)**

UrbanA participated in the 3-day Ecocity Conference from September 8-10th 2020 with Ecocity Builders, to further build up the network of city makers engaged in creating Sustainable Just Cities and to explore new technologies for participating in Blended Arenas. The "Eco City Open Campus" event happened on September 8th; it was an experimental forum that used the VirBELA platform (like an avatar game) to try to connect city makers (Fig 4.8). Days 2 and 3 were hybrid events, based physically in Dhaka, Bangladesh, facilitated by the Institute of Wellbeing and Work for a Better Bangladesh. The conference theme was “Making our Cities Healthier for People and Planet”, organizers used the #BuildBackBetterBD hashtag.



Figure 4.8: Eco City Open Campus, using the VirBELA platform (Ecocity Builders, 2020)

- **UMUNDU festival Lisbon (October 10, 2020)**

“Creating Sustainable and Just Cities – The UrbanA experiment” was a talk I facilitated in a Lisbon bookshop that followed a walking tour I also led in the city along the Alcantara river and through the Bela Flor community. Both events were part of the Lisbon UMUNDU eco festival (9-17 October 2020). The talk was a Blended event that connected participants in a physical location and others online using new communication technologies. The physical event was limited to 20 places, due to COVID restrictions. The discussion explored what UrbanA issues might mean in urban transformations happening in a changing Lisbon. The event built on earlier discussions about Lisbon with local city makers and the UrbanA community, about if Europe´s 2020 Green Capital is helping transform Lisbon into a Sustainable and Just City.

- **Communities for Future (December 02, 2020)**

The third "Communities for Future" online session explored what is a CoP and what can be their role in strengthening community-led responses to societal challenges. Three CoPs from the ECOLISE network at different stages of their evolution were represented; BLAST (Blended Adult Learning for the Social-ecological Transition), Municipalities in Transition and UrbanA. Davie Phillip outlined how BLAST established processes for their group and for assessing best practice and insights from different CoPs within the ECOLISE ecosystem. Together guests explored the shared idea of an eco-social just transition. I represented UrbanA and wrote the report, which was my first post on ECOLISE's "Communities for Future" blog on Medium[64]

- **The Nature of Cities Festival (TNOC) (February 22, 2021)**

UrbanA, ECOLISE and Communities for Future joined forces to lead an experimental seed session on the first day of The Nature of Cities Festival (Fig 4.9). About 25 people turned up from different corners of the planet, to explore the topic of "Translocal adventures in developing an Urban Systems Community of Practice". The event was hosted by Giorgia Silvestri & myself from UrbanA, and Sara Silva from ECOLISE. The domain that this Urban Systems CoP Ecosystem supported was nothing less than full eco-social just transition, to return the scope of human activity back within the limits of planet earth. The TNOC event was an experimental step, aiming to share the story so far, maximize guest participation, allow diverse discussions to develop, harvest insights from the group and encourage wider participation in the CoP Ecosystem. I published a report on ECOLISE's blog and the next year on TNOC's website[65].

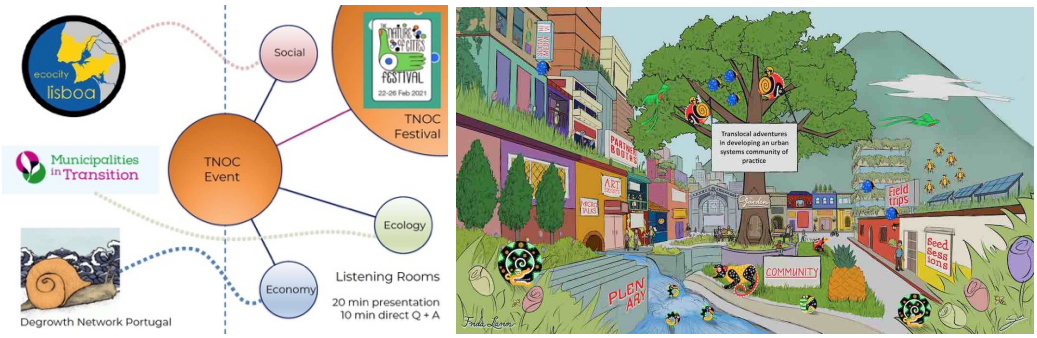


Figure 4.9: The Nature of Cities Festival L: Listening Rooms R: TNOC Festival Poster (Author, TNOC, 2020)

[64] Communities of Practice, leveraging impact by learning together https://medium.com/communities-for-future/communities-of-practice-leveraging-impact-by-learning-together-621a27410ca5
[65] Translocal Adventures, Communities of Practice, and the TNOC Festival article https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2022/04/21/translocal-adventures-communities-of-practice-and-the-tnoc-festival/

UrbanA Podcasts

The last remaining component of the UrbanA CoP was the podcasts, which were hosted by Ian Cook and Kate McGlin from the UrbanA partner then based in Budapest, Hungary; The Central European University. They created seventeen podcasts from November 2019 to December 2021, that were "a series of critical conversations with activists, entrepreneurs, intellectuals and policy-makers in different European cities who are working to create cities that respond to the twin challenges of justice and sustainability". Table 9 outlines this content and speakers. The podcasts are available on CEU's site[66] and main streaming channels (Spotify, Apple, Podcast Addict), with links posted on the wiki[67]. Eight more podcasts were added during UrbanA's second stage (2022-2024), when ICLEI's Sophia Silverton took over the hosting to "hone in on stories of community-led initiaitves and share voices which are so deserving of a megaphone!"

Table 9*: UrbanA Podcasts*

#	Title	Dropped	Description
1	Sustainable Food and Transport	Nov 22, 2019	Speaking (and cycling around Budapest) with UrbanA fellow Orsolya Lazányi. She is a co-founder of Cargonomia, a Budapest-based community space for locally-produced food and cargo bike rentals. Listen in as we talk about Orsolya's work, her views on the degrowth movement, and the cultural intricacies of building an organization like Cargonomia in Hungary.
2	Transition Governance	Dec 18, 2019	We discuss transition management as a governance approach. We travel to a real live urban arena in Rotterdam and meet Derk Loorbach director of UrbanA partner, DRIFT, and Professor of Socio-economic Transitions at the Faculty of Social Science, both at Erasmus University Rotterdam.
3	Textile Recycling	Jan 27, 2020	We discuss the potential of textile recycling as part of a circular economy. We're lucky to get to speak to Hilde van Duijn from EigenDraads, a Rotterdam based initiative that wants to take our non-reusable clothes and transform them into something new.
4	Shipping	Feb 29, 2020	Speaking with Elisabeth Schober, Associate Professor at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo. She is the Principle Investigator within the upcoming 'Ports' project, which will be funded by the European Research Council under the EU's Horizon 2020 program.
5	FabLabs	Mar 27, 2020	we're talking with Rafael Calado about FabLabs. Rafael is Programme and Operations Manager at FabLab Lisboa. An architect by trade, he also co-founded Repair Café Lisboa and BioHacking Group Lisboa 2017.
6	Nature Based Solutions	Apr 23, 2020	we're talking with Panagiota Kotsila, a political ecologist with the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability (BCN.UEJ) and part of Undisciplined Environments. She talks about 'Nature-based solutions as

[66] https://podcasts.ceu.edu/series/urban-community
[67] Wiki: UrbanA Podcasts https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/UrbanA_Podcasts

			discursive tools and contested practices in urban nature's neoliberalisation processes'.
7	Integral Cities	May 25, 2020	we're speaking with Marilyn Hamilton, the founder of Integral City and author of the Integral City book series. + Urban Arena podcast correspondent 1: Marcelline Bonneau CEO & founder at Resilia Solutions.
8	Social Entrepreneurship	Jul 1, 2020	Kate catches up with UrbanA Fellow Kemo Camara, founder and CEO of Omek, a new digital and physical platform dedicated to the social and professional advancement of the African diaspora community.
9	Networks for Sustainable and Just Cities	Sep 30, 2020	our podcasters Kate McGinn and Ian Cook get lost in the voices of people who have helped sustain, build and critically assess networks that aim to create just and sustainable cities: Matthew Bach, Flor Avelino and Tom Henfrey all three of whom are part of the UrbanA team.
10	Urban Design Processes	Oct 29, 2020	Kate McGinn talks with Florian Strenge – an urbanist and UrbanA Fellow fascinated by spaces, people and processes. + urban arena podcast correspondent: Sophia Silverton, an enviromental governance researcher working with UrbanA.
11	Racial and Environmental Justice	Dec 2, 2020	we're joined by Meera Ghani, ECOLISE Policy Coordinator, and Tamara Steger, Associate Professor at the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy at Central European University. The topic? Environmental and racial justice.
12	Drivers of Urban Injustice	Feb 3, 2021	This month we're joined by Panagiota Kotsila, Isabelle Anguelovski, and Jonathan Luger from the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability. We're talking about drivers of urban injustice:
13	Participation and the Distribution of Urban Space	Mar 1, 2021	Sophia Silverton chats with Isabell Eberlein and Denis Petri from Changing Cities. They talk about the role of participatory actions in trying to bring about more just distributions of urban space. The conversation is framed around the notion of 'governance arrangements'.
14	Venture Capital & Climate Tech	Mar 30, 2021	Kate speaks with Heidi Lindvall from seed stage ClimateTech VC company Pale Blue Dot.
15	Food Sharing	May 17, 2021	Romane Joly from the University of Freiburg speaks with Kaja Zimmermann and David Bachmann from foodsharing Freiburg.
16	City Politics	Sep 18, 2021	we're talking with Tom Meeuws, Vice Mayor for Social Affairs and Environmental Affairs, in the city of Antwerp.
17	Gender Equality and the City	Dec 1, 2021	This time we're talking with Linda Gustafsson, Gender Equality Officer, City of Umeå.

To increase CoP participation, we created the "UrbanA challenge". We invited the UrbanA audience to be podcast correspondents, to answer the question 'What is a sustainable and just city?' in a maximum of 3 minutes. For the 13th podcast episode "Participation and the Distribution of Urban Space", I submitted "Postcard from the Future (2050)". Using a visioning process ECOLISE were then using, I imagined my home thirty years in the future after the eco social just transition had been implemented. Transcript and analysis are below in the Annex[68].

[68] See Apendix – 7.1: UrbanA challenge: Postcard from the Future (2050)

Urban Community Network Weaving (UrbanA Stage 2)

The academic stage of UrbanA ended in December 2021. The project also won the Integral City of the Year Award[69] at this time. ICLEI reported back that the project had been received very well by the European Commission and members of other European projects. The CoP space on LinkedIn was still active and there had been considerable social media interaction too.

Due to these, and perhaps more, factors the Robert Bosch foundation provided funding to allow the CoP continue for another year of experimentation, again led by ICLEI, with a subtle name change from UrbanA to UrbanCommunity[70]. ICLEI took over full control of the UrbanA social media channels, including the LinkedIn social space. I was invited to join this second stage as a "network weaver", to continue the work of connecting people, projects, communities and ideas. I was sub contracted from FCUL from 2022 till early 2023.

A call was put out for the following work: "Through micro-funds and peer-learning, we recognise, support and share the knowledge and experiences of community-led initiatives and local governments who are acting locally to create sustainable and just cities". Eight groups were selected, six were CLIs and two were local government. The CoP facilitated a number of events between these actors and others within our wider networks, based on the template we developed with UrbanA. I joined ECOLISE Council in May 2021 and began to further expand the combined CoPs, but ECOLISE intentionally quietened down to focus on internal conflicts, so navigating both became difficult. During this period (Jan 2022- Dec 2024), ICLEI's Sophia Silverton took over the podcast series and released a further 8 episodes (Table 10). I was interviewed for the final podcast "Community takes practice"[71], it dropped November 8th 2024.

Table 10*: UrbanA stage 2 podcasts* – UrbanCommunity 8 episodes

#	Title	Dropped	Description
18	From UrbanArena to UrbanCommunity: A handover	Dec 7, 2022	Sophia Silverton introduces its new focus: sharing the stories of community initiatives for sustainable and just cities.
19	Art and culture in climate conversations	Dec 14, 2022	Amy from HubRen in London shares her thoughts on the interconectedness of all things, how hope is a verb, and the power of art and culture in climate conversations.

[69] https://integralcity.com/2021/12/16/integral-city-association-of-year-2021-urbana-urban-arenas-for-sustainable-and-just-cities/
[70] Urban Community for Sustainable Just Cities https://sustainablejustcities.eu/urban-community-sustainable-just-cities
[71] Urban Community: Community takes practice https://podcastaddict.com/episode/http%3A%2F%2Fpodcasts.ceu.edu%2Fsites%2Fpodcasts.ceu.edu%2Ffiles%2Fpodcasts%2F2024-11%2Fduncan_final.mp3&podcastId=3134646

20	Snacking on food solidarity	Jan 12, 2023	Filippos from Pervolarides in Thessaloniki shares his experience with creating a social solidarity net through food and beyond.
21	Youth participation now!	Jan 23, 2023	Sıla from Roof Coliving in Turkey convinces us that civic engagement, especially from young people, is what puts the 'just' in 'Just Transition'.
22	Just neighbourhood planning	Mar 1, 2023	Tatiana and Honorata from JUSThood turn traditional city planning on its head by sharing their creative neighbourhood planning method.
23	When cities and communities collaborate	Jun 2, 2023	in this episode is Kieran McCarthy, a city councillor in Cork, Ireland, and an Irish member of the EU Committee of the Regions. We talk about the importance of collaboration between cities and CLIs and Kieran explains how important it is to have a plan!
24	Creating city commons	Apr 22, 2024	Giulia from The Space coolhaven in Rotterdam talks about why commons in cities are places of connection, creativity, and civic engagement.
25	Community takes practice	Nov 8, 2024	In this final episode (for now), our community of practice expert and network weaver, Duncan, explains what these terms mean.

It was a great pleasure to learn from and with the UrbanA / UrbanCommunity CoP. It is hard to tell what the true impact of this academic process has been, or will lead to, but the willingness to engage from all communities in City councils and CLI worlds surely benefitted both. All the experimentation influenced ICLEI, who in turn, continue to influence city mayors.

Academic Publications about UrbanA

There were a number of academic publications from the UrbanA process, many being academic deliverables, as requested by the Horizon process and stored on the Cordis page. ICLEI adapted some and had them published from the UrbanCommunity website. I published four academic outputs during the PhD process that mentioned the UrbanA process, to varying degrees. Annex CC shows the covers of three of the publications they featured in. They were the following:

1. Creating a Sustainable & Just Lisbon (March 2020, chapter)[72]
2. Transformational Politics. New Networks Of Governance (March 2021, chapter)[73]
3. Towards a necessary regenerative urban planning. Insights from community-led initiatives for ecocity transformation (April 2021, article)[74]
4. Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities (February 2023, article)[75]

[72] https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/urban-hub20-accelerating-citychangein-a-vuca-world-thriveable-cities-244157764/244157764 (Pages 184 - 192)
[73] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350567960_Transformational_Politics_New_Networks_of_Governance
[74] https://journals.openedition.org/cidades/3384
[75] https://oekologisches-wirtschaften.de/index.php/oew/article/view/1925

4.1.2 ECOLISE

The "European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability" is more commonly known by its acronym, ECOLISE. It was formally created on May 9th 2014. ECOLISE is an NGO, but it is much more complex than that. ECOLISE is a meta- network, a network of networks. It is a mix of different sized groups working at various scales within Europe, in the areas of sustainability, climate, regeneration, community solutions and local development. The three main movements at the core of ECOLISE are all community-led; transition movements, permaculture projects and ecovillages. The main *raison d'être* for ECOLISE was twofold; to facilitate better communication between these movements and the wider ecosystem, and to support policy and advocacy work at the European level to better influence community-led action for climate change and sustainability solutions. The logo (Fig 4.10) includes various sized nodes, to describe a dynamic network uniting different communities and projects for a common goal. After eleven years active, they define their current strategy as:

- Purpose: ECOLISE's purpose is to engage in, support, and facilitate accelerated learning and collaboration among community-led initiatives, their networks, and partners to catalyse systemic transformation within and across society.
- Vision: Achieving a just and regenerative future for all within planetary boundaries, thanks to a strong role of transformative community-led climate action.
- Goal: At least 25% of the European population is engaged in transformative community-led climate action by 2030, reaching the tipping point for transformative social change.
- Theory of Change: Mainstreaming and strengthening community-led climate action initiatives will allow them to achieve this goal and vision.



Figure 4.10: ECOLISE logo (ECOLISE, 2024)

The current make-up of the ECOLISE network[76] (December 2025) is comprised of 52 members divided into 4 groups: European Networks (6), National Networks (29), Local Initiatives (3), Specialist Organisations (14). Table 17[77] lists the four member groups and the full list of current members for each. ECOLISE describe the current members network type, location and size as:

> ECOLISE currently has 50 member organisations in 18 EU Member States, plus Albania, Serbia, Switzerland, and the UK. National and regional networks of sustainable community-led initiatives, as well as international networks such as the Transition Network (representing 1,200+ Transition initiatives), the Global Ecovillage Network (15,000 ecovillages), the Permaculture movement (3 million practitioners globally), ICLEI Europe (representing 160+ members in 2,500+ cities, towns and regions), and other specialist organisations that support transformative, community-led action on climate change and sustainability in Europe.

ECOLISE origins, values and development

The network came together from a couple of strands that united with limited resources, great passion and a deep and wide range of perspectives about both the vision of what a radically different world could look like and lived experiences and experiments from attempts, at different scales, to bring such worlds into being.

The ecovillage world has existed in different forms since after World War 1, and the network GEN formalised in 1995. The Permaculture movement formed in Australia in the 1970's and spread throughout the English-speaking world in the 1970s and 1980s, and beyond in subsequent years. The Transition movement grew out of attempts to incorporate permaculture principles in towns and cities in the mid 2000's, originally labelling itself the "Transition Towns" movement. GEN is a global network but is divided into continental bodies, including Europe, as well as some regional bodies such as the Baltic, and some national groups. Permaculture is a global community that has some national networks in some, but not all, European countries. The Transition Network is a global body, based in the UK. While there was some overlap and interaction between these three independent community-led movements, an idea always existed to create a more formal structure to better serve the interests of CLIs.

The EU committed to sustainable policies for environmental, social and local development and put programmes in place to implement them, such as the LIFE and LEADER programmes.

[76] ECOLISE https://ecolise.eu/
[77] Annex E1 – Page 355

The EU now sees The LEADER programme[78] as "the most successful policy tool for community-led local development (CLLD) in the EU" It was developed by the EU in the 1990's due to the perceived failure of traditional, top-down policies in addressing the problems faced by many of Europe's rural areas. LEADER is a French acronym for "*Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale*" (Links between activities (or actions) for the development of rural economy). It uses Local Action Groups to support CLLD in EU states.

Eamon O'Hara is an Irish eco-social entrepreneur who was a Brussels based consultant for the European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)[79], that supported the European Commission in the local rollout of various programmes, including LEADER. Between 2009 and 2013 he carried out research on community-based action on climate change and sustainability and found that certain CLIs were barely acknowledged by policy-makers in Brussels, such as Transition Towns, permaculture projects, ecovillages, energy communities and related grassroots initiatives. AEIDL published this work in the 2013 report "Europe in transition: Local communities leading the way to a low-carbon society"[80] (Fig 4.11.1).

GEN Europe's 2011 conference "Ecovillages and Sustainable Living", happened in Portugal, in Tamera ecovillage in Alentejo. This inspired much subsequent activity, including the creation of a mapping system for all Portuguese CLIs and related sustainable projects called *Rede Convergir* (Convergence Network)[81], involving the Portuguese Transition Network. The European funded project "Bottom-up climate adaptation strategies towards a sustainable Europe" (BasE) ran from 2012-2016. Portuguese Transition people worked on this project, including the action researcher Gil Penha-Lopes from the CE3C research lab in FCUL. Other partners in the consortium were Transition Network, GEN-International, Gaia Education and action researchers from the Schumacher Institute in the UK. After BasE, this group worked together to make a new funding application bid for a co-creative action learning project between CLI networks and academia called TREE (Transition Research, Evaluation and Engagement). The TREE bid was not successful but strong relationships were formed.

Through mutual connections, the TREE group were soon in contact with the "Europe in transition" authors. In 2013, through support from AEIDL, the assorted group of authors, action researchers and representatives of national and international CLI networks met in Brussels for

[78] LEADER / CLLD https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/networking/leader_en
[79] AEIDL https://www.aeidl.eu/
[80] Europe in transition: https://ecolise.eu/publications/europe-in-transition-local-communities-leading-the-way-to-a-low-carbon-society/
[81] Rede Convergir https://redeconvergir.net

the first time. They explored ideas about the formation of a group that could advocate on behalf of the interests of these CLIs active on the ground, many struggling at the margins of society.

After the Brussels meeting a working group formed of possible network members, with Eamon O'Hara facilitating much of the work. This group would eventually form the member base of ECOLISE. They agreed on a few core structures and agreements. The network would have three key 'pillars' of work: 1) Communication 2) Policy Engagement 3) Knowledge & Learning. The network would have a four-tier membership structure: 1) national CLI networks 2) international CLI networks 3) Local initiatives (where national networks did not exist) 4) Specialised members. The last group were not specifically CLI networks, but worked with them or supported them through education, research, communication and advocacy. There would be a General Assembly (GA) of all members, that would meet annually. This would be the highest decision-making authority. Every two years the members would elect a new Council at the GA to represent them. A president would be elected from the council also. The GA would delegate an Executive Director to carry out operational duties. The working council group agreed on a strategy and ECOLISE was formally constituted as an international association under Belgian law in a legal ceremony in Brussels on May 9th 2014, coinciding with Europe Day.

ECOLISE's first official GA happened in 2015 at Germany's Freiburg University. It was hosted by one of the founding members, ICLEI, the global network of Local Governments for Sustainability. Members elected the 1st council for a two-year term and Eamon O'Hara was appointed Executive Director. Members paid a minimum fee to join the ECOLISE network.

During the following years, ECOLISE developed steadily. Through the CLLD world, some partnerships emerged to give greater space to highlight the work of CLIs. In 2016 the network received some funding which enabled a team to be created, where each work pillar had a coordinator. In September 2017 ECOLISE launched the European Day of Sustainable Communities (Fig 4.12.1) to highlight the work of CLIs as real solutions for climate emergency. A strong relationship was formed with some EU bodies, such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)[82] to develop dialogues to shape EU policy. Figure 4.12.2 shows a typical Brussels meeting with Ilonka Marselis from DRIFT, Dicte Frost from GEN Europe and Tine Bielen, then an ECOLISE intern. ECOLISE became a member of the CAN network, through which it was able to participate at COP meetings, bringing the voice of European community groups to the international level. Figure 4.12.3 shows ECOLISE at COP24 in Poland, with Robert Hall from GEN who was acting ECOLISE President, and Meera Ghani,

[82] EESC https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en

then ECOLISE's Policy Co-ordinator. GAs happened physically in various member locations, which was a good way to deepen relationships and further support local initiatives.

Through the action researchers at CE3C and similar member groups, some books were published about CLI solutions and more action researchers were involved in projects that explored the CLI solutions. In 2017 ECOLISE agreed that a key strategic project would be for the Knowledge and Learning working group to compile a Status Report[83]. Building on the theoretical base of knowledge commons, ECOLISE created a wiki for this work in October 2018[84]. It was publicly released as *Reshaping the Future: How local communities are catalysing social, economic and ecological transformation in Europe* in May 2019 (Fig 4.11.2). It piloted open-source knowledge co-creation processes. This projects two main aims were:

1. To provide a comprehensive and scientifically rigorous account of the documented extent, nature, impacts and potential of CLIs in Europe, incorporating relevant academic studies, grey literature, practitioner records and informal and experiential knowledge, to inform policy, advocacy, practice, and future research.
2. To establish an active, self-organising knowledge co-creation community that collaborates on an inclusive, open source basis to maintain, update and extend the knowledge base on which the Status Report draws, in a way that also makes this knowledge base available for other uses.

Soon ECOLISE was successfully applying for different funding grants for various projects. Two were for smaller Erasmus+ projects: Ecovillage Transition in Action (ETiA) and Community Climate Coaches (CCC)[85]. Two were for larger Horizon 2020 funding, including COMETS[86], exploring Collective action Models for Energy Transition and Social Innovation, and the UrbanA project. It also got some LIFE-NGO funding and received further philanthropy funding. Increased funding allowed ECOLISE's team expand, but this brought new challenges.

I will examine my time with ECOLISE in the following chapter. For the rest of this section, I include four key contributions: 1) Exploration of social innovation dynamics from ECOLISE's 2019 GA 2) May 2021 event which culminated in attempts to create a diverse CoP, by bringing various groups together. 3) Summary of ECOLISE projects I worked on. 4) ECOLISE's main policy process in 2023 and the "Time For Collective Action Manifesto".

[83] Status Report: https://ecolise.eu/publications/reshaping-the-future-how-local-communities-are-catalysing-social-economic-and-ecological-transformation-in-europe/
[84] Status Report on CfF wiki https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/2019_Status_Report
[85] Community Climate Coaches https://ecolise.eu/community-climate-coaches/
[86] COMETS https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/837722



Figure 4.11 ECOLISE Related Publications. 1: European in Transition 2: 2019 Status Report 3: People Care Manual (AEIDL, 2013; ECOLISE, 2019 & 2023)



Figure 4.12 ECOLISE activities 2018. 1: European Day of Sustainable Communities 2: ECOLISE at Brussels conference 3: ECOLISE at COP24 (ECOLISE, 2018)

Pioneering Social Innovation: ECOLISE General Assembly 2019

How ECOLISE do their work, is nearly as important as the utopian values they try to realize. I will outline the various communication tools and governance processes, by the order I came into contact with them. Not merely tech know how, this is true social innovation to enable deep participation. The role of communication in all its forms was an eye opener upon arriving gradually into the ECOLISE way of doing things, from the use of online tools to support ongoing conversation, to the blended arena technology for online meetings, to facilitation techniques for real world meetings, assemblies and work moments, to graphic design and communications work for newsletters, posters, reports, books and content for sharing on social media. Many social communication tools were developed by groups in the ECOLISE network, especially processes being experimented with, or sometimes created, in the ecovillage world that GEN coordinates. Some made their way into Transition groups and other social movements, such as Nonviolent Communication (NVC), whose goal is to create empathy in a group conversation. The key governance tool being used and experimented with, Sociocracy, is how ECOLISE take group decisions. It works best when all using it are literate in its use.

The UrbanA section described earlier examines some of the key tools that ECOLISE brought to that academic project and community, such as the use of Check-ins and Check-outs at the start and end of meetings, the creation, care of and curation of a knowledge commons, in this case a wiki, and the creation of an evolving Community of Practice. These were coupled with the ideas, concepts and examples from practice of, at times, a somewhat more radical perspective, which entered into the discussions about issues of urban justice, degrowth, racial equality, social justice etc… Some of these perspectives were shared in academic outputs as articles, while others manifested in softer, less obviously academic media, but that is perhaps more accessible to non-academic everyday people, such as the excellent series of podcasts.

Shortly after joining UrbanA, in April 2019, and as part of FCUL, I was invited to participate in my first ECOLISE General Assembly (GA)[87], which is an annual event where members gather to fulfil statutory obligations of the association and plan activities for the year ahead. It was a blended event, also known as a hybrid event; happening both online and in the real world simultaneously, with the core ECOLISE group meeting at a rural location in Križevci, Croatia, from April 7th to 11th. The hosts were ECOLISE member Permaculture Croatia, which was led by then Council Member Nenad Maljković[88], who was also a key person

[87] GA on CfF wiki https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/ECOLISE_General_Assembly
[88] Nenad on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/nmaljkovic/ & Medium https://medium.com/@nmaljkovic

in the ECOLISE Working Group tasked with designing and facilitating the GA. This "Remote ready 2019 ECOLISE General Assembly"[89] built upon the 2017 and 2018 GA blended format (Communities for Future / ECOLISE, 2018):

> combining onsite participation and full and meaningful involvement of remote participants via Zoom. Just like those attending in person, online participants were expected to attend for the duration and able to contribute fully to discussion and decision-making in both plenary and breakout sessions

Such blended events were experiments to ensure that online participants did not merely watch proceedings silently from afar, but got to engage just as much with things as those present did. The use of online harvesting was another key communication tool, where a shared live document, a google document, was opened and people were encouraged to contribute to it in certain moments. Ongoing notes were also entered here for later access by a note taker. I tuned in for key moments of the 4-day event from my home in Lisbon and found the level of care taken to ensure optimum dynamics for inclusion, including in breakout rooms, and dynamics to energise the group of about 25 physical and 30 online (Fig 4.13) was superb.

For blended events the facilitation team (Nenad Maljković, Davie Philip, Emilia Rekestad, Eamon O'Hara, Genny Carraro, Iva Pocock & Markus Molz) developed two complimentary parts: Technical and meeting facilitation. In figure 4.13 we can see in red circle the online guests on the laptop, on zoom. The blue circles show Nenad (left) up from the computer and Claudian (right) holding 1 of the mobile phones (video + audio inputs), the photo taker has 2nd mobile phone. The yellow circles show meeting facilitators with microphones, Davie (left) and Meera (right). Based on these experiences, Nenad compiled these tips into an article for the 1st UrbanA event in Rotterdam in November 2019, it appeared on UrbanA's Medium blog on sustainable and just cities, entitled "For a blended event, BYOD"[90], where Nenad (Maljković, 2019) wrote:

> We encourage event participants to self-organise using devices we all normally use—laptops, smartphones, LCD projectors , external microphones, speakerphones, tripods, selfie sticks, etc. Hence we have a BYOD policy — *bring your own device*.

[89] Remote ready 2019 ECOLISE General Assembly https://www.facebook.com/events/406723130152974/
[90] For a blended event, BYOD
https://medium.com/urban-arenas-for-sustainable-and-just-cities/for-a-blended-event-byod-b71afa91eb5

A few months later COVID arrived and these social technologies assisted greatly as most of the world moved into a strange new remote existence. Nenad expanded on the UrbanA article in March 2020 with the post “Fearless Experimentation: doing Open Space event online”[91].

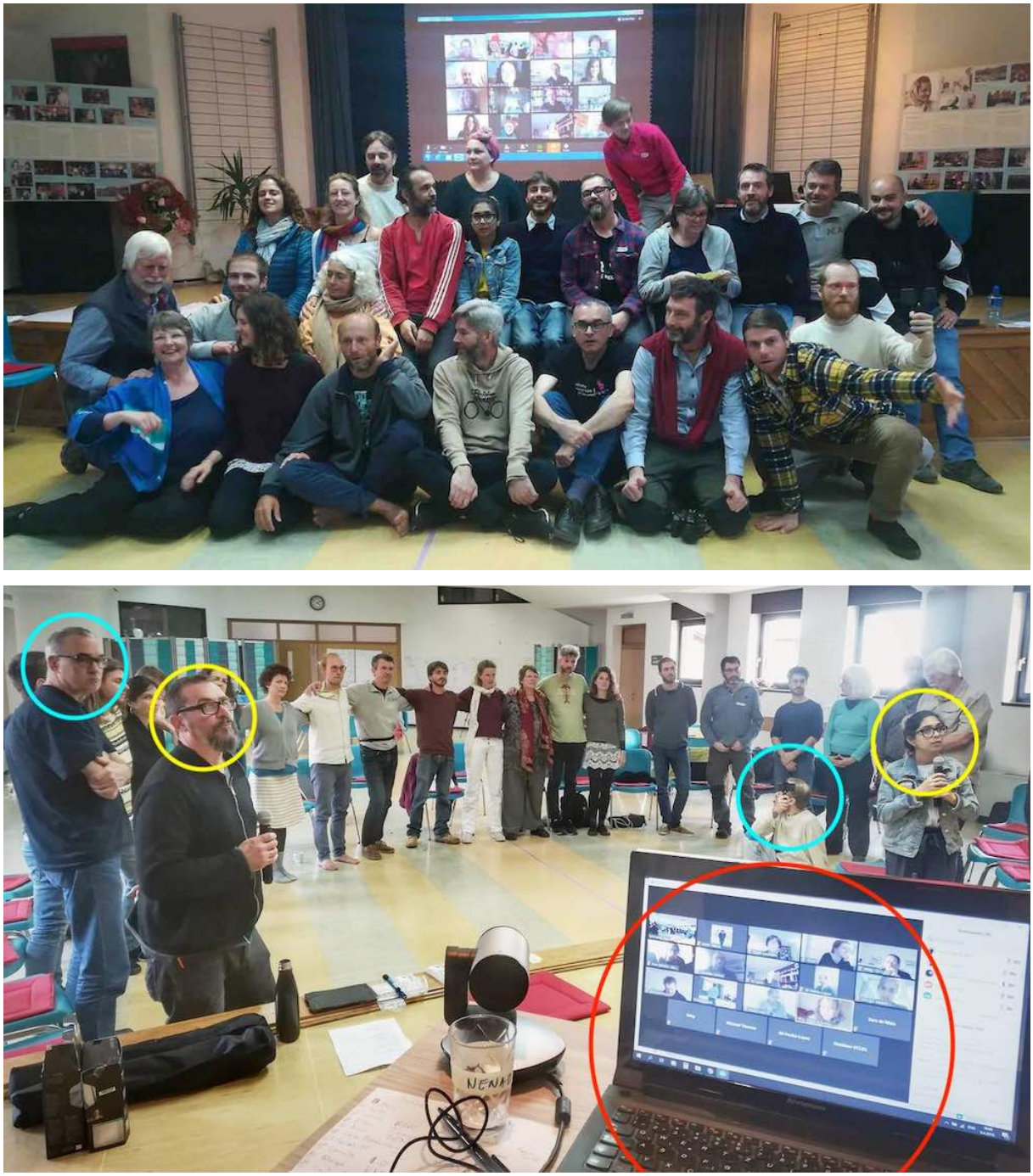


Figure 4.13: ECOLISE General Assembly 2019. Top: Hybrid Gathering. Bot: Remote ready 2019 ECOLISE General Assembly - Details (ECOLISE, 2019)

[91] Fearless Experimentation: doing Open Space event online
https://medium.com/virtual-teams-for-systemic-change/fearless-experimentation-5a8695bbd10e

Moving from the how, to the what, we move from ECOLISE's hybrid meeting technology to the difficult challenge of reaching a decision for an agreed new definition of the strategy for a diverse network. Key ECOLISE organisational ingredients use include: Great structure, skilled facilitation, flexibility, attunement to group needs (if tensions arise, if people get tired or drift away), respecting time, clear communication, bringing joy, humour and celebration. The 4-day event schedule was agreed beforehand, some moments were plenary, where all participants are present (physical and online), and some were for smaller groups, breakout rooms used for the online guests, different rooms or different tables in same room for guests. Diversity is most welcome in such communities, but for an ECOLISE GA not everyone knows each other and some are new to ECOLISE way of working. Key facilitation objectives include ensuring everyone feels welcome, are clear on roles and responsibilities and all voices are heard.

People arrived to Croatia on Sunday evening, after an evening meal there was the first group dynamic. An event's Opening Circle identifies who is there, how the group will work together and why they come together. The 30 or so people there presented themselves individually, the ECOLISE member group they are part of and what wider networks they are, or feel part of. A note taker in the room wrote the names of the different networks on a sheet. Some networks had more than person involved. Of the 40+ Networks identified, the ones with more than 1 person involved, in order were: Permaculture 14 people, Transition Towns 9 people, Ecovillage 8 people, Seed Saving 7 people, Shared Governance 6 people, Community Energy 4 people, Slow Food 3 people.

Setting Community agreements is a hugely important step, to help navigate how we communicate together and assist navigate tensions that might arise. The facilitators invited all participants present to write one key issue important to them on a post-it and place it onto the sheet on the wall. Facilitators would then examine all responses and begin to cluster them into themes. Figure 4.14 shows the 37 post-its arranged into the following 13 clusters (Table 11):

Table 11*: ECOLISE General Assembly 2019* - Community Agreements

#	*Agreement*	#	*Agreement*
1	Respect	*8*	Listening
2	Inner emergent wisdom	*9*	Dialogue
3	Selfcare / inner transition	*10*	Diversity
4	Generosity	*11*	Inclusion
5	Collaboration	*12*	Language
6	Connection	*13*	Methodology sharing
7	Care		

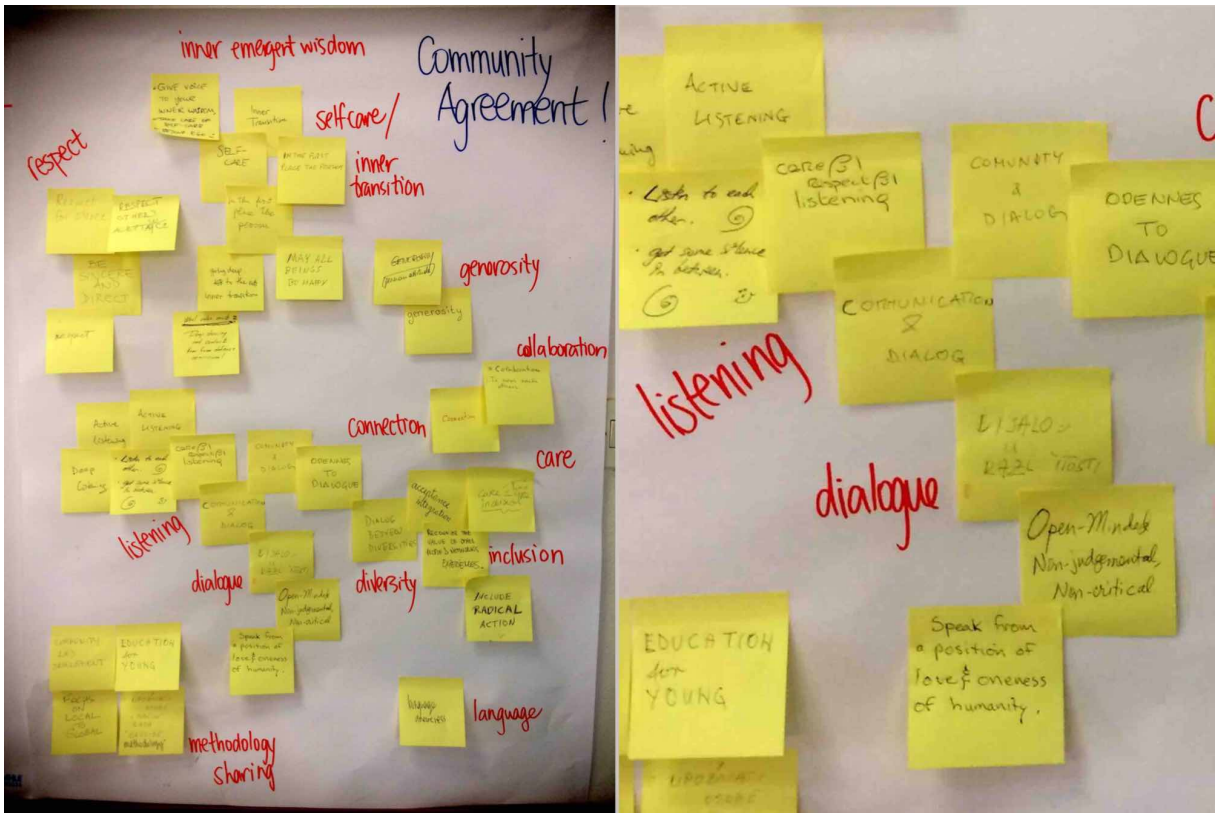
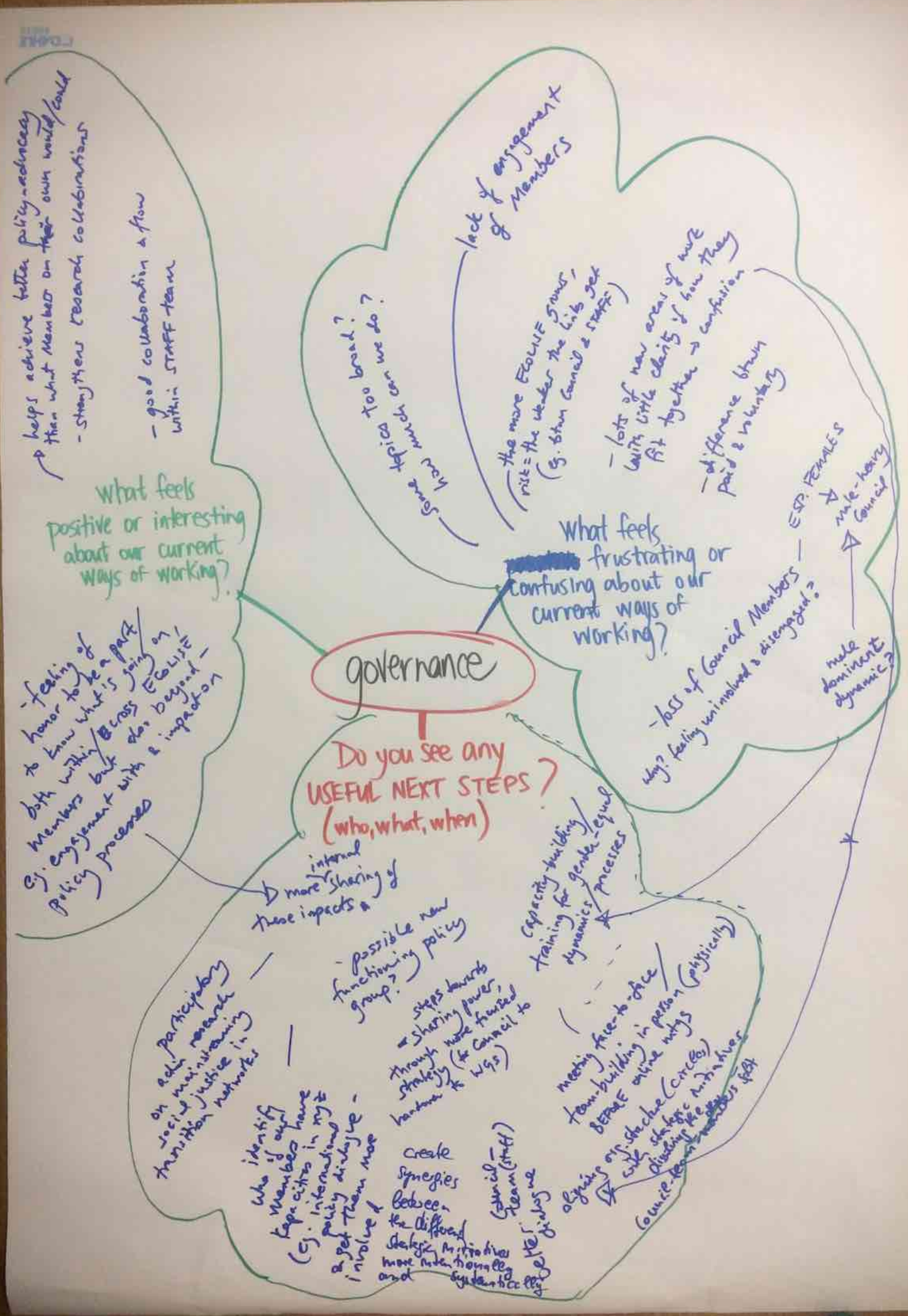


Figure 4.14: ECOLISE GA: Community Agreements & detail (ECOLISE, 2019)

Monday and Tuesday were the main two days where procedural issues were taken care of. Monday's morning dealt with annual report, financial report and approval of new members. Tuesday's slot before lunch dealt with the Council Elections were held before lunch. All other slots were devoted to ECOLISE's Strategy, Day 1 to its redrafting, Day 2 to its implementation. Day 1's 3 slots included: Introduction, Values and Governance. A tuners group redrafted the Strategy before the GA, it was examined and improved during the GA with groups braking out from the plenary to discuss issues in the different periods. Key inputs were added to the online document. the revised draft was agreed on Tuesday morning. Governance is key to ECOLISE, how the network works, makes decisions and effects change. For this section small groups, both physically in Croatia and online in breakout rooms, responded to the three questions below. Figure 4.15 captures the responses from one of four groups, writing together around a table.

- What feels positive or interesting about our current ways of working?
- What feels frustrating or confusing about our current ways of working?
- Do you see any useful next steps?

Figure 4.15: ECOLISE GA – Governance Discussion page (ECOLISE, 2019 Overleaf)


governance
What feels positive or interesting about our current ways of working?
What feels frustrating or confusing about our current ways of working?
Do you see any USEFUL NEXT STEPS? (who, what, when)
helps achieve better policy-advocacy than what members on their own would/could
- strengthens research collaborations
- good collaboration & flow within STAFF team
lack of engagement of Members
topics too broad?
can we do much?
the more ECOWAS grows, risk = the weaker the links get (eg. btwn Council & staff)
- lots of new areas of work with little clarity of how they fit together → confusion
- difference btwn paid & volunteers
- lack of Council Members — esp. females
why? feeling uninvolved & disengaged?
male-heavy Council
male dominant dynamic?
- feeling of honor to be a part of both within/across ECOWAS & members but also beyond — eg. engagement with & impact on policy processes
more internal sharing of these impacts
- possible new functioning policy groups?
capacity building/ training for gender-equal dynamics/processes
participatory action research
social mainstreaming
transition justice in networks
steps towards sharing power, through more trusted strategy (for Council to WGs)
who identify members have capacities in my policy analysis - get them more involved
create synergies between the different strategic initiatives more internally and
(Council-staff) dialogue
meeting face-to-face/ team-building in person (physically) BEFORE online mtgs
eg. structure (circles) with strategic initiatives directing the

From Fridays for Future to Communities for Future. Co-creating community-led system change (Cities for Change event, May 26, 2021)

This event was part of the "Cities for Change" forum, a 2-month online program showcasing world-changing ideas in digital and interactive events for "building a just, sustainable and equal society from the ground up". It happened on May 26th 2021, from 14 - 16h. It was fully online and had 37 participants, most from Europe, some from Latin America. The forum was organised by Amsterdam city council, who embraced and were trying to expand the Fearless Cities[92] movement that had been growing since the first event organized by *Barcelona En Comú* in 2017, after the municipal election win of Ada Colau in 2015. We were invited to participate, as I then acted as the ECOLISE link for the Transformative Cities[93] network led by the Transnational Institute (TNI)[94], who are based in Amsterdam and helped create the forum. Our event was in the *Energy and Climate* track of the *Transition Talks* section that ran May 24 - 28.

Wearing both the UrbanA and ECOLISE hats, I reached out to the two growing CoPs, of associates and friends in related communities, to explore key ideas together. Despite very strong ideological bases amongst groups that seem very aligned, the reality is that there has been much dis-connection between groups for a long time. The event objective was for "us", the eight distinct invited groups and projects, to explore challenges together and to build bridges for moving forward together, in short, to connect communities for system change. The event poster (Fig 4.16 L) read "Change the world, start with the city!", the longer event outline read:



Figure 4.16: L: Cities for Change poster R: Economy breakout room (ECOLISE 2021)

[92] Fearless Cities, ECOLISE wiki https://wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php?title=Fearless_Cities
[93] Transformative Cities https://transformativecities.org/
[94] Transnational Institute (TNI) https://www.tni.org

> Since the eruption of "Fridays for Future" demonstrations on world streets in 2019, the ECOLISE network has been developing the "Communities for Future" action platform to accelerate the eco-social just transition. As part of the "Cities for Change" summit, ECOLISE invite 8 of their member groups and allies to explore how best community led initiatives that have been hovering at the periphery, can emerge to become catalysts for system change, making the old structures obsolete.

To combat climate breakdown, regenerative action is required. Degrowth criticizes sustainability's relationship to perpetual quantitative growth on a finite planet. Permaculture's post carbon pathway shows us where we must go. Doughnut economics gives us the compass to get there. The event was inspired by GEN's "5 Dimensions of Sustainability" (Whole System was the workshop itself). On behalf of ECOLISE, I invited eight communities to respond to the four following specific questions simultaneously about regeneration, in pre-arranged groups:

- Social: How can we bring regenerative design ideas from ecovillages to our cities, especially when urban injustice continues to grow? (GEN & UrbanA)
- Cultural: How can we bring about a culture of resistance and regeneration that is accessible to all? (Fridays for Future & Communities for Future)
- Ecology: How can we bring our ecological ideas out of the academic and activist ghettos to the streets and everyday social movements? (Degrowth & Transition Network)
- Economy: Imagining an end to capitalism, instead of the end to the world… How best can community-led initiatives bring about territorial transformation, policy change and system change? (Doughnut Economics & Regenerative Practitioners)

Key insights were harvested in an online document, Figure 4.16 R is from the economy breakout room. Key findings, shared resources and further reading recommendations were shared after online[95]. Nonty Sabic and myself co-facilitated the event, acting in role as co-presidents of ECOLISE. The structure of the two-hour event was the following:

- 5 min: Introduction
- 25min: Framing of Questions
- 40min: 4 Simultaneous Breakout Rooms
- 10min: Plenary
- 40min: Open Discussion (Audience Q &A)

[95] https://medium.com/communities-for-future/from-fridays-for-future-to-communities-for-future-1c8f421e7c74

ECOLISE projects I worked on

From 2020 till 2024 I worked on a number of EU funded ECOLISE projects, to varying degrees and to different levels of engagement. Table 12 lists the seven projects and also lists the types. Figure 4.17 shows two posters I designed for the WAVE and ReGEN4All projects. Each project is described below, along with clarifications about the different EU funding bodies and types.

Table 12 – ECOLISE projects I worked on

Horizon Europe	Erasmus+
Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas (FLIARA)	Community Climate Coaches (CCC)
Urban Arenas for Sustainable Just Cities (UrbanA)	Ecovillage Transition in Action (ETiA)
DEAR	Regenerative Cultures for All (ReGEN4All)
SPARK	We Are Voices of Ecology (WAVE)



Figure 4.17 ECOLISE Projects. L: WAVE Belgium R: ReGEN4all (ECOLISE, 2024)

The EU has various funding sources, with moneys given to assist it get closer to its strategic objectives "to tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's SDGs and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth". Horizon Europe[96] is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation, the indicative funding amount for Horizon Europe for the period 2021-2027 is EUR 93.5 billion. Also called "Global Citizenship Education", Development Education and Awareness-Raising (DEAR)[97] enables people of all ages to reflect critically and assume active roles, both locally and globally. Erasmus+[98] is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Full list of ECOLISE projects is on their site[99].

- **Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas (FLIARA)**

The project is on a mission to create a more sustainable future by highlighting the role of women in agriculture and rural areas. FLIARA will boost understanding of the needs and challenges facing women leading innovative environmental and rural development practices in EU farming and rural areas. FLIARA aims to create a European-wide rural innovation ecosystem that supports women-led innovative practices in farming and rural areas (based on establishing a CoP, with 20 women innovators as ambassadors at its core). This initiative seeks to elevate the visibility and awareness of existing female- led innovations, emphasising their pivotal role in advancing EU environmental and inclusion policies. Jan 2023 – Dec 2025. http://fliara.eu

- **Urban Arenas for Sustainable and Just Cities (UrbanA)**

Its main aim is to gather knowledge from previous EU-funded research and other relevant projects and mobilise it more effectively for action and policy influence. It combines the synthesis of existing information with the active engagement of diverse city-makers in a series of four Arena events. January 2019 - December 2021

ECOLISE wiki entry https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/UrbanA

UrbanA wiki, under ICLEI control: https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/Main_Page

- **SPARK**

SPARK, brings together a diverse consortium of 20 organisations under the umbrellas of Oxfam and the Climate Action Network Europe (CAN Europe). The project raises awareness, increases

[96] Horizon Europe https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en
[97] DEAR https://dearprogramme.eu/about/
[98] is Erasmus+ https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/what-is-erasmus
[99] ECOLISE projects https://ecolise.eu/how-we-do-it/projects/

capacity, and supports EU citizens, particularly young people, to build public support for ambitious climate change and development policies which have gender equality at the core. As part of its role in the project, ECOLISE delivered street actions under the umbrella of the European Day of Sustainable Communities, the Time for Collective Action Manifesto and an annual policy event. ECOLISE participated in the Ticket to the Future Activity and in the Fixing the Future Festival in Barcelona in October 2023. The consortium's joint actions have led to at least 30 million people becoming aware of climate change, development and gender equality. The Project ran from August 2020 - July 2024)

DEAR project page https://dearprogramme.eu/project/spark-climact/

Partner WECF page: https://www.wecf.org/climate-action-by-eu-citizens-2/

- **Community Climate Coaches (CCC)**

Community Climate Coaches is an exciting, Europe-wide community climate action and climate justice project aimed at catalysing, supporting, and co-creating transformative change at the local and (bio) regional levels through community-led initiatives. CCC is an approach to train, support and enable community facilitators and catalysts across Europe to coach communities in local resilience in the face of the multiple social and ecological crises, and to seize the opportunities this creates for change. The CCC project has been developed through a consortium of partners active in European Permaculture, Ecovillage, Transition Towns and Regenerative Design networks. The work is Ongoing. Project team created an open-source, wiki-based commons for collectively work, its Regenerative Knowledge Commons (RKC).

Project webpage: https://ecolise.eu/community-climate-coaches/

RKC: https://rkc.communitiesforfuture.org/index.php/Main_Page

- **Ecovillage Transition in Action (ETiA)**

Ecovillage Transition in Action (ETiA) project focused on creating empowering partnerships to scale sustainable development and regenerative practices by communities and local authorities collaborating for sustainability. As is shown by many such successful partnerships between CLIs and local authorities, this proves to be an effective way to cross-pollinate ideas, develop opportunities and scale successful initiatives. The ETiA project produced a Handbook, a Toolkit, a curriculum and a navigation pathway to support the collaboration between local authorities and CLIs. 2020 – 2022 (interrupted due to COVID)

ECOLISE wiki entry:

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Ecovillage_Transition_in_Action

- **Regenerative Cultures for All (ReGEN4All)**

The purpose of the ReGEN4All project was to serve researchers, practitioners, and adult educators from ecovillages and academia as well as policymakers on all levels. ReGEN4All aimed to make the knowledge gained within and through ecovillages more accessible both for academic research and to help inform policy decisions on sustainable lifestyle and regenerative practices. The project launched the E-Community platform, which includes a matching system between ecovillage researchers and ecovillages, a database that contains a collection of literature about ecovillage research and a code of conduct on how to approach ecovillages as a researcher, as well as guidelines for ecovillages on how to handle researchers conducting research in their communities. REGEN4ALL was a year-long project that ran in 2024, its partners were GEN Europe, ISCTE, ECOLISE and the Danish Ecovillage Network (LOES)

E-community Research Platform https://ecommunity.gen-europe.org/

ECOLISE CoP event: European Community of Practice: Collaborating effectively with local governments https://tinyurl.com/4h3vf74p

We Are Voices of Ecology (WAVE)

WAVE is a European funded ERASMUS+ project, run by 5 partner organisations based in Romania, Turkey, Lithuania, Portugal and Belgium. WAVE's mission is to take action against climate change, encourage environmental sustainability and give a voice to the youth by providing them space and tools to become active citizens. WAVE will develop the active participation competences of 180 young people while empowering them to understand, adapt and promote a more sustainable style of living. The 180 young people will create monthly podcasts to promote the 3 topics. The group will explore how to use various media channels for promoting the voices of youth. ECOLISE will run a WAVE ambassador for 5 youth workers based in Belgium for a year, after an International Onboarding Training. WAVE values include: Focus on radical transformative action; Regeneration (go beyond sustainability; Empower and mobilize the youth; System change not climate collapse. Project length: July 2024 to July 2025.

WAVE: https://linktr.ee/wave_project + https://www.instagram.com/waveprojecteu/

WAVE Belgium on Spotify

https://open.spotify.com/show/6igfb5JF70tEVG4occ4ApF?si=373f0bc946fa4426

The WAVE Arrábida Podcast (Portugal) on Spotify:

https://open.spotify.com/show/6Y2tT3B2m7sVoSatz39d8l?si=04d812c6b078442d

Time for Collective Action Manifesto

The "Time For Collective Action Manifesto" was launched at ECOLISE´s main policy event (fig 4.18) “Making the European Green Deal Strong and Real: Harnessing the power of community-led initiatives and local governments” (co-organised with ICLEI and EESC), on November 7th 2023 at the EESC’s main hall in Brussels. The Manifesto was an outcome of ECOLISE’s participatory advocacy process with over 900 people from over 140 organizations participating. The manifesto reflects the diversity of citizen-led initiatives: it is a symphony of voices providing key ideas and policy demands directed to EU policy makers.[100]



Figure 4.18 Time for Collective Action Manifesto. 1: Manifesto 2: Nina holds the manifesto 3: Portuguese MEP Francisco Guerreiro 4: EESC hall, Brussels (ECOLISE, 2023)

This was an informal follow up of the Beyond Growth Conference[101] from a grassroots & local perspective. It brought together around 500 participants, about 100 in person in Brussels and another 400 online. It had around 20 speakers, including two Members of the European Parliament: Belgian MEP Philippe Lamberts and Portuguese MEP Francisco Guerreiro. Other speakers included Antwerp’s Deputy Mayor Tom Meeuws and the Spanish Youth Climate Activist Maria Serra Olivella, from the SPARK project. The event marked the beginning of an advocacy campaign led by ECOLISE through 2024 that led up to the European elections.

[100] Manifesto site: https://timeforcollectiveaction.eu/
[101] Beyond Growth 2023 Conference https://tinyurl.com/4e5th54t

This manifesto outlined key ideas and policy demands for transformative change aimed at EU policy makers, as well as non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and CLIs. It aimed to trigger deep conversations and reach out to changemakers on all levels, building a solid alliance of partners for a strong European Green Deal. Its seven demands were:

1. Support community-led initiatives as laboratories for transformative social innovation.
2. Support the right to have a choice to live sustainably
3. Harnessing the power of community for a strong localised Green Deal
4. Meaningful public participation and lively democracies
5. Financing and resourcing community-led solutions
6. Imagine the possibilities: from "what is" to "what if?"
7. From extraction and infinite growth towards care and wellbeing

The manifesto was the outcome of a year-long (2022-2023) consultation process initiated by ECOLISE, which positions community-led initiatives towards the European Green Deal, contributing to "10 theses towards transformative community-led local development policies". These theses provided a framework for conversations about the role of communities in achieving transformative systemic change and their connection with EU policies. It had 3 goals:

- To trigger deep conversations between ECOLISE members, partners and policy stakeholders
- To form the basis for an advocacy campaign targeting the European elections
- To be used as the starting point for further co-creation in policy positioning

By 2023, ECOLISE positioned itself in a very radical position. The manifesto is very radical. It identifies the problem of "sustainable growth" and the need to move beyond infinite economic growth. It does not mention capitalism, but calls for systemic change and references a Postcapitalist article. Noting immense challenges, ECOLISE proposes a change of narrative:

> We have the opportunity to work together, in community and solidarity, towards a good life for all within planetary boundaries. We have the opportunity to fix a broken system based on infinite economic growth, hyper-individualisation and over-consumption. We have the opportunity to take action for a more meaningful and just life.
>
> Transformative change requires both individual and collective action accompanied by systemic change. We need to support people to become active changemakers as citizens, as active consumers, in their communities, and in their working lives.

4.2. Grassroots Activism

4.2.1 Architectural Moments

4.2.1.1 Eco City Banja Luka, Bosnia (2003)

In 2003 I participated in the "Eco city Banja Luka" project in Bosnia. Banja Luka is the second largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the largest city in *Republika Srpska* (Serb Republic), in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was a two-week long EASA event. EASA stands for the "European Architecture Student Assembly" which is a self-organized community of architectural students that has been having yearly gatherings since it was set up in 1981 in Liverpool, England. This event was a SESAM, a "Small European Students of Architecture Meeting". Writing in the EASA blog[102] at the outset of the event, on April 11 2003, here are the key sections of what I quickly wrote (note grammar errors):

> "eco city project – banja luka" could and indeed should become the most exciting global architectural project, an example of a new direction in a new age. if it gathers sufficient momentum, it will happen. its up to us to make that momentum. the worlds population is moving into the urban, sustainable city living is the problem we as designers must create the solutions for. This project is attempting to face this challenge. Personally I think today's architectural vision is lost, this is exactly the thing architecture and indeed the world needs. Placing it in the Balkans is the most appropriate position for it due to recent wars. ecotopia happened in Ireland last summer, hopefully it will happen in banja luka sometime soon, sustainable living can happen out in the woods but we have to make it happen in our urban world. make the world a better place...please do

Only a few years earlier, this part of the world was in a horrific civil war (1991–1995 / 2001), which saw the breakup of the old country of "Yugoslavia". The project was set up by the EASA network and had the support of the mayor and general city council. Participants in the project were made up from about 20 architectural school students from the Banja Luka university, and about 10 of the EASA network who travelled from outside of Bosnia. Different workshops happened in the university, with site visits to different areas of the town. Local people were very fond of their river, despite some parts being highly polluted and used as a dumping ground (Fig 4.19.8). Various teams were formed and worked on proposals over a

[102] eco city banjaluka – EASA blog: https://easa.antville.org/stories/348675/

weeklong period. At the end there was a meeting with the mayor and city council (Fig 4.19.5) to discuss the various ideas shared. The results of the event were then presented in an art exhibition in the state art gallery in a two-week long exhibition

The work I was involved in focused on trying to spread word in the city that this event was happening and that the public were invited to come to the art gallery, see the proposals and join the discussions about what sort of future they wanted for their home town. To gain attention and spread word we created the "EKO PARADE", a walk from the park by the river, up through the city, as marked by the red dots on the map below (4.19.4), and finishing at the state art gallery. Small flyers were given out to passers-by, small enough to fit in your hand, mostly in Serbian. The main visual prop was a very big "EKO flag" was made (Fig 4.19.7), using a dead 12-foot branch of a tree to hang a giant white sheet from, which had the letters EKO painted in green and the green EKO footprint stencil (Fig 4.19.6). I also used my orange builders jacket and orange wig to further draw attention to our little band of wanderers. The EKO flag was used as a banner for the exhibition and was hung on main door to gallery.

The group I was in explored the ideas of how the new technology tools we had could assist in creating an improved society, connecting communities beyond national borders in a network age. Print outs from work with the Indymedia network I was then part of, IMC Oxford, concerning activity around resistance to the ongoing war in Iraq that had started earlier that year, were shared. Some interactions happened online between people in the wider EASA network. At the end, the various ideas were collected and shared in book form, EKO BOOK, which was given to the people who ran KIC, a local media centre/ pub in Banja Luka. 6 weeks after the event, end of June, I shared a blog post about the ecocity work in a post "INDYMEDIA stuff exhibited in Bosnia state art gallery"[103]. A few weeks after the event ended, May 21st, some of the local ecocity team in Banja Luka shared a photo report about the work on the EASA blog[104].

I drifted from the EASA network after 2004, returning only once more briefly, when EASA came to Ireland in 2009. In 2017 I put together another post about this architectural moment[105]. 22 years later, I am not sure how much of an impact this little EASA workshop had on helping shape Banja Luka into a more ecological city. This and similar questions are addressed in the following chapter, Discussion, below.

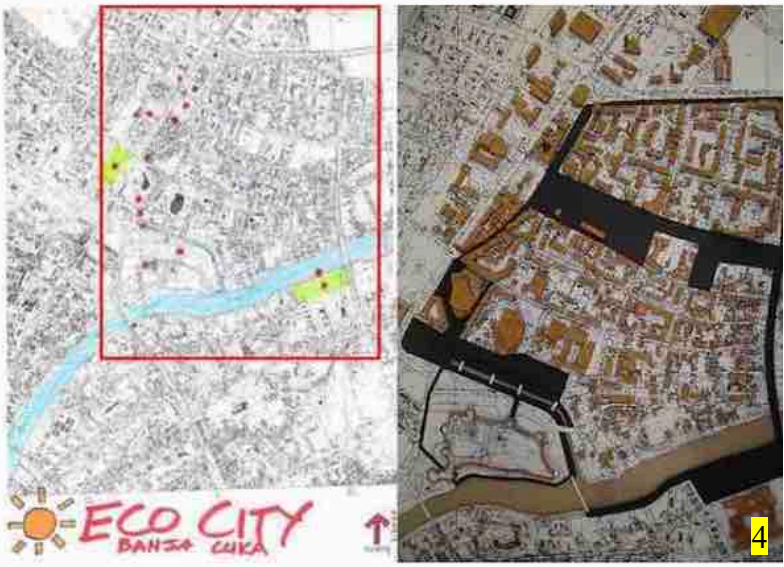
Figures 4.19: Eco City Banja Luka, Bosnia, 2003 (Author, 2003, Overleaf)

[103] Indymedia stuff exhibited in Bosnia state art gallery https://oxford.indymedia.org.uk/2003/06/273494.html
[104] ALBUM –Posted on EASA blog, May 21 2003 - https://tinyurl.com/43uvuy45
[105] Eco city Banja Luka, Bosnia, 2003 https://ecocitycuritiba.wordpress.com/2017/05/17/eco-city-banja-luka/


ECOLOGY
I LOVE ECO CITY BANJA LUKA
1


ECG
ECO CITY GROUP
2


3


ECO CITY
BANJA LUKA
4


5


EKO GRAD BANJA LUKA
MAKE YOUR CHOICE
6


7


8

4.2.1.2 Botanic Spine, Dublin, Ireland (2005)

I initiated the first moment "Botanic Spine & Dolphins Barn Community Garden" in my home town of Dublin in 2005 with eco friends and loose political networks I was part of. It was a twofold process that sought to create a greener city, improve community action in a socially impoverished part of the city and to move from thoughts to real deeds with the political network of grassroots and direct-action activists I was part of. It also grew from the theoretical ideas I was exploring to complete my degree in architecture. It involved cycling and community gardening. 20 years ago, it was illegal to ride by bicycle along the edges of the cities two canals. To point out the absurdity of this law, we organised illegal monthly bike rides along this 18km orbital route to push for law change and demand cycle infrastructure be implemented. All rides started and finished in Sheriff Street. We invited people from the communities the canal went through to join the bike rides, informing them of the possible consequences of the action. We called this circular route the Botanic Spine, it weaved together the 2 canals, the huge Phoenix Park, 3 city rivers, as well as going through many difficult, near abandoned areas.

We identified a series of points about the spine as possible points for community gardens. We carried out a tree walk to plant local species trees with communities around the spine. We illegally squatted land beside the canal behind a factory in the neighbourhood called Dolphins Barn, which in recent decades had seen huge problems with drugs, especially heroin abuse. The garden brought together a mix of urban punks, local residents and other people from the city who wished to learn how to plant food or wanted to support the project. After a productive year with much support from the local community (Fig 4.20), the council threatened the garden with eviction. We moved to a 2nd spot nearby with what we could move from the 1st spot. That too was evicted. A local business had another corner site derelict for decades, they offered it to the project for temporary use until building work started. They moved in and continued gardening there until 2023. For over 15 years a derelict corner became a much-loved community hub.



Figures 4.20: Top: Dolphins Barn Community Garden (Author, 2005)

The 2006 deputy city mayor, Andrew Montague, joined us for an illegal bike ride and entered the squatted garden to help the project. He was a bike enthusiast and brought in legislation to allow bike riding soon after. In the following years improved bike lanes were introduced. After the 2008 crash, many more urban community gardens opened in the city.

We created the Dublin Ecocity Group and posted events on Indymedia Ireland, as well as post event summaries with photos and sometimes audios. A few articles were turned into features. Figures 4.22.1 and 3 show images from the bike rides. Fig 4.22.2 shows the map and Botanic Spine Greenway proposal.

Politically engaged architecture: Direct action on Dublin's Botanic Spine

The first public communication[106] sent out after the successful occupation of derelict land read:

> **community garden opened, 5 trees planted**
>
> we got off to a late start, it was lashing rain but we went in and had the tree planting ceremony. There was new faces, laughter, singing, messing, serious planning, getting wet, sheltering, planting, heading for tea. the garden has very good soil, possibly it was used as a garden in earlier years, on the OS map it is listed as allotments. We wandered around the site, there were no trees, we planted 3 hazel trees and 2 willow. we then went up to the rich's gaf for tea and bikis and had a chat about how we would like to see things progress and other matters. there was a lovely spirit in the group, most of who had not met each other before. we imagined how things might be in 3 years time. hopefully the factory that the garden backs onto will be supportive and in time they might even allow us to use their wall for some muralismo. we will meet next in the garden on thursday from 6.30 onward, come along and bring things to plant and tools to use. we will then head up to Seoidíns gaf for a get together.

Thus began our strange little community gardening adventures in Dublin, from Sheriff Street[107], to Dolphins Barn[108] (3 attempts), Phibsborough[109], Finglas, South Circular Road[110] and beyond.

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[106] community garden opened, 5 trees planted https://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=69341&condense_comments=false#comment104938
[107] tree walk - 11-15th april https://www.indymedia.ie/article/69290
[108] Bringing Nature to Man's Domain https://www.indymedia.ie/article/69689
[109] new community garden up and running in Phibsboro https://www.indymedia.ie/article/74524
[110] 3rd time lucky for community garden in Dublin 8? https://www.indymedia.ie/article/84268 + SCR Blog https://southcirculargarden.blogspot.com/ + SCR Video, 2009: https://vimeo.com/5751928

From ideas to action

In April 2005 I was engaged in both theoretical architectural work, finishing the thesis project in my final year in DIT, and practical action with some small, fringe, anti-capitalist projects and street actions with a growing "grassroots" activist community on the island. Mayday 2004 had seen the opening of a temporary Dublin Indymedia Centre when a large number of street protests happened, the biggest of which resulted in the Irish states first use of a water cannon. The Shell to Sea struggle was also beginning in the North West. The 9th Grassroots Gathering[111] happened in Dublin over the first weekend of April 2005, in the Nicholas of Myra community centre, in the heart of the Liberties in the city centre. This was an island wide gathering open to everyone involved in or interested in grassroots, non-hierarchical activism. It was attended mostly by established leftist groups (socialist, anarchist, Irish republican, anti-fascist, trade union, anti-war) and interested individuals to share what was happening locally and build strategies for moving forward for a different, socially just and ecologically sound island. Some community gardeners from Cork and Belfast joined a few of us wanting to do similar in Dublin.

At this time, I was exploring the *Botanic Spine*[112] (Fig 4.25) concept for my architectural thesis: An 18km orbital eco corridor / greenway for Dublin city: A green thread that connects up a series of pocket parks, organic food gardens, local amenities, cities waterways and a new city metro underground. While the focal point for the theory design was in Sheriff Street, the old dock community alongside the Royal Canal on the Northside, with activist friends we had identified a patch of derelict waste ground on the banks of the Grand Canal on the Southside, just beside Dolphins Barn. In the lead up to the Grassroots Gathering, we got in contact with various people involved in gardening, eco urban action, land squatting, homeless support and peace work, and invited them to join the workshop we organized for the event in the Liberties.

About 30 people participated in the discussion part of the workshop. Then about 20 walked the near half hour to the identified site. An adjacent space had been already taken by locals in front of their houses and turned into a little garden, they told us they had not asked for permission, just taken the space. Our earmarked space (Fig 4.24.4) was roughly 200m long by 20m wide (roughly 6000m2 / 1,5 acres). We entered for the first time by crossing over the factory wall. Inside, Elinor from Cork's Mandala Community Gardens told the group how they had created 6 gardens, working with the city council and had even gotten funding through the

[111] Grassroots Gathering 9: Report Back https://www.indymedia.ie/article/69248
[112] The Botanic Spine : A Greenway and CPUL for Dublin (eco)city https://ecocitycuritiba.wordpress.com/2017/05/23/dublin-2005/

European capital of culture grant to pay for some full-time workers. Darren and Tom talked about their experiences with their squat garden in Belfast, how it acted as social space that worked very well for the welbeing of their activist group. The “Peace process” was only 7 years old then. Pears from Dublin had much experience with gardening and tree planting. He recently created a small garden in St Agnes community school in Crumlin and outlined practicalities of a garden, like running costs of money to purchase tools, trees, seeds and equipment. All there agreed we were willing to take the step to move forward with this project. We agreed we would not ask the city council for permission, as many in Dublin said they had done so in the past without responses. We would take illegal action to try to force collective community change in our city. We believed it was better to act and suffer the consequences, rather than not act at all.

Tree Walk and breaking ground

Pears organized a Tree walk two weeks after, April 11-15th, in Dublin. We agreed to enter and squat the land on Tuesday 12th, to plant native Irish trees and begin our action. The event was open to all and posted publicly on Irish Indymedia with simple instructions (sic):

> meet 6.30pm portobello bridge. walk along grand canal. arrive and open garden 7pm

The tree week began in the brains collective warehouse, a bike workshops and vegan café, where the “Lost Zine archive” was then housed, under the local train line in North Strand. Pears had bags with 115 trees for donation, a mix of local indigenous species. About 6 people assisted on Day 1. We walked to the nearby Sheriff Street community and made 5 stops. Firstly, to the Senior Boys school, St Lawrence O'Tooles, where my grandmother had spent her life teaching. We had made no reservation. Pears explained to the school body and David Bailey got some of 3rd class to come up to the roof where they each got a tree to put into a pot, to be taken to other gardens later. We then called into Gerry Fay’s shop, Gerry was head of the North Wall residents association, to inform him of the activity. We called into the Women’s Centre, connected to the "Little Treasures" creche. Kevin from our group told the kids about the trees and sang songs (Fig 4.21.1). Then the 3-year-olds helped plant the first tree in the ground (Fig 4.21.2). We were given tea and biscuits and chatted with Sylvia after. Then, with an after-school project, Geraldine helped organize for their "Smallies" group to plant 2 Ash trees in the small front garden of the parish priest, Father Ivan, whose basement was used by the "Smallies" group.

We left Sheriff Street and walked up North Circular Road to Maple House, a men’s homeless shelter near Croke Park. A prior connection had been made no fixed time to meet was

made to plant, so not too many men were around when we arrived. We were told residents asked about making a shrine for one of the residents who died recently. We returned 3 days later, on Thursday. Three homeless men, John, Harry and Dermot (Uncle Dermo) planted a tree each in the back garden for their friend Billy Merrigan (Fig 4.21.3). Billy had lived a tough Dublin life for 83 years, before being tragically killed when a bus struck him outside the shelter.

On Tuesday we went to the South Side, starting in Synge Street School, where the Irish playwright and political activist George Bernard Shaw had studied. In an area where tree planting ceremonies had happened before, school kids planted an Ash, Birch and Rohan. It felt apt when we remembered with these children why we were doing this walk and Shaw's famous line: "You see things, and say, "Why?" but I dream things that never were, and say "Why not?".

Tuesday evening, a group of about 10 people met at the bridge on a cold, wet April evening. The group was a mix of both the activist and architectural communities. We explained the nature of the action, that it was an experiment based on hope that a better city might result from the action, and that it was illegal. All knew the risks and walked along the canal. Just after 7pm we climbed over the wall, taking the bag of trees with us (Fig 4.21.5). After discussion, sacred songs and a little dance, the soil was dug (Fig 4.21.6). With all present holding the tiny tree as it entered the soil, the first Hazel tree was planted. A powerful, hope filled moment.

On the last morning, a Hazel tree was given to the Tibetan Buddhist centre with a holy well.



Figure 4.21: Tree Walk & Opening Dolphins Barn Community Garden. 1 & 2: Sheriff Street. 3: Maple House. 4: Intended new garden. 5: Entering. 6: Breaking ground. (Author, 2005)

Community-led attempts to transform Dublin city

On Saturday 21st of May 2005 we had our first "Dublin City greenway Cycle"[113], our first bike ride along the proposed 18km orbital route Botanic Spine (Fig 4.25.2), that weaved together the two canals, the Botanic Gardens, the huge Phoenix Park, 3 city rivers, as well as going through many difficult, near abandoned areas. On June 1st 2005, we created the "Dublin eco city group", as an informal grassroots city movement. It was then illegal to ride by bicycle along the edges of the city's canals. To point out the absurdity of this law, to push for law change and demand cycle infrastructure be implemented, we organised illegal bike rides every month (Fig 4.22.1 & 3). I participated in and mentioned our plans at the international Velo-City and European Greenway Conferences that happened in Dublin that June. In September 2005, in his last day of office, the deputy Dublin City Lord Mayor and bicycle enthusiast, Andrew Montague, did the illegal bike ride with us and helped weed in Dolphins Barn Garden, with his gold chain on. He was elected city mayor 2011-2012, during which time he implemented a bikeway along the Southside canal and achieved planning for the North Side, which was finally implemented about 2023. All bike rides started and finished in Sheriff Street. Since 2005, the walls around the canal there have come down, blocked areas are now open.



Figure 4.22: L: Eco city group M: Botanic Spine map R: Canal cycle ride (Author, 2005)

The Phibsborough garden did not last well, it was thin, windswept and had bad ground from constructing the train tracks. In February 2006, a tree planting day was scheduled with some of Dublin's homeless community. Some people got caught up in the "Love Ulster" riots and were arrested in town that day. Interest in the "Cursed Earth" garden waned and it slowly died.

The Dolphins Barn Garden grew from strength to strength, as can be seen (Fig 4.23). Many people joined in the first year, more trees and shrubs were donated to the space, a regular group took ownership of the project with a healthy mix developing between locals and activists. From

[113] Dublin City greenway Cycle http://www.indymedia.ie/article/69929

the start, communications went out that this was not a speculative initiative, but that it wanted to explore how best local communities can come together, work together, learn together and dream together about what sort of city they want. An exhibition was put on in the local library, that faces the garden. on the other side of the canal. A good working relationship was developed with Willie Morrough from Dublin City Council, with whom we entered the social housing scheme of Dolphins Barn to also begin planting areas, but that never took off. In March 2006 communication began with the owner of the site, White Heather Industrial Estate. A year after the project began, we were told that to stop or be evicted[114]. Articles about the garden appeared in mainstream media; the Irish Times (May 2005) and The Village (April 2006), as well as in the local newspaper in Dublin 8. We moved what we could from the garden 100 metres down the canal, near Sally's bridge, on an unused green field behind a fence that backed onto the back of the Dublin Mosque. The council threathened the group with "trespass" orders. The collective were about to give up, but a solution soon came from the local community itself.

One of the original group, Seoidín O'Sullivan, called into a neighbour to find out if people knew who owned a nearby corner derelict space on South Circular Road. It belonged to a locally based salvage company that hadn't been used in over 20 years. Contact was made with the owner who said the community garden could move in for free (Fig 4.23). The only condition was that the site had planning permission and when the time came to move off the site, they would. Agreeing with this demand, the group created a prototype so the council could see how community gardens work. It received good feedback from people locally and got media attention, including the national RTE TV news (July 14 2008). Seoidín's sister Aoibheann made a lovely documentary about it in 2009. In 2023, the time came to close down for building work.



Figure 4.23: South Circular Road Garden (Aoibheann O'Sullivan, 2009; SCR, 2016)

[114] Dolphin's Barn community garden under threat http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75438

4.2.1.3 Reclaim Power, Copenhagen, Denmark (2009)

"Reclaim Power" was the name of a two-week-long gathering for non-violent direct action (NVDA) in the cold and snowy streets of Copenhagen in December 2009, when indigenous, climate justice, anti-capitalist and various other groups united during the COP15 climate conference. It was also the name of the final day of action in that period when thousands of activists descended on the Bella Centre, where the world leaders had gathered to try to make agreements on how best to deal with what was still then called "climate change". The final action on December 16th was the big day of action for "Reclaim Power" (Fig 4.24). It was the creation of an alternative communication space outside the Bella Centre, where a Peoples Assembly was created. Testimony was shared by the various indigenous representatives and other climate justice social movements. Although not successful in objectives in Copenhagen, this was where the "System Change, not Climate Change" slogan became used. It was also an important moment that united indigenous groups with Global North climate justice groups.



Figures 4.24: Reclaim Power, Copenhagen (Climate Justice Action, 2009)

Social & Climate Justice Caravan – Getting to Copenhagen

Two important summits took place at the end of 2009 in Europe: the 7th conference of ministers of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva, Switzerland, and the UN climate summit in Copenhagen (COP15). With a week between them, 60 activists, most from the Global South, travelled across Europe through Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France and Denmark. They drew attention to the consequences neoliberal globalization and climate breakdown had on their lives and showed how to fight against them. Together with local activists in all the countries they

passed through, they looked for alternatives to free trade and the privatisation of resources. Their mission was to unite the North and South in their shared fight for another world.

The Social & Climate Justice Caravan[115], shortened to Climate Caravan (Fig 4.25), wanted to link the protests against the WTO with the protests against the climate summit. Between 3rd and 9th December, these representatives from global movements from the South and North drove two routes from Geneva to Copenhagen. The Western route went through Paris and Brussels, the Eastern one through Freiburg, Frankfurt and Cologne, including a delegation to Berlin. The activists met up in Hamburg to drive together over the Danish border to Copenhagen. With public meetings, discussions and actions planned along both routes, the caravan drew attention to the consequences of trade liberalisation and climate change on people in the global South. Through meetings and workshops, participants sought to establish networks with local activists and hoped to mobilize as many people as possible to come to Copenhagen.

I applied to join the Climate Caravan, responding to an invite sent on an activist email list. I was accepted, having a background in eco-activism, community media and speaking Spanish.



Figure 4.25: Social and Climate Justice Caravan (2009)

I was active with the Indymedia Ireland[116] network since first posting from Ecotopia in 2002. In 2003 I became active with the Oxford IMC (Independent Media Centre) when the illegal war broke out in Iraq and collaborated with Hamish Campbell who helped set up the video activist group Undercurrents and whose documentary "Globalisation and the Media"[117] won an award. I did my first audio recording in 2004 during the Red Archive discussion in Dublin[118] and more infrequently with the loose Indymedia radio network and various projects and communities[119].

While the Caravan created a website before leaving Geneva, I offered to create a more dynamic blog and to assist in training people in how to publish articles and do low tech audio

[115] Social & Climate Justice Caravan blog: https://climatecaravan.wordpress.com/
[116] https://www.indymedia.ie/index.php
[117] Undercurrents: Globalisation and the Media https://www.undercurrents.org/media.html
[118] Blogpost: Art spaces as weapons of war https://itsafunnyoldworld.wordpress.com/2008/10/10/art-spaces-as-weapons-of-war/ & Audio file (MP3): http://radio.indymedia.org/uploads/the_red_archive_discussion.mp3
[119] Bold, Beautiful, Blooming Barcelona asks: What would it mean to win? https://itsafunnyoldworld.wordpress.com/2009/03/09/garden-radio-trilogy/

and radio interviews. I quickly bonded with Jose Goyas, a leader from the indigenous territory of Hondurs Morales in the Cauca territory in Colombia, who was from the political commision CRIC (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca)[120]. I did language translation, along with a Swiss man Alain, who had lived for much time in Colombia. Within the first few days on the caravan, it became known that there had been another murder in Jose's community, linked to Canadian business interests. Canadian activist Dave Bleakney from the Canadian union of postal workers was with us on the caravan. Together, we set up a radio interview between Dave and Jose about the situation, published a blog post with the audio file: "Colombian paramilitaries assassinate indigenous leader in the name of Canadian multinationals"[121] and followed up with a formal press release: "Canada linked to Indigenous murders in Colombia"[122]. The group responsible for the murders were the paramilitary group *Aguilas Negras Nueva Generacion* (Black Eagles New Generation), at the behest of the Canadian mining firm Cosigo Resources of Vancouver.

The Climate Caravan had been set up by Olivier De Marcellus, a Geneva-based activist and a founder of Peoples' Global Action (PGA)[123]. Olivier had been part of the old 1968 group of Paris and was originally from the US, but living in Europe since the 60's and supporting indigenous and anti-capitalist movements for much time. Other key organizers were Tom Kucharz from the Spanish group Ecologists in Action and Jurgen Krauss from Global Justice Now. Funding had come from international solidarity movements. The caravan community was half European and half indigenous folk from all continents coming to Europe to tell their stories.

Reclaim Power: Indigenous Solidarity and Action in Copenhagen

Despite some holdups at the German-Danish border, both buses were allowed through after being searched. News was spreading of anti-capitalists coming to Copenhagen, fear mongering was spreading in mainstream media with stories of violent groups coming to cause trouble. We were invited to stay in Christiania, the anarchist, squatted urban ecovillage, housed in the ex-military barracks beside the waters. We stayed here for about 1,5 weeks, from December 9th till about December 20th. I slept in my sleeping bag in a big hall upstairs, on a wooden bench. Waking up every morning, facing out to what had been old military buildings, thinking of where I was and the challenges we faced, put things in clear perspective: It was war, but we chose to fight not with violence, but with solidarity, organization, collective intelligence and love.

[120] Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca - CRIC https://www.cric-colombia.org
[121] https://climatecaravan.wordpress.com/2009/12/09/colombian-paramilitaries-kill-colombian-indigenous/
[122] https://climatecaravan.wordpress.com/2009/12/07/canada-murders-in-colombia/
[123] PGA History https://europe.pgaconference.poivron.org/en/pga/pga_history

Some of our group had accredited badges, allowing them to participate inside the main COP space, the Bella centre. We all participated in different moments in the alternative summit, Klimaforum (See page 57) and in the many demonstrations that were planned over the week in the city. I also got accreditation to join the media space near Klimaforum, where I continued to share updates of goings on, on various Indymedia sites (Denmark IMC is now closed down). At one stage I was in a working zone next to the team from Democracy Now![124]. For the duration of the summit, the Danes opened an Indymedia space in a squatted old factory, it was about a half hour walk from Christiania, it was next to another space that was used for social movements to gather, discuss matters, plan actions, prepare floats for actions. When meetings were on, I continued to assist doing live translation for the Spanish speaking friends from the Caravan. I met Irish activists I knew from 2005, when we had been in Scotland for the anti G8 protests (see page 219) together and before that. They were now living in London and part of the Dissident Island Radio[125] collective and connected with the Indymedia London crew.

There were a number of days of actions in the streets, which were planned before hand at the activist convergence space. The Indigenous community of the Climate Caravan played a leading role in messaging and in the front lines of demonstrations in the lead up to the big day of action on December 16th which was called “Reclaim Power” (Fig 4.24). The Filipino fishermen had brought a fishing boat with them, which acted as both a very strong visual prop, as well a potent reminder of the communities they were there to represent. They were in Copenhagen to tell the stories of the struggles their communities were going through, just to exist. They were speaking truth to power, and seeking help to bring about System Change.

Police handling of the protests leading up to the 16th were very heavy handed. Saturday 12th 100,000 people marched to the Bella centre, our section demanded "System Change Not Climate Change". Monday the 14th there were demonstrations against Canadian Tar Sands and issues of climate change and migration. Despite protesters being fully peaceful, there were many reports of police violence, pepper spraying and many hundreds of people being arrested and taken to the docks area where it was rumoured cages had been set up that could hold thousands of protesters. That night in Christiania an important “Alternative Climate Meeting” was planned with leading high-profile climate activists Naomi Klein, Michael Hardt, Tadzio Müller and Lisa Fithian. To be followed by a big party, with music and dancing. After the street demo, I returned to the Indymedia centre with Alain from the Caravan, to publish reports and prepare communications with the Dissident Island crew for the 16th. We arrived late to

[124] Democracy Now! https://www.democracynow.org/
[125] Dissident Island Radio https://dissidentisland.libsyn.com/

Christiania. Upon entering, fire barricades were alight in the streets and tensions were high. We caught the end of the talk (a video of the talk was uploaded by *professorakbar* and is available at below blog post[126]). The key demand to all groups wishing to participate in "Reclaim Power" was that they respect organizers call that it be an explicitly nonviolent day of direct action. As reported the next day [127] [128], when the party started police raided Christiania and fired tear gas (Fig 4.26.L) directly at attendees who were dancing and gathering. Some protesters responded by throwing bottles at police and setting fire to barricades again (Fig 4.26.M). People went running in all directions. Myself and Alain stuck together. Someone opened the door of the building we took shelter beside, we went in and stayed quite with others in the dark for about an hour or two. The police scooped up hundreds of people and kept them sitting on the ground (Fig 4.26.R) in the cold for a long time. Nearly 200 protestors were arrested and taken away.



Figure 4.26: Christiania L: Police fire tear gas M: Protesters burn barricades R: Police arrests (Democracy Now! 2009; Indymedia, 2009; Martin Sylvest Andersen / Guardian, 2009)

The following day plainclothes police arrested Climate Justice Action (CJA) spokesman Tadzio Müller as he left the Bella centre and news reports began to emerge that not only were the rumors of the temporary cage prison true, but that the police had used pepper spray on detainees in the cages. After four days of demonstrations, more than 1,500 arrests had been made. There had also been 200 official complaints filed with the police about the arrests on Saturday and Sunday. Tensions were further growing before the big day of action on the 16th.

Many organizers of Reclaim Power saw it as a continuation of the anti-capitalist, ecological and social justice movements that burst onto the scene in 1999, when the WTO talks were shut down in Seattle. This time, nearly ten years since N30, rather than shutting down a summit of world leaders, our intention was to open up an alternative communication space. We were dismayed and angry by the non-democratic processes happening within the Bella Centre, where

[126] Reclaim Power, that talk, that "riot", that action, the consequences https://climatecaravan.wordpress.com/2010/01/29/reclaim-power/
[127] Democracy Now! https://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/15/headlines
[128] Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/15/copenhagen-194-arrests

rich G8 countries were able to bully the poorer countries of the majority world and where climate problems were seen as new business opportunities, based around false solutions. Some members of our groups had strong connections with the Bolivian delegation under Evo Morales, the countries first indigenous leader who came to power in 2006 and who was committed to defending *La Pachamama* (Mother Earth). Reclaim Power's objective was for the various lines to make their way to the Bella Centre and to create a People's Assembly there: An open and alternative space to allow the peoples of the world, the social movements of North and South, with the indigenous peoples taking the lead, to speak together and build a new world together.

The various social movements of North and South had been working together for a long time and together had produced the Klimaforum declaration (Fig 2.15.L, page 58). This was an agreement about what the limits of climate temperature increase should be and a pathway for how to get there. It would be presented inside the COP two days later, but all the movements were already in agreement about it and at the assembly it could be used as a base to build from. 'System Change not Climate Change' was the key title of this document. It was also the banner 1000's of us marched behind the previous Saturday. The People's Assembly was hoped to be the key to unlock the process to implement the ideas written in the document, through action.

We made it to the Bella Centre, I walked with the Filipino fishermen, helping push their boat for many hours from early morning before the dawn. Despite the cold and the long walk, there was euphoria and a real sense that we could be making history. With the indigenous groups in the centre, and with the rest of the Climate Caravan around them, and thousands more from the various environmental activist groups around them: CAN, CJN, CJA and many more autonomous groups and communities and people who turned up for the day. Unable to get inside the centre, due to police violence, we had the People's Assembly outside (Fig 4.27).

Various speakers from the indigenous communities spoke, about why we need to leave the oil in the ground, how their communities were being wiped out due to mining and deforestation. They spoke in their own language, which was translated to English. Activists in our networks and many delegations who supported the call were inside the centre. When we were unable to get inside, hundreds of people staged a walkout to join us outside. Joshua Kahn Russell from Rainforest Action Network and US Indigenous rights leader Tom Goldtooth led a crowd (Fig 4.27.3) chanting "Justice! Reclaim power! Join the People's Assembly! Take back the talks! Climate justice now! Bolivia!". Naomi Klein and leaders from other delegations, including many African countries, followed them. Again, they were met with a heavy police response. In a scene reminiscent of a medieval siege over a moat, the Danish police beat all those trying to leave the centre back inside at the bridge (Fig 4.27.4). Who knows what could have been?

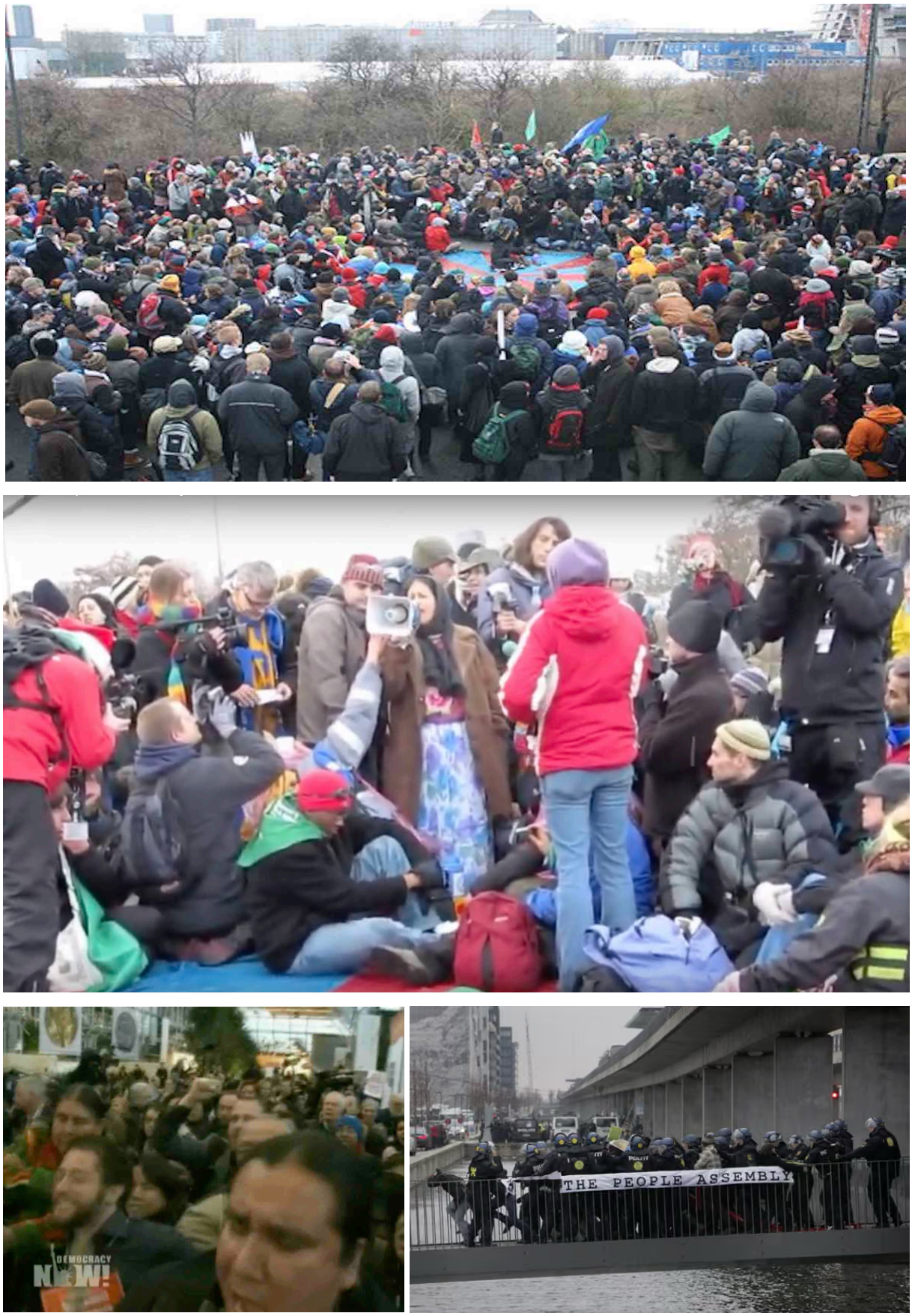


Figure 4.27: 1 & 2: The People's Assembly. 3: Bella Center walkout 4: Danish police violence (Ecolabs1, 2009; Democracy Now! 2009; Peter Dejong / Guardian, 2009)

In a further attempt to widen this critical dialogue, along with the friends from Dissident Island Radio, we facilitated a live stream that went out over the internet and over terrestrial radio in London. I held up a phone beside the mouth of each speaker when they spoke on the loud hailer (Fig 4.27.2, grey jacket), this went out over the radio network, albeit, low quality. In this way, anyone with net access could, at least, listen to this discussion as it happened in live time via this small Indymedia radio network experiment. While there were documentary film makers also on the caravan, the attitude of opening spaces in real time to facilitate "radical telling of the truth" meant that people used the tools they had, in the places they had them. While it was a bit messy, the urgency of the moment, and what was being fought for in those moments, were what mattered. Whereas when documentaries are finally edited and released, the moment has often passed. Both are, or were, needed, to help bring about system change.

Ironically, it was around this time 2009-2010, that the ten year old experiment of Indymedia started to die. This was mainly due to the rise for some years of social media. Soon, it seemed everybody was using Facebook as the main means to connect and communicate. Reluctantly, I finally joined, so as to be also able to share there. In 2022 Elon Musk bought Twitter, rebranded it as X, and let it veer sharply to the right. Far-right commentators previously banned were invited back, and Musk himself started supporting far-right European parties and movements.

Some years after COP15, it was found by the Danish courts that the Danish police had acted illegally and with excessive force. They argued that they had been told to "decapitate the social movements", but were found guilty none the less. Danish government ministers who gave such orders were never charged.

The Danish 2009 COP was seen as an absolute failure, in terms of reaching climate agreements, and thereby helping stop climate breakdown. 6 years later, advances were made at COP21 in Paris in 2015. The Klimaforum declaration was shared with governments inside the centre, but it was mostly the Global South bodies who agreed with its concerns, narrative and proposals. Global north voices declared it a utopian vision and not economically sound.

Upon leaving Copenhagen I made a final radio interview with Olivier and Alain about the Failure and Victory in Copenhagen. The subsequent blog post[129] includes that audio recording and Olivier's parting short article. Despite the failures, Olivier saw things positively, how our actions had been "a decisive step towards a global climate justice movement... since the Zapatistas called forth the anti-globalisation movement 13 years ago, there has never been such a broad alliance of organisations calling for "system change".

[129] Failure and Victory in Copenhagen https://climatecaravan.wordpress.com/2010/01/02/failure-and-victory-in-copenhagen/

4.2.1.4 Spanish Revolution, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain (2011)

The 2008 economic crisis in Spain led to massive austerity cuts, bank repossessions of housing, rise in suicides and a spike in unemployment with youth unemployment rising as high as 56%. I eventually lost my job working as an architect with EIG. It is said that up to about 90% of Barcelona's architects lost their jobs. Out of this misery and anger a coordinated day of direct action happened in a network of cities throughout Spain on May 15th 2011, hence being called the "15M" movement, with Spanish public squares being occupied by the *Indignados* (Indignant ones) movement named after the former French resistance fighter Stéphane Hessel's pamphlet "Indignation" (2010). They demanded a complete reboot of how politics was done in Spain, calling for Real Democracy (Castells, 2012; Mason, 2012). The occupations lasted two months. Activists used #SpanishRevolution and #15M hashtags on social media, which become names for the movement. From the start, the public continuously occupied squares all over Spain, to start an open dialogue about how to get out of the economic crisis. Thousands arrived in the squares daily, formed assemblies and made decisions collectively. At night, many slept in the squares, protecting and holding the space. In Barcelona's *Plaça de Catalunya* (Catalonia Square) activists set up infrastructure, tents, a kitchen, information points, had workshops and meetings, and held an open public general assembly every evening. From the start there was a light police presence, which watched but did not interfere, but on May 27th, orders were given to displace the square in the early morning. After 6 hours of police violence, 147 people were injured, many seriously. Shocking pictures flooded firstly social media, then the mainstream: This resulted in 20,000 people expressing solidarity by retaking the square that day (Fig 4.28).



Figures 4.28: 15M Indignados occupy Placa Catalunya, Spain (Edu Bayer, Eldiario.es, 2011)

While initially created by established activist groups and social movements, quickly numbers grew at the evening assemblies. People sat around in a circle that could easily expand outward and also allowed for the general public to walk around and listen in. People took turns to come to the speaking area to make points, suggestions, share views, tell personal stories, at the start with a simple loudhailer (Fig 4.29 L). It was later replaced by a mic and sound system. It was something special to witness, to see how quickly members of the public turned from spectators at the edge to participants, it was people from all walks of life, young, old, working, unemployed, man, woman, student, granny, the discussions reflected the diverse, passionate and intense desires for improving things. Online toolkits helped facilitate the process; at the meetings, one person spoke at a time, people listened, there were a series of hand signals to assist, rolling of index fingers or hands if the speaker was rambling, crossed forearms to indicate blocking a proposal and the waving of open hands to show agreement (Fig 4.29 R) with a proposal or a quite way to clap. People spoke to the crowd, proposals were made, agreements were taken by those in the square and things developed in this way for two months. Although not without disagreements or problems, it was a super example of direct democracy in action.



Figure 4.29: L: Democracy in action, Placa Catalunya (AcampadaBCN, 2011; La Vanguardia, 2016)

In terms of infrastructure there were a series of fourteen commissions, which anybody could participate in, many of which had sub commissions, to facilitate the quick expansion of the urban phenomenon (Fig 4.30, translated Table 13). Everybody had a role, if they wanted; kitchens were set up, living quarters developed. In a very short period, a self-organized open system transformed the national discussion through a network of citizen led direct actions in the public realm. Castells (2012) referred to this form of urban action in his native Spain as “A Rhizomatic Revolution”, noting how after the initial actions of 15M, the structure multiplied rapidly “Over 100 Spanish cities following suit, triggering a massive occupy movement that spread in a few days to almost 800 cities around the world”.

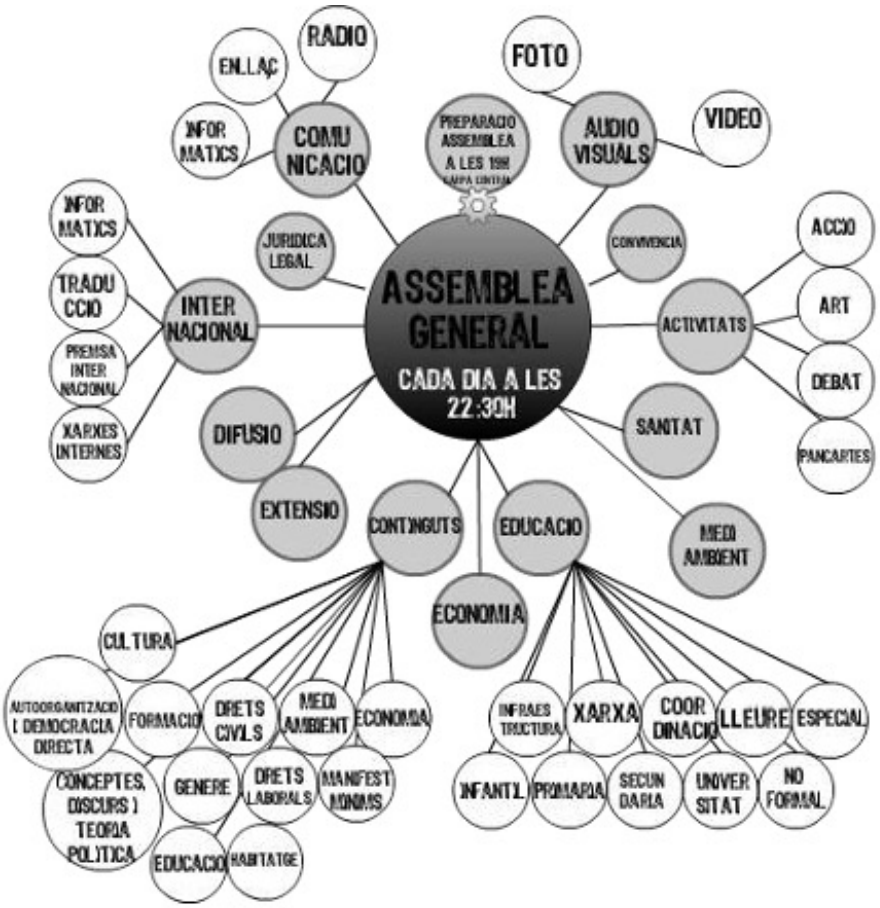


Figure 4.30: Placa Catalunya assembly organization structure (Apunts sobre l'abisme - Take the square, 2011)

Table 13*:* Organization structure of Placa Catalunya assembly commissions. Developed by the author - Apunts Sobre L'abisme – take the square (2011)

General Assembly – Every day at 22.30h			
# Commission	Sub commissions	# Commission	Sub commissions
1 - Audio-visual	• Photo • Video	8 - Content	• Culture • Training • Civil Rights • Environment • Economy • Manifest XXX (Can't read) • Labour Rights • Gender • Self-Organization & Direct Democracy • Concepts, Discussion & Political Theory • Education • Housing
2 - Interaction		9 - Extension	
3 - Activities	• Action	10 - Diffusion	

	• Art • Debates • Banners		
4 - Health		11 - International	• Computer Systems • Translation • International Media • Internal Networks
5 - Environment		12 – Legal Issues	
6 - Education	• Infrastructure • Network • Coordination • Freedom • Special • Children • Primary • Secondary • University • Non-Formal	13 - Communication	• Radio • Online Linking International Media • Computer Systems
7 - Economy		14 – Assembly Preparation — At 19h Central Area	

Deleuze & Guattari first developed this philosophical Rhizome concept in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972–1980) project, which is based on the botanical structure of the creeping rootstalks Rhizomes, which grow perpendicular to the force of gravity and have the ability to allow new shoots to grow upwards from new nodal points.

Quickly communicating the rapidly changing 15M reality reinforced the network, which happened in both the digital and physical worlds simultaneously, with pins added on a world map in the info point in *Plaça de Catalunya* acting as a form of rapid constant feedback loop (Fig 4.31). Castells noted “The emergence of mass self communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own projects” (Castells, 2007) and examples of the mutually global and local aspects of these networks were perhaps best expressed between Barcelona and Athens; the 2010 “Peoples of Europe Rise Up” banner unfurled at the ancient Acropolis appeared in 2011 on my handmade placard on Barcelona’s streets (Fig 4.32). A beautiful moment of shared real time communication happened between the two cities united in the same struggle; a live video transmission between Barcelona’s square and Syntagma square in Athens (Fig 4.33), taking the Peer to Peer (P2P) concept to Square to Square (S2S), through global solidarity and direct action. Soon after, the Occupy movement erupted in US cites and in 2013 similar citizen mobilizations erupted globally.



Figure 4.31: Network Encampments Map in Placa Catalunya (Author, 2011)



Figure 4.32: People of Europe Rise Up: Athens & Barcelona (Louisa Gouliamaki / AFP / Getty, 2010; Lluis Gene / AFP / Getty, 2011)



Figure 4.33: Square to Square (S2S): Barcelona & Athens (CRIMETHINC, 2011)

Nobody fully expected the 2011 Spanish Revolution to make the impact it did. Harvey (2012) noted perhaps it was an example of Lefebvre's revolutionary concept of heterotopia, where those weeks showed some active groups that something radically different was not only possible, but had actually sparked into existence. Although facilitated extremely well by experienced activists from social movements long used to diverse group dynamics, it was the rapid opening up of the common space which truly made it a profoundly successful urban rupture, as more citizens took a stand, made a point or started to actively participate for the first time, in both the real and digital realms together: reading and commenting on new reports, retweeting links to short quickly edited videos, sending messages from the plaza to friends on WhatsApp lists, waving hands or making a statement at the nightly assembly. Together in a new joined space, or idea, that forms the core of living and acting in the network age, Spain took bold steps into the unknown. Speaking about the *acampada* (encampment) after the first week, Barcelona activist Esther Vivas (2011) predicted:

> We are witnessing the birth of a movement whose energy, enthusiasm, and collective strength has not been seen since then (2001). It will not, therefore, be a nostalgic tenth anniversary (of the Anti- Globalization, World Bank summit in Barcelona of 2001). Quite the contrary. We are going to celebrate it with the birth of a new movement.

Although it was a slow process and took some time, she was correct: Four years later her city, Barcelona, went through even more profound change, opening up the Common Space even further. While built upon those same forces that gave rise to and grew quickly in 2011, this part of the story took things to a completely new level. The citizen platform *Barcelona en Comú* (Barcelona in Common) won the 2015 Municipal elections in Barcelona and declared they were developing a more 'feminised' democracy. With seven more citizen platforms wins, including Madrid, the newly labelled Spanish 'Rebel Cities' movement began. After over 2,000 years of history, Barcelona got its first woman mayor, Ada Colau: An indignado who led PAH, the city's housing movement with whom she was arrested by riot squad in 2013 (Fig 4.34.L). For Colau:

> We think the city governments are key for democratic revolution, to begin governing, with the people, in a new way. But on the other hand, we're very aware that the real change must be global, that one city alone cannot solve all the problems we're facing, many of which are global because today the economy does not have borders. The big capital and the markets move freely around the world, unlike people. (Colau, 2015)



Figure 4.34: L: Ada Colau arrested by riot police, 2013 R: Barcelona feminist assembly, Gràcia neighbourhood, 2017 (AP photo / Paco Serinelli, 2013; ikimilikiliklik, 2017)

Barcelona en Comú work on a Municipalist only platform, seeking power only at the city level, based on a set of related characteristics (Shea Baird, 2017):

1. Distinctive political organization reflects diversity of local political landscape
2. Open and participatory decision-making processes
3. Organizational structure is relatively horizontal (for example, based on neighbourhood assemblies) and guides elected representatives
4. Capacity for institutional action depends on strong, organized movements in the streets that push elected leaders.

Their structure and work method is a continuation of the earlier groups of social movements and *indignado* processes they grew from. They aimed to create a feminist democratic revolution, further opening up the Common Space in Barcelona based on deep communication processes that allows for a city that listens. They occupied the institutions of the mayor's office, dispersed power by opening them up to the various assemblies in the city neighbourhoods, where members of the mayor's team and residents discussed plans and projects that affect them together (Fig 4.37 R), thereby residents are co-creating their neighbourhoods of the future, based on an open participative planning process. Colau's win was celebrated widely around the world, with people soon asking "Is this the world's most radical mayor?" (Hancox, 2016).

In 2017 *Barcelona en Comú* created "Fearless Cities", a global municipalist movement to help all cities follow Barcelona's lead. The city hosted a 3-day conference with representatives from all over the world, split in 3 lines: 1) Work as a global Municipalist network: 2) Feminize politics: 3) Stop the far right. The Fearless Cities network grew quickly, conferences happened in New York, Chile, Eastern Europe and Brussels before Covid. Then in 2021, in Amsterdam.

4.2.1.5 Cyclists Square, Curitiba, Brazil (2014)

The cycling movement in Curitiba, Brazil had created a steadily growing base since illegal actions, the painting of unsanctioned bike lanes and the creation of illegal community gardens. In 2014 they hosted the World Bicycle forum and requested the city government give over a derelict corner site on a street which had become dangerous in recent years due to drug dealing, violence and murder. They put a call out for assistance, the local community co-designed and co-built a square for very low cost. They did this through *mutirão*, a Brazilian Portuguese word that came from Indigenous traditions for collective work action (similar to *meitheal* in Irish) (Fig 4.35). Every weekend people helped construct the square, it was opened on World Car free day, September 22nd 2015. The community kept developing ideas for a more people friendly city. The founder of the NGO, Goura Nataraj[130] (aka Jorge Brand) was selected to stand for local municipal office. He won and implemented many of the NGO's proposed changes. He later was elected for Parana State. Curitiba's community-led experiments now inspire more cities.



Figures 4.35: Public community design & build new square (Praça de bolso do ciclista, 2014)

[130] Goura https://mandatogoura.com.br/ + Praça Ciclista https://www.facebook.com/PracadebolsodoCiclista

4.2.1.6 The English Estate, Lisbon, Portugal (2025)

The *Quinta dos Ingleses* (English Estate) is a 54-hectare green space behind Carcavelos beach in the municipality of Cascais, 20 km outside Lisbon and part of the wider Municipal Area. For decades it has been abandoned by the authorities and the different development plans were stuck in political fights. In 2024 a court case gave the permissions to the building constructor, Alves Ribeiro, to commence work. A fence was put up around the site and no one was allowed in. *SOS Quinta dos Ingleses*[131] was created in June 2021 as a local NGO to try to save the green space. They also point out that it and the nearby recent developments are part of a very controversial and illegal planning process in Cascais, where environmental rules are not being respected, where local governance decisions and mandates are not being respected and in times of climate and biodiversity emergency, huge building works will seriously affect the delicate ecological balance of this area. Recently direct action has intensified and in early 2025 (Fig 4.36) the site was illegally entered and occupied for a weekend, with people sleeping in the woods during the nights. The nearby Hilton Hotel being constructed at the end of Carcavelos beach also had its work stopped while the courts explored if it too was carrying out illegal activity and if the sale of the land was legal. Court appeals are ongoing. Anger and greater dissatisfaction grows, where the local community feel they are being unheard. Two members of the SOS community were elected in the 2025 local elections. The fight is not over yet.



Figures 4.36: Occupation of the *Quinta dos Ingleses* (SOS Quinta dos Ingleses, 2025)

[131] *SOS Quinta dos Ingleses* https://www.sosquintadosingleses.com/

4.2.2 Ecological Communities

4.2.2.1 Findhorn, Scotland, UK

Albert Bates describes the solutions visible in the 2022 IPCC reports image (Fig 2.4) of the recently constructed co-housing block of East Whins from the Scottish ecovillage of Findhorn:

> Superinsulated co-housing apartments adjoin each other, topped with solar PV panels and water heaters, each with an enclosed sunspace/greenhouse fronted by a family garden, rain barrels, a paved walking/biking trail, and a common green. It is not an artist's rendition. It could be either Ecovillage at Ithaca or Earthsong in Auckland, or a thousand similar places. (Bates, 2022)

Findhorn Ecovillage (Fig 4.37) is considered Europe's oldest ecovillage, founded in 1962 by Peter and Eileen Caddy and Dorothy Maclean in a caravan park outside the village of Findhorn, in Moray, North Eastern Scotland[132]. It's where GEN was officially established after the 'Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities for the 21st Century' conference in 1995. Reminiscing about this in 2004, Gaia Trust cofounder Ross Jackson said "It was appropriate that the first major conference was at the "planetary village" of Findhorn… because it was one of the oldest and best known of the many intentional communities around the world". The full Findhorn community is a mix of components. GEN EU's site describes Findhorn as a spiritual and ecological community that has grown around the Findhorn Foundation (FF), and comprises an experiment in conscious living, an education centre and an ecovillage. The New Findhorn Association is the umbrella organisation to facilitate and encourage development of the community. GEN's entry[133] notes the community's description of itself, including their values:

> The Park Ecovillage, Findhorn, is a vibrant, diverse community nestled in the northeast of Scotland. Home to over 350 people from around the world, it is a place where everyday life is interwoven with spiritual practice, ecological awareness, and social innovation– a living experiment in how we can live lightly on the Earth, care for one another, and co-create with nature. Our shared journey is guided by three founding principles: Inner listening, Co-creation with nature & Work as love in action

[132] Google map location: The Park, Findhorn, Forres, Scotland https://maps.app.goo.gl/amUdJkbQGKni1bkU8
[133] GEN: The Park, Ecovillage Findhorn https://ecovillage.org/ecovillage/thepark-ecovillagefindhorn/



Figure 4.37 Findorn. L: Communty R: Layout (Findhorn, 2012, Author, 2023)

Returning to the IPCC 2022 cover, there was no direct mention of Findhorn, or GEN, and only two mentions of ecovillages in its giant 2258-page report[134]. In Chapter 9, Buildings, they referenced France's SER (Sufficiency, Efficiency, Renewables) Framework that was considered in the design of the French energy transition law in 2015. Box 9.1 merely stated "Senior cooperative housing communities and eco-villages are considered among the cohousing examples to scale-up" (IPCC, 2022, p 959). In Chapter 17, Accelerating the Transition in the Context of Sustainable Development, section 17.4.1.1 "Social Movements and Education" mentions research communities that have "pointed to social networks such as the 'transition initiative', eco-village networks, civil-society movements and intentional communities as ways of generating the shared understandings that are central to inner and outer transitions, as well as the broader development of social movements" (IPCC, 2022, p 1765).

After her 2014 book Litfin developed a website to help further transformation. Findhorn[135], is widely perceived as "the mother of all ecovillages". Although physically relatively small, it has had a huge global impact, not only in more ecovillages, but increasingly in education and policy guidelines with local municipalities, including urban cities, beyond the Global North:

> Now, Findhorn members serve as consultants for the United Nations and multinational corporations. While formal membership is around 400, the wider community includes hundreds more supporters living nearby and thousands more visitors. While Findhorn still grows plenty of vegetables in its Cullerne Gardens, it primary focus to day is on "growing people" through a popular smorgasbord of conferences and workshops on spiritual and ecological themes.

[134] 6th IPCC Assessment Report on the mitigation of Climate Change https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/
[135] Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community: Findhorn https://ecovillagebook.org/ecovillages/findhorn/

Questioning the economic sustainability of Findhorn in 2014, Litfin identified this concern:

> Tens of thousands of people participate in the Findhorn Foundation's calendar of personal growth events every year. Between the events themselves and all the requisite food and lodging, this workshop economy constitutes Findhorn's primary source of employment… Findhorn's economy is utterly tied to a brimming schedule of conferences and workshops that attract visitors from all over the world, yet its residents pride themselves on their small ecological footprints. Those footprints, however, are only small if we ignore the air miles that make their economy possible.

After the global ecovillage community created their formal network, GEN, in 1995, they succeeded in creating their 2nd goal, "creating a global educational network and a common educational curriculum" (Jackson, 2004), in October 2005 at Findhorn. This led to the network of Global Ecovillage Educators for a Sustainable Earth (GEESE) and their program and group Gaia Education Design for Sustainability (GEDS), or just GAIA Education[136], who are now separate from GEN and also a key ECOLISE member and project and policy work collaborator. Litfin notes that "by 2012, Gaia Education was offering its Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) in thirty-two countries and nine languages, with support from city and national governments, as well as the EU". A Findhorn resident who helped write the EDE curriculum is May East, a Brazilian woman from São Paolo who had a past life as a pop star and who moved to Findhorn in the 90's. East was deeply concerned about bringing the ideas from Findhorn to the wider world, especially communities not currently aligned to ecological and spiritual thinking in big cities. East said "Cities make up 12 percent of the Earth's land and consume 83 percent of its resources. If we spend our time on what can't be replicated in cities... we're losing time" (Litfin, 2014). East ran a United Nations CIFAL, the French acronym for International Training Center for Local Authorities, and brought the EDE to Brazil's largest cities, with funding from local municipalities helping run courses in Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paolo "We ran the EDE in São Paolo's largest slum and had a hundred students, mostly on scholarships... All told, we've trained 15,000 designers, and these change agents are sparking every kind of social and ecological enterprise you can imagine".

Litfin notes that due to the somewhat irregular mystical beliefs of the early Findhorn community, they were accused by conservative neighbours of being a cult. Peter Caddy and

[136] GAIA Education https://www.gaiaeducation.org/

Eileen Caddy fell in love in 1953 in Iraq. Peter was stationed there with the Royal Air Force (RAF) and married to Sheena Govan who led a spiritual group that had "quiet times" during which they would listen for divine guidance. Eileen moved there with her first husband, also in the RAF. They both divorced and moved to Scotland together, where Sheena's group was dubbed the 'Nameless Ones' by local media. Canadian born Dorothy Maclean also joined this spiritual group. Eileen and Peter married in 1957, and had three sons. For work, from 1957 they co-managed a run-down hotel in Forres, the town next to Findhorn, called the Cluny Hill Hotel, which was run on spiritual principals in the 1950s. Maclean joined them as the hotel's secretary. In 1962 the hotel company terminated their employment, and as the FF's history page[137] states "With nowhere to go and little money, Peter, Eileen, Dorothy and the three young Caddy boys moved to a caravan park in the nearby coastal village of Findhorn". Despite the ground being poor quality and very sandy, Eileen listened to her inner voice and they began practising organic gardening as a means of supplementing their family's food supply. FF notes (2025):

> In the barren sandy soil of the Findhorn Bay Caravan Park they grew huge plants, herbs and flowers, most famously the now-legendary 40-pound cabbages. Word spread, horticultural experts came and were stunned, and this garden at Findhorn became famous… In the late 60s Peter and community members, in accordance with the inner wisdom being received by Eileen, built the Park Sanctuary and the Community Centre, buildings where the community met to meditate together and to eat.

Between gardening and spirituality, the community grew, followed soon by various forms of organic buildings and a steadily growing intentional community. Writing about the spiritual dimension in ecovillages Jackson wrote how Findhorn is one of the better-known ones and that

> Within GEN, spiritual and religious diversity is seen as a blessing and not as a problem. We see Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, Christians and Jews coexisting happily with each other and with other lesser-known spiritual traditions, not to mention atheists. They meditate and celebrate together with total mutual respect as they learn from each other without any problems (Jackson, 2014)

[137] Findhorn Foundation, history: https://www.findhorn.org/history

Litfin spent time in Findhorn ecovillage and despite expectations of finding a messy hippie haven, said it turned out to be one of most well-organized workplaces she ever encountered. At Findhorn work is considered to be love in action, Litfin wrote "Part of Findhorn's genius is that a good chunk of its work is done not just by volunteers but by people who enroll in its personal development and green-living workshops. I myself paid for the privilege to work on the Findhorn's 7- acre farm, Cullerne Gardens, as part of a full-immersion course called Experience Week. That work I paid to do turned out to be a highlight of my journey".

Findhorn has plenty of economic challenges now, but part of the East Whins neighbourhood on IPCC's cover provided some community-owned affordable housing, as agreed with Moray Council Housing and outlined by the Park Ecovillage Trust (PET)[138].This resulted in a long-term community member to be cared for in the comfort of her own home and 2 two-bedroom shared ownership houses being allocated to one young family and to a young first-time buyer.

Brexit and Covid caused major economic difficulties to FF's business that had previously been generating millions a year from its residential courses. In April 2021, a fire destroyed the Findhorn community centre and its sanctuary building (Fig 4.38 L). It was deliberately caused by the community centre's manager who had lived and worked at Findhorn for 16 years after he learned that because of restructuring plans he was one of 50 staff who would have to leave Findhorn. Visiting a year after the fire, joining in the open group discussions, working in the garden with the Caddy's son and speaking to residents, it sounded like the community's heart had been destroyed. How intentional communities govern themselves, respond when challenges arise and deal with conflict is a major part of the ongoing work all such bodies face, including ECOLISE. But as May East (Fig 4.38) wrote on her return to her old home, for Findhorn's 60th birthday in 2022, the model evolves and "the ecovillage offers a rich field where the tangible and intangible values of place are not separate; they are rather… two sides of the same coin".



Figures 4.38: L: Findhorn Fire. R: May East in Findhorn (Jasperimage, 2021; East, 2022)

[138] PET: East Whins Story https://parkecovillagetrust.co.uk/2017/06/15/east-whins-story-2/

4.2.2.2 Cloughjordan, Ireland

Cloughjordan Ecovillage[139] (CJEV) is Ireland's first ecovillage, located in North County Tipperary[140], on the eastern side of the River Shannon basin. Social dynamics were a key factor for the project since the outset. Many ecovillages are created far away from the modern world, with many created to be stand alone, self-sufficient, autonomous and a haven from a sick world. Cloughjordan rejected this model, hoping that their project could act as an economic, social, cultural and ecological regenerative force in Cloughjordan (CJ) country market town that had suffered much, like most of rural Ireland's towns and villages, from steady population decline, unemployment, brain drain and physical dilapidation for many decades. CJ has a main street with homes, some bars, cafes and shops. In the hinterland are a series of varying sized farms. CJEV located themselves down a lane off main street (Fig 4.39), which opens up into 67 acres of land within which the ecovillage is located, with homes, community buildings, farmland and wild areas. There is also the amazing Cloughjordan community amphitheatre for community gatherings, and theatre and artistic performances, that was opened in April 2017 by President Higgins, a long-time supporter of this ambitious cultural, eco-social project (Fig 4.40.1).



Figures 4.39: Cloughjordan Ecovillage maps (Google Maps, 2025; Cloughjordan, 2012)

[139] https://www.thevillage.ie/
[140] Google map location: Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary https://maps.app.goo.gl/L3MJd6dhrzn3TaHM7



Figures 4.40: 1: President Higgins opens community amphitheatre 2: Community meal (Cloughjordan, 2017; Davie Philip, 2012)

The core CJEV group formed in 1999. Their mission statement is "to serve as an education, enterprise and research service resource for all". The GEN entry[141] description notes that “they work to; minimize pollution to the air, water and land; demonstrate a new approach to rural regeneration; facilitate systems whereby people can create local and sustainable work; and provide for the cultural, artistic and non-material needs of the residents of the village and surrounding community”. Ecovillage resident Peadar Kirby noted in his chapter “Cloughjordan Ecovillage: Community-Led Transitioning to a Low-Carbon Future”:

> The project emerged 20 years ago when a group of people concerned at how unaware the public were about climate change and the need for sustainability, decided to develop Ireland’s first ecovillage. The first steps were to establish a company, Sustainable Projects Ireland, to build and manage the ecovillage and to choose the site – 67 acres of land in Cloughjordan, bought in 2002. Finances were raised from members, from an ethical investor and by borrowing, and the infrastructure installed in 2007-08. The first houses were built in 2009 and by 2013, 55 houses had been built. A carbon-neutral district heating system was installed and Cloughjordan Community Farm was

[141] https://gen-europe.org/discover/ecovillage-map/

> established in 2008 as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm to establish a resilient food system. (Kirby, 2020)

Kirby noted key extracts from Litfin's 2014 book "Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community", which relate to his view of the project. Litfin calls ecovillages 'living laboratories ... running collective experiments in every realm of life: building, farming, waste management, decision-making, communication, child rearing, finance, ownership, aging and death'. She sees them as 'opportunities for learning', both for ecovillagers themselves and for the wider society. An example of the very social feel of CJEV can be seen from the community meal on market square, taken in 2012 (Fig 4.40.2), where the wider town's community were invited to join too.

CJEV was a 2020[142] Transformative Cities finalist, in the housing section, in responding to "What's unique about the initiative?", they demonstrated how they are a model community:

> Cloughjordan ecovillage models the transition to a low-carbon society and shares its learning through educational activities. With 55 low-carbon homes, Ireland's lowest ecological footprint, a carbon-neutral district heating system, a community farm, green enterprise centre, and a planned reed bed treatment plant, the ecovillage demonstrates ecological, economic and social sustainability.

The towns history is interesting in a country that at the end of the 1990's was still somewhat divided, suspicious of new ideas and communities, and still suffering from poverty. The town was situated in an area of good land for agriculture just 15 kilometres from the River Shannon. This area had been greatly affected by the Tudor plantations (1550s – 1620s), where the English Crown confiscated Irish-owned land for colonisation with settlers from Britain. The Crown saw the plantations as a means of controlling, anglicising and 'civilising' parts of Ireland. Another repressive wave of ethnic cleansing happened in the 1650's under Cromwell's and his army's call of "To hell or to Connacht". New lands were given to his generals as tokens of the spoils of war. The corner of the CJEV site that seems cut off at Cloughjordan House is where an officer in Cromwell's army, Captain Harrison, built his mansion to govern his newly won lands. Cloughjordan itself translates as "Jordan's stone", as Captain Harrison had been to Jordan and brought a stone back which forms the foundations of one of the corners of what is today's Cloughjordan house. The Protestant ascendancy, from the British Unionist classes, held power

[142] The Cloughjordan Ecovillage models the transition to a low-carbon society
https://transformativecities.org/atlas/housing5

there for much time. In 1829 Catholic emancipation ended the hated sectarian Penal Laws and the economic wellbeing of Catholic communities slowly began to improve. One of the seven signatories of the Irish Proclamation for Independence, the *gaelgoir* (Irish language speaker) educator, poet, playwright and early feminist Thomas MacDonagh, was born in the town but died early by firing squad for his role in the 1916 revolt in Dublin. During the decades of the new state, the Irish Free State, since 1922 and subsequent Irish Republic, since 1937, CJ was always seen as a relatively diverse town, where Catholics and Protestants mixed well. This was a key reason for selecting the town, the group felt that it might be easier for a group of mostly urban educated eco people, many coming down from Dublin, to integrate with the local townspeople, more so than in other rural towns where little or no Protestants remained.

Integration was a key force for CJEV from the start, how best to connect with, support and ideally be accepted by and become part of the existing community. They have cultural events, as well as economic, social and local development processes active in both the town of CJ and the wider region of North Tipperary and the province of Munster. Their hope is to add an extra layer that might bring more life to the town, by demonstrating that ecological activity can increase and build up a more local resilient economy. Another key point in deciding on the location of the ecovillage was that it was serviced by a train station on the main Dublin – Limerick line, so can accommodate people who needed to commute to one of the bigger towns and who wanted to do so by a more sustainable form of transport.

Many members of CJEV are part of Cultivate, which used exist in Dublin but is now based in CJEV and is an ECOLISE member. Cultivate collaborated in many ECOLISE led projects.

An earlier document from before 2005 outlined the following vision for the CJEV community, based on understanding and working with the ecological economic view of limits:

> For thousands of years, people have lived in communities close to nature. Many of these communities, towns and Villages, exist to this day but are struggling for survival. The modern Eco- Village movement aims to recreate this sustainable heritage within a modern context. An Eco- Village can be an urban or rural community whose members try to provide a high quality lifestyle without taking more from the Earth than they give back. EcoVillages attempt to integrate a supportive social environment with a low-impact way of life and take many forms from small urban co-housing schemes to clusters of Villages in a bioregion.

CJEV incorporated 10 “Eco Village Elements” into their community’s design (See Annex X).

4.2.2.3 Schloss Tempelhof, Germany

Schloss Tempelhof translates as Tempelhof Castle (Fig 4.41). ST ecovillage[143] is a small compact community that exists in a renovated village around Tempelhof Castle in the Kreßberg municipality of Baden-Württemberg, situated midway between Nuremberg and Stuttgart, about a 100km from each. They exist physically since 2010 and their GEN summary reads:

> The future is shaped by the present. We are a community in Baden-Württemberg, comprising approximately 130 adults, young people, and children, as well as other people who work in our businesses. We experiment and research how we can cultivate our coexistence and our interaction with nature in such a way that a future worth living for future generations emerges.



Figures 4.41: Schloss Tempelhof ecovillage (Schloss Tempelhof, 2023)

Schloss Tempelhof is one of 22 communities that make up GEN-Deutschland[144] (GEN-D), which formed in 2014. Earlier, it became a member of GEN in 2013. ST was a case study for the TRANSIT project[145], TRANsformative Social Innovation Theory, that ran from 2014–2017 and was led by Flor Avelino and DRIFT. Iris Kunze's 2015 report outlines the project's origins:

> ST was started in 2007 in Munich by about 20 entrepreneurs and activists from civil society movements like Artabana and credit unions. The main ideas target intergenerational living, a common wealth economy, and raising the financial consciousness. With a combination of personal development and living in community, ST uses tools for building authentic communication, empathic relationships, and

[143] Schloss Tempelhof ecovillage https://www.schloss-tempelhof.de/
[144] https://gen-deutschland.de/ + https://gen-europe.org/geneunetworks/gen-deutschland/
[145] TRANSIT ST timeline http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/sii/gen-2

> economic transparency. The main tool since the early starting phase is called WE-Process.After years of searching a suitable site near Munich, the village of Tempelhof146 located in the Jagstregion, a rural area in Southern Germany, state of Baden-Württemberg, is bought in December 2010 for 1,5 Million Euros plus another 4.600 Euros for every new member from the 67th person on that joins till 2017. The ST foundation owns the the property and all residents are voting members. Today, Schloss Tempelhof is a communal and self-organized village grown from 20 to 140 Inhabitants in only three years with a site of 32ha (4ha Buildings, 27ha agrarian land incl. 1ha forest). The community chose the name "Schloss Tempelhof" to indicate their commitment and identification with the place.

ST differs to most other European ecovillages because it has a come from a strong economic base, with many of the founders having had very strong backgrounds in business and project development. Kunze noted that "members do not perceive Schloss Tempelhof as a classical ecovillage, because it is rather focused on social and socio-economic aspects. It became a member of GEN in 2013 after GEN has broadened its criteria". She concluded that ST did not start as a typical ecovillage because its primary focus was not on ecological living, but that it "brought forward numerous ecological as well as socio-economic innovations" in its first three years. Their 2020 entry on GENs site[147] updates on developments from 2010 - 2020:

> In 10 years, a real village has been created with a school, a seminar house, community-supported agriculture, community kitchen and catering, car-sharing, guest house, village shop, café, workshops, and creative rooms. On the way to becoming an All Leader community, it is about growing into a culture of trust and learning, which strengthens the ability to take responsibility, the connection, and integration of diversity and actively involves many. To achieve this, we continually adapt our social structure and move topics in regular intensive periods.

ST was a case study example for the ERASMUS+ project ETiA (see section below). They developed a good relationship with the local municipality that resulted in them creating three key innovations, their Market Garden, Earthship and Free School[148].

[146] Google map location: Schloss Tempelhof, Kreßberg https://maps.app.goo.gl/DcWFKo3MgitQjPNv7
[147] https://ecovillage.org/ecovillage/tempelhof/
[148] See images in Annex D, page XX



Figures 4.42: Schloss Tempelhof. Top: Earthship L: Earthship Wintergarden fig trees R: Eating area (T: Author, 2020; L+R: Schloss Tempelhof, 2019)

- **Market Garden CSA System**

ST run a regenerative, solidarity-based agriculture project[149] that is part of the Solawi Bodensee. Solawi is an acronym for "Solidarische Landwirtschaft" which is German for solidarity agriculture, and means "sharing the harvest". It is similar to the US-concept of CSA that developed in the 1980s. ST has a team of 10 skilled employees, and three apprentices, that produce food for the eco-village and its surroundings. 32 hectares of grassland and arable land around the village are cultivated using organic and regenerative methods to produce over 50 varieties of vegetables. A wide variety of herbs are grown in the nursery and in three large

[149] ST Market Garden CSA System https://www.schloss-tempelhof.de/regenerative-landwirtschaft/einsteig/

polytunnels. They have several grain varieties for flour for bread and cakes. Chickens and bees provide the community with meat, eggs, and honey. Orchards in the surrounding area have fruit.

- **Earthship**

ST applied to build Germany's first Earthship[150]. It is a south facing passive solar-powered eco building with simple, intelligent systems for water collection and storage, wastewater recycling, solar energy generation and storage, and food production. After a year of planning, 60 volunteers from 17 nations began construction of this unique social experiment in September 2015, a small village within a village. The community came up with a unique and ingenious solution to meet strict building and planning regulations; Instead of applying for planning permission for the various buildings, there is just one entity, the Earthship forms the centre piece of a residential complex with small mobile units of various types (construction trailers, tiny houses, yurts) surrounding it as individual "rooms." The large front glassed area supplies the natural heating, and the wintergarden enables fig trees grow (Fig 4.42). It includes "170 square meters of floor space with sanitary facilities, a kitchen, a living and dining room for up to 25 people, and an integrated greenhouse where crops grow and provide a natural climate. The house's energy self-sufficiency is supported by the permaculture elements surrounding it for self-sufficiency: herb gardens, hedges, vegetable and fruit plants".

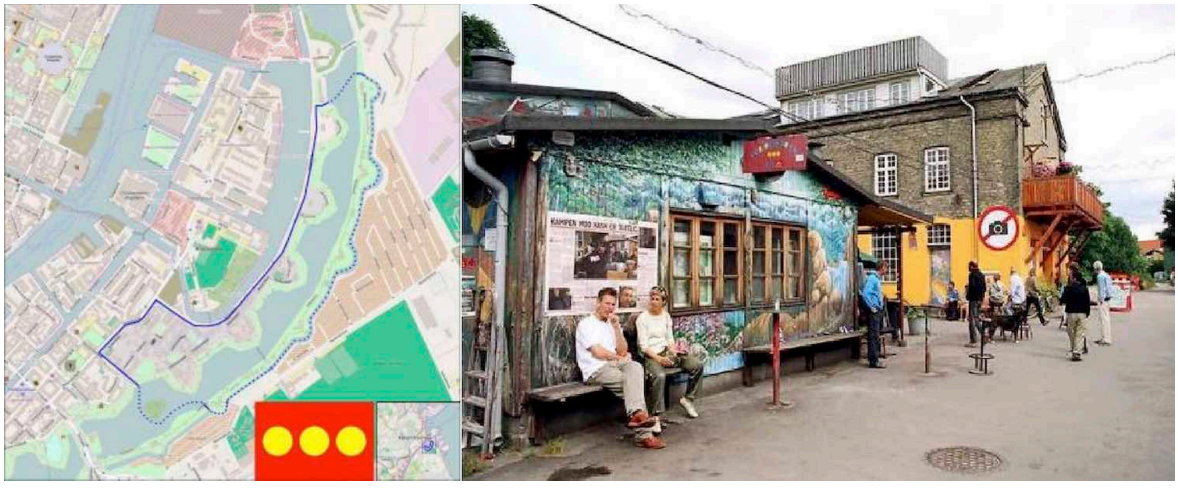
- **Free School**

ST is a member of the Federal Association of Independent Alternative Schools, they agree with the resolution "Education is political". They applied and were granted permission by the education ministry to create a unique new model of the village school[151] based on the free school concept for elementary and secondary levels in 2013. Free schools are individually-adapted and self-responsible model of education. It does not see students follow prescribed curriculum, but rather be allowed to develop interests in the things that interest them. The ST teaching assistants "are there to accompany the children lovingly and with respect for their own development, to build relationships with them, acknowledge their feelings, set boundaries, provide security, and strengthen their self-responsibility for their own learning". (Schloss Tempelhof, 2025). More refugee families moved to surrounding areas in recent years and the popularity of the school kept growing. The municipality created a bus service to collect children to attend the ST school.

[150] ST Earthship https://www.schloss-tempelhof.de/wohnen-und-bauen/experiment-tempelfeld/
[151] ST Free School https://www.schloss-tempelhof.de/freie-bildung/lernen-von-innen/

4.2.2.4 Christiania, Copenhagen, Denmark

Christiania[152] is a somewhat controversial project. It is one of the two urban ecovillages in GEN's global network, the other being Los Angeles EcoVillage, (LAEV) in the US. Freetown Christiania, as it is also known, is a self-proclaimed autonomous neighbourhood of about 850 residents, covering 34 hectares (84 acres) in the borough of Christianshavn in the Danish capital city of Copenhagen[153]. It is in the city centre, in a large old army barracks along the old city wall. The area was abandoned and in 1971 inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood broke down the fence to take over parts of the unused area as a playground for their children. Squatters and activists moved in and on 26 September 1971, Christiania was declared open by Jacob Ludvigsen. In contrast to the site's previous military use, the spirit of Christiania grew out of the hippie movement, the squatter movement, collectivism and anarchism. The community organised using consensus to make decisions and 9 rules were formed since the start, including no firearms, no heavy drugs, no biker gangs. Soft drugs were permitted and it had a cannabis trade that was tolerated by authorities until 2004, it has seen conflicts, riots, police raids, gang violence, a grenade attack, shootings and a murder. Despite varying conflicts with the municipality, the project was allowed to continue as a cultural experiment. Christiania's flag is a red banner with three yellow discs representing the dots in the 3 i's in "Christiania" (Fig 4.43 L), and their anthem translates as "You cannot kill us". The space has a mix of living zones and communal spaces in the old army barracks section (Fig 4.43 R), such as bars, cafes, restaurants, cinema, baths and more. Outside of this area are different spaces for self-built houses (Fig 4.44).



Figures 4.43: Christiania. L: Map & Flag. R: Main street (Wikipedia, 2025, Newsweed, 2016)

[152] https://www.christiania.org/
[153] Google maps address: Freetown Christiania, Copenhagen https://maps.app.goo.gl/oWvXpxH6rexBNT4z7



Figures 4.44: Christiania homes (Christiania, 2025)

I first visited Christiania on my overland voyage to India in 1999, it was like another world. I returned in 2002 on a university city tour with my university. It was not on the official trip itinerary, as the tour was organised to visit high quality architectural buildings, both new and old, or perhaps due to its controversial and dangerous nature? A group wanted to visit the wilder edge of the city, with the infamous "Pusher Street". I lived there for about 10 days during the COP15 activities in 2009 with part of the climate caravan group supporting indigenous groups (outlined in other section), my last visit in 2013 was to visit a friend who lived there as a child.

In July 2020 GEN published the *Regenerative Urban Communities Manual* (Mattos, 2020) with 12 steps on how to create an urban regenerative CLI (Table 14). GEN's urban projects include Christiania and LAEV urban ecovillages, both are classified as urban rejuvenation projects and both are inherently political: Christiania squatter community opened up derelict military barracks for growing housing needs, LAEV was created in response to the 1991 racist riots after Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles Police Department officers. Japan's "As One Community" In Suzuka is as an intentional physical network. At smaller scales, US and New Zealand initiatives and Ireland's ecovillage Cloughjordan show ingenuity.

Table 14*:* GEN's 12 step process for creating Regenerative Urban Communities

Route to create a regenerative CLI			
1	Form an initiating group	7	Deepen relationships
2	Create the group common ground & rhythm	8	Develop projects & practical activities
3	Get others involved	9	Make alliances & partnerships
4	Study! participate in trainings	10	Evaluate & celebrate
5	Develop skills to live & work well together	11	Expand / scale up
6	Create working groups	12	Inner & outer transition

4.2.2.5 Sterling (temporary) Ecovillage, Scotland, UK

In July 2005 the temporary HoriZone ecovillage was created outside the town of Sterling for two weeks. It was created as a base for anti-capitalist movements that marched to try to shut down the G8 meeting at nearby Gleneagles (Images in Annex). Activists from the Dissent Network selected the site after looking for a site for months. It was a self-organised, police-free, autonomous zone where principles of permaculture and direct democracy were put into practice. It inspired the subsequent climate camp actions in the UK and beyond in later years. Litfin noted "in terms of political action, opposition to economic globalization serves as a rallying point for many ecovillagers. Yet, even in their opposition, they move beyond the politics of protest" and how "a core group from Findhorn (ecovillage) led thousands of activists in creating a temporary ecovillage as a counterpoint to the unsustainable policies being promoted at the summit" (2014). Findhorn ecovillagers help led to:

> The fully functional demonstration ecovillage included composting toilets, graywater systems, solar panels and wind turbines, and thirteen kitchens serving fair-trade and local organic food. This photogenic village was the darling of the news media.

The decentralized anarchist collective, CrimethInc's 2017 retrospective of 2005[154] added:

> In 2005, when the rulers of the eight most powerful countries in the world gathered in Scotland, capitalism seemed invincible and eternal. Most protesters limited themselves to begging the G8 to be nicer to the nations on the receiving end of colonialism and imperialist wars. Yet a few thousand anarchists, recognizing how short-lived "the end of history" would be, set out on a seemingly suicidal mission to blockade the summit and demonstrate what sort of resistance it would take to create another world.

Starhawk is a US born feminist, writer, NVDA trainer and activist with permaculture and peace, women's, environmental and anti-globalization movements. She was part of the network that created the ecovillage. Soon after the event, she wrote Some Notes on Permaculture at the HoriZone Ecovillage, on the systems created, what worked and did not work, and on the overall process and organizing. Some of Starhawk's key learnings and questions are shared below in Annex C.

[154] https://crimethinc.com/2017/06/27/opposing-the-g8-in-scotland-july-2005

4.2.2.6 Ecocity World Summits

Ecocity Builders have run Ecocity World Summits[155] since 1990. The 14th edition was originally scheduled for 2021, but was postponed until February 22-24, 2022 due to the Covid pandemic. It happened in Rotterdam, with support from the Department of Urbanism, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at Delft University of Technology (TU Delft). The theme was "Urban transformations for nature based solutions". It convened in conjunction with the 7th CIB international conference on Smart and Sustainable Built Environments (SASBE).

In 2017, for the 12th World Summit in Melbourne, Australia, while in Brazil I contacted the contacted the event organizers Ecocity Builders, on behalf of our informal "Ecocity Curitiba" group, to propose doing a satellite style event, to unable those unable to, or not wanting to travel (for climate concerns) around the world to Australia, to be able to still participate (discussed in section 5.3.2.2 below). We also recommended these events, and others like it, could and should open up and explore communication tools to firstly allow interested people to watch proceedings, and building on that, to make them interactive to allow for a multi nodal, network style truly global conference to further enable ecocity responses around the world. We got the blessing to do a local summit of sorts, and had what we believed to be a successful event to connect a diverse range of communities locally. Ecocity Builders were unable to facilitate a viewing system for us to "tune into" Australian discussions. Perhaps the legal side blocked it?

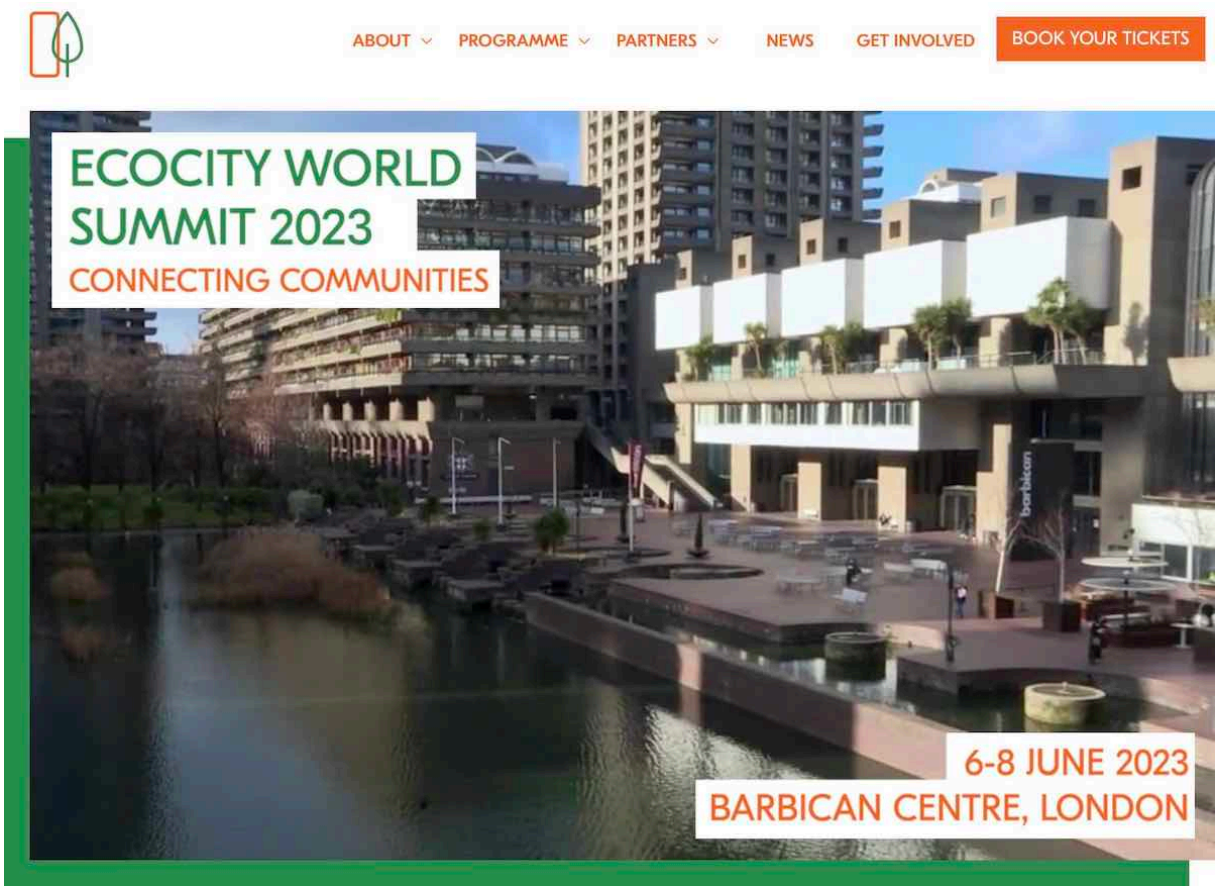
The 13th World Summit in happened in Vancouver, Canada in 2019. I was at the beginning of my PhD journey and also had begun working full time with the UrbanA project. I did not submit anything for it. Interestingly though, that summit's theme was "socially just and ecologically sustainability cities", which was very aligned to the UrbanA theme. As we developed our CoP, we did engage in some attempts to connect communities and support Ecocity Builders work. I met the executive director of Ecocity Builders, Kirstin Miller, when she visited Lisbon in 2019 and we discussed possible collaborations between UrbanA and Ecocity Builders. As UrbanA, we did collaborate with them to explore an experimental online space in September 2020 using the VirBELA platform (discussed in section 5.2.1.1 below), as well as joining discussions with a local event in Bangladesh with the Institute of Wellbeing & Work for a Better Bangladesh. It was a good experiment to make links with Asian communities.

Perhaps as responses to the challenges everyone faced by Covid, for their 14th Ecocity World Summit, Ecocity Builders were able to make great advances on both fronts we had

[155] Ecocity World Summit https://ecocitybuilders.org/ecocity-world-summit/

requested, pushed for, demonstrated was possible and discussed in person. The 2022 event was a hybrid event and there was a good support structure online for the duration of the event. It worked using the normal academic safeguards of applying to participate, so it was not a fully viewable event open to the public. The second great leap was that that year, as part of the official summit, they included the Cairo Satellite Conference. Heba Allah Khalil (2022), Professor of Sustainable Urbanism at Cairo University outlined the logic for this step in the Conference Proceedings[156].

I made two poster submissions for the Rotterdam 2022 Summit; both were accepted and are viewable below. The first was to share for the record what had happened in Curitiba, the second to share where the research was going in Lisbon. I was unable to travel, due to having a clash with a physical work event with ECOLISE in Brussels, but I participated online. The two posters and their related content are shared below.



Figures 4.45: Ecocity World Summit 2023 - Connecting Communities (Ecocity Builders, 2023)

[156] Ecocity World Summit 2021-22 – Conference Proceedings. (Page 5) https://ecocitybuilders.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/EWS-21-22-Proceedings.pdf

The last Ecocity World Summit happened in London in June 6-8, 2023. It happened in and around the Barbican Centre in London a performing arts centre in the Barbican Estate of the City of London (Fig 4.), an iconic urban project built to house a residential complex of around 2,000 flats in the brutalist style in an area devastated by World War II bombings. The theme for this summit was "Connecting Communities". The summit had major guest speakers, the usual academic presentations and discussions, as well as urban tours, exhibitions and workshops. The summit was set against the backdrop of the London Festival of Architecture (LFA), a month-long celebration of city building and architecture. Fittingly aligned to UrbanA, the LFA theme that year was 'In Common'. Unlike previous summits, a website was created for the website, which is still active[157]. Also, for this summit members of the public could buy a ticket and attend the proceedings. The two keynotes, with very contrasting calls to action, were delivered by Norman Foster and Yasmeen Lari.

The poster I submitted was selected and is viewable below. It outlined the work I had been doing over many years in Lisbon to connect communities on the ground: "Urban walking tours as a tool to Connect Communities and green our cities". I was also selected as a panellist on day 1, for "A global catalogue of community action". This was chaired by Elsa Lefevre, the Programme Officer for the Cities Unit of UN Environment Programme (UNEP). I delivered the presentation "UrbanA's experiments in connecting communities to create a sustainable just cities community of practice", speaking as ECOLISE Communications Officer. The other two presenters and themes were "Connecting Communities through Neighbourhood Climate Action: Success Stories using the Citizen's Coolkit in Canada" by Cheryl Ng from Vancouver, and "Hidden Voices" by Shade Abdul, London based Architect, Educator and Researcher.

While Ecocity Builders have nearly had their summits every two years since their first in Berkeley (1990), there was no event in 2025 and no news for any coming up. Also of interest is the way the last two summits were connected with other, bigger festival or conference, which was similar to the approach we took with the UrbanA nested events. The opening up of the London summit is to be commended, but perhaps it could go even further. It feels that given the importance of these summits, there could much more innovative ways of involving communities on the ground. To inspire, support and help develop better translocal communities to implement change where they are, all around the planet, and at all the scales.

My submission boards for the years 2022 and 2023 are at ANNEX B. The research builds on and a study of related ecovillages I visited and worked on, which is is at ANNEX C.

[157] Ecocity World Summit 2023 - Connecting Communities https://www.ecocity-summit.com/

Ecocity Summit Curitiba, 2017 / Curitiba Ecocity Festival (2017)

The Curitiba Ecocity festival[158] was a 5-day festival that happened in July 2017 in Curitiba city, a parallel event to the World Ecocity Summit in Melbourne, Australia, that was organised by Ecocity Builders. Our event ran from Wednesday the 12th till Sunday the 16th of July. We had 14 events, about 160 participants and 36 different groups helped co-create or participate in the programme. It was an experimental, positive provocation as to how Global Forums can become multi nodal with greatly increased levels of participation, leading to greater and quicker urban transformation with the construction of an expanded global Ecocity network. The main objective in Curitiba was to "Fix The City"; to identify solutions to today's urban problems and construct pathways for necessary change in the city, through bottom-up, community-led solutions. Secondary objectives were to examine and support local solutions, develop tools to identify who is currently doing what and where in the city, improve interconnection between actors, facilitate greater public participation, investigate the physical city more deeply, push the limits of the use of technology and dialogue, build and share visions of what sustainable futures might look like, explore how new jobs in an ecological economy can be created, use free social community events in public spaces as tools for change, including picnics. In short, to change the culture surrounding the idea of what an Ecocity is, in Curitiba, through theory and practice in an open, attractive, inclusive, accessible and social way. Curitiba invited other world cities to participate in a similar manner, Santiago in Chile organised a similar event. We believed this dynamic could increase participation for 2019's World Ecocity Summit, in Vancouver, Canada.



Figures 4.46: L: Recreate Your City Forum. R: Bike ride to Fazendinha. (Author, 2017)

[158] Programa Curitiba 2017 https://ecocitycuritiba.wordpress.com/programa-curitiba-2017/

We got the blessing from the Ecocity Builders team and tried to organise some live streams to be broadcast from Melbourne directly to a social space in Curitiba, as we had successfully done during the climate window experiment two years previous, but the technology team were unable to make this happen. We believed that there is no reason why every world city should not be able to get organised and participate for future summits, and thereby the ecocity idea might become more relevant to community groups working on the ground for real change, from the mayors offices to the smallest of local groups, all working to the same goal. Our Curitiba group developed tools to facilitate such a process and we freely shared knowledge in the group.

The Curitiba Ecocity Curitiba festival (Fig 4.46) was a process to discover, a process to connect, a catalyst for collective change. Nearly 40 different groups helped co-create or participate in the programme. The main objective was to connect communities. Many new connections were made, new perspectives shared, friendships made, plenty for more groups to build on. So, although not a great big event, the organizers were happy to see it as a success that could lead to further urban transformation in the near future. Each of the five days was themed and thirteen key issues were identified by participants from the full process (Table 15).

Table 15*:* Curitiba Ecocity Curitiba festival, participating groups

Day	Themes	Key Issues identifies	
1	Technology and Economy	Waste	Citizenship
2	Nature and Food	Security	Consume
3	Community and Change	Community	Water
4	Culture and Public Spaces	Green areas	Economy, including jobs
5	Water and Mobility	Food	Technology
		Energy	Public spaces
		Mobility	

Taking onboard the initial criticisms of Curitiba's urban development, attempts were made to engage in as wide a number of spaces and communities as possible, which included areas outside the safer and more well known, easy to get to spaces in the city centre, such as the final days bicycle ride from Praça Ciclista in the centre to Park Barigui, to Parque Guairacá in the Fazendinha neighbourhood in the urban periphery, following as best we could the route of one of the city's main rivers, the Barigui. 13 different locations with different groups were visited over the 5 days, as well as walking and bike tours through the streets. Figure 4.21 shows the complete program with locations and times. The Ecocity WhatsApp group is still used in 2026. The Poster is in Annex G at page 385.

CHAPTER 5.

Discussion

POWER TO THE PEOPLE
AND CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW
ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE
AND WE KNOW HOW

Climate Justice Activists chant, streets of Copenhagen, 2009

5.1. Why does ecological emergency need responding to?

5.1.1 Why grassroots activists fight for radical change

Social movements are political organisations, consisting of grassroots activists, pushing for system change in many forms and at a range of scales, from the local (a street, block or neighbourhood), to the regional, national, transnational and global. They are "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities" (Diani, 1992). Different groups do not always agree on strategy or objectives, so building strong and diverse alliances around specific demands is often required to force radical forms of system change.

Using GEN's 5D framework[159] to divide ecological emergency into five interconnected and constituent parts, the challenges that grassroots activism needs responding to are identified.

From the whole system side, the world has entered a quickly worsening climate emergency: June 2026 Europe experienced its worst ever heatwave, made worse by climate crisis due to fossil fuel emissions (Keeping, et al. 2026). Climate breakdown is driving up temperatures around the world, but Europe is the fastest warming continent, heating up twice as fast as the global average (Copernicus, 2026). The Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit was passed in 2024 (Copernicus, 2025) and 2ºC is declared dead (Hanson, 2025). An expected Global Heating rise, a form of atmospheric colonization (Hickel, 2024), of 2,7º - 3ºC means "2 billion people across the tropics will be exposed to extreme heat and substantially increased mortality risk". The

[159] GEN: The 5 Dimensions of Sustainability https://ecovillage.org/solution/the-5-dimensions-of-sustainability/

deaths of the poorest people on the planet, who have had the least to do in creating this problem in the first place, exemplifies the brutal realities of climate injustice (Sultana, 2023). Fossil fuel use must stop; "We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide" (Guterres, 2022).

From the biodiversity perspective, the delicate "web of life" (Capra, 1996) that sustains all human life is in peril. Nature is disappearing: The average size of wildlife populations has fallen by a staggering 73% between 1970 and 2020 (WWF, 2024). Five global tipping points (Lenton et al, 2019) are fast approaching that "threaten humanity, Earth's life-support systems, and societies everywhere" (WWF, 2024). What is needed is a global "just transition that revives life and systematically restores what we have degraded" (WWF, 2024). Since the 1970s some ecological social movements have used direct action to protest and sabotage environmentally damaging activities. Building upon permaculture (Mollison & Holmgren, 1978), to work with all communities and dynamics in bioregions (Glanzberg, 1991 & 2017), regenerative cultures (Wahl, 2019) are growing globally, which design systems to "reverse the degeneration of the earth's natural systems, but also to design human systems that can coevolve with natural systems" (Mang & Reed, 2011). The re-connection with place is a key part of these movements.

Respecting the planet's limits to growth (Meadows et al, 1972) demands an ecological economics (Daly, 2000) attitude that understands and counters fossil fuel addiction (Heinberg, 2004; Hopkins, 2008; McKibben, 2022; Guterres, 2022) and growth dependence (Raworth, 2017; Kallis, 2025). This requires moving beyond the interlinked forces of capitalism and neoliberalism (Purcell, 2009; Klein, 2014), built upon extractivism (Galeano, 1971; Escobar, 1995), biodiversity destruction (Bookchin, 1962; Shiva, 1988; Dirzo, 2022) and profit over life (Fremeaux & Jordan, 2015; Merner, 2025). This is inherently political and there is strong resistance to these radical calls for the reorganisation of society for a socially and ecologically just planet, for all. The Post-growth movement seeks "to replace the goal of increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with the goal of improving human wellbeing within planetary boundaries" (Kallis et al, 2025). A transition for wealthy nations (O'Neill, 2012) involves a degrowth phase to lower resource use, to function within a steady state economy (Fig 2.9). The doughnut economic concept (Raworth, 2012) champions a regenerative approach to economics and uses a visual framework shaped like a doughnut. In July 2019 the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) was launched, and in March 2020 Amsterdam city council announced it hoped to turn the city into a "doughnut city". In May 2023 the Post-growth community had its "Woodstock moment", when the European Parliament facilitated a 3-day *Beyond Growth* conference. This was followed up by five follow up conferences in Austria, Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy, many happening within national Parliaments. In a very recent opinion piece

published in The Guardian in June 2026, more leading economists, including Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz and best-selling author Thomas Piketty, called on political leaders at all levels to move away from the "doomed strategy" of growth (De Schutter, et al, 2026).

From the social perspective, for all human related dynamics, Wheatley and Frieze (2006) suggest "Whatever the problem, community is the answer", suggesting emergence as the only way change really happens on this planet. Emergence is the fundamental scientific explanation for how local changes can materialize as global systems of influence. They recommend all citizens to "act locally, connect regionally, learn globally." investigating the *Polycrisis of Environmental and Social Breakdown,* Heinberg and Miller (2023) envisage a future that "will consist of decades of social, economic, political, and ecological turmoil punctuated by periods of rescue and recovery". They divide the social into six categories: A) Poverty B) Inequality C) Racism and Other Forms of Discrimination D) Antisocial Responses to Scarcity E) Authoritarianism F) Impacts of Technological Change. They conclude that equity and justice are the key to averting social unravelling. Paradigm shifts occur in discontinuous, revolutionary breaks (Kuhn, 1962), resulting in very quick and abrupt moments of change, from which greater system change can be built upon. Meadows identified leverage points as places to intervene in a system with an increasing order of effectiveness, to enable system change. The deepest leverage point, paradigm, concerns the "deepest set of beliefs about how the world works" (Meadows, 1999). The 'System Change not Climate Change' phrase emerged from climate justice social movements during COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. It came just ten years after the successful WTO shut down in Seattle on November 30th 1999, the day that "permanently changed the political landscape of globalisation" (Capra, 2002) and what Hawken (2006) saw as the *Blessed Unrest* of the immune system of humanity kicking in. While the attempts in Copenhagen by climate justice movements to "reclaim power" were ultimately unsuccessful in slowing down climate breakdown, they led to movements' radicalization in subsequent years where "leftist reformist and especially the more radical currents are engaging with non- or anti-Western indigenous praxis to forge the contemporary transnational environmental movement." (Reitan & Gibson, 2012). From the architectural and built environment perspective, dynamics affecting people's everyday lives are seriously under threat under capitalism and neoliberalism. Ex-Brazilian Secretary of Urban Programmes at the Ministry of Cities, and later the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing (2008 – 2014), Raquel Rolnik, outlined the extreme violence behind the architectural process in her 2019 book *Urban Warfare: Housing under the Empire of Finance*, where homes and neighbourhoods have effectively become the "last subprime frontiers of capitalism". With little or no regulation, long established urban

communities are being driven to urban peripheries, due to gentrification, urban speculation and touristification (Tulumello & Allegretti, 2020). Oxfam claims "Our economy is broken, with hundreds of millions of people living in extreme poverty while huge rewards go to those at the very top". They showed that in the 10 years since the financial crisis, the number of billionaires nearly doubled, and the fortunes of the world's super-rich have reached record levels, growing "by $2.5bn a day, yet the super-rich and corporations are paying lower rates of tax than they have in decades" (Chan et al, 2019). In June 2026, the Far right supporting (Shukla & Pleitgen, 2025) and Nazi saluting (Connolly, 2025) *tech bro* Elon Musk became the world's first trillionaire, the same week he tweeted support for a violent and racist pogrom in Belfast that left 27 immigrants homeless after their homes were petrol bombed in an orchestrated attack by British loyalists (Browne, 2026), with support from neo-Nazi groups (Gilbert, 2026). Climate justice movements are led by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions aim to "decolonize climate at a basic level" by integrating "more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations" (Sultana, 2022). The social perspectives challenge lies in how to activate, support and enable organised communities to make change. Worth noting is that while a diverse range of alternatives to the current system exist, not all are compatible with each other. Tensions can grow as each get closer to winning.

Culture concerns our deepest values and beliefs about how the world works. The use of the Indigenous Hopi word *Koyaanisqatsi* signifies the belief held by many that the contemporary way of life is out of balance with the natural order of nature. Due to scientific quantum theory breakthroughs in the 1920s, a paradigm shift in physics has sparked "a much larger cultural transformation" (Capra, 1996), concerning a number of entrenched ideas and values that shaped our modern Western society and significantly influenced the rest of the world. Many see current ecological imbalance as result of break of connection people had with the places around them (Wahl, 2016; Magan, 2022). Remembering that depending on how far we go back, all humans come from indigenous communities. A recurring question in the Regenerative world is what would in mean to become indigenous to place again. A multitude of belief systems, languages, cultures, means of organising communities and managing resources have survived the 500+ year cultural onslaught of the indigenous peoples of Latin America. *Buen Vivir* (good life in Spanish) is a Latin American alternative to Western development (Gudynas, 2011). From the streets of Paris in 2015, art activists Jay Jordan and Isa Fremeaux crafted the powerfully apt and beautiful phrase; "We are not fighting for nature. We are nature defending itself".

5.1.2 Why this engaged research works for just and regenerative change

ECOLISE and UrbanA seek a just and regenerative future for all. My engaged research was carried out from March 2019 to December 2024. Because the UrbanA project came from the ECOLISE ecosystem, I will first explore ECOLISE, then proceed to UrbanA.

ECOLISE works for changes because it has a vision of "a just and regenerative future for all within planetary boundaries, thanks to a strong role of transformative community-led climate action". Since 2014, they have been supporting CLIs, their networks and partners to catalyse systemic transformation within and across society. Their goal is that "at least 25% of the European population is engaged in transformative community-led climate action by 2030, reaching the tipping point for transformative social change" (ECOLISE, 2025).

ECOLISE is a meta network based around the three core CLI movements of transition, permaculture and ecovillages. It is geographically European, but based in Brussels. Being a meta network, ECOLISE brings in much of the DNA of groups it is composed from. The ecovillage world has perhaps the strongest dynamics because these are a very diverse range of fully lived projects. Often people have chosen to leave the modern world to retreat into a community, to live together and to spend time in a more qualitive sense, near nature, in a simpler, more intentional and hopefully happier way. Some ecovillages were created by very anti system people who tried to build total alternatives to the capitalist system. Others were more affluent and based around shared values and a simpler life, but seeking to act as places that seek to live more sustainably and responsibly. Some individuals joined such groups because they had the affluence to do so, others left the contemporary world with trauma from becoming burned out from modern life. In this mix of projects and communities, key components are governance, setting of values and boundaries, and agreements about how to organise, do work, take responsibility and sadly one that is overlooked; how to deal with conflict when it arises. Many social innovation techniques experimented with by GEN came through lived experiences in the ecovillage world. Nothing is ever set in stone; processes can always be improved upon.

The transition world grew from when Rob Hopkins returned to England in the mid 2000s after some years working in Kinsale in Ireland, to deliver the first permaculture course in a European college. After a sad final chapter, he explored much psychological ideas about group behaviour, as well as addiction studies in regard to the modern world's addiction with cheap oil and the consumerist lifestyle. Key dynamics of what would become the transition way were questioning what defines a quality life and what factors are needed to create accessible, positive environments where all sides of society are welcome and feel they can contribute to building

up an environmental project or movement. Transition deals with the head, hands and heart. The head is the intellectual stuff, exchanging of ideas and debating theory. The hands are doing the work; digging gardens, fixing broken things, using creativity, painting, making food. The heart is the most important, the forging of new relationships and friendships, being spiritually moved, falling in love with place. Or having difficult, deep conversations about ecological collapse, loss and death, or facing at times unseen blindness's around inequality, racism or class issues.

ECOLISE has an inner and outer side. The outer side is the work it does, to advocate on behalf of CLI voices. This can be seeking to bring awareness of projects from its network to policy makers within the EU, or to seek funding opportunities from the range of EU grant or funding opportunities. It can also be in building alliances with like-minded groups, political groups or individual politicians to push for law reform or increased funding for specific points. In this regard, ECOLISE might just appear to be another of the many NGOs active in Brussels.

A second part of the outer ring is the action research component. In permaculture the edges are thought to be the most interesting, as this is the realm between the end of one world and the start of another. It is a realm where things can be messy but where much life can be found. Similarly, groups engaging in research in the areas of ecovillages, permaculture, transition often explore subject matter that had been below the radar for a long time. Part of the action research drive is the belief that these CLIs are actually doing things in a far better, healthier, more ecological and socially just way. Bringing the knowledge in from the edges is a means to sometimes challenge mainstream narratives and try to push for real solutions. Aware of an extractivist mindset, where academia just takes and takes, action researchers also seek to support what they study in different means. Sometimes it can be shining a spotlight on positive solutions, publishing articles, making documentaries, radio shows or films, which spread the word about different ways of working. Other times, the CLI project can be brought on board as a partner for a future project. In such a way, some financial support can assist small projects, many of which are often struggling to keep going. Often, the researchers themselves will be from projects, or communities, and thereby using the educational path as an extra funding source to support their work, or to support a specific academic endeavour to support their work.

The inner side of ECOLISE is the most interesting dynamic. Based on the values and social innovation of communication and governance techniques, ECOLISE is also a community. Like an ecovillage, it has to adapt to changing challenges, which at times includes conflict. In 2025 ECOLISE consisted of its 50+ member groups, a council of seven, and a paid team of 19. The core of the organism is the council and team. This is where the day-to-day work gets done, where working groups are active on different objectives regarding strategy, policy,

communication, learning and much more. Getting the balance between ensuring the core goals of the organisation are being adhered to, ensuring that the wider network is active and participating in things, and that real impact is been made. These are ongoing challenges.

ECOLISE's 2019 strategy identified three guiding principles for its work, as outlined in the People Care Manual[160] (Fig 4.11): 1) Co-creation 2) Social justice 3) Ecological integrity. In the following section I examine in detail how well ECOLISE did, or did not do, in this regard. My time there was during a moment of deep conflict and contrasting views about what climate justice is. I outline how ECOLISE entered a turbulent time that became visible to the wider layers of the network in 2021. This was a very difficult time, but it could have been one of great transformation for the organisation, to become a true ally of the climate justice movements that it claimed to be part of in various projects. Much healthy work did improve relations and procedures for the ECOLISE team, but some drifting from core values happened. Emerging from this period with a co-created policy process that led to a manifesto launch in Brussels, as well as becoming deeper aligned with others in the climate justice movements, it seemed ECOLISE was finding its place. It publicly took radical positions and advocated system change. Wider trust was growing. But the 2023 Gaza conflict made it clear that further climate justice work was needed. Silence about Europe's part in subsequent genocide is seen as complicity.

UrbanA was very much an academic project from the ECOLISE ecosystem, and thus it incorporated much from the ECOLISE approach to group organisation, as well as values and objectives. The consortium behind UrbanA shared the ideas of using the academic project to try to develop mechanisms, spaces and tools to further enable real world transformation, as opposed to a mere academic exploration into themes. Partners DRIFT, FCUL and project lead ICLEI were ECOLISE members, while BCN UEJ were very much part of the Degrowth world. So, the core group was very open to more radical explorations and discussions.

UrbanA focused on creating a process to bring different sorts of urban actors together in a meaningful way, where different sorts of viewpoints could engage together to explore different themes of questions and explorations into what is a sustainable just city, what is not, what forces block such transformation, what steps can be taken to improve things in Europe. A key factor was enabling more people from more bottom up, grassroots groups to be able to engage in a meaningful way with other people who were coming from more top-down worlds, such as local government, and at times national government. While the key moments during the three-year period were the four arenas, each scheduled for a different city, the consortium hoped that

[160] People Care Manual https://ecolise.eu/publications/ecolise-people-care-manual/

enough momentum could be generated so that the core group of 25 fellows would participate in a CoP together outside of the main arena moments. Understandably many such urban actors have busy work schedules, so such commitments might have been difficult. But, UrbanA did manage to get a high level of participation from most of the group who signed up for the urban adventure. Also, by creating a CoP and through a savvy use of social media, there was the hope that word would spread to others interested in the concept of sustainable just cities, and that the CoP might grow, beyond academia. This did happen, so the base level hopes were realised.

The desire to create and actively use the knowledge commons was a high aim. The logic being that many academics used to projects legacy, saw how much great work happened, reports got written, but the knowledge got lost. Similar to a great report being put in a folder, in a box, and locked into a big filing cabinet, lost forever. Again, building on the ideas ECOLISE had been developing, UrbanA also built a wiki. The idea was the consortium would use it and from that it would become an active resource for the more active participants of the CoP. But despite a training CoCo on how to edit and contribute on the wiki, it never really took off.

Ultimately, UrbanA was an EU funded project. So it had to carry out the tasks, complete the work package deliverables and comply with the timeline it set out for itself from the outset. Thankfully UrbanA was very well organised by a passionate team led by Matthew Bach and the ICLEI team. The projects timeline was clear, when project deliverables needed to be finished by. Even with the spanner of Covid thrown in the works, the team proceeded very well.

From Lisbon's side in UrbanA, there was flexibility, openness and support from the main consortium for our suggestions to apply the lessons learned from the UrbanA process to our immediate world, the city of Lisbon. We were given the green light and a small bit of financial support, to proceed with a local arena in the city and to try to connect local actors, groups, communities and other academic projects we felt could benefit from, and contribute to, such a dynamic process. Covid was a big challenge for the Lisbon UrbanA CoP, we did explore things with the translocal Lisbon community of BAM – Bela Flor, Ajuda, Marvila, and later more directly with Bela Flor. We understand that this work did help active CLIs on the ground. From the permaculture dynamic of stacking, the work could be done so that it could feed back into the various areas of work, which in my case, was UrbanA, ECOLISE, my PhD and ultimately to act as fruitful engagement processes for the groups active on the ground, so that ideally it would help them move forward in the struggles they were dedicated to and very busy with.

From ICLEI's side, they hoped to gain clear insights from the process, which they did. The final UrbanA keys and the "Handbook for sustainable and just cities" were celebrated by ICLEI and wider urban academic networks. UrbanA won the 2021 Integral City of the Year award.

5.1.3 Why are we doing this work?

We do this work to keep the human species alive. The world is already in ecological emergency due to growth addiction and fossil fuel use, but "we have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide". Using GEN's 5D framework to divide ecological emergency into five interconnected constituent parts, particular challenges are identified, that need responding to: 1) Whole System: The world is in climate emergency. Global heating limits of 1.5 and 2ºC are dead. The expected rise of 2,7º - 3ºC will kill over 2 billion of the world's poorest people. Deep adaptation is urgently needed. 2) Ecology: The world is in biodiversity emergency: The delicate "web of life" that sustains all human life is in peril. Nature is disappearing. Five global tipping points that threaten humanity are fast approaching. Make the planet Green and Blue again. 3) Economy: When Earth's limits to growth are respected, all life thrives. Ecological economics is inherently political: Countering growth dependence and fossil fuel addiction, while rejecting capitalism, neoliberalism, extractivism, biodiversity destruction and profit over life. Postgrowth is deepening since the 2023 "Woodstock moment" in the European Parliament. 4) Social: Emergence sees the old system in decline, and a transformed world already quietly emerging at the fringes. Copenhagen 2009 radicalized climate justice social movements. Gentrification, touristification and urban speculation are destroying established urban communities, driving people to city peripheries. 5) Culture: Contemporary ways of life are out of balance with nature. Regenerative cultures re-connect people with place and ask what would in mean to become indigenous to place again. *Buen Vivir* is a Latin American alternative to Western development. Social movements fight for freedom and life. They challenge dominant economic and political systems of power that created and maintain ecological and social inequality for greed and profit. They are political organisations, consisting of grassroots activists, pushing for system change in many forms and at a range of scales, from the local to the regional, transnational and global. The engaged research I was part of worked toward a just and regenerative future for all. ECOLISE is a European meta network based around three core community-led movements of transition, permaculture and ecovillages. Their guiding principles are 1) Co-creation 2) Social justice 3) Ecological integrity. They identify, support and connect local initiatives for deeper systemic change. They use action research to identify real solutions from the edges of society, to challenge mainstream narratives. They launched a Regenerative Communities Fund in 2024 to financially support regenerative communities in Europe, many of whom struggle to survive. Through European funding, UrbanA created a process to bring urban actors together in 4 arenas to explore what is a sustainable just city. Over a 3-year period, members of local and national government and bottom-up grassroots activists developed a community of practice together.

5.2. How are communities responding to ecological emergency?

5.2.1 How grassroots activism responded to ecological emergency

Rage drove me initially to participate in the projects selected and described, but moments of love and peace were found in all. Grassroots activists understand and oppose the roots of climate injustice (Sultana, 2023), not through words alone, but actions. All examples work on a series of levels. I will begin with the direct action from my home city of Dublin, the Botanic Spine.

Local food production is one way to begin to challenge our addiction to, and dependence on, fossil fuel. The industrial model uses huge levels of fuel to transport food from around the planet to our tables. A local community garden is an attempt to produce food locally, thereby reducing global CO2 emissions responsible for climate breakdown. The Botanic Spine (Fig 4.22.M) was an ecological dream, an imagined 16km orbital route, to thread a public way along the two canals, crossing the river Liffey, connecting with the Phoenix Park and most importantly, to provide a direct link with the Botanic Gardens. The idea being that over time, a series of feedback loops would introduce ever increasing bits of biodiversity around the spine, starting with nodal points, to make a biologically wilder city, thereby countering biodiversity emergency. The economic logic considered what a more connected, better organised, better functioning and fairer city might be like. Dublin suffered greatly from poverty over the years and was one of the worst cities in Europe for heroin abuse in the 1980s. The selection of two somewhat still marginalised neighbourhoods was intentional; Sheriff Street on the Northside and Dolphins Barn on the Southside. An attempt to better connect the urban social movements the project came from with strong working-class communities, to offer a radical attitude to community organising and to simply invite anyone interested to get involved. The architectural / urban analysis pointed out that there was much land and premises derelict, that could be, or should be put to better use. Many places were off limits, with developers keeping them that way, for speculation, later investment, or development. The wall was still up blocking the Canal from Sheriff Street and the area eventually taken and squatted for the Dolphins Barn Garden was unused for decades. The confrontational, yet peaceful, attitude of the action was intentional, to start developing a cultural form of anti-capitalism, to try to move from simply being against things, to suggesting alternatives, taking action, being aware of the risks, using the action as a means to open dialogue and inviting those interested to get involved. The social aspect became perhaps the most beautiful from the action; strangers from different walks of life united in a small community, friendships were forged, much learning happened. A year of illegal monthly bike rides succeeded in pushing for law changes and getting bicycle infrastructure implemented.

The Ecocity Banja Luka moment was an opportune experiment led by local students and ecologically aware activists to try to shape the future of their city. Happening in 2003, just some time after the brutal Balkan wars, had perhaps more of a cultural, social and economic slant. EASA had its roots in an explicitly political sense of how architecture could be used for good, and it was able to mobilise people to come together for a short period to assist a local area. Being afforded the support of the city government and given space for an art exhibition in the state art gallery was impressive. But it must be noted that safety issues were still present, whereas Bosnians had travelled to Croatia for the previous year's EASA event, this time no Croats travelled into Bosnia. Being an Irish person, I was very well received by both sides and had no difficulties. In fact, both sides strongly identified their struggle with the Irish story.

2009 in Copenhagen was a pivotal moment. Had things gone differently, we might still be under the 1,5º limit that the Paris Agreement sought to limit global heating to. Sadly, both 1,5º and 2º are now dead (Hanson, 2024) and an imagined 3º will lead to perhaps 2 billion deaths of the world's poorest peoples. A key question for social movements has always been how to get more people aware of the problems, and if they care, how to take meaningful action to stop the destruction of our planet, the livelihoods of the majority world, and our shared future. The radical anti-capitalist block I was part of is outlined in depth above (4.2.1.3). Ultimately, the burgeoning climate justice movements attempt to "reclaim power" was a failure, but it did lead to radicalization of social movements' in subsequent years where "leftist reformist and especially the more radical currents are engaging with non- or anti- Western indigenous praxis to forge the contemporary transnational environmental movement." (Reitan & Gibson, 2012). Subsequent COPs, and the wider ecosystem of street protests, alternative summits, community media and improved organisation of civil society managed to push leaders to make the Paris deal in 2015. More importantly, indigenous voices became valued more and were given leading positions in subsequent movements, such as FFF, XR, and to a smaller level, ECOLISE's work.

Economic breakdown was what ultimately sparked the Spanish Revolution in 2011. Coming soon after the 2008 economic crisis, when youth unemployment rose to 56%, massive austerity cuts, bank repossessions of housing and intense rise in suicides, it seemed the extreme downturn affected everybody. The call to occupy squares on May 15th was answered by droves of angry people. Key factors included that activities happened in the public realm, people had training in political organization, from a DIY attitude, there were commissions and working groups to join, there was food to cook, freely serve and clean up after, there were tense moments of holding the space against police lines and threats of violent attack with rubber bullets. Social movements possess a great freedom and a speed in which social change can happen. A correctly

hit note can quickly spark similar activities in other places, as a “Rhizomatic Revolution”, how Castells (2012) referenced Deleuze & Guattari (1972), as the network encampments map in Placa Catalunya (Fig 4.31) shows. Occupation as revolt, as an open communication experiment is also key. From a more decentralized structure, something very familiar in Barcelona with its history of anarchist revolution, how organization flows, and is let flow, is critical. A tension in leftist organization sees desire to control proceedings, discussions, speakers etc, by more formal, often Marxist aligned groups. The moment when the live transmission happened between two occupied squares in two occupied cities, Barcelona’s Placa Catalunya and Athens Syntagma square (Fig 4.33), was a truly beautiful moment enabled by emerging technologies.

My two studies from Portuguese speaking countries (section 5.3.1) explore active hope, which is critical to grassroots activism. They examine how differing colonial mindsets affect both thinking and action, when working for system change. Macy’s insights from decades of work dealing with elements of trauma, Buddhism and indigenous wisdom, as summed up in *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in Without Going Crazy* (2012), are all used in “the work that reconnects” which has made its way into ecovillages, transition and various social movements. A belief here is not left in the hope that things will work out, but a core belief that real transformation is possible and identifying a pathway to make it happen. Wheatley & Frieze’s transformative two loops model (Figure 2.17.3) sees the old world collapsing, and another world quietly emerging at the fringes. They claim (2006) that “Whatever the problem, community is the answer” and recommend all citizens “act locally, connect regionally, learn globally”. They identify emergence as the only way change really happens on this planet, which is the fundamental scientific explanation for how local changes can materialize as global systems of influence. The words of the murdered Brazilian environmental activist, Chico Mendes, who fought and died defending the Amazon rainforest in 1988, come to mind when reflecting upon Brazil; "Environmentalism without class struggle is just gardening”. In Curitiba the common phrase heard from grassroots groups, and people in general, was "Sempre há um Jeito" (There's always a way). In Portugal "Mas, é cultural Pá" (But, it's cultural man) is commonly used to justify why radical change is nearly impossible. Part of how grassroots activists respond to ecological emergency is in fully understanding and moving on from our past histories, both good and bad. In some cases, this means rediscovering old lost ways, as is happening in Ireland with language, culture and territory (Magan, 2020, 2022). In others it is dealing with a colonial past, to transform to a better place (Wahl, 2016). In Permaculture “the problem is the solution”. Perhaps part of Portugal’s solutions lies in constructing a decolonial, anti-racist, ecofeminist culture? Thereby inverting the call: “Yes, the solutions are cultural, Pá”.

5.2.1.1 How architectural communities responded to ecological emergency

Building on, and contributing to, the surge in momentum around ecological emergency in 2019, with the FFF global climate marches and XR climate actions, the UK architectural community soon began to make meaningful action to identify problems, create a united front and push for real solutions. They set up "Architects Declare"[161] (AD), soon followed by "Built Environment Declares"[162]. As of October 2021, 1,155 UK practices had signed up to UK Architects Declare, and over 7,000 companies in 27 countries worldwide had declared a Climate and Biodiversity emergency under the wider umbrella of 'Built Environment Declares' (previously Construction Declares). AD'S Practice Guide states:

> Architects Declare (AD) formed in the UK in May 2019, as a declaration of Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, after the IPCC's 2018 report. AD is both a public declaration of our planet's environmental crises and a commitment to take positive urgent action in response to climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse.
>
> AD's aim is to transform the built environment so that it is planned, constructed and operated within planetary boundaries delivering positive social benefits for all.
>
> The AD movement is about encouragement, with every signatory organisation expected to self-govern its progress toward achieving the declaration commitments it has made. On the basis that no single architect is currently meeting every part of the radical commitment to change, a firm 'no public blame and shame' policy is in place.
>
> AD is part of the wider Built Environment Declares movement which brings together a large number of professionals involved in the sector: architects, designers, landscape architects, engineers, project managers, surveyors, developers and estate managers, contractors, material suppliers, students, academics etc.

Haworth Tompkins architectural studio aim is to be agents of positive change, helping to realise the safe and just space in which the living world can flourish without breaching planetary boundaries. Their Advocacy section[163] houses AD's Practice Guide which was published in 2021. In March 2024 AD complemented the Practice Guide with a Regenerative Design Primer.

[161] Architects Declare https://uk.architectsdeclare.com/
[162] Built Environment Declares https://www.builtenvironmentdeclares.com/
[163] Architects Declare Practice Guide https://www.haworthtompkins.com/studio/regenerative-design/architects-declare-practice-guide

5.2.2 How engaged research responded to ecological emergency

5.2.2.1 From climate change to system change? Perspectives from ECOLISE

Having been deeply excited about the role ECOLISE was playing in bringing about the eco social just transition we so desperately need in our world, I offered myself in service to the organisation since my return to Europe from Latin America in 2018. Since being invited to join the FCUL team by ECOLISE co-founder Gil Penha-Lopes in early 2019, to work on the UrbanA project, I saw first-hand the great passion and talents that exist in their wide community, as well as a sense of the massive potential for radical change in the world the network possesses. I felt I could learn much from them, and that I had things helpful to offer.

I participated in the 2019 and 2020 ECOLISE General Assemblies, as part of the FCUL team, an ECOLISE member. In December 2019 I was part of ECOLISE's delegation to the COP 25 climate conference in Madrid, with Juan Del Rio. Through growing collaborations with the UrbanA project, ECOLISE's research coordinator and Learn domain lead, Tom Henfrey, invited me to collaborate with ECOLISE on the ETiA and Transformative Cities projects they supported in 2020. I also collaborated with other Portuguese based ECOLISE members for the launch of their Communities for Future (CfF) action platform in September 2020.

By 2021, I felt strongly that ECOLISE was far away from making the impact I believed it could achieve. I put myself forward for council elections, hoping to help enable ECOLISE transform into all that it could be. Since co-creating ECOLISE in 2014, Gil decided to take a step back from things as the 2021 General Assembly (GA) approached in April 2021. I stood in as the FCUL delegate for the GA proceedings. ECOLISE invited members to stand for ECOLISE Council elections, I put myself forward as the FCUL delegate and was elected with 10 other members. I was also chosen as interim ECOLISE Co-President, with Nonty Sabic from GEN. Nonty left the council soon after and was replaced in July 2021 by Alisa Dendro from the Baltic Ecovillage Network (BEN). I stayed on in the Council through an extremely turbulent time over the next year. By the following years GA, in May 2022, the previous Council had reduced from 11 to 2 members, Leonor Afonso from GEN Europe and myself remained. We were re-elected and joined by 5 new Council members. I was re-elected as Co-President, along with Mieke Elzenga from GEN Europe. In July 2022 I stepped down from the Council and as co-president to join the ECOLISE team of paid workers. I joined the Inspire domain as social media officer and continued in the work I had been doing since 2021, to help resolve conflicts.

After some further conflicts, this time involving me, and ECOLISE keeping silent about the war in Gaza, In January 2024 I was moved to support two projects, FLIARA and WAVE. In December 2024 I stopped working with ECOLISE, to focus on finish writing my PhD thesis.

Part of being a group based on transformational system change means creating alternative systems to the mainstream. This includes trying to find ways to offer dignified and meaningful livelihoods for more people, finding means to economically support people who wish to use their work time engaged in things that align to their value systems. Finding, or creating, work for such people can be the first step in wider system change. I myself benefitted from this, when I was asked to join the UrbanA project. Although I began to physically work from March 2019, due to bureaucratic issues within the Portuguese system, I was unable to get paid until late 2019. But I was able to build up credit which was used elsewhere, by getting covered to do the Regenerative TRP course online, which Portuguese colleagues, including Gil, assisted in. After the academic part of UrbanA ended, I was lucky to be included as part of the 2nd stage, through funding from BOSCH foundation. The ECOLISE "work" I had done from April 2021, after the GA and elections, was not paid work. As co-president taking on large responsibilities in a very turbulent time, it took much time to navigate difficult territory. From July 2022 I worked in the ECOLISE team as a paid worker until the end of 2024. Gaining understanding and perspectives from both sides of the "core" was extremely beneficial, especially in how to navigate through conflicts. In 2024 ECOLISE launched a Regenerative Communities Fund (RCF)[164], the first fund specifically focused on supporting regenerative communities in Europe. In 2025 it reached out to support local CLI hubs in five EU countries: Croatia, Finland, France, Portugal and Spain.

Being a legally based Belgian NGO, that is a meta network with much focus on policy work at the EU level, ECOLISE did try to employ Brussels based people. It often employed Brussels based interns, normally finding payment programmes to cover them through various funding mechanisms available to European youth. For a short while it also rented offices in the city. But as ECOLISE's team of workers grew, online remote work became the main means of working. While Central European Time, Brussels time, was the main time zone we worked around, there was flexibility between the team to accommodate a group of 15 spread, at times, from Romania, Hungary and Finland in the East, to Spain, Portugal and later Ireland in the West.

The core group also met physically, which was extremely important. Not just about being able to explore things like developing strategy or doing workshops to explore future visions together, being able to physically meet allowed people to truly get to know each other, as well

[164] https://ecolise.eu/how-we-do-it/regenerative-communities-fund/

as having off time to mix socially and allow the collective glue connect people in different ways. In groups working in regenerative systems, having such moments is critical to actually being able to do quality work together. Working in the area of "People Care" continually, ECOLISE's area for dealing with internal tensions and conflicts, for my whole time with the network also allowed me to see first-hand how real-world moments enabled healthy processes to develop. But having only limited periods for this dynamic during my time, I believe seriously contributed to unhealthy processes festering and affecting the network's ability to get good work done. Figure 5.1 shows examples from the two sides of working together, the left image is from ECOLISE's Online GA in 2022, the right is from my first dedicated physical working moment, where we spent four days together in a lovely Southern Belgian farm in March 2023.



Figures 5.1: ECOLISE Meetings. Top: Online GA 2022. Bottom: In-person meeting, Belgium (ECOLISE, 2022 & 2023

Exploring the call "From Climate Change to System Change", I will now examine my own experiences within ECOLISE in more depth to identify in what areas things worked well, and others not so well. I have divided the three separate moments of my work into these sections:

1. Building Bridges & Connecting Communities (April 2019 – April 2021)
2. Navigating Conflicts (April 2021 – July 2022)
3. System Change? (July 2022 – December 2024)

Section 1 includes some overlap between ECOLISE and UrbanA, where the lines between both became a bit blurred. This section includes a sub section from our work at Madrid's COP 25 in December 2019: "Building bridges beyond the ECOLISE network, with Climate Justice movements" paints a multileveled, multi lingual picture of the networked nature of this work.

Not all details can be shared from the delicate moments in sections 2 and 3, for ethical reasons. While great care, and much time, was taken throughout these processes for collective transformational change, in the end, it was not enough. ECOLISE could have done better.

Section 1: Building bridges and connecting communities

(Period: April 2019 – April 2021)

With things developing with the ECOLISE team in UrbanA, my mentioning of ECOLISE's work at the Social Solidarity Economy and the Commons (SSEC) conference in November 2019 and my past and current involvement with climate justice movements in both Europe and Latin America, I was invited to be part of the ECOLISE delegation to COP25 in Madrid in December 2019, after it moved from Chile due to the huge protests against social inequality that started there that October. I had been active during COP15 in Copenhagen's streets in 2009 (section 5.2.2.1), outside the official arena, working with and supporting indigenous groups in the streets, social centres and alternative summit. ECOLISE are part of the Climate Action Network (CAN) group and get accreditation to participate inside the COP events most years. ECOLISE had a number of badges and used them to bring in a diverse range of people from various sectors of the network. I participated with Juan Del Río (Fig 5.2), who was ECOLISE Network and Outreach Coordinator, to bring the voice of CLIs on climate change to the COP25 climate negotiations in Madrid. We were long-time friends, having been *indignados* together during the Spanish Revolution in 2011 (section 4.2.1.4) and Barcelona Transition adventures before that. In the photo, I have the speech bubble prop I created while in Brazil, with the Portuguese translation of "We are Nature defending itself".



Figure 5.2: Bringing the community-led voice to COP25 in Madrid (ECOLISE, 2019)

ECOLISE's 2019 Activity Report[165] highlighted our contribution:

> The ECOLISE delegation participated actively at the Cumbre social por el Climate (the Counter COP), which ran alongside the official proceedings. With more than 350 different sessions and workshops, this provided a space for networking with indigenous people, social movements such as the solidarity economy movement, Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future, as well as ECOLISE partners such as the European Economic & Social Committee. Delegates also took part in a massive demonstration of over 500,000 people.
>
> Victor Torre of RIE (Iberian Ecovillage network), Mar Muro from Red de Transición (Transition Spain), and Juan Pedro Franco from Permaculture Ibera attended during the first week, with Juan and Duncan Crowley of FCUL, Lisbon, flying the ECOLISE flag in the second week. Duncan hosted a workshop on alternative media for social movements, while Juan led one on synergies for building community resilience.
>
> Juan's reflections on the event: "There was a sense of urgency but instead of the talks focussing on climate justice and paying back the ecological debt, the main narrative was about market-mechanisms, green growth and techno-optimism. In essence, the complete opposite of ECOLISE's message of zero-carbon regeneration and inclusivity."

A diverse range of groups participated in the *Cumbre Social por el Clima* (Social Gathering for the Climate). Most events happened at The Complutense University of Madrid at the edge of the city and also at a trade union space in the city centre. Most things happened in Spanish, but live translation often happened in spaces. Videos of the mostly Spanish livestreams available on the *Cumbre Social por el Clima* YouTube channel[166], The report from *Ecologistas en Acción* (Ecologists in Action) gives a good overview of the event[167], as they have been chief organizer in climate justice movements for a long time. The event was also a chance for me to connect better with the Portuguese climate activists with whom I travelled by bus from Lisbon with. A main group that most climate communities took their lead from was the indigenous peoples network "*Minga Indigina*" [168] who describe themselves:

[165] ECOLISE Activity Report 2019 https://ecolise.eu/reports/2019/
[166] Cumbre Social por el Clima YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@cumbresocialporelclima7322
[167] Assessment of the social summit for climate. Possible learnings for future events – PDF available: https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/143591/
[168] Minga Indigina LInkedIn page https://www.linkedin.com/company/minga-ind%C3%ADgena/about/

> We are a collective of groups, organizations and communities from indigenous nations throughout Abya Yala (the American continent). Minga is the coming together of people when there is a calling. This is an Indigenous Calling for everyone to come together.
>
> The leaders of Indigenous Minga come from the highest communities in the Andes, the deepest forests of the Amazon, the islands farthest away from the continents, the driest desert in the world, the northernmost territory in Alaska and the largest reserves of water in southern Patagonia. They come to help humanity remember what it is to be 'human' and to invite them to join the cause for climate and biocultural diversity from a new perspective.

I initially established connections with indigenous activists and indigenous support groups from my time in Barcelona, and in particular during the mobilisations with the Climate and Social Justice Caravan at COP15 in Copenhagen, 2009. I was able to connect European groups with old Brazilian friends and groups who had representatives in Madrid[169]. The *Wiphala* is the flag of the indigenous Andean peoples, the flag of *La Pachamama* (Mother Earth), where native people still live in today's Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and parts of north-western Argentina and southern Colombia. My wife is from Ayacucho, high up the mountains in Peru. We got our Wiphala flag in Bolivia in 2013. Figure 5.3 (right) shows my wife Tania (right of picture) and myself with our flag and two more Peruvians outside the entrance to the COP on day 1.



Figure 5.3: Waving the Wiphala L: Welcoming Greta R: Entering COP25 in Madrid (Author, December 2019)

[169] 350.org: The faces of resistance at COP25 https://350.org/the-faces-of-resistance-at-cop25/

Over time the Wiphala has come to symbolize the connection between indigenous groups and global climate action and climate justice groups. Figure 5.3 left shows me in Lisbon, standing on the roof of MAAT in Belem overlooking the river Tejo, the day that Greta Thunberg arrived in the city after her sailing expedition arrived from the US. One key interest I brought to ECOLISE over the five years with them, was how better can European and non-European communities, struggles, viewpoints, histories, epistemologies and world views see each other, hear each other, understand each other's histories and current struggles, to work together for a sustainable and just future. Given their histories of colonialisation and imperialism, both Iberian countries of Spain and Portugal are ideal places to act as bridges in this dialogue.

Juan also co-founded the Spanish Transition Network, *Red de Transición*[170], which is also an ECOLISE member. His workshop was in Spanish and built on methodologies from their work to understand coming, or current, climate challenges and how people can best prepare now to build community resilience. My workshop "Don't hate the media. Be the media. Rebooting the Indymedia project"[171] (Fig 5.4 L) was a continuation of work done since the early 2000's with the Indymedia network and the recent 20-year celebrational and experimental event "N30 & 20"[172] we did in Lisbon. The Madrid event was experimental and live streamed to allow for blended participation. It connected people in Madrid with others from Lisbon, Barcelona, Glasgow, Cambridge & New Orleans USA, and somewhere in Germany. Event co-organisers included the Portuguese Indymedia team of PTrevolutionTV[173] who helped stream.

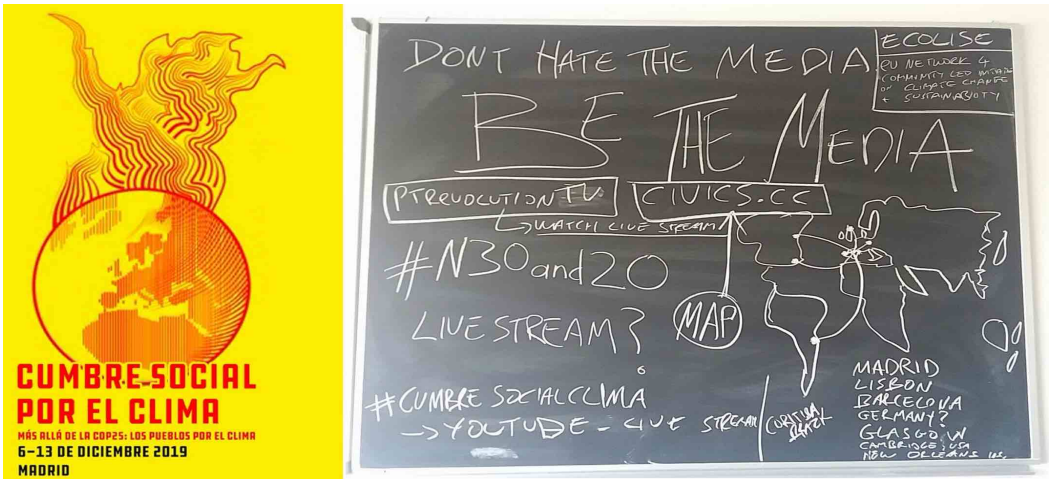


Figure 5.4: L: Cumbre social por el Clima R: ECOLISE Media event blackboard (L: Cumbre social por el Clima. R: Author, 2019)

[170] *Red de Transición* https://www.reddetransicion.org/
[171] Event on facebook https://www.facebook.com/events/2395994920522486
[172] N30 & 20 – From Seattle to Madrid https://n30and20.wordpress.com/2019/11/28/n30and20/
[173] PtrevolutionTV https://www.facebook.com/ptrevolutiontv.live

After 20 years of indymedia, we asked where was citizen journalism now? The event sought to increase how activists make our own news to shape discourse. Our premise was that we already have the communication tools to facilitate radical change, but were not using them well.

Using the N30 & 20 channel I created on Facebook, I made a live video stream[174] of the opening ceremony from the Peoples Climate Summit that evening. This included offerings, songs and speeches from many indigenous women and men from the Minga Indigenous group. Tom Goldtooth from the Navajo Nation and for many years the executive director of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN)[175] spoke in English. Figure 5.5 L shows a screengrab from that video. After him, a leading figure from Brazilian indigenous groups spoke in Portuguese, which was translated to Spanish after; Ninawa Inu Huni Kuī, from the Huni Kui people of Acre. Ninawa is president of the Huni Kui People's Federation of Acre, with about 17,000 indigenous people from Brazil and Peru. He is an advisor to the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), a member of the World Alliance of Mother Nature's Guardians and a senior advisor to the Council of Indigenous Social Museology. Some 350.org members supported him, whom I'd collaborated with in Brazil.

The following day, Sunday the 8th, a demonstration happened in front of the headquarters of Spanish energy company, Repsol. Ninawa led the action that called for an end to oil drilling and exploration off the coast of Brazil. Reuters videoed the action[176] (Fig 5.5 R). Portuguese climate activists, including myself participated too. Ninawa held our *Wiphala* flag during much of the action (Fig 5.5 M), as I reported later on the Ecocity Lisboa Instagram page[177]. Many discussions happened in these days between people about how best ECOLISE could support these indigenous struggles against territorial violence for resource extractivism.



Figure 5.5: L: *Minga Indigena* at *Cumbre social por el Clima* M: Chief Ninawa demands an end to oil exploration off Brazil coast R: Indigenous climate activists protest against fossil fuels outside Repsol HQ, Madrid (L & M; Author, 2019; R; REUTERS, December 2019)

[174] Climate Summit Opening Ceremony https://www.facebook.com/n30and20/videos/745435439270607
[175] Indigenous Environmental Network https://www.ienearth.org/
[176] Indigenous climate activists stage protest against fossil fuels https://reuters.screenocean.com/record/1446909
[177] Ecocity Lisboa report https://www.instagram.com/p/B51G1nCH4a5/

Widening the global urban Community of Practice

In 2020 ECOLISE's Tom Henfrey, asked me to support their work for the Transformative Cities initiative[178], a partnership between six networks and organizations, led by the Transnational Institute (TNI)[179]. Transformative Cities is a platform to connect, amplify and learn from community efforts, showcasing how citizens, movements and municipalities are already creating change through cooperation, solidarity and democratic participation. They ran four editions of the Transformative Cities People's Choice Award (fig 5.6.1) between 2018 and 2022, which seeks to highlight cities and collectives working on solutions to ensure access to water, food, energy and housing. Finalists of the four editions make up the Atlas of Utopias[180] (fig 5.6.2), a living collection of inspiring solutions to today's urban crises. The Atlas is the result of a peer-review evaluation process by an interdisciplinary team of scholars, activist, policy makers and international NGO's representatives. In 2020 I assisted Tom in evaluating case studies, for the final edition I was ECOLISE's sole member of the evaluation team. In 2020, through my Brazilian contacts, I successfully invited former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Raquel Rolnik, to be the featured special guest (fig 5.6.3).



Figure 5.6 Transformative Cities. 1: People's Choice Award 2: Atlas of Utopias 3: Raquel Rolnik (Transformative Cities 2022 & 2020)

September 2020 ECOLISE launched its new action programme *Communities for Future*:

> To mainstream community-led action on climate change and sustainability. Communities for Future is inspired by the international Fridays for Future movement. It builds on ECOLISE members' work and the European Day of Sustainable Communities, which is a celebration of local communities taking action for a healthier, fairer, regenerative Europe. (ECOLISE status report 2020, page 12)

[178] Transformative Cities https://transformativecities.org/
[179] Transnational Institute https://www.tni.org
[180] https://transformativecities.org/atlas-of-utopias/

In the week leading up to the launch, regional online workshops happened in Croatia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. CE3C and HabitaRegen ecovillage cooperative organised the Portuguese event "The regenerative role of local communities for a sustainable future"[181]. The 1,5-hour discussion involved European MEP José Gusmão, action researcher Flor Avelino (part of DRIFT & UrbanA) and eco entrepreneur António Vasconcelos.

As explained earlier[182], overlap started to happen between UrbanA and ECOLISE, as we focused on trying to expand the CoPs. The last 3 UrbanA Side Events were all jointly organised by both, with me acting on behalf of both. The first one "Communities for Future: Communities of Practice, leveraging impact by learning together" (Dec 2nd 2020) explored the role of CoPs in strengthening community-led responses to societal challenges. Three CoPs from ECOLISE's network at different stages of their evolution were represented; BLAST[183] (Blended Adult Learning for the Social-ecological Transition), *Municipalities in Transition*[184] and UrbanA. The subsequent blog post I wrote for ECOLISE's blog included the video and Miro work images[185]. The 2nd event, for the TNOC festival is described above with related links for further reading.

The final event was "From Fridays for Future to Communities for Future. Co-creating community-led system change". It is described in ECOLISE's Case Study section earlier (Pages 169-170). I believe that last event was the highpoint of my divergent period with ECOLISE, seeking to connect the different CoPs with wider communities. I organised the following event, building on contacts I had participating in each of the 8 groups, to various degrees. Even though the date of the event, May 2021, belongs to the following section, it was the last of the opening out stages of "Building Bridges & Connecting Communities", as I had begun to organise it with groups before joining ECOLISE council in April 2021. Despite the seemingly strong alignment between groups to an outsider, the reality for a long time was that different ecological social movements worked in silos, or ghettos. I was involved in both the transition and degrowth movements for a long time. We cocreated the Barcelona transition group in 2008 together, 13 years previous. I am now part of Degrowth Portugal. This was a chance to try to bring the ideas, the communities and people (and egos) together, to try to make radical change, together. Also important was the fact that this was the first time ECOLISE invited people from the Fridays for Future movement to speak directly with members of the Communities for Future movement.

[181] Portugal CfF launch https://tinyurl.com/y8k67678
[182] In: Case Studies, 4.1.1 UrbanA, Pape 160
[183] Wiki: https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/BLAST
BLAST CoP guide https://ecolise.eu/documents/blast-community-of-practice-guide/
[184] Municipalities in Transition https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Municipalities_in_Transition
[185] Report: Communities of Practice, leveraging impact by learning together https://medium.com/communities-for-future/communities-of-practice-leveraging-impact-by-learning-together-621a27410ca5

Section 2: Navigating Conflicts

(April 2021 – July 2022)

Guided by the principles of co-creation, social justice and ecological integrity, ECOLISE supports community-led action on climate change and sustainability. The inner side of the group is the most interesting dynamic, because here is where a network governs itself as a community.

I put myself forward as a possible candidate for the council elections in ECOLISE's 2021 GA, as the delegate and representative of FCUL. Despite working with ECOLISE for two years on UrbanA, collaborating in a number of events with ECOLISE and participating in the previous two GAs, I had no idea of just how serious tensions were within the inner side of the organisation. ECOLISE publish yearly activity reports[186]. The 2020 report mentioned that after the 2020 GA a process of deep reflection was initiated, "a collaborative proposal forming process aimed at resolving tensions that had been observed within the work of ECOLISE". Both the 2020 and 2021 GAs were virtual, due to COVID. The 2021 GA took place from 16th-18th April. It was a highly tense moment, which led to a highly tense year. Their 2021 Report stated:

> 2021 marked seven years since the establishment of ECOLISE. This milestone year has not been an easy one for ECOLISE. Through a series of unfortunate events and internal dynamics, we have been called to slow down and turn inwards to reinvent ourselves.

The result of the post 2020 GA participatory proposal forming process was a report called "ECOLISE Transforming 2021: Caterpillar to Butterfly", which was handed over at the 2021 GA. The working groups main suggestion was that ECOLISE go for a period of cocooning, processing the deep tensions in integrative ways, in order to 'transform from a caterpillar into a butterfly'. Previous councils were mandated for two-year terms. All but one of the 2019-21 Council distanced themselves from ECOLISE. The new Council was mandated to continue this challenging work and bring a proposal to an extraordinary GA. The report went on to say "Tensions were felt in a number of areas, including issues around internal communication, proposal forming, decision-making processes and governance, as well as the inclusion of diversity and minorities". In early 2022, ECOLISE tweeted[187]: "ECOLISE acknowledges tensions based on sexism and racism that have led to the departure of some team members & some network members expressing concern". Tensions erupted during this heated 2021 GA. For people at outer levels, it was unexpected. This was the situation I had offered myself into.

[186] ECOLISE yearly activity reports https://ecolise.eu/how-we-do-it/activity-reports/
[187] ECOLISE on twitter https://x.com/ECOLISE/status/1494619098138951681

After the first section of the GA on Saturday, when truths were shared and the sharpness of the problems were understood, I wondered should I really stand for the council elections that evening. It seemed quite an extreme situation, with much hurt and anger. There also seemed to be a sense of polarization and communication breakdown within the ECOLISE core. Did I really have skills and expertise to help navigate through these difficult waters? I went for a walk after an intense half day behind the computer screen on zoom. I listened to the birds, I breathed deep and I became more at ease. A strange feeling came over me. What if this difficult situation was actually a gift? Having recently completed the Regenerative TRP course, and used to the Permacultural idea that "the problem is the solution", a calmness took hold. I felt I was in the right situation at the right time. Despite how serious the problems were, they could act as a positive stimulus to provoke ECOLISE to really transform into something beyond what it then was. I returned to the evenings GA business at ease. I felt it was correct to stand for elections.

Earlier that day during a series of concurrent breakout rooms, I participated in one on: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, EDI for short. I went to mostly listen. In ECOLISE, harvest documents are used for efficient, wide and deep collective communication. Messages and feedback are encouraged on the zoom chat. I added that: I identify as an Irish, white, male, ecofeminist: I felt it was important that ECOLISE shows explicitly antiracist, antifascist values, because even in the permaculture, regenerative worlds, eco-fascism was growing: As ECOLISE supports more climate justice movements, a strong EDI process will become more important.

16 people stood for the council elections, 11 were selected; 7 women and 4 men. Nonty Sabic, a black South African woman living for many years in Europe and part of GEN, and myself were selected as co-presidents, using the sociocratic process. We both accepted.

I felt that the challenge that this council was tasked with was indeed enormous, but not impossible. Coming from a theoretical and practical culture of radical telling of the truth, based on Gandhi's concepts of *Satyagraha* (holding firmly to truth) and *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence), and Buddhist doctrines on truth telling, I believed that by this process ECOLISE could not only resolve its conflicts, but turn into something far more impactful. The transformative process would be challenging. Very difficult conversations would have to happen. A lot of listening would have to happen. Very well-designed processes to facilitate such a journey would be key. ECOLISE would be able to pull through things, where the inner core understood what hurts had been caused and collective healing allowed happen. My deepest hope was that only by going through such a deep transformation, well beyond most people's comfort zones, could ECOLISE arrive to a totally new place of understanding and connection. Only by such a journey could it become a true ally of the global family already on the front lines of the climate justice battle.

This was my deepest understanding of, and hope for, the cocooning phase. That ECOLISE would navigate through the challenges and a truly beautiful butterfly would emerge. It would be a seed to grow from within ECOLISE to without, to all others in the wider ecosystem. From ECOLISE's core, to the outer layers, to the wider member organisations and active projects. From there to the various CoPs we were building, to the wider climate bodies we had connected further with in the last two years. I believed that upon coming out the other side, ECOLISE as an organisation, would have developed a deeply decolonial understanding. That through the learnings of all the individuals in its member groups, ECOLISE would play an important role in ending European blindness to systems of oppression, colonialism and white supremacy.

Beginning in April 2021, and continuing right till the end of my period with ECOLISE in December 2024 I worked to try to rebuild trust between the inner core and the wider member base, by creating those systems I believed were needed to bring about the full transformation, to enable the butterfly emerge. A small "culture building" group of fellow team and council members dealt with the team's conflicts and tension issues. This was called "People Care".

As opposed to the "calling out" culture common in much of society today, with Nonty and the council, we tried to have a "calling in" process in June 2021. This has its origins in African Ubuntu tribal systems Nonty uses in her work, where elders call in their full community in moments they feel it is warranted. Much time and care was given to the process, which included bringing in external professionals who were impartial to ECOLISE's polarisations in that moment. Unfortunately, people who felt most affected by the tensions then, refused to participate in proceedings. So, despite some things happening, true impact was not realised.

In March 2022, ECOLISE's core felt things had improved sufficiently to warrant three new people joining the team. Also, Pauliina Helle and Juan del Río were selected as Co- Directors through an internal sociocratic selection process lasting some months. As people care leads, Pauliina and myself did a 5-week long course using a systemic approach to conflict transformation with professionals from the Whole Partnership[188]. Specific sessions happened after with ECOLISE's full core in a very well-designed way, to work on deep ongoing tensions.

During 2022 we finalised a new version of ECOLISE's Code of Conduct, including a list of social agreements that were meant to guide us in a positive way in building and maintaining the kind of organisational culture they wanted to foster, instead of just focusing on preventing and repairing harm. All team members had to agree to, and sign the newly worded text before receiving payments for work. Any disagreements, like what happened before, would be checked

[188] Whole Partnership https://www.wholepartnership.com/booking/conflict-transformation-a-systemic-approach-online/

for drifting away from the code of conduct agreements. Building on this in 2023, a temporary people care officer specializing in such matters helped create guidelines for navigating these tensions, which is a publicly accessible resource for other groups to consult: The ECOLISE People Care Manual (Fig 4.11.3) [189]. It was inspired by RadHR's pioneering work.[190]

Not all processes worked out successfully, in terms of resolving conflicts. Some individuals left ECOLISE's core, some member groups they were part of subsequently left the network too.

Sadly, my hopes for ECOLISE's radical transformation did not fully materialise. In 2021 ECOLISE lost eleven team members. By the following year's GA, on May 20th 2022, the previous year's council of eleven had been reduced to two, myself and Leonor Afonso from GEN Europe. Giving the opening speech at that GA as co-president, I tried to rebuild trust with the member groups by asking key questions relevant to what did they need to move forward?[191]

> Could ECOLISE be better, work better, serve better? If yes, what needs to be nudged to allow ECOLISE all it can be? What is needed for your group(s) to go further, building on improved interactions with other member groups in the ECOLISE community? By strengthening the network within ECOLISE, how best can we support the wider climate movements?
>
> ECOLISE has a superb toolkit ready for the service of humanity, but how useful are we really being? How many of the climate striker kids have heard of us? How many of those working in the policy labyrinth at Brussels know of us, or our solutions from the field?
>
> ECOLISE is a very diverse community, with different roots and lived experiences, but have we a shared value system yet? Have we adequate and safe enough spaces and moments, both online and off, to meet, share, listen, learn, work and celebrate together? Can we agree on what we stand together for? Can we agree on what we stand together against? Can we collectively tackle the difficult question of 'What would it mean to win?'. We need to not only "fight the good fight", but to fight truly believing that we will win.

In July 2022 I stepped down as co-president and the council to work in ECOLISE's team.

[189] ECOLISE People Care Manual https://ecolise.eu/publications/ecolise-people-care-manual/
[190] RadHR https://radhr.org/
[191] Full speech at Annex 6.5.2 & https://medium.com/communities-for-future/message-from-the-ecolise-co-president-f9751b46b606

Section 3: System Change?

(July 2022 – December 2024)

ECOLISE's initial three key "pillars" of work became four "domains": 1) Communication (Inspire) 2) Policy Engagement (Advocate) 3) Network building (Enable) 4) Knowledge & Learning (Learn). Nearly a year since the GA, the butterfly transformation recommendations, losing paid members and some internal reshuffling, three new team members joined the team in March 2022. Each hired as a new domain lead and each had not been involved directly with ECOLISE before: Jane Feeney (Inspire), Nina Klein (Advocate) and Laura Kaestele (Network). Tom Henfrey left ECOLISE in 2021 and the Learn domain has not been active since.

In July 2022 I joined ECOLISE's Inspire domain as social media officer, to support Janes work. All ECOLISE team members do the work within their domain, but also work on many different areas, including how to support the interdomain work to organise, design, execute and build on events. I was one of ECOLISE' contact points for two projects with GEN (ETiA & ReGEN4All) and I supported two projects with a very strong theoretical base around system change and climate justice; Community Climate Coaches (CCC) and SPARK. ECOLISE's strategy work was ongoing. I continued on the important "People Care" work, which sometimes involved opening specific procedures between people or groups, if and when tensions arose. As social media officer, I was responsible for the social media, newsletters and event support work.

The European Day of Sustainable Communities (EDSC)[192] is one of ECOLISE's flagship events. It began in 2017 as a celebration of local communities taking action for a healthier, fairer, regenerative Europe. It took place on, or near to, the third Saturday of September each year. ECOLISE invite communities, both in and outside their network, to organize and register an event, big or small, in person or online, to showcase action for climate and sustainability at the local community level. It began small, but communities from 24 European countries took part in the second EDSC, including the *Fête de Possibles* ("Party of Possibilities", aligned to French speaking Transition groups), involving over 1500 communities in France and Belgium. The Lush Spring Prize is awarded to initiatives that are considered "real game changers, and are building and strengthening the global regenerative movement". In 2019 ECOLISE jointly won the Lush Influence Award[193] for "campaigning or lobbying to influence policy, regulation or public opinion in support of regeneration", mainly for their EDSC work. They shared the award with Zimbabwe's ZIMSOFF, each project won £25,000. I became ECOLISE's Portuguese National Contact Point for two years for the EDSC program in 2022 and 2023.

[192] EDSC 2025: https://ecolise.eu/european-day-of-sustainable-communities-2025/
[193] Lush Spring Prize - ECOLISE https://springprize.org/shortlisted/ecolise/

Under Nina Klein's leadership in the Advocate domain, a strong, co-created programme begun to emerge in 2022[194], culminating in the launch of ECOLISE's radical "Time For Collective Action Manifesto" in Brussels in November 2023[195], calling for systemic change. Our Earth Day 2023 Instagram post[196], on April 22nd, stated: "Communities finally getting organised. System Change Not Climate Change" (Fig 5.7.1). One image used the word systems, the other just system. ECOLISE used the three variations for System Change. I wondered did full alignment exist between people then working within ECOLISE, and the wider networks of member groups and organisations working with us, regarding these phrases and climate justice.

ECOLISE was a supporting partner of the Beyond Growth Conference[197] that happened in the European Parliament, 15-17 May 2023 (Fig 5.7.2). This was a multi-stakeholder event aiming to discuss and co-create policies for sustainable prosperity in Europe. ECOLISE was one of 150+ Civil Society Organisations to sign an open letter from 400+ experts, supporting a call for a shared vision of a Europe beyond growth. The Postgrowth and Degrowth community helped organise the event and supplied many key speakers[198]: Raworth, Hickel, Shiva, Sultana, for what was later called the "Woodstock moment" for the Postgrowth community. ECOLISE Council and team members participated in Degrowth conferences in 2018 and 2023, and I participated in the joint Degrowth and International Society for Ecological Economics Conference in 2021 (online). For the UrbanA project, consortium partner BCNUEJ are part of Barcelona based ICTA, the intellectual base of the Degrowth movement. I shared an image of the Degrowth symbol, the snail, and the ECOLISE butterfly (Fig 5.7.3), at ECOLISE's Belgium work gathering in November 2023 to enquire about increased alignment around system change.



Figure 5.7 System Change. Beyond Growth. Snail and Butterfly (ECOLISE, 2023; Beyond Growth, 2023; Author, 2023)

[194] A perspective from ECOLISE's policy domain, by Nina Klein, July 2022 https://ecolise.eu/why-communities-need-to-engage-in-politics-in-general-and-the-european-green-deal-in-particular/
[195] Covered earlier in Case Studies, 4.1.2 ECOLISE, pages 183-184
[196] ECOLISE System Change Instagram post: https://www.instagram.com/p/CrWjoT9N8X-/
[197] Beyond Growth Conference. https://www.beyond-growth-2023.eu/ + Conference Briefing: www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/747108/EPRS_STU(2023)747108_EN.pdf ECOLISE report: https://ecolise.eu/beyond-growth-2023-conference-towards-local-community-led-transformative-policies/
[198] Many quoted earlier in Literature Review sections, 2.1.1 Climate Breakdown & 2.1.3 Growth Addiction

In July 2023 the European Parliament voted on what was seen as one of the most important pieces of legislation for nature in Europe in the last 30 years, the Nature Restoration Law[199]. In the months leading up to it, ECOLISE was part of a #RestoreNature coalition[200] of civil society groups pushing to get it passed and to counter an unprecedented attack and disinformation campaign led by conservative and ring-wing politicians against the legislation. The law was seen as our best chance at curbing the biodiversity and climate crises and securing a safer and healthier future for European citizens. Irish MEP Sean Kelly endorsed 2019's EDSC and urged EU Institutions to endorse and enable CLIs on climate change & sustainability, saying "Communities are the way to go". Ahead of the July 12th vote we urged Sean Kelly to listen to the community voices from ECOLISE's CLI network who wanted the law approved. His party Fine Gael are part of the conservative European People's Party (EPP) that were set to reject the vote. Less than 24 hours before the decisive vote, Seán Kelly broke ranks with the EPP to declare he would not reject the law. The remaining 4 Fine Gael MEPs followed suit and inspired some other EPP MEPs to do likewise. All Irish MEPs refused to reject the law. That was just enough to swing the final vote of 324 against rejecting the bill, to 312 in favour. Despite some months of watering down the proposal, a majority of EU member states gave a final green light to the Nature Restoration Law in June 2024. ECOLISE's community played a small part in the victory for climate activists, NGOs, scientists, civil society, and farmers. #RestoreNature won.

The guest speaker for ECOLISE's 2020 GA, Daniel Wahl, shared E. F. Schumacher's quote "Perhaps we cannot raise the winds. But each of us can put up the sail, so that when the wind comes, we can catch it". I was not to know then the storm that was brewing for ECOLISE, but I am happy to have been able to help grab a sail, when it looked like we were hitting the rocks.

The turning point was the violent attack by Hamas in Gaza on October 7th 2023. I first got to know Palestinians when living in England when the illegal Iraq war broke out in 2003. Their situation is incredibly similar to Ireland's struggle for independence, through shared systems of colonial territorial occupation, apartheid and repression by similar actors. After Britain's state terror group, the Black and Tans, left Ireland in 1922, many went to Palestine. I've participated in peaceful movements for a free Palestine in England, Ireland, Spain, Brazil and now Portugal.

Two days after the attack, I travelled to Madrid for the SPARK project's major activity "Ticket to the Future". In Madrid, the OXFAM *Intermon* team organised an ecofeminist walking tour, beginning in the Madrid's multicultural heart, Lavapiés, and finishing by the Manzanares river and the Matadero, a refurbished slaughterhouse that is now a civic cultural

[199] Restore Nature www.restorenature.eu & https://fairseas.ie/2023/06/27/eu-nature-restoration-law-update/
[200] Nature Restoration under threat https://ecolise.eu/pioneering-eu-proposal-for-nature-restoration-under-threat/

centre run by Madrid City Council. The different partner groups met here and discussed what climate justice meant to them. The following day, the "Ticket to the Future" saw two train journeys converge on Barcelona with over 150 youth climate activists participating, one from Paris, and ours from Madrid. This was part of the "Make Rich Polluters Pay"[201] campaign run by OXFAM, to push for the richest groups in society to pay the trillions needed to tackle the climate crisis. On the trains workshops happened for the activists to share ideas about climate justice and their personal experience of the climate crisis. I led the ECOLISE team of six youth participants, one of whom was a young Spanish based, Muslim Kashmiri man. All had a strong climate justice grounding and understood links with injustices in Palestine. Together in Sants train station, OXFAM Intermon director, Franc Cortada[202], stated clearly why we fight:

> The battle is to uproot a very greedy, and oppressive system that is only serving a very small elite, and it's oppressing and repressing millions of people, so this is the battle we are fighting. Its a battle to uproot the capitalist system.

This large group came to Barcelona to participate in the fourth edition of the Fixing the Future Festival, a 3-day forum from 12-14 October in Design Hub Barcelona to "share, inspire, ask critical questions and, most importantly, take action to change the world for the better". There was much creativity from this diverse group. During this event a group I was in created a short 3-minute play about a climate injustice situation, based on time travel and techniques from the theatre of the oppressed. The play is called "The Cloud that kills the river"[203] and it appeared later on a few special occasions. These days were very intense and included deep discussions about climate injustice with members of indigenous communities who would later represent their communities and countries at the COP in Dubai, UAE, the following month. I made a particularly strong connection with Pavel Martiarena[204], a young photographer from near Peru's Puerto Maldonado in the *Madre de Dios* (Mother of God) region, where one of the world's largest illegal gold mine poisons his community's animals, water and food systems.

Soon after this very intense week in Barcelona, ECOLISE had the "Time For Collective Action Manifesto" Brussels launch, directly followed by our second work gathering of 2023 in Belgium, November 7th to 11th. Then ECOLISE's act of silence in regard to Gaza happened.

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[201] Make Rich Polluters Pay https://makerichpolluterspay.org/
[202] Franc Cortada, director of OXFAM Intermon: https://www.instagram.com/p/CyScAs6M6Sz/
[203] The Cloud that kills the river: In Annex CCC with Autoethnographic Assessment, pages 354 - 365
[204] Pavel https://makerichpolluterspay.org/activists/pavel/ & https://www.instagram.com/pavelmartiarena/

As outlined earlier[205], on November 12, 70,000 people took part in the biggest climate protest ever in the Netherlands. Greta Thunberg was invited to address the crowd from the stage. She had outlined her support for Palestine soon after October 7th and stated "As a climate justice movement, we have to listen to the voices of those who are being oppressed and those who are fighting for freedom and for justice. Otherwise, there can be no climate justice without international solidarity". The German FFF branch distanced itself from her views and the wider FFF movement. Positioning by European climate groups on how to respond to the Israeli Palestinian conflict "led to splits within groups and between them" (Niranjan et al, 2023).

I worked on publishing ECOLISE's newsletter from July 2022 to December 2023. The agreed upon templates and procedure worked well, content came from the full team. Most content was news or opportunities from within ECOLISE's projects or member groups. A smaller section about major climate related news, often included perspectives about climate justice. I was also responsible for the social media content. For December's newsletter[206], we proposed to share an item entitled 'No climate justice on occupied land' - Palestine and the Climate Justice movement", linking to a report[207] about the Dutch climate march, Greta and subsequent fallout of divisions within climate movements. It led to robust discussions, followed by a tense team meeting where an agreement to remain silent about Gaza was made, including on social media. Despite what unfolded since, ECOLISE has not mentioned Palestine publicly.

Some ECOLISE members contributed to understanding the situation better: Permaculture Association UK's November 2023 event "Perspectives from Palestine- A discussion with Palestinian Permaculturalists"[208] was deeply moving. In December 2023, Luxemburg's CELL demanded a Ceasefire[209]. A'ida Shibli joined the 2024 European Ecovillage Gathering[210], she is "a Tamera ecovillage coworker and an indigenous Bedouin woman from occupied Palestine". Requests for ECOLISE to support the October 20th call for a ceasefire made by the climate network it is part of, CAN[211], could not be agreed upon. ECOLISE remained silent.

In December 2023, I was moved from Inspire to support the FLIARA project and for project coordination of the WAVE project, which had a very strong climate justice emphasis. This led to my own internal conflict process with members. It was interesting to be on the other side.

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[205] Literature Review; 2.1.4 Social Unravelling , Pages 42-44
[206] ECOLISE newsletter, December 2023: https://tinyurl.com/4yadun5z
[207] Greta Thunberg briefly interrupted by man on stage at climate protest in Amsterdam https://tinyurl.com/36af3xv8
[208] Permaculture Association https://tinyurl.com/k33kkjbc
[209] CELL https://www.cell.lu/blog/gaza-cessez-le-feu-maintenant/
[210] GEN Europe https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=831742548989152&set=a.627026196127456
[211] CAN, October 2023 https://climatenetwork.org/2023/10/20/climate-action-network-calls-for-a-ceasefire-now/

ECOLISE's 2024 GA was the first in person one in five years. It happened with a series of work days in Arterra ecovillage, in the Basque hills in Northern Spain. This was our first time meeting physically since the Belgian farm in November, and the first time since the Palestinian question had arisen and caused internal tensions. A full day was given to an Open Space process[212]. I facilitated a 1,5-hour session outside to explore this difficult, and so far, divisive topic together, in an open, meaningful and respectful manner. Nothing concrete was agreed upon, but it was very helpful for ECOLISE team, council, members and others present to share views and explore what, if anything, could ECOLISE do regarding the situation. Some of the arguments given why ECOLISE should remain silent included: It is not ECOLISE's place, but those of their member organizations to take positions about certain issues: To be against genocide and illegal war actions might be seen negatively in Brussels and policy partners in Europe or member countries, perhaps mostly in Germany: If ECOLISE was to position itself, it would need a lengthy, difficult, time-consuming process to engage with members on the topic.

If ECOLISE was fully aligned with the core ideas behind the Beyond Growth movement, which formed the core of the 10 theses positioning and the later "Time For Collective Action Manifesto", they would have understood the roots of today's problems and joined those already active in building alternatives. From a degrowth perspective, being, as Farhana Sultana pointed out, actively anti colonial, anti-racist and eco-feminist. They were asked to take the lead from, and support, Jewish collogues in the degrowth network, some of whom had family members exterminated in the death camps of Auschwitz, like IPCC lead author Julia Steinberger[213].

Following the GA, discussions carried on in the core of team and council. As the situation in Gaza worsened, another proposal was put forward to support CAN's May 2024 statement[214], which included "Palestinians are facing a complete blockade, famine, disease, forced evacuations and destruction of all infrastructure. We will not be silent in the face of an unfolding genocide" Despite many wanting to support, again, ECOLISE agreed to remain silent.

After Ukraine was attacked in 2022, space was given for Ukraine's ecovillage movement to speak at ECOLISE's 2023 GA. As Gaza's civilians were oppressed, starved, and put through genocide, ECOLISE remained silent. Silence is seen as complicity, indirectly choosing "the side of the oppressor" (Tutu, 1984). For many activists, this is an example of clear climate justice illiteracy, exacerbated by blind European racism regarding ongoing global conflicts.

[212] Explained in methodology section below.. XXX
[213] Julia Steinberger https://profjuliasteinberger.wordpress.com/about-me/ + https://jksteinberger.medium.com/from-ashes-of-failure-7662a37d19a2
[214] CAN, May 2024 https://climatenetwork.org/2024/05/16/climate-action-network-can-statement-on-gaza/

In earlier, more joyful, moments in ECOLISE we were able to engage together with great camaraderie. During the Belgian November 2023 gathering I first shared the little theatre piece with the group (Fig 5.8.1), which was born from the Barcelona climate justice gathering. At WAVE's International gathering in April 2024, I facilitated a fishbowl discussion on climate justice (Fig 5.8.2). While it was powerful and transformative for many to explore these themes, it became increasingly difficult when asked directly how ECOLISE had responded to things.



Figure 5.8 Climate Justice 1: Theatre 2: WAVE Fishbowl (ECOLISE, 2023 & 2024)

While any moment to spend time physically together was hugely welcome, I felt the meetings in the countryside outside Brussels lacked one huge factor; Nature (Fig 5.9.1). I tried to organize water wanders to nearby rivers, but they were not so successful. In the Basque hills, we celebrated ECOLISE's 10th birthday with a big fire (Fig 5.9.2) where stories and dreams were shared. We also got to find a nice little river, to connect deeper into nature (Fig 5.9.3).



Figure 5.9 Connecting ECOLISE with the Source (Tania Landeo 2023, ECOLISE, 2024;)

5.2.2.2 UrbanA's experiments to create a Sustainable and Just Lisbon

Alongside the macro UrbanA process around the 4 Arenas and the development of the CoP with the 25 fellows, the Lisbon team sought to create a similar micro local process, to bring together local participants working for urban change in the wider Lisbon city area, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML). In November 2019, just before the first Arena in Rotterdam, an event was organized in the Lisbon's most multicultural neighbourhood, Mouraria. Nearly thirty participants from different groups came together for the two-part event to explore what the project theme meant in a city that in 2019 had been deemed by some commentators as the new European capital of gentrification and evictions (Rodríguez, 2019). Part 1 was a walking tour, part 2 was an afternoon workshop in a municipal space. Insights identified were fed into the first Rotterdam Arena the following week. Two of UrbanA's twenty-five fellows were from the AML, Joao Dinis and Rafael Calado, both participated at the Rotterdam event and both later contributed in different forms to moments in the CoP, including CoCo's, podcasts and more.

After the Rotterdam Arena, the Lisbon team began to focus attention on the area of Marvila and began discussions with the local group *Res do Chão* (Ground Floor). We were also commissioned to write a book chapter about our intentions[215]. As the initial meetings happened in Marvila library and walks happened to understand work on the ground, COVID quickly arrived and all physical work was shut down for many months. Applying the Translocal approach, our Lisbon team identified three different places in the city to explore possibilities of working together. All three places were in Lisbon municipality, had received BIP/ZIP funding, had a limited knowledge of the others, had various challenges and all had had groups working on the ground before COVID. They were Bela Flor, Ajuda and Marvila. We called this team BAM.

Throughout 2020 and 2021, interactions happened between these three groups together at the Lisbon level, and then at the European level with other groups during the other remaining three arenas and various other CoP moments. Near the end of the UrbanA process, greater attention was focused on the Bela Flor community, which was in the Alcantara river basin of the city. A number of walks and events with a wider CoP happened here. The translocal interactions between the BAM group led to wider understanding of each other's projects, problems and approaches for change and, sometimes, further collaboration in specific moments. Action research done right can be a very fruitful exchange, where all parties learn and benefit.

[215] Creating a Sustainable & Just Lisbon
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340314530_Creating_a_Sustainable_Just_Lisbon

Focusing on Mouraria

The co-created walking tour (Fig 5.10 L) led by local housing activists through streets recently cleared of local families (Fig 5.10 R) finished in a municipal resource centre for an afternoon of group dynamics and dialogues to identify common ground. Artistic graphic capture processes harvested insights from the dialogues on a giant canvas, a process that was to be developed further in each European Arena. These insights fed into the first Rotterdam Arena in the following days and were shared in *UrbanA* communications and later academic publications.



Figure 5.10: UrbanA Lisbon Walking Tour: L: Poster. R: Derelict street (UrbanA, 2019)

Leading up to this event, I participated in meetings with all groups to invite their participation, as well as with leading local housing groups *Habita* (Dwelling), an association for the Right to Housing and the City, and *Stop Despejos* (Stop Evictions). Activists from the tour stops who spoke about their struggle, community, or project included: *Jardim Martim Moniz* (Martim Moniz Garden) who opposed the corporate takeover of a public space used by many immigrants; *Renovar a Mouraria* (Renew Mouraria) association have a small space and promote social inclusion, cultural dynamism and community development in the neighbourhood; *Casa de Achada* (Thoughts house), or the Mário Dionísio centre, an artistic and cultural space; *Largo Residências* (Square Residents) based in *Largo do Intendente* (Intendant Square) and contributed to local development through the implementation of cultural activities and social businesses, driving artistic creation and dynamism and community involvement and integration. The tour ended in the council run "Mouraria Creative Hub". While the main UrbanA group chose not to have a Facebook page, our local UrbanA Lisbon group

decided to use both Facebook and Twitter. Pictures from both the walk[216] and talk[217] were shared as Facebook albums, and some photos were shared on other channels. We believed that running our own social media could help amplify the many voices from the neighbourhood.[218]

The event happened in one of the city's oldest neighbourhoods, which is also considered the most multi-cultural neighbourhood in the country, Mouraria. Centuries ago, this was where the cities Muslim community, the Moors, were housed, and later those that were forced to convert to Christianity. The neighbourhood's axis, *Rua do Benformoso*, now mostly consists of curry restaurants and shops of new immigrants from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and India, many of whom are Muslim. We tried to involve representatives from these groups, and spoke with their groups, but were unable to get any direct involvement. After the walk, most people ate a curry together in a small local immigrant restaurant. I wrote this short report of the day for the UrbanA Zine[219] that was published after the 1st Arena in Rotterdam (UrbanA, Jan 2020):

- **Lisbon, The new capital of gentrification and evictions**

November 12th 2019 was the start of the UrbanA project in Lisbon, a city going through such rapid and profound change that it was recently deemed "The new capital of gentrification and evictions" (Ara.Cat). After much time reaching out to local groups and projects active in the city, a group of about 30 participated in a full day of activity in the cities most multicultural community, Mouraria. The event started with a walking tour of the labyrinthine neighbourhood under the old castle, where, like many European cities, touristification, gentrification and Airbnb are driving up rents so quickly that locals can no longer afford to pay and are moving out of their *bairros*. Although Minimum wage raised 6% to 635 euros in 2019, it is still the *lowest* in western Europe (Reuters). Activists from Housing and Right to the City groups *Stop Despejos* (Stop evictions), Jardim Martim Moniz and Habita led a mostly local group through the streets to the heart of this transformation, the now mostly emptied, *Rua Dos Lagares*, where remaining families recently had their evictions stalled due to mobilisations in the streets. Later in Mouraria's Creative Hub participants explored how the approaches to urban justice and sustainability identified in UrbanA translate to the Lisbon context, using Fishbowl, World Café and other participatory methods.

[216] Walk photo album https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.151457029563707
[217] Talk photo album https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.153385982704145
[218] Tour communities who spoke: habita.info - stopdespejos.wordpress.com - jardimartimoniz.pt - renovaramouraria.pt - centromariodionisio.org - largoresidencias.com - hubcriativomouraria.pt
[219] UrbanA Zine, with links: https://tinyurl.com/evrn9yz2 (Page 19)

- **Lisbon Local Arena, Mouraria**

The "Local UrbanA Arena" ran from 2 till 9pm in Mouraria's Creative Hub (AKA: Centre for Innovation in Mouraria / CIM). The central question to UrbanA´s implementation in Lisbon was "How might an urban CoP help manifest the dream of a Sustainable and Just Lisbon?" More than 30 representatives from 24 different groups or projects (info in wiki[220]), active in the city met each other. Not all had done the earlier walk. Group dynamics happened outside, such as aligning by age (Fig 5.11 L), sensing what our areas of focus were and where we worked.



Figure 5.11: L: Social Dynamics. R: Group Discussion & Live Sketching (UrbanA, 2019)

After, inside the space, the UrbanA project was briefly outlined. Participants explored how the approaches to urban justice and sustainability identified in UrbanA translate to the Lisbon context, using participatory methods like Fishbowl and World Café (Fig 5.11). Live Sketching happened throughout the day. Filipa Santos made a graphic register (Fig 5.12) documenting dynamics used and key insights from the day. The five main conclusions from the day were:

1. Many solutions exist, but complex problems persist
2. Tailor solutions to reality and local participation
3. Need for articulation to better connect people and projects
4. Continuity and cross-pollination is essential.
5. Inform about citizen intervention starting points

Gil and Constança facilitated the afternoon's discussion. Gil pushed for, and used funds to pay for, the artistic process of graphic register. The process was very well received by the wider UrbanA community and this tool was incorporated into all subsequent European fora.

[220] Lisbon projects+initiatives https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/Database_of_Lisbon_projects_%26_initiatives

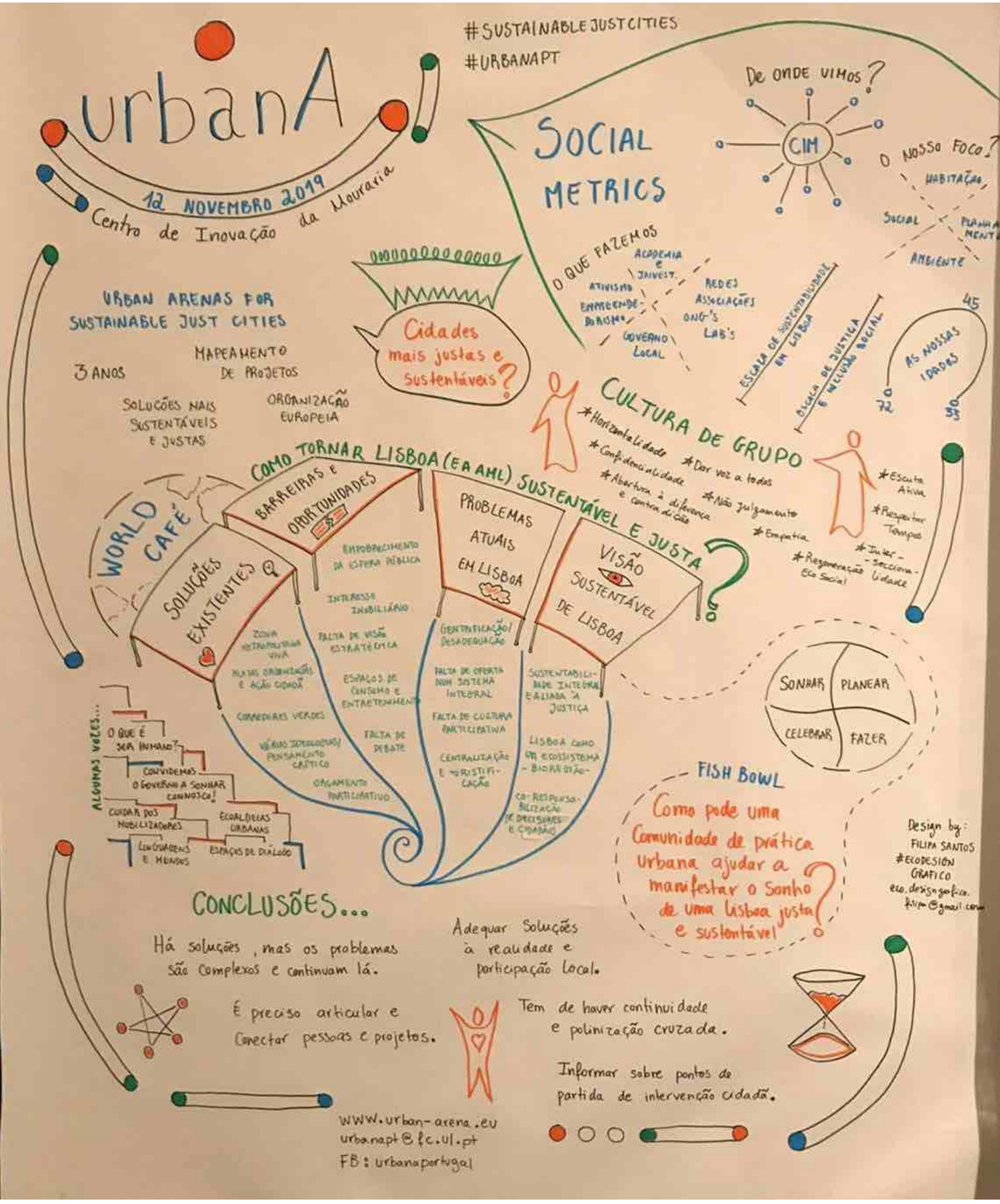


Figure 5.12: Lisbon Local Arena: Graphic register (Filipa Santos, UrbanA, 2019)

Focusing on Marvila

From the start of 2020, the Lisbon UrbanA team changed its focus from Mouraria, to Marvila. 2020 was the year that Lisbon was selected as Europe's "Green Capital" by the EGCA body and our team were interested in exploring how green development strategies employed by the city council affected social justice aspects of life for the established community of Marvila. Starting out with high momentum, things were cut short by the arrival of COVID in early 2020.

UrbanA Lisbon shifted its focus to Marvila to identify how best can the needs of local communities be supported by the project. Initial meetings happened with Jessica Verheij and Margarida Reis e Silva who were working in the area for another Horizon 2020 project called ROCK, short for Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural heritage in creative and Knowledge cities[221], and Luís Matos of *Rés do Chão*[222] (Ground Floor), an urban regeneration non-profit association who had worked in the community for some years with the "4 Crescente" community group[223]. The first meetings happened at the public library in Marvila and a number of non-public walks happened to get a sense of challenges and opportunities on the ground.

Since the first Arena in Rotterdam in November 2019, discussions had been developing with UrbanA fellow and Integral Cities founder Marilyn Hamilton, who was based in Findhorn ecovillage in Scotland (UrbanA's May 2020 podcast featured Marilyn and her work[224]) and the UrbanA Lisbon team about how ideas explored at the arena could be applied concretely at the more micro level of the Marvila neighbourhood in Lisbon. This led to a book chapter entitled "Creating a Sustainable & Just Lisbon" in *Urban Hub 20 Accelerating City Change in a VUCA World - Thriveable Cities* (VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous), that was published in March 2020[225]. Hamilton, our UrbanA Lisbon team and the Marvila activists explored key chapters from the book, that described other urban communities, projects and ideas. These discussions identified ideas most appropriate to the needs in Marvila and we began to explore how to implement them. A central question to UrbanA´s implementation in Lisbon was "How might an urban Community of Practice help manifest the dream of a Sustainable and Just Lisbon?" Since that point in time, COVID stopped things abruptly, from February 2020. Due to the period of physical distance, we developed our BAM strategy and had the CoP event "Is Lisbon a Sustainable and Just City? Perspectives from Europe´s 2020 Green Capital".

[221] ROCK: https://rockproject.eu/ + CORDIS entry: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/730280
[222] Rés do Chão https://resdochao.org/
[223] 4 Crescente facebook group https://www.facebook.com/GrupoComunitario4Crescente
[224] UrbanA May podcast: Integral Cities https://podcasts.ceu.edu/content/integral-cities + Spotify https://open.spotify.com/episode/1otPLecPiziltBy7T5fudZ
[225] Creating a Sustainable & Just Lisbon (pages 184-192 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340314530_Creating_a_Sustainable_Just_Lisbon

Creating a Sustainable & Just Lisbon

- **How UrbanA hoped to enable integral capacities in Lisbon?**

UrbanA continued its local community engagement process in Lisbon by grounding its activity in Marvila, a rapidly transforming riverside neighbourhood on the Eastern side of Lisbon. The objective was to identify how best can the needs of the local communities be supported by the wider UrbanA "Community of Practice" and the project´s tools. It also aimed to explore how to accelerate the transformation of Marvila into an Integral City Neighbourhood by applying perspectives and tools shared by other authors in Marilyn Hamilton's *Urban Hub 20* book.

Marvila's port industry and working-class area was forgotten about for many decades and housed one of Lisbon's largest shanty towns, the Chinese Neighbourhood. This was replaced in the late 1990's by fragmented modern housing blocks of high-rise towers, amidst large, empty, unused spaces (Fig 5.13). In 2020, urban transformation saw rent and land prices rise rapidly, established communities being forced to leave and even evictions happening.

Marvila was beaming with transformation potential. Many research and social innovation groups were active here, working with local government and communities to increase citizen collaboration in planning processes and to explore issues of equality and urban sustainability.



Figure 5.13: Urban Hub 20: Creating a Sustainable & Just Lisbon (Author, 2020; Soares 2011; ROCK 2018)

- **Honouring and building on previous work in Marvila**

UrbanA aimed to partner with and build on the work done by local change-making actors and activities to explore what sustainability and justice means in context, and how UrbanA

might help local communities develop further in an integral way. UrbanA sought to use the public library as a central community-building space.

Lisbon was Europe's "Green Capital" for 2020. A great opportunity existed to deepen current ecological urban concepts to better incorporate social justice. We felt that Community-led initiatives and local government could design regenerative solutions for Marvila's open spaces, based around the cultural, economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainability.

- **UrbanA´s intention for Marvila**

UrbanA´s Portuguese team intended to ground this central inquiry in Marvila with the intention of acting as a meta-collaboration platform for actors of change, both local and translocal (through the UrbanA Community of Practice). Preliminary conversations with local actors in Marvila indicated the need for continuity of previous collaborative and co-creative community work. UrbanA set to work with a microsmos of Marvila and together explore how to best serve the flow development of this neighbourhood as a nested system in the wider Lisbon.

UrbanA set out to realize this intention by applying selected approaches from Urban Hub 20 to guide the unfolding of our inquiry and our project development. These included:

1. What are the worldviews and capabilities in our team to help the system see itself? (Integral Project Design)
2. Who are the 4 voices we will join in to help transform Marvila, and how will our common project evolve over time? (Integral Civil Society; Salutogenic Cities; Slocan Integral Forestry Cooperative)
3. How can we help tell better stories about the meta-impact the communities are having? (Wisdom Economies)
4. How to include and understand the four critical relationships between behaviour, systems, relationships and mindsets in our responses? (Making a Place We Can All Call Home)

Focusing on Lisbon (During COVID)

As UrbanA's CoP grew, the May 2020 CoCo was our first "City Series", it focused on Lisbon. This gave us a chance to work at both levels simultaneously; macro-European, micro-Lisbon. The event report[226] includes the video of three guest presentations and participant responses to "How am I experiencing sustainability and justice in my city, especially now with Covid-19?"

[226] Is Lisbon a Sustainable and Just City? https://medium.com/urban-arenas-for-sustainable-and-just-cities/is-lisbon-a-sustainable-and-just-city-perspectives-from-europe-s-2020-green-capital-c106d61b326f

Is Lisbon a Sustainable and Just City? Perspectives from Europe´s 2020 Green Capital

Nearly 60 people attended the fourth UrbanA Community Conversation, on May 26th. It was also the first in our new "City Series" of community conversations, for which we visited the then European Green Capital, Lisbon (Fig 5.14). The event was facilitated by Constança Belchior from the UrbanA Portugal team. It included perspectives from UrbanA Fellow Rafael Calado of Fablab Lisboa, Luís Matos of *Rés do Chão* and Patrícia Robalo of *Morar em Lisboa* and Lisbon's Housing Movement about a range of issues including urban greening, evictions, gentrification, civic engagement and local community solutions in this fast-changing city.

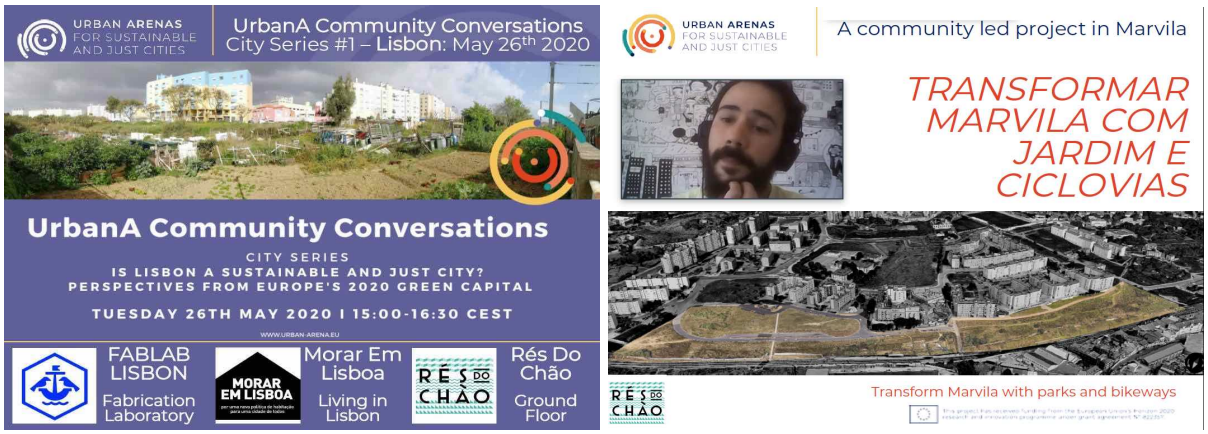


Figure 5.14: L: UrbanA Community Conversation, City Series, Lisbon. R: Transforming Marvila with Parks and Bikeways (L: UrbanA, 2020; Rés do Chão, UrbanA, 2020)

To begin with, two quick surveys identified people's locations and interests. (What is your location: Lisbon 52%, Rest of Europe 39%, Rest of World 6%, Portugal 3% + What brought you here today? Sustainability and Justice 57%, Community-Led Initiatives 33%, Housing 7%, Maker-movements 3%) Constança outlined the intention to "Amplify our collective knowledge about what drives and supports sustainability and justice in our cities, with Lisbon as our gate of departure.". The rest of the event incorporated three distinct sections; presentations on three perspectives from Lisbon, discussion in break-out groups about challenges and opportunities regarding urban sustainability and justice, and finally a plenary discussion.

The call began by outlining UrbanA activities in Lisbon to date: the event in Mouraria in November and the start of work in Marvila, until COVID stopped things. We also shared images from the "Urban 20 Hub" publication, which led to presentation of the central question concerning UrbanA´s activities in Lisbon: "How might an urban community of practice help manifest the dream of a sustainable and just Lisbon?"

- **UrbanA's City Series: Lisbon**

Rafael Calado is an architect by trade and also co-founded Repair Café Lisboa and the BioHacking Group Lisboa. This FabLab (Fabrication Laboratory) was set up by Lisbon Council after the economic crisis in 2013 in an abandoned abattoir behind an old market in the most diverse neighbourhood in the city. It was set up to empower creativity by democratizing the access to digital prototyping tools and giving free access to machines except for commercial production. An example of the "Nurturing a Community" philosophy behind the project was seen when the "Covid19 fast response" project printed badly needed PPE equipment for front line medical workers during the pandemic.

Patrícia Robalo is also an architect and part of Morar em Lisboa (Living in Lisbon), a housing network of various entities that seeks a new politics of housing for a city for all. Patrícia's presentation focused on "The City as an instrument of spatial inequality, urban injustice and unsustainability". She began by asking "Which Sustainability" (Fig 5.15) and argued that Spatial justice and ecological sustainability were not priorities of the then current urban model, which was driven by three main factors within the current economic model; crisis, competitiveness and financialization. She shared Morar em Lisboa's priorities for how they want things in the city to be improved



Figure 5.15: Spatial justice and ecological sustainability are not priorities of Lisbon's current urban model (UrbanA, 2020)

Rés do Chão (Ground Floor) is an urban design NGO founded in 2013 that has developed a methodology based around facilitation of community groups and group design processes. For work in Marvila, some financial support came from the city council's innovative BIP/ZIP Program. Luís Matos spoke about the community led project *Transformar Marvila com Jardim e Ciclovias* (Transforming Marvila with parks and bikeways), which was the result of an organised community of four local neighbourhoods, the 4Crescente network, who rejected a proposed city plan for housing blocks, arguing instead that they never got the infrastructure like parks, play areas and the like, that other urban areas got. Having fought and won, an urban design project is now underway to turn 144.000m2 of public vacant land into a city-scale public park (Fig 5.14 R). Luis argues this bold, ambitious project is a CLI because:

1. The initial idea came from the tenants of this public housing neighbourhood;
2. Using the resources available (and backed by the local community group) the tenants made clear their will;
3. Efforts were made to make every decision-making step as participative as possible;
4. A community representative is part of the jury to select the final project.

- **Group Discussions**

After the presentations, participants broke into groups of three to six, in both English and Portuguese. Break-out groups were invited to discuss the question "How am I experiencing sustainability and justice in my city, especially now with Covid-19?" The main challenges and opportunities were harvested in a shared online document. Six groups added their feedback to the document.

Participants' insights caught a particular moment in time. Their responses included that problems due to COVID were most exacerbated for the most vulnerable communities in socially disadvantaged parts of the city. That many communities had not the tools or access to digital meetings that others had. While new forms of solidarity emerged in the period, there are questions about the wider purpose of this solidarity or how it will evolve, as lockdown restrictions ease. Can we begin to address spatial aspects to the city, to deal with gentrification and urban injustice. With the changing city of Lisbon, especially driven by touristification, the pandemic displayed a great emptying of the city. There is a fear of "returning to normal", led by market forces. Things are still in limbo now, but while unhealthy patterns remain, solidarity is still vulnerable. Great challenge is how to build from the lessons learned in the pandemic, how to put them into practice into a wider scale, as the economy picks up.

BAM – Translocal Action in Lisbon

In 2021, UrbanA Lisbon began a new step, to develop a deeper relationship with three CLIs from our CoP network. These three geographically based communities were selected because they are most aligned to the regenerative idea for ecocity transformation, they have four factors in common: 1) All are in Lisbon municipality; 2) All are activating community organisation for territorial change; 3) All are marginalised communities that have received BIP/ZIP support; 4) All already incorporate food production and regenerative thinking into their projects. They were Bela Flor, Ajuda, Marvila, BAM for short (Fig 5.16).

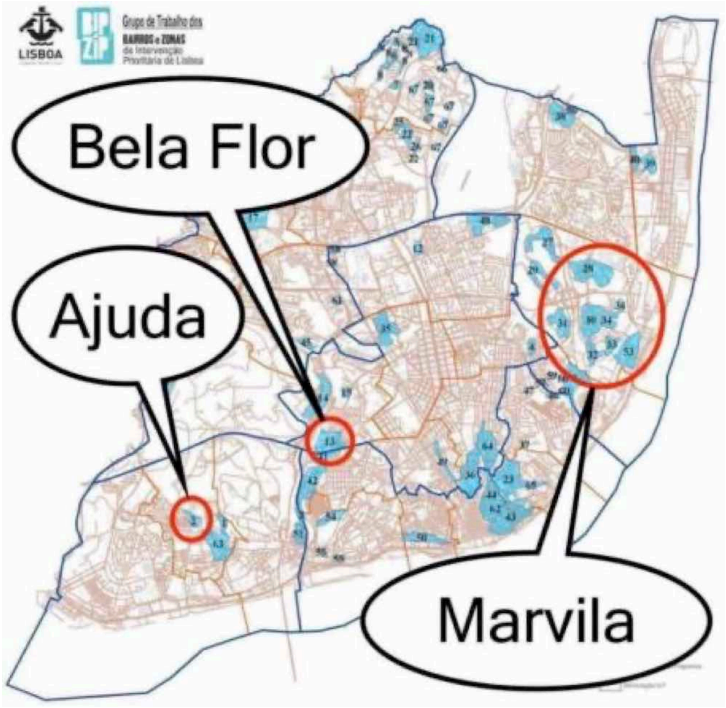


Figure 5.16: BAM on Lisbon Bip/Zip map (Lison City Council, 2014 & Author, 2020)

In 2011 Lisbon council began its BIP/ZIP process. It has been praised internationally for its innovation in improving co-governance and civic engagement in Lisbon's most sensitive urban areas. It mapped the city and identified 67 "neighbourhoods and zones for priority intervention" in peripheral areas and the historical centre. In these island clusters (Fig 5.16), blue areas), citizens could apply for a budget of up to 50.000 euros to work on a one-year project to improve the community. Proposals were voted on by the public and those elected received funding to develop projects for urban, ecological or social cohesion or improvement. BIP/ZIP's creator Miguel Brito outlined its aim (Patti, 2017): "To promote social and territorial cohesion, active citizenship, self-organisation and community participation. The aim was to ignite partnerships, to connect the city and the people in these areas to find answers for the future."

- **Bela Flor**

The *Bela Flor* (Lovely flower) neighbourhood is on a hill that leads down to the Alcântara valley, where a major river used to flow for many centuries. In recent decades this was covered over by roads and train lines. Sadly the river is no longer visible, hidden by pipes. Until the 1990s the territory contained one of the largest informal settlements on the city edge, in the Campolide parish. In 2018 the *Bela Flor Respira* (BFR, The lovely flower breathes) project began in the neighbourhood (Fig 5.17) after receiving BIP/ZIP funding. This is an ecological transition project that is transforming a forgotten wasteland into a productive and regenerative space. It started by planting fruit trees beside steps along the steep embankment leading from the housing blocks toward the city centre. Rows of mixed vegetables were planted by a flat area alongside one block. The group have a ground floor storage space for storing tools and for education purposes. It seeks to bring greater social cohesion through the creation of a community meeting space. The project was developed by the Portuguese Circular Economy NGO and is an example of a social food movements based in the parish. The project wants to function as a teaching point in the centre of Lisbon to demonstrate and develop urban agroforestry practices. Another goal was to encourage families to separate organic waste for composting in urban gardens located in the neighbourhood. The compost products were to be used as natural fertilizers for organic plants, fruits and vegetables grown for local consumption. In this way, citizens are directly involved in closing the cycle to create a greener city.

With UrbanA Lisbon I helped organise an urban tour for Global Degrowth Day in June 2019, which included a guided visit of BFR with members of the team. A later UrbanA tour in October 2020 showed how old pedestrian access routes to Monsanto are now closed off. The agro ecological principles in the space are very well organised and the community space works well for the project's needs, such as storage of tools, making recycling systems, keeping books. In 2020, although many children from the locality participated, few adults did. Most BFR participants did not live in the community, some living quite far away. Perhaps Bela Flor adults saw the project as a distraction for their children, but something for outsiders only? Due to BFR and other projects, the parish council created an innovation department to support similar projects. For UrbanA's Berlin Arena in March 2021, we tried to develop a physical hub experiment in the parish offices to further push the limits of the "blended arena" format, but it did not materialise. UrbanA CoP work was complemented in 2023, when ECOLISE supported a Degrowth Portugal event here to further connect groups. Lisbon council has plans to develop an urban project with bike lanes to connect the Tejo River to Campolide train station. People fear this could cause "Green Gentrification" and force people out of their home and community.

- **Ajuda**

Positioned between an old palace, the city's green lung Monsanto park and part of the city's university complex with fantastic views of the river Tejo, the "*Bairro 2 de Maio*" (B2M) community should be a much-desired neighbourhood to live in, it's not. When the "Carnation Revolution" happened in 1974, the still unfinished housing blocks earmarked for workers of the dictatorship were occupied by poor families from Ajuda and its environs on the 2nd of May. Subsequently, it is very disconnected from its surroundings and faces difficult challenges.

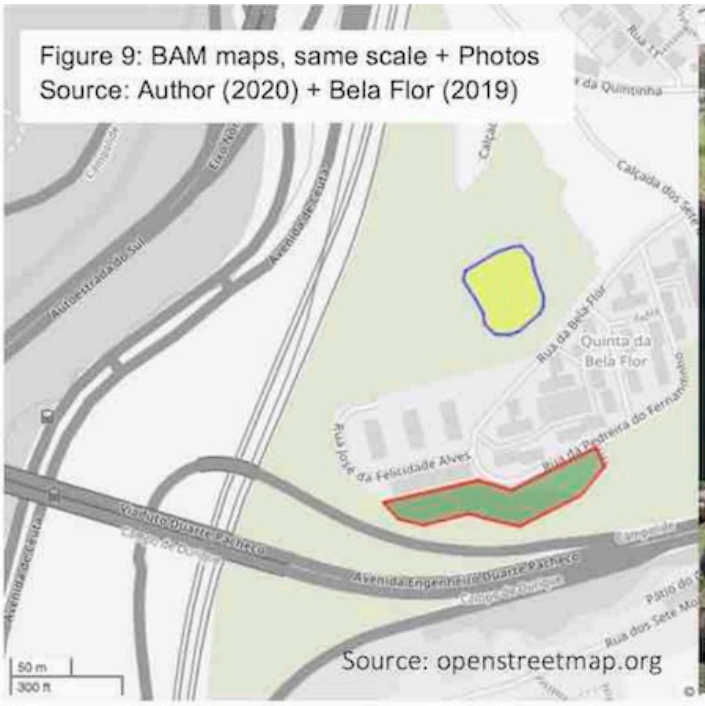
In 2011 students from the neighbouring architecture school led a project to improve conditions for residents and develop relationships with the Ajuda neighbourhood. BIP/ZIP funding led to the setting up of the LOCALS approach project that is based on three pillars of intervention: 1) Transformation (Regeneration); 2) Knowledge (Information); 3) Participation (integration). BIP/ZIP funding led to the renovation of an abandoned space to create the *Casa Para Todos* (house for everyone), the setting up of the *Feira do Galo* (Roosters fair) local neighbourhood festival in 2016 and the *Muita Fruta* project to create an orchard city, by using all the unused fruit from city trees. In 2016 the Ajuda group set up *Forum Urbano* to map and archive all the municipal BIP/ZIP projects from 2011 to 2016. A later project saw residents develop self-run community gardens and in February 2020 with the "Popular incubator of Ajuda" project, fruit trees were planted in the somewhat abandoned green areas that divide blocks (Fig 5.17). The community has its social problems, but deep democracy methods are growing, thanks to LOCALS. More residents are starting to make collective decisions about their territory. January 2020's spatial implementation vote followed much debate concerning if police were to be allowed back into the community. This led to badly needed maintenance work happening on buildings and public space in the housing area and more fruit trees being planting. The project is being supported by Lisbon City Council.

The *Associação Amigos do B2M* (Friends of B2M) was officially founded in 2017, but started in May 2016 when BIP/ZIP funding stopped. It works with the most vulnerable children and youth of the neighbourhood and is run by volunteers who want to improve the future quality of social and economic life of the neighbourhood's younger and more fragile generations. They support children and young people from 6 to 18 years in the community space, between 5 and 7 pm, from Monday to Friday. They often have up to 35 young people and children using the small space, or playing in the painted area outside.

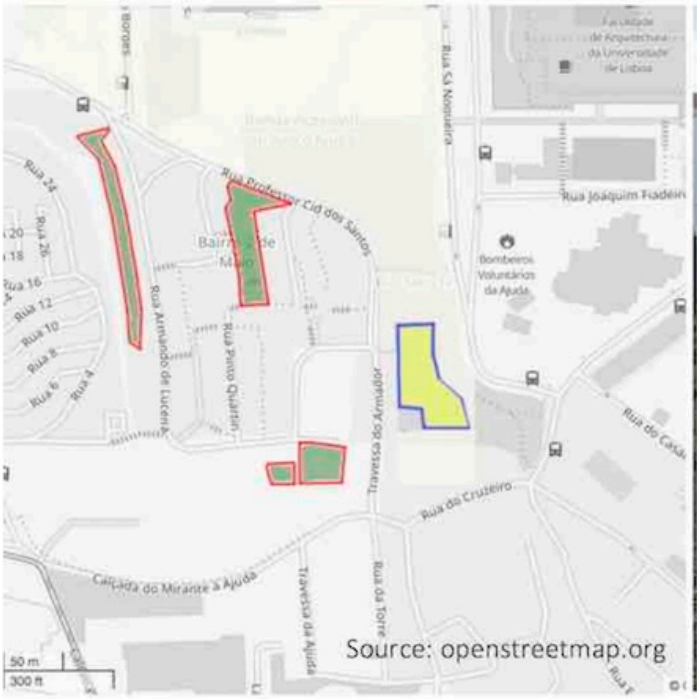
- **Marvila – Discussed already.**

Figure 5.17: BAM, 3 maps. (Author, 2020, OpenStreetMap, Bela Flor Respira- Overleaf)

Figure 9: BAM maps, same scale + Photos
Source: Author (2020) + Bela Flor (2019)













5.2.3 How are we making change?

Grassroots activists are driven by a rage at the current system of social and ecological injustice. Global network-based social movements use climate justice values and solidarity to work for system change. Led by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions who integrate "more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations". Finding joy and celebration in action also matters. Active hope is critical to grassroots activism: The belief that hope alone is not enough, that real transformation is only possible when pathways for real change have been identified. Differing colonial mindsets affect both thinking and action, when working for system change. Western blindness exist and needs challenging, especially in unseen and unintended racist dynamics from a supremacist culture. Copenhagen 2009 was a pivotal moment, when the climate justice movement emerged. Danish police responded to direct actions, street protest and a citizen's assembly with illegal violence. Spain's 2011 occupations sparked similar "rhizomatic revolution" activities in other places.

ECOLISE's purpose is to engage in, support, and facilitate accelerated learning and collaboration among community-led initiatives, their networks, and partners to catalyse systemic transformation within and across society. They do this by mainstreaming and strengthening community-led climate action. Some of my experiences working in ECOLISE (2019 – 2024) worked well, others did not. Key takeaways question their system change values:
- Conflict can be transformative. Despite efforts to deal with past hurts, this group did not heal.
- ECOLISE's policy work led to 2023 launch of radical Manifesto calling for systemic change.
- They were a supporting partner of the Beyond Growth Conference in the European Parliament.
- The Restore Nature coalition pushed European Parliament's vote for Nature Restoration Law.
- With OXFAM the "Make Rich Polluters Pay" campaign's "Ticket to the Future" project connected 150 youth climate activists in Barcelona, including from indigenous communities.
- The violent Hamas 2023 attack and following Genocide in Gaza created division in ECOLISE. Climate justice illiteracy, exacerbated by blind European racism regarding ongoing global conflicts, meant organizations remained silent, despite wider community pleads for action.

UrbanA worked at 2 levels: Macro supporting 4 Arenas in Europe over a 3-year period, and locally in Lisbon exploring what is required for Lisbon to become a sustainable and just city. A walking tour and day of interaction in Mouraria in 2019 was followed up by developing a translocal CoP between 3 communities in Bela Flor, Ajuda and Marvila (BAM). An online event "Is Lisbon a Sustainable and Just City?" invited local housing movements discuss evictions, gentrification, civic engagement and local community solutions for a changing city.

5.3. What healthy places are emerging, at various scales including cities, from community responses to ecological emergency?

5.3.1 What is emerging from grassroots activism?

5.3.1.1 "Sempre há um Jeito" (There's always a way): Community organizing in Brazil

"Sempre há um Jeito" means "There's always a way" in Portuguese. It is a common phrase used by people in Brazil, not just by people from the activist, community and social movements, but by all people, in both urban and rural contexts. It points to a creativity, resilience and when needed, bending of the rules, to achieve goals, get things done, or fight for what's needed.

Curitiba in Brazil has been seen as a leader in the area of ecologically based urbanism since the 1970s, all be it from the top down. The Ecologist magazine labelled it "The Greenest city on Earth" in 2014 (Barth). It won 2010's Globe Forum Sustainable City Award and it was the location of Ecocity Builders 4th Ecocity World Summit in 2000. Mendonça (2002) argued that the cities "Ecological Capital" title was a successful marketing campaign created by the city itself in the 1990's, which highlighted successful municipal policies regarding quality of water, air, green areas and solid residues, but failed to address already huge social problems the city faced, such as the rapidly growing city and growth of slums in the periphery. Gustafsson & Kelly (2012) noted the rapid urban explosion of the Metropolitan area, with a near tenfold urban population increase in a half-century (1955: 360,000: 2012: 3,5million). Many feel that since the 1990s the city had "rested on its laurels" (Irázabal, 2009) and there were growing calls for Curitiba's government to involve citizens in the planning process in a more thorough way, to increase "their democratic participation in the process of making the city" (Moura, 2005).

2007 was a turning point in Curitiba due to new urban actions and philosophies, that continue to create an ever-growing culture seeking to transform Curitiba through open collaboration, inviting all citizens to participate in making their city. Punk inspired, bicycle culture direct actions and illegal gardening projects led by Goura (AKA Jorge Brand) and friends, enabled this radical citizen-led culture to grow. By 2011, more formal structures were needed to realize growing dreams of this diverse community. The *Cicloiguaçu*[227] cyclists' association formed in 2011 to specifically advance urban mobility issues and bike activists rented a space in a rundown part of the centre of town to create the *Bicicletaria Cultural*[228]. This offered a safe space to store bikes and for groups to work from, as well as being a cultural centre to further promote and build up the cultural diversity around the bike world. In February

[227] CicloIguaçu - Associação de Ciclistas do Alto Iguaçu www.cicloiguacu.org.br
[228] Bicicletaria Cultural https://bicicletariacultural.wordpress.com/

2014 *Cicloiguaçu* hosted the 3rd World Bicycle Forum, which was attended by hundreds of people from Brazil, Latin America and other countries and included guest speakers from Europe and the US. The conference's theme "The Balanced City" explored all aspects of urban, social, economic and cultural issues. The *Praça de bolso do ciclista* (Cyclists Pocket Square)[229] (Section 4.2.1.5) began then, a community design and build project for the derelict street corner across from the *Bicicletaria Cultural*. Subsequently, Goura was asked to run for local elections. Facilitating a municipalist citizen led process on a horizontal open platform[230] he won a city council seat in 2016, followed by a state deputy seat in 2018 which he retained in 2022.

My wife and myself lived in Curitiba from January 2014 till March 2018. We participated in the bike forum and the community building of the *Praça ciclista*. I put on events in the *Bicicletaria Cultural*, the main ones were the Climate Window, during the COP event in Paris in December 2015 and the Ecocity Curitiba Summit in 2017. I participated with a small NGO "Cheer for Peace", with whom we did social sporting events in the *favelas*, informal urban settlements, of Vila Torres in Curitiba, and later in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, when Brazil hosted the football World Cup, June - July 2014. We were involved with the *Parque Gomm* (Fig 5.18) community, where a community garden was built in a small green park, to attempt to stop the development of the expansion of a shopping centre. We hosted some events there also. During my time there, I worked in the municipal market and later a small juice bar. I applied for and was successful in winning a grant to do a two years masters with the MADE group in UFPR, during which time I continued to explore and support local ecological communities. We also supported indigenous communities, making friends with Kreta and his family which are a mixed Guarani and Kaingang community who live outside the city. We joined them after indigenous communities in another state were massacred and later organised the first event around the October 12th date, the day of Colombus's so called "discovery" of the Americas, which has grown into a day of indigenous resistance and Global North solidarity with indigenous struggle.

My wife is Peruvian but studied in the North of Brazil, in Belem, where the Amazon River meets the sea. We travelled to Brazil for work, after the fallout of Spain's economic crisis since 2008, but Brazil had more economic difficulties after the World Cup. The rise of the far-right political movement led by Jair Bolsonaro saw an increase in street violence in Curitiba, where ex-president Lula was being prosecuted. People involved in local activism were being attacked. Two friends of ours were murdered in this short period. We returned to the safety of Europe. A key moment from Curitiba was the fractal river ecocity proposal, following natures patterns.

[229] Praça de bolso do ciclista https://www.facebook.com/PracadebolsodoCiclista
[230] Goura www.mandatogoura.com.br

Curitiba Climate Hub, Curitiba, Brazil (2015)

COP21 happened in Paris, France from November 29th to December 12th 2015. For this important moment, a small group of us organised the *Janela Climática* (Climate Window) 2015[231] in Curitiba. This was a 2-week long gathering of sorts in the city centre that lasted the duration of the COP, to act as a focal point for climate and sustainability social movements to meet around, organise from and seek to build up movements for wider change. The main physical space was the *Bicicletaria Cultural* (Cultural bike space), a small bike shop and cultural space across from the *Praça Ciclista*, where films and talks happened. Other events included a demonstration through the city centre on November 29th followed by a public climate assembly (Fig 5.18), the *Virada Climatica* (climate turnaround) closing session in *Parque Gomm* (Gomm Park), a local green space under threat of eviction for the development of a shopping centre, an ecocity tour to visit a series of spaces and a talk in the IBQP building near the Botanic Gardens, with people from the iCities movement and the Cheer For Peace group.

Leading up to this event, the informal *Curitiba Pelo Clima* (Curitiba for the climate) group was created, along with a basic WordPress blog, social media pages (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and a WhatsApp group. Open meetings were held in the UFPR university. In the lead up to the Paris event, activists I had collaborated with in the past (see Anti G8 Demo in Scotland, page 219) developed the Climate Games. Art activists from The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination[232], Jay Jordan and Isa Fremeaux, are credited with creating the powerful and beautiful phrase "We are not fighting for nature. We are nature defending itself". Inspired by comic books, we created a giant speech bubble of the Portuguese translation for sharing in the streets and city. Figure 5.18.1 shows Fernando holding the "*Somos a natureza se defendendo a si mesma*" sign in the Bicicletaria Cultural, a playful gimmick for attention and discussion.

The logic of this action was multifold. For many people climate ideas are too abstract and the language used is often difficult to interpret. We opened the space for people to gather, share views and try to interpret the ideas from climate leaders and climate movements in Paris, and to try to translate them into understandable ideas for Curitiba, and the Brazilian context. We broadcast live Democracy Now! video reports and held talks and screened climate videos. The Andean *Wiphala* flag was ever present, to further links with indigenous struggle, linking the political with the spiritual. We attempted to make the process inclusive. The Key messages we invited people to think about and respond to, were shared on the blog, including the following:

[231] Janela Climática 2015: N29-D12 https://curitibapeloclima.wordpress.com/2015/11/25/janela-climatica/
[232] https://labo.zone

> Welcome to the *Curitiba Pelo Clima* group. We are an open group here in Brazil, in the city of Curitiba, bringing together people from many different movements, projects, groups, and worlds. Our common challenge is: To increase climate literacy in Curitiba, for a more sustainable city, for a more resilient world!
>
> Soon we will have an event of extreme importance for the future of our family: #COP21 in Paris. For two weeks, N29-D12 (November 29 to December 12), in Curitiba and around the world, many events, collective efforts, and diverse actions are planned… To change everything!
>
> Hundreds of thousands of people are creating an unprecedented global mobilization for climate justice. On November 29th, days before world leaders gather for the Paris Conference, citizens from around the world will take their demands to the streets during the Global Climate Mobilization. This will be the beginning of two weeks of interventions throughout the conference, culminating in a large-scale action in Paris on December 12th. This final moment will signal to our governments that we will continue fighting for more robust, broad-based actions to save our climate in 2016 and in the years to come. Regardless of the decision made in Paris, we want to build and influence the course of our planet, or rather, Pachamama (Mother Earth). Thousands of cities will be mobilized, united for ambitious action against climate change. United to transform our energy matrix, moving away from fossil fuels and their negative impacts. United for fair economic changes driven by solutions that benefit both the people and the planet. United for justice and human rights for those most affected by climate change. United for a world where everyone has access to quality food, clean water, clean air, and a healthy and dignified life—a good life. And to change everything, we need everyone: therefore, we invite you to join this movement to care for Pachamama on November 29th. There will be a climate bike ride departing at 8:30 am from the “Naked Woman's Square”, and, in parallel, at XXX am, the Climate March. Both rides will culminate at Salete Square, at XXX pm, where we will hold a Climate Assembly (or, Popular Climate Assembly), giving everyone a voice to build a "Utopia in Action."

Curitiba Pelo Clima’s Climate Window was a small experiment, easy to replicate globally. It was successful in connecting established and funded NGOs with wider social movements and groups concerned about Curitiba and the world. It helped further stitch the ecosystem together.



Figure 5.18: Climate Window 2015. 1: Bicicletaria Cultural 2: Climate March 3: Climate Assembly 4: Bicicletaria talk 5: Video 6: Climate Assembly, Parque Gomm (Author, 2015)

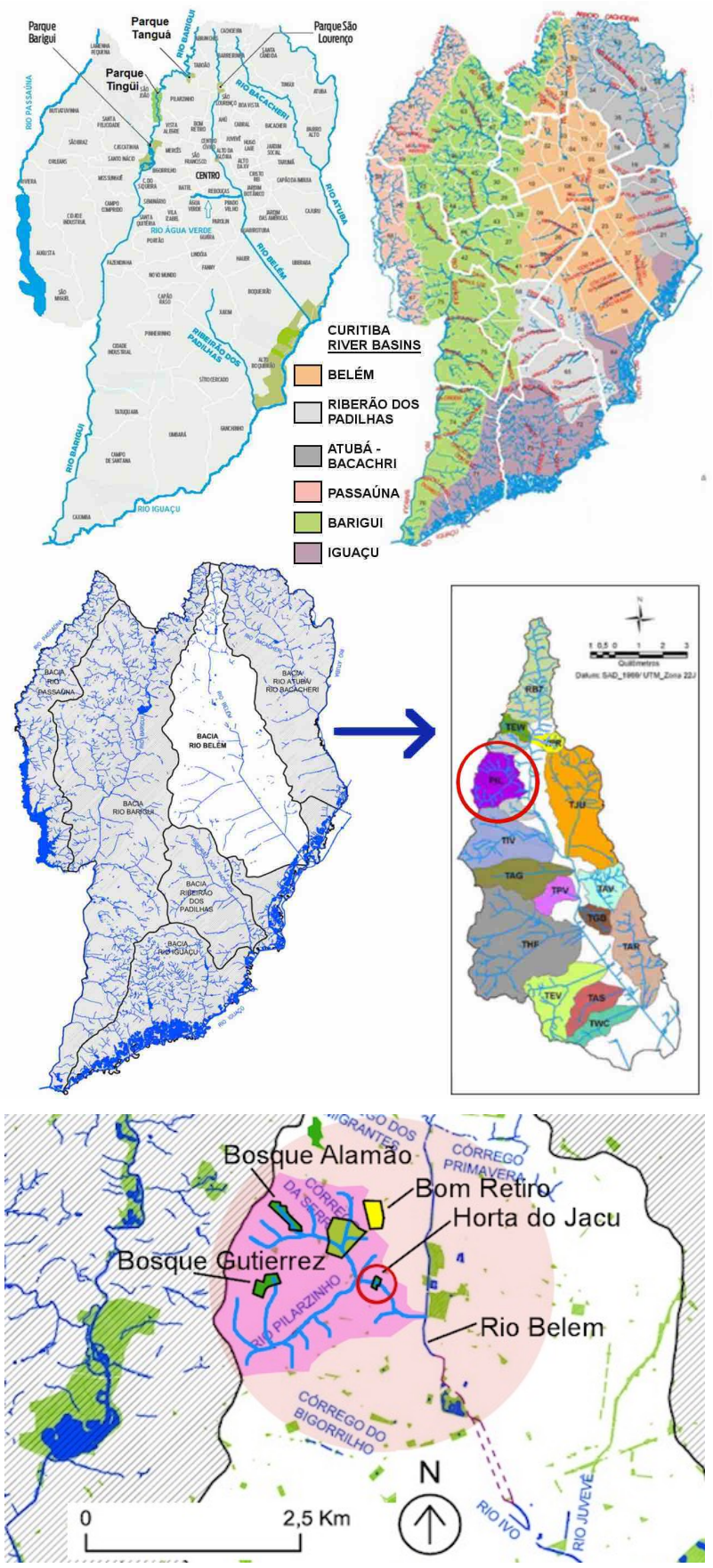
An Ecobarrio (eco neighbourhood) for Curitiba?

A fractal approach for community governance, involving rivers and their sub basins, was begun to be explored with friends in Curitiba who were involved in *Parque Gomm*, *Horta Cristo Rei* and later in *Horta do Jacu* (The Jacu's garden), a community garden named after a type of hen that was begun by activists squatting a piece of land next to a stream called the Pilarzinho river.

On 16th December 2017, without asking the council for permission, activists entered the land, cleaned up the rubbish and cut down high grass to begin their community garden. Two months later the community had developed food beds designed with agroecology principles, mixed creole seeds, a compost system which was being used by many local neighbours, a large open area which served as a public or kids play area, with a big old tree in the middle, a stage, an area for fires and a hill, which the activists called Jacu Pichu (a play on Machu Pichu).

What we noted in early 2018 was that the fact that the river goes through the site is very interesting and a future biophelic urban project could be developed here, connecting walking routes along the sections of the Pilarzinho river which are still open. There have also been initial discussions about how the garden could act as a catalyst for an ecobairro (eco neighbourhood) plan for the river basin of the Pilarzinho, a size of about 5km2 (outlined in pink in Fig 5.19). Within this area are 2 very special woods the Bosque Alamão (German Woods) and Bosque Gutierrez, which has a natural water fountain from an underground reservoir, with very pure and clean drinking water. People come from around the city to fill water bottles here. In Gutierrez woods there is also a memorial to Chico Mendes, the famous Brazilian environmental activist who fought and died defending the Amazon rainforest in 1988. Also in the park is a major NGO space, the Brazilian headquarters of the 350 movement, which many groups use. Also in this possible eco neighbourhood was a disputed area for a new park; Parque Bom Retiro.

Figure 5.19 shows how the location of *Horta do Jacu* is just after a point where the Pilarzinho river joins the Corrego do Serra basin. This could be a location for a citizen science group to take regular samples of the river water to see if it was clean. Further upstream, similar communities could do likewise for their basins. Such a process could enable the detection of any pollution in the river and the sub basin from which it came. The Pilarzinho river is one of 18 sub basins of the River Belem, which is one of the six rivers that forms Curitiba municipality. Eventually the waters from these rivers flow into the Iguaçu river (Big Water in Guaraní), which travel downstream to fall over one of the world's greatest natural wonders, the mighty falls of Iguaçu, the largest waterfall system in the world, that divides the countries of Brazil and Argentina. This flows on to the Parana River, joining the sea just up from Buenos Aires.



Figures 5.19: Ecobarrio Pilarzinho. A Fractal Governance Ecocity Proposal. (1; Gazeta do Povo. 2, 3 & 5: IPPUC. 4: Córrego do Aviário. 5; Edited & arranged by Author 2017)

From *Mutirão* to community led political change for a more balanced city.

The *Praça ciclista* is tiny, less than 40 square meters. It had been derelict and boarded up for 20 years, on a critical corner of a street that was a dangerous, nearly no-go area, used by drug addicts. Cicloiguaçu lobbied the council for years as to who owned the site and demanded change, which resulted in the council declaring a public square was to be built with Cicloiguaçu acting as project managers. The council had limited funds, so an open public process saw architects within Cicloiguçu designing the square collaboratively and it being built over a series of weekends for 4 months by the public through the Brazilian system of *Mutirão*, self-organized collective work events (Fig 4.35). The council closed traffic on the street during these periods. *#RecrieSuaCidade* (Recreate Your City) and *#CidadeParaPessoas* (City For People) were the hashtags used for online media for the calls made by Cicloiguaçu. Many artists supported the process, doing artwork on the new walls, creating gardens, building a bench using permaculture methods, doing a group mosaic project for the bench (Gaudi meets playschool), street fairs, games area on the street, art workshops, theatre and music in the road, painting a white patch on the wall for night time cinema. Mayor Fruet officially opened the Cyclists Square before a huge bike ride on International Car Free Day 2014, a massive victory 7 years after the first day of direct action when the first illegal bike lane was painted on a Curitiba street. These months were an explosion of creativity and celebration, when a city's public made urbanism.

Cicloiguaçu's work has led to many major urban changes in Curitiba (Fig 5.20). Their first major victory was in July 2014 with the creation of the first official cyclelane on Brazil's first *Via Calma* (Calm way), alongside the iconic Bus Rapid Transit system, on the September 7th Street. The 6,3 km designated bicycle only route stretches from *Rua Mariano Torres* to *Praça do Japão*, alongside cars limited to a speed of 30 km/h. The following year, a second traffic calmed bikeway was implemented, the *Ciclorrota* (Bikeway) between PUC city university and the dense urban neighbourhood of *Portão*. The 6,2 km shared space stretch with blue and white bike circle symbols painted on the crossing points of more dangerous streets was developed by the city council with the assistance of IPPUC (city planning office). *Mais Bici* (More bikes) was set up in 2016 as part of the city government offices, through which Cicloiguaçu activists have had greater ability to develop public policy for citizens, especially in the overlooked periphery or poorer parts of the city. They created open monthly meetings that the public could participate in. The council implemented many of Cicloiguaçu's proposals for clear street signage for bicycles and the issuing of free maps to the citizens. The *Área Calma* (Calm Area) came into effect in November 2015 with a maximum speed limit of 40 km/h within the central

zone and 22 speed cameras at 12 junctions to monitor car speeds. The argument is that if accidents happen, the risk of death is greatly reduced by such speed reduction. The project was implemented while Fruet was still mayor. The project was controversial and hated by many drivers and with the election of a new mayor, Greco, in 2016, the council did talk about scrapping the scheme, but Cicloiguaçu and other groups continued to fight to keep the project in place. Since 2014 Cicloiguaçu helped create *Vaga Vivas* in the city, artistic actions to temporarily transform car parking spaces into social spaces. This led to three new permanent small public spaces with seating: *Centro Civico, Rua Riachuelo* and at the Municipal Market.

Cicloiguaçu's president Goura was asked to join City Hall's transport group SETRAN in 2015, then he was asked by *CicloIguaçu* and other social movements to run for the State Governor elections, to highlight their causes and give greater profile to their work. He received many votes but was not elected. In 2016, Goura was asked to run for Municipal elections as a city councillor. Although running for the PDT (Democratic Workers Party) party, Goura worked with social movements to create a horizontal open platform with a number of working groups focusing on various areas, including mobility and sustainable urbanism. This co-created process resulted in the political mandate on which Goura ran and was successfully elected as a local councillor. The working groups are still active, with Goura's office acting as a conduit between the demands and proposals from civil society and the political city mechanism. Goura created a series of public assemblies in the City Hall, to allow wider input from the public. Through this process Cicloiguaçu continued to make proposals to the city authorities about shaping the city, some of the group work in Goura's office in City Hall. In nine years, Curitiba activists went from occupying streets to occupying the institutions of municipal power.

The inclusive cultural component of *CicloIguaçu's* work cannot be undervalued. Using Brazil's *Mutirão* culture enabled wide participation, kept building costs down and enabled all strands from society to interact and work together. The public took full ownership of the square.



Figure 5.20: 1: Curitiba's erased bike lane. 2: Illegal bike lane. 3: Cycling infrastructure 4: Calm Area Curitiba (1: Gazeta do Povo 2007. 2: Patricio, 2008. 3 + 4: Cicloiguaçu, 2017)

5.3.1.2 "Mas, é cultural Pá" (But, it's cultural man): Crises and Hope in Lisbon

"Mas, é cultural Pá" means "But, it's cultural man" in Portuguese. It is a common phrase used by many people I have met in Lisbon, even ones doing some of the most radical work in community organising, activism and work with social movements in areas of social and ecological work, housing rights, anti-racism work and Palestinian solidarity. It seems to be the go-to response to questions about how can things be changed in Portugal, why is participation so low on street demonstrations, why is there a culture of passivity and why hope seems so low.

Navigating through local struggles, social movements, community groups over time in Lisbon has been complicated for a number or reasons. Part of reason for doing a PhD here was to try to connect with similar entities I have participated with in past decades in other locations, principally Dublin, Barcelona and Curitiba. The hope was that by continuing to do action research, I could support groups and try to bring different, and often more radical, viewpoints more into the mainstream dialogue, while also being in a position to bring more resources to certain groups. Such resources being mostly connecting local Lisbon groups to groups who have faced similar challenges and at times tried different approaches, or had to respond in unique ways to things which resulted in transformative approaches to organising, challenging things, or helping build global, or European, translocal networks of joined up activism.

Upon arrival in Lisbon in May 2018, we began living in a small shared apartment in Rio do Mouro, on the Sintra train line, in Sintra municipality, four stops before Sintra town. This is one of the many built up areas in the urban periphery around train stations, some are near to old villages that used exist in the countryside. Many of these places have higher proportions of black and brown Portuguese people, descendants of African families from Portugal's colonial past. We got this apartment through friends we had in Brazil. After about 6 months we moved to Ajuda, just up from Belem in Lisbon municipality, due to my wife finding work there and me finding work (not related to the PhD) in the city centre. With the arrival of COVID, state restrictions meant we were unable to leave our home to go to the sea to swim, as only travel within your own municipality was allowed, unless you had work clearance. After a few months, we found a place in Parede, a bit behind Carcavelos beach in Cascais municipality, where we still live now. All these places are part of the wider Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML).

In Sintra, we began to connect with the territory and made initial contacts with eco groups, at the Sintra Festival of Alternatives, and the "Quinta dos Sete Nomes" (Estate of 7 names), an eco-space in Colares where permaculture was taught and practiced. We camped there for the summer Solstice celebrations, near Saint John's night, where a small fire was made, which is how we try to celebrate our pagan wedding anniversary. Beginning to connect in Lisbon city,

we soon found the GAIA space in Alfama, where the degrowth community had a meeting. Trying to connect with a transition towns group, we visited the local festival in the Telheires community in the large neighbourhood of Lumiar. I made some audio recordings with Luis Keel Pereira there[233]. During this time I set up the "Ecocity Lisboa" group, as "A community network to help transform Lisbon into an ecocity" (Fig 5.21 L). After moving to Ajuda, I began the first ecocity urban walk (Fig 5.21 R), some of the degrowth community joined in. We continued the walks as a tool to investigate different neighbourhoods, identify what groups and struggles existed, invited representatives to share their stories and use the walk as an enjoyable social act to make new connections, and for us new immigrants to make more friends.



Figures 5.21: Ecocity Lisboa. L: Website Banner R: Walk & Talk 1: Ajuda / Belem (Author, 2018 & 2019)

From March 2019, things changed, thanks to finally meeting Gil in the small transition project of the Permalab, the permaculture-based community garden behind the Science faculty, FCUL, in Lisbon University, up near the Campo Grande part of the city, very close to Telheires. Due to shared involvements with transition, permaculture and eco-social action, Gil agreed to meet. This meeting was the unforeseen event that opened the window which led to all the "engaged researcher" work happening. Throughout the subsequent five years, 19-24, I was employed to work in the UrbanA and ECOLISE related worlds, which meant an increased amount of time behind screens, working for, with and often on behalf of local communities all over Europe, but nearly none in the area I was living in. During this time, I continued to participate as a grassroots activist to support local campaigns and movements, as best I could.

[233] Festival de Telheiras 2018 – Report and Audio https://ecocitylisboa.wordpress.com/2018/05/20/festival-de-telheiras-2018-report-and-audio/

Lisbon, a changing city

Lisbon was awarded the title of European Green Capital 2020 on June 21st 2018 by the European Commission, in recognition of its urban development towards a more sustainable city for all. This does not mean it is Europe's greenest city, just that it has been implementing some important changes in recent years. An Expert Panel highlighted that "Lisbon is particularly strong in the field of sustainable land use, sustainable urban mobility (transport), green growth & eco innovation, climate change adaptation and waste". Lisbon also recently joined the 100 Resilient Cites and C40 networks. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area incorporates the Municipality of Lisbon and surrounding municipalities. In 2018 the European Commission launched a Call for Action for Sustainable Cities that aimed to create a "green movement" to inspire cities worldwide to become more sustainable and climate-resilient. The following year saw the emergence of the global climate movement Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion. the Portuguese parliament declared climate emergency in Lisbon on June 7th after months of heated public meetings, street protests, Live TV shows interrupted, conference interruptions and road blockages. Many of Lisbon's climate movement criticised the Council's "Green Capital" label as an act of Greenwashing (XR, 2020), due to plans to build a new Lisbon-Montijo airport in an environmentally sensitive area on the southern side of the river after receiving the final green light from the Portuguese Environment Agency in early 2020.

Like many European cities, touristification, gentrification and short-term housing are driving up rents so quickly in Lisbon that many locals can no longer afford to pay and are moving out of their established communities in Lisbon's historical neighbourhoods. Portugal has still the lowest minimum wage in western Europe, even after a recent rise in 2025 to 940 euros. In late 2019 Barcelona's Ara.Cat deemed the city "The new capital of gentrification and evictions". In response, a growing housing movement became active in stopping evictions, building networks of resistance, holding public assemblies, demanding politicians make change and winning some policy changes. But activists struggled to build the movements. The "What is going to happen here?" documentary paints a vivid picture (Left Hand Rotation, 2019).

During COVID, Lisbon was the only European capital city where rental prices kept increasing. After COVID more people from Europe came to live in the city. This included many "Digital Nomads" who the government made attractive tax breaks for, in hope that their work could further stimulate the economy, make more jobs. Since COVID Lisbon has become one of the most unequal European cities, with communities unable to pay very sharply increased rents. Perhaps Lisbon is now the European epicentre of what Rolnik's "Urban Warfare" (2019) describes? Despite these hardships though, a united housing movement has not yet materialized.

SOS - The battle to defend the Carcavelos Coast

I share the words I said when interviewed by the *SOS Quinta dos Ingleses* group in March 2024, for a testimonial[234] for their social media work to help stop the destruction of our local park.

> The Quinta is firstly a beautiful, wild little corner here in Carcavelos. I live just a 10-minute walk over there in Parede. I love the fact that there is this space that I can walk through, I can see wild nature. I see little hares (lebres) dancing around. I can see the birds flying around. There's a little stream, it's not too clean sadly.
>
> This is a place where it still hasn't been affected by the "Development", by the growing city that eats up all of these green spaces, for further development. I think this space is a little bit unloved. I think that it should be held onto. The idea that in today's moment of ecological and biodiversity emergency, the fact that Cascais Camara (City Council) is willing to proceed with this massive, massive development, is completely wrong. Because this council, Cascais, they're doing many great things to advance the green agenda and doing some great work. But at the same time, they're allowing for the destruction of a huge green area, of about 35 Hectares, when we should be protecting it. Not only protecting it, but improving what this space is: Improving the river all the way, the Sassoeiros, going up, and improving the communities around here, the accessibility to this space.
>
> Also, in terms of the history here. I'm a new immigrant here. I'm from Ireland, I'm only here a few years now I suppose. It raises questions about democracy. I think active participation is one of the fundamental bases of a healthy society. So when Cascais talks about resilience, at all the different levels. We talk about social resilience. The fact that you can have a process which has been "won" by a non-democratic process: When somebody was mandated by this parish council, the *Junta de Freguesia*, when they were mandated to say no, they went in and with their vote, they said yes. And that's the vote that went from no to yes, that gave the permissions for this to be changed into a modern housing development. The fact that that is so unfair. If that happened in other cultures around the world, people would stand up and not allow it to happen. The world changes when people have a desire to make change, because it makes sense.
>
> We are deep into climate breakdown. We are deep into biodiversity breakdown. We have to recognise that it is emergency. We need to stop, we need to understand what

[234] Quinta dos Ingleses, Carcavelos - Testemunho/Testimonial Duncan Crowley: Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjCzc3RCi6s & Insta: https://www.instagram.com/p/C4vbrTIsxM0/

> has to be done to bring things back to a better state, and then start doing the work to restore nature back to a healthier level. So we can do that. This is already a great start because it hasn't been affected, but we can do more. We can follow the river up, we can bring in more regenerative processes with all the communities and schools that live in this little watershed here. And we can think about what does it mean to live in an ecologically and a socially just future.

Outlining the stages of this project covered in the Case Study, there have been many moments of controversy around this project for decades. It is a further example of the "urban warfare" (Rolnik, 2019) which sees neighbourhoods becoming the "last subprime frontiers of capitalism" under the "empire of finance". It also speaks of the hypocrisy of some city councils. Cascais municipality's technical officer Jõao Dinis represented the council as one of the UrbanA fellows and as one of the two municipalities in UrbanA's second stage. I organized community of practice events with João at both stages and we have a good working relationship. Cascais prides itself as being a leader in sustainable and resilient innovation. It has also won European prizes for its local democratic practices.

Since arriving in the neighbourhood in 2020, the space was a relatively wild green zone behind Carcavelos beach, which my wife and myself often wandered in and enjoyed seeing the wildlife within. I called it the "Hare's corner", an old Irish Gaelic term for always leaving a corner of a farm go wild, for nature to thrive and a corner for the animals to be left alone. *SOS Quinta dos Ingleses* was created in June 2021 as a local NGO, we supported their calls to stop development and hold onto this green space. There were a number of demonstrations on the streets with high enough attendance. Both my wife and myself are now members of SOS. In early 2025 a fence was constructed around the entire perimeter of the 54-hectare site, to prepare for the building works to commence. The SOS group objected and took a court case against Cascais Municipal Council and the Construction Company Alves Ribeiro, which is a family-owned company claimed by the SOS community to be the 5th richest family in Portugal.

Like the surrounding areas, there were plans to "develop" old green spaces since the 1960's. The project has had a series of stages of hold up. Critically, in recent years new environmental laws were created locally, regionally and nationally in Portugal. For Carcavelos, the local parish council created PPERUCS (Plano de Pormenor do Espaço de Restruturação Urbanística de Carcavelos Sul) - Layout Plan for the Urban Restructuring Space of South Carcavelos – which stipulates that no new developments can be built 500 meters from the sea. SOS argue that due to this law, the proposed mega dense development should not be allowed.

The court case was held up, but the judge deemed that building work could commence within the now enclosed area. Since the start SOS have their own legal team who provide top level advice on how to proceed with the community struggle. Feeling that they had explored all legal avenues and that the law was actively working against them, SOS decided to escalate their nonviolent direct-action tactics and began the first occupation of the site in May 2025. The site was illegally entered and occupied for a weekend (Fig 4.36), with people sleeping in the woods during the nights. The occupation was headline news (Fig 5.22) and got more coverage for the struggle. I visited the group within the occupation and made a short little audio interview in English, sharing the blogpost[235] with the full transcript with activist networks and people I know from similar territorial struggles. The full interview transcript is in the Annex section. Here are some insights people shared during that moment (activists given anonymity, for legal reasons).

> Right now, we are in a really crucial moment because the municipality, the construction company, are starting full-on with a process in courts that is not still heard, and they are going full-on. We made petitions, we made court statements. But the legal way doesn't work. So, yesterday we did a really beautiful thing, that was opening the forest that has been always open to everyone, so the people can enjoy, breathe here, and remember that Nature is for all, and they cannot close it.

> **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** has legal support from some lawyers and they have demanded accountability from the town hall, the Camara Municipal. They put an action against the town hall. There are, I think, at least two different ones. There's one regarding the **Quinta dos Ingleses** and they tried to put a legal stop to the advancement of the works, because there was voting in the municipality. And by only one vote, of one person from the junta (local Parish Council) who had the possibility to stop all of this. I think it was a few years ago, maybe? (2014 mentioned). Was it that that long ago? I thought it was 2019 that there was a final vote? And this one person changed, they said they were going to vote against this building project in the forest here, and this person voted in favor. And we think, probably, that they there could have been some bribing, or even intimidation, because we have heard cases that people have been intimidated.

Two SOS members stood for Portugal's 2025 local council elections. both were elected.

[235] A cup of tea with the Forest Guardians at Quinta dos Ingleses in Carcavelos
https://wearenature2030.wordpress.com/2025/05/22/quinta-dos-ingleses-occupation-2025/



Figure 5.22 Quinta dos Ingleses. 1: Culture defends space, 2022. 2: Occupation, 2025. 3: Legal destruction (Author, 2022; RTP News 2025)

SOS use many tactics to spread word and build support. In September 2022, they drove a pick-up truck into the middle of the Quinta, on which a classical pianist who supports the cause played beautiful classical music (Fig 5.22.1). This was registered as one of ECOLISE's EDSC Portuguese events. Figure 5.22.3 shows the level of destruction behind the beach. In times of ecological and biodiversity emergency, and ironically in a municipality that is winning European awards for its work to protect nature, it is incredible to see strong environmental laws being totally disregarded for further profit. The fight is far from over. Hopefully the desire by all residents to protect this space will increase and it will act a turning point for climate struggle.

5.3.2 What is emerging from engaged research?

Emerging healthy places work on the five identified areas of ecological emergency (ecology, economy, social, culture, whole system), taking into account Wheatley & Frieze's emergence theory, where local changes materialize as global systems of influence, and the two loops model (Figure 2.17.3); the old system is in decline, another is already quietly emerging at the fringes.

ECOLISE and UrbanA themselves did not create or develop specific healthy places, but their work identifies, supports and weaves together many different communities, projects, people and places into an ecosystem of various communities of practice, at different scales and focusing on different criteria. Here are some keys places that demonstrate existing solutions.

ECOLISE is a meta- network, a network of networks. It is a mix of different sized groups working at various scales within Europe, in the areas of sustainability, climate, regeneration, community solutions and local development. The three main movements at ECOLISE's core are all community-led; Transition Network (representing 1,200+ Transition initiatives), GEN (15,000 ecovillages), and the Permaculture movement (3 million practitioners globally). Findhorn ecovillage's co-housing scheme featured as the climate solutions cover photo for the 6th IPCC report on "Mitigation of Climate Change" in 2022 (Fig 2.4 & Section 4.2.2.1).

FCUL, Lisbon University's Science Faculty, is one ECOLISE member, that carried out much of the action research on various projects. Their R&D department FCID was one of seven UrbanA consortium partners. FCUL's students and staff, with support from CE3C, created a 150m2 mini forest, *HortaFCUL* (FCUL garden)[236] in 2009 (Section 3.1.3). In August 2015, this community developed the Permaculture Living Laboratory (PermaLab)[237], which is a 600m2 permaculture research garden. Although it is physically and socially integrated in FCUL, it is a public transition project that has fruit trees, a pond, various systems of compost, 2 greenhouses with lots of seedlings and a social area for the people care side of things. Student research work there includes calculating the CO2 emissions saved by composting FCUL's canteen food waste.

The Atlas of Utopias[238] (Figure 5.6.2) was developed for Transformative Cities (page 246), with ECOLISE work, between 2018 and 2022. This identifies 41 unique solutions from all over the world that highlight cities and collectives working on solutions to ensure access to water, food, energy and housing. The examples showcase how citizens, movements and municipalities are already creating change through cooperation, solidarity and democratic participation.

[236] HortaFCUL on FCUL https://ciencias.ulisboa.pt/pt/horta-fcul / Linktree https://www.instagram.com/hortafcul
[237] PermaLab https://ciencias.ulisboa.pt/sociedade/sustentabilidade/projetos-ciencias/permalab
[238] Atlas of Utopias https://transformativecities.org/atlas-of-utopias/

The Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) (section 2.1.3) was created in July 2019. In March 2020 Amsterdam City Council announced it was embracing "Doughnut Economics" and hoped to turn the city into a "doughnut city". In June 2021, as part of Amsterdam City Council's "Cities for Change" summit, we created an online event entitled "Governance and citizenship for transition: Case studies in Amsterdam and Portugal"[239]. This was part of the work of the ECOLISE CoP, it highlighted the work of a number of places in Lisbon to explore Portuguese case studies on citizen participation for new models of governance and public space. A number of the community activists from Barreiro's Community Innovation Laboratory (LABIC)[240] project spoke about their work on the *Bairros Saudáveis* (Sustainable Neighbourhoods)[241] project, across the river from Lisbon. UrbanA's 3rd Arena in Berlin[242] (online due to COVID) in March 2021 had participants from Berlin's Doughnut Economics group and Irish DEAL members participated in the ECOLISE CoP event, also part of Amsterdam City Council's "Cities for Change", in June 2021 (Pg 171, Fig 4.16). In January 2021 TIME magazine's article read: "Amsterdam Is Embracing a Radical New Economic Theory to Help Save the Environment. Could It Also Replace Capitalism?" (Nugent, 2021), adding "Citizen-led groups focused on the doughnut that are forming in places including São Paulo, Berlin, Kuala Lumpur and California bring the potential to transform their own areas from the bottom up". The DEAL network is growing rapidly around the planet, at all scales; municipalities, cities, even countries.

The key to healthy social places is good governance, how all those involved with a place, territory, community or project, have the greatest say in shaping the future of that place. The decision-making tool Sociocracy is a fractal structure of circles within circles within circles (Fig 2.21.L) offering a direct democratic process, decisions come from the bottom up. It is used by many ecovillages, GEN and Transition Network. ECOLISE began using it in 2018. Due to the success of the Brazilian *Ecobairro* (Econeighbourhood) project, the City Council of one of São Paulo's 32 municipalities, Vila Mariana (size: 26,5 km2, Population: 344.632), began using it. This projects aim is the transition to a local, circular and participatory governance in which community members are encouraged to act responsibly. With 8 axes in its DNA, it moves from micro to macro; individual, home, block, neighbourhood, network (Ecobairro Brasil, 2013)[243]. In Rojava (section 2.2.3), the mostly Kurdish Northern region of Syria, a feminist, anti-capitalist

[239] DEAL Portugal: https://doughnuteconomics.org/events/governance-and-citizenship-for-transition-cities-for-change-event & Video of event https://vimeo.com/559852130
[240] Labic Barreiro Velho https://www.facebook.com/LabicBarreiroVelho
[241] Bairros Saudáveis / Sustainable Neighbourhoods https://www.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/
[242] Berlin UrbanA Arena info https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/Just_Sustainability_Governance_Arrangements
[243] Ecobairro Brasil https://www.ecobairro.org.br/ & https://apptuts.bio/ecobairrobrasil

society (Fig 2.20) began in 2012 during the political instability in Syria. Based on Bookchin's (1991) libertarian municipalist ideas, people developed democratic confederalism (Finley, 2017) to create what they refer to as a real democracy, declaring autonomy from the state using a process called *Tekmîl* based around networks of grassroots people's assemblies or communes. The 2011 Spanish Revolution occupations led to victories in 2015 for citizen movements in 8 Spanish Cities; the 'Rebel Cities' movement. Barcelona saw the election of a woman as mayor for the first time in over 2,000 years; Ada Colau of the housing movement *PAH* (4.2.1.4). The citizen platform *Barcelona en Comú* began developing a feminist democratic revolution because "the real change must be global, that one city alone cannot solve all the problems we're facing, many of which are global because today the economy does not have borders" (Colau, 2015). They work on a Municipalist only platform, seeking power only at city level because "Beside turning local institutions into mechanisms of self-governance, municipalism also has the potential to feminize politics in a way that action at the national level does not" (Shea Baird & Roth, 2017). In 2017 the *Fearless Cities*[244] municipalist movement was created in Barcelona.

Local food production is a key component of resilient, regenerative (Girardet, 2014) and ecocities. Crises can quickly provoke collective responses to transform urban areas into food production zones; abandoned or underused spaces, post industrial lines, roof spaces, balconies, even window sills. London during WW2 (Hopkins, 20008) or Havana city during the "Special Period" (Fig 2.28.1) show what is possible. Cuba's Permaculture based urban transformation inspired UK architects Bohn & Viljoen's *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes* (CPUL) 2005 concept (Fig 2.28.2) of root like threads weaving through the urban fabric. Middlesbrough City Council invited them to design an urban CPUL plan in 2007, with 80 locations becoming productive growing points, of various sizes, across the city. "The eight-month project culminated in a town meal outside the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, where up to 8,000 people shared meals from the food that had been grown" (Early, 2008). The Dublin Botanic Spine (4.2.1.2) proposed an 18km orbital CPUL, but got no council support. A number of UrbanA's podcasts explored how food affects sustainability and justice in cities[245]. For ECOLISE's "Time for Collective Action Manifesto" launch (Fig 4.18) in Brussels in November 2023, Christian Jonet of the Liège Food Belt[246] spoke about the importance of strong relationships as the fertile soil for social innovation and cohesion. This group was created by citizens from the transition movement in November 2013, with the support of the City of Liège.

[244] https://www.fearlesscities.com/ & UrbanA wiki entry https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/Fearless_Cities
[245] Sustainable Food and Transport https://open.spotify.com/episode/6UgA9I0VDTf2bMxwmRL1UQ
[246] Liège Food Belt https://www.catl.be & ECOLISE post https://ecolise.eu/liege-food-belt-belgium/

Since at least 2002, there has been a much-cited statistic that 80% of the world's biodiversity is under Indigenous stewardship (UN, 2002). This figure was disputed in 2024 in a carefully worded article written by 13 authors including three Indigenous scientists (Fernández-Llamazares, Á. *et al,* 2024). The modern worlds "complete urbanization of society" (Lefebvre, 1970), or Planetary Urbanization (Merrifield, 2013) threatens these healthy places and the communities living there in harmony with nature. The legal victory of the indigenous Māori tribe, Whanganui Iwi, in Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 2017, to have their sacred river, the Whanganui (2.3.2), officially granted the status of a legal person has opened up law changes around Rights of Nature that is growing all around the planet, for both indigenous and non-indigenous communities. In 2022 Spain's Parliament passed a law to recognize the legal personhood of the *Mar Menor* (Smaller Sea) and its basin, near Cartagena in Murcia, thus making it the first ecosystem protected by Rights of Nature in Europe. The Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN)[247] is a network of organizations and individuals committed to the universal adoption and implementation of legal systems that recognize, respect and enforce Rights of Nature. Ecological Jurisprudence is an approach to law that recognizes humans are part of Earth's living systems. Since 2019, their monitor has tracked ecological law initiatives worldwide[248]. Spain has 5 official active initiatives; Portugal has currently none. A Mira Guardians[249] group is exploring how to grant legal rights to the Mira River basin and bioregion. Many people are part of Co•Re, the re-rural learning centre[250] in São Luis village in Alentejo, which is the Portuguese pioneer project for ECOLISE's Regenerative Communities Fund[251] that launched in 2024 to financially support regenerative communities in Europe.

Rewilding initiatives are gaining ground through various formats, and at different scales. In Minas Gerais, Brazil, the *Instituto Terra*[252] (Earth Institute) (Fig 2.27.1) was created in 1998 to reforest the barren Bulcão Farm. The dream to turn Brazil's most degraded region into its most biodiverse has seen 2,347 Hectares planted with 3,3 million trees from 300+ seed species collected within a 200 km radius, resulting in the return of 235+ animal species. John Liu, founded Ecosystem Restoration Camps (ERC)[253] in 2017, a worldwide movement that aims to restore damaged ecosystems on a large scale, which he claimed was 'the Great Work of Our Time'. They have 98,000+ hectares under restoration, run by 80+ Initiatives in 40+ countries.

[247] Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN) https://www.garn.org/
[248] Ecological Jurisprudence Monitor (EJM) https://ecojurisprudence.org/
[249] Guardiões do Mira https://www.instagram.com/guardioes_do_mira/
[250] Co•Re: Re-Rural Learning Center https://www.re-rural.info/
[251] ECOLISE Regenerative Communities Fund https://ecolise.eu/how-we-do-it/regenerative-communities-fund/
[252] Instituto Terra (Earth Institute) https://refloresta.institutoterra.org
[253] Ecosystem Restoration Camps https://www.ecosystemrestorationcommunities.org/

In Ireland a few small, island wide, rewilding initiatives are attempting to bring back the indigenous Atlantic rainforest, along Ireland's west coast, including Hometree[254], based in West Clare (Fig 2.27) and Eoghan Daltun (2022) in West Cork. In Ireland, people's hearts and beings are also being rewilded. Through re-learning the indigenous language, Gaelic, and other cultural dynamics, people are returning to old ways lost less than 200 years previous due to the great Irish hunger (famine); seeing all rivers as goddesses, again (Magan, 2022; Blindboy, 2021).

The mid 2000s promise of bold new ecocity projects in Asia was problematic: Dongtan on Chongming island adjacent to Shanghai was cancelled in 2009, "deemed to be built on a fiction" (Pearce, 2009). The 6 km2 Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates petrostate, had less than a sixth of the area developed by 2023 and was labelled a Frankenstein city (Cugurullo, 2016). McDonough & Braungart's biomimicry approach for *Buildings Like Trees, Cities Like Forests* (2002) and *Cradle to Cradle* (2002) are strong concepts but McDonough's implementation of ecocities in China was problematic and hushed up. Tianjin Eco-city (Fig 2.31) was slightly more successful, but on seeing a whole avenue of fake leaves tied onto trees, Caprotti asked 'Eco' for whom? (2015), stating that the grand corporate urban planning and environmental-economic vision was devoid of an organic society. Despite the Chinese governments drive to implement a green transition, the claims are that "China's eco-cities are often neither ecologically friendly, nor functional" (Reuters's, 2015). Regarding what urban solutions can best respond to ecological emergency, the final Ecocity Summit in London in 2023 finished with "no consensus or even the beginning of an agreement on what a built environment practitioner had to do to effect genuine change" (Lincoln, 2023). To Scale GEN's approach to ecocities, locally owned, participatory processes would need to remain intact.

UrbanA's work in Lisbon involved urban experiments to try to connect communities, examine challenges of areas under extreme stress that Rolnik identified, such as housing, gentrification, and evictions, and try to facilitate a city-wide CoP to seek practical solutions. COVID seriously disrupted this process. In 2021, UrbanA Lisbon began a new step, to develop a deeper relationship with three CLIs from the CoP network. These three geographically based communities were somewhat marginalised communities that received funding support from Lisbon council's BIP/ZIP[255] project which was praised internationally for its innovation in improving co-governance and civic engagement in Lisbon's most sensitive urban areas. This translocal CoP of Bela Flor, Ajuda, Marvila, BAM for short (Fig 5.16), all involved local food production and democratic decision making as tools for community-led urban transformation.

[254] Hometree https://www.hometree.ie/
[255] BIP/ZIP (neighbourhoods and zones for priority intervention) https://bipzip.cm-lisboa.pt/

5.3.3 What is emerging from the work?

A vast amount of healthy places are emerging, at various scales, in various parts of the planet, to respond to ecological emergency. Democratically structured, community-led initiatives are forming, from micro to macro; projects in translocal networks, villages, even entire territories:
- FCUL, Lisbon University's Science Faculty, is an ECOLISE member and was part of UrbanA. In 2009 its community created a 150m2 mini forest and in 2015 a 600m2 permaculture living laboratory, this public transition project with fruit trees lets the public eat the city and keep cool.
- The Transformative Cities Atlas of Utopias identifies 41 solutions of citizens, movements and municipalities creating change through cooperation, solidarity and democratic participation.
- Healthy social places need good governance: Sociocracy is used by São Paulo's Eco neighbourhood project: Vila Mariana's City Council use it for local participatory governance, community members decide micro to macro; individual, home, block, neighbourhood, network.
- In Rojava, a feminist, anti-capitalist society began in 2012 in the mostly Kurdish Northern region of Syria. They declared autonomy from the state and developed democratic Confederalism, using their *Tekmîl* process of fractal networks of grassroots citizen assemblies.
- Local food production is a key component of regenerative cities. Havana's "special period" of urban transformation inspired a *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes* (CPUL) concept. In 2007 80 locations became productive growing points, of various sizes, for Middlesbrough's CPUL. After eight months, 8,000 people shared a town meal from food grown at the art gallery.
- Rewilding initiatives are growing at different scales. Since 1998 the *Instituto Terra* (Earth Institute) in Minas Gerais, Brazil, has planted 2,347 Hectares with 3,3 million trees from 300+ seed species collected within a 200 km radius, resulting in the return of 235+ animal species. Ecosystem Restoration Camps began in 2017 to restore large scale damaged ecosystems. They have 98,000+ hectares under restoration, run by 80+ Initiatives in 40+ countries. Irish groups are attempting to bring back the indigenous Atlantic rainforest, along Ireland's wild west coast.
- Rights of Nature is transforming the world. A little under 80% of the world's biodiversity is under Indigenous stewardship. The 2017 legal victory of the Māori Whanganui tribe in New Zealand saw their sacred Whanganui River granted the status of a legal person. In 2022 Spain's Parliament passed a law to recognize the legal personhood of the *Smaller Sea* in Murcia.
- UrbanA's work in Lisbon supported three somewhat marginalised communities that received funding support from Lisbon council's BIP/ZIP project which was praised internationally for its innovation in improving co-governance and civic engagement in Lisbon's most sensitive urban areas. The translocal CoP of Bela Flor, Ajuda and Marvila (BAM) all involved local food production and democratic decision making for community-led urban transformation.

CHAPTER 6.

Conclusions

We are not fighting for nature.
We are nature defending itself.

Isa Fremeaux & Jay Jordan, 2015

Are regenerative and community-led responses to ecological emergency transforming cities for a healthier world? Yes, they are, but only to a minimal degree. Their combined level of impact is, so far, nowhere near the levels needed to respond adequately to the ever-worsening crises that threatens human existence. Paris's 1.5°C limit passed in 2024: "Our house is on fire".

With political will, all can be remedied: The solutions exist, but much more work is needed to widen, deepen, expand, accelerate and build upon them. All global citizens have a part to play in responding to shared challenges. To be radical means understanding the root causes of problems, to enable the necessary regenerative, community-led transformation of our home. Key findings from the work can enable this transformation to happen, from the local to global:

- **Identifying pathways and blockages for the required eco-social just transition.** Results from grassroots activism since 1996, and engaged researcher work since 2019:

Make the World Blue and Green Again. Global Heating and Nature Loss must stop and be reversed. "We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide". The burning of fossil fuel and CO2 released into the atmosphere since the 18th century is set to heat the Earth by 2.7º - 3º. An economic system based on indefinite growth on a physically finite planet has led to current ecological emergency. The challenge to cool the climate and allow nature return can only be met by the political act of envisaging and creating a post-growth, post-capitalist world, now.

Love Home by respecting the Limits to Growth. Post-growth emphasises independence from - or prosperity without - growth, and serves as an umbrella term encompassing research in Doughnut and Wellbeing Economics, Steady State Economics, and Degrowth. Combating Climate Breakdown collectively, allows all life to thrive. Degrowth criticizes sustainability's

relationship to perpetual quantitative growth on a finite planet. Permaculture's post carbon pathway shows us where we must go. Doughnut Economics gives us the compass to get there.

Create Sustainable and Just Cities: Through European funding, UrbanA created a process to bring urban actors together in four arenas to explore what is a sustainable just city. Over a three year period, members of local and national government and bottom-up grassroots activists met, shared and worked together. The *UrbanA Handbook* and *17 Keys* show cities how to transform. UrbanA's work in Lisbon supported three somewhat marginalised communities that received funding support from Lisbon council's BIP/ZIP project which was praised internationally for its innovation in improving co-governance and civic engagement in Lisbon's most sensitive urban areas. The translocal BAM group of Bela Flor, Ajuda and Marvila involved local food production and democratic decision making for community-led urban transformation.

System Change, not Climate Change? ECOLISE's guiding principles are co-creation, social justice & ecological integrity. Externally, they launched a radical Manifesto calling for systemic change, partnered for the European Parliament's *Beyond Growth* Conference, helped Europe's Nature Restoration Law get passed, connected 150 youth climate activists in Barcelona to *Make Rich Polluters Pay* and launched the *Regenerative Communities Fund* to financially support community-led regenerative communities in Europe. Internally, unresolved conflicts happened and silence about Europe's part in the Gaza Genocide was seen as complicity. Trust was lost.

Let Passion and Love drive change. As long as unfair dominant systems of power, abuse, exploitation, injustice, misery and destruction were to be fought against by oppressed communities, Social Movements have existed. These political organisations consist of grassroots activists, pushing for system change in many forms and at a range of scales. They "permanently changed the political landscape of globalisation" in 1999, taking on corporate globalisation, and for a short moment, winning, by shutting down Seattle's WTO conference. They are both messy and magical. Scale matters, hence clarity on what winning means matters.

Act locally. Connect regionally. Learn globally. Community-led Initiatives are activities that are self-initiated and self-managed by groups of people at the local and regional scale for the sake of actively sustaining, protecting and restoring ecological and social qualities. Many initiatives create Communities of Practice to share a common interest, collaborate and learn together to develop this interest and apply it in practice. Digital maps identify local projects.

Regenerate everything, at all scales, all the time, including yourself. Sustainability is not Enough: We Need Regenerative Cultures. Sustainability does less damage to the environment, regeneration reverses damage done to our living planet and, building on permaculture, is a designs system that allows humans coevolve with nature. Regenerative planning enables nested communities blossoming to transform their worlds, at all scales; backyard, neighbourhood, city, bioregion. Reconnection with, and transformation of, place to what its nature requires is the essence of the work. Practitioners ask what would it mean to become indigenous to place again?

Dream it. Believe it's possible. Make it happen. Active Hope is critical to grassroots activism: The belief that hope alone is not enough, that real transformation only happens when pathways for real change have been identified. Social movements seek to understand and challenge the structural elements that cause and maintain inequality. Differing post-colonial mindsets affect everything, as many Brazilians say "environmentalism without class struggle is just gardening".

Climate Justice Now: Climate Justice movements are led by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions to integrate more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations. The attempts to "Reclaim Power" in 2009 radicalised many Global North movements and deepened connection with Indigenous struggles.

Let Rights of Nature change (y)our world. *From the mountains, To the Sea. I am the River, And the river is me*: Indigenous legal victories in New Zealand are inspiring people of the planet to transform their local worlds; both indigenous and non-indigenous communities. In 2017 a Māori tribe were granted the status of a legal person for their sacred river, the Whanganui. In 2022 Spain's Parliament did similar for the *Mar Menor* in Murcia, Europe's first ecosystem protected by Rights of Nature. The Rio Mira community now seek the same in Portugal, as do hundreds more globally. In Ireland, old indigenous attitudes lost less than 200 years, now return.

Make every village an ecovillage, every city a green city. Recent ecocity work is problematic, objectives since 2000's are questionable, consensus not reached about what constitutes them. Community-led Ecocities could be implemented by respecting GEN's methodology where citizens shape their territories through deep democratic process, following a fractal governance approach (municipalism) that follows natures patterns. Brazil's eco neighbourhood experiment in São Paulo has Vila Mariana City Council using sociocracy for participative decision making.

Let everyone find their place in this Fantastic Adventure. This works objective is to keep the human species alive. The Earth is one. The problem is everyone's, the solutions must be for everyone. Radical, regenerative, community-led transformation is needed in every community. Like football, there are home and away games: Moments to connect locally where communities sort out their own backyards, and others to join as a global network to work for equality for all. The challenge is how to activate, support and enable organised communities to make change. Participation and accessibility are key; seeing how transformative toolkits identify and assist local challenges is priority. As conflicts exist, better distribution of resources helps navigation. The challenges are huge, this is the "Great Work of Our Time". Invite all to laugh, love, live.

- **Peace, Love and Rage: 12 keys for radical, regenerative, community-led transformation**. These keys have huge impacts for the field and practice of architecture.

Can architecture be in service to humanity, in times of ecological emergency?

Building on, and contributing to, the surge in momentum around ecological emergency with the Fridays for Future global climate marches and XR climate actions in London, 'Architects Declare' formed in the UK in May 2019 after the IPCC's 2018 report. By October 2021, 1,155 UK practices had signed up to UK Architects Declare, and over 7,000 companies in 27 countries worldwide had declared a Climate and Biodiversity emergency under the wider umbrella of 'Built Environment Declares'. Inspired by post-growth ideas, including doughnut economics, they published their *Practice Guide* in 2021, for how architecture must face and respond to such heavy matters, and complemented it with a *Regenerative Design Primer* in March 2024.

Architecture is a problem-solving process. Graduates have top skills that can greatly assist communities work for greater ecological and social change, but many get sucked into corporate jobs to pay for an increasingly unaffordable world. Star architecture, fancy shaped images in magazines, driven by ego, is part of the sickness of an unbalanced world. Much architecture happens without architects, in marginalised urban communities, and much of the Global South. Moments of urban revolt lead to moments of spatial reorganisation, are today's architects there? Working with and for nature, following natures patterns, means positioning all building within river networks, social histories and inviting all communities to imagine a better future. By falling in love with bold dreams, communities are willing to stand up and fight for their home. The final section invites inspection of challenges, and inspiration for what's already emerging.

- **3 Questions**: Why is the work needed? How is it happening? What's emerging?

1) Why does ecological emergency need responding to?

Why does ecological emergency need responding to? Ecological emergency implies that the contemporary way of life is out of balance with the natural order of nature, where humanities existence is threatened by a rapidly changing world: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (2022) stated “We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide”, in regard to how humanity responds to its fossil fuel addiction. Using GEN’s 5D framework to divide ecological emergency into five interconnected constituent parts, some key challenges identified include:

Whole System: The world is in climate emergency: The Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C limit was passed in 2024 and 2ºC is dead. An estimated Global Heating rise of 2,7º - 3ºC means “2 billion people across the tropics will be exposed to extreme heat and substantially increased mortality risk”. Europe experienced its worst ever heatwave in June 2026 and is the fastest warming continent, heating up twice as fast as the global average. Deep adaptation is urgently needed.

Ecology: The biodiversity emergency implies that the delicate “web of life” that sustains all human life is in peril. Nature is disappearing, the average size of wildlife populations has fallen by a staggering 73% between 1970 and 2020. Five global tipping points are fast approaching that “threaten humanity, Earth’s life-support systems, and societies everywhere”.

Economy: Respecting Earths limits to growth demands an ecological economics attitude that understands and counters current fossil fuel addiction and growth dependence. This requires moving beyond the interlinked forces of, capitalism and neoliberalism built upon extractivism, biodiversity destruction and profit over life. Post-growth had its “Woodstock moment” when the European Parliament facilitated a Beyond Growth conference in 2023. This is inherently political, there is strong resistance to radical calls for the reorganisation of society.

Social: Heinberg and Miller’s Polycrisis of Environmental and Social Breakdown conclude that equity and justice are the key to averting social unravelling. For Wheatley and Frieze “Whatever the problem, community is the answer”. The ‘System Change not Climate Change’ phrase emerged from climate justice social movements during COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. Rolnik outlines the extreme violence of the architectural process where neighbourhoods have effectively become the “last subprime frontiers of capitalism”. With little or no regulation, long established urban communities are being driven to the periphery, due to gentrification, urban speculation and touristification. Climate justice movements are led by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions to integrate “more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations”. Elon Musk became the world's first trillionaire in June 2026, the same week he tweeted support for a racist pogrom in Belfast.

Culture: The Indigenous Hopi word of *Koyaanisqatsi*, is the belief held by many that the contemporary way of life is out of balance with the natural order of nature. A recurring question in the Regenerative world is what would in mean to become indigenous to place again. A multitude of belief systems, languages, cultures, means of organising communities and managing resources have survived the 500+ year cultural onslaught of Latin American indigenous peoples. *Buen Vivir* (good life in Spanish) is an alternative to Western development.

Social movements are political organisations, consisting of grassroots activists, pushing for system change in many forms and at a range of scales, from the local (a street, block or neighbourhood), to the regional, national, transnational and global. They are "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities". They don't always agree on strategy or objectives, so strong alliances are often required to push for radical system change. The social challenge lies in how to activate, support and enable organised communities to make change. The examples here examine moments of community-led ecological change.

The engaged research I was part of worked toward a just and regenerative future for all. UrbanA was a three-year academic project from the ECOLISE ecosystem, incorporating ECOLISE values and approaches and objectives. ECOLISE is a meta network based around the three core CLI movements of transition, permaculture and ecovillages. ECOLISE has a vision of "a just and regenerative future for all within planetary boundaries, thanks to a strong role of transformative community-led climate action". ECOLISE's three guiding principles are 1) Co-creation 2) Social justice 3) Ecological integrity. UrbanA focused on creating a process to bring different sorts of urban actors together in a meaningful way, where different sorts of viewpoints could engage together to explore different themes of questions and explorations into what is a sustainable just city, what is not, what forces block such transformation, what steps can be taken to improve things in Europe. Four arenas in different cities enabled people from more bottom up, grassroots groups to be able to engage in a meaningful way with other people who were coming from more top-down worlds, such as local government, and at times national government. the consortium hoped that enough momentum could be generated so that the core group of 25 fellows would participate in a CoP together outside of the main arena moments.

ECOLISE's action research believes CLIs are doing things in a far better, healthier, more ecological and socially just way. Bringing this knowledge in from the edges is a means to challenge mainstream narratives and to support and expand real solutions. Supporting the work is done by helping spread the word about different ways of working and by using financial support to assist the CLIs, many of whom struggle to survive.

2) How are communities responding to ecological emergency?

Grassroots activists are driven by a rage at the current system of social and ecological injustice. Examples show how communities connect, organise, identify objectives and take direct action for radical change. Illegal activity is often employed, those participating know that risks could include violence, arrest, imprisonment. In global south communities, extremes are worse, death often happens. Global network-based social movements use climate justice values and solidarity to work for system change. Led by activists, youth, Indigenous groups, academics and unions who integrate "more decolonial, anti-colonial, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist critiques and struggles into mainstream climate discourses and practices to redress ongoing oppressions and marginalizations". Finding joy and celebration in action also matters.

2009 in Copenhagen was a pivotal moment. The burgeoning climate justice movement included radical anti-capitalist block with indigenous leaders from the climate caravan. The attempt to "reclaim power" was a failure, but it did lead to radicalization of social movements' in subsequent years where "leftist reformist and especially the more radical currents are engaging with non- or anti- Western indigenous praxis to forge the contemporary transnational environmental movement". Street protests and direct actions led to the creation of a citizen's assembly, all of which were met by illegal and violent responses by the Danish State. Pressure from social movements in civil society later pushed leaders to make the 2015 Paris COP deal.

The call to occupy squares on May 15th 2011 was answered by 1000's of angry people. The "Spanish Revolution" was a collective citizen response to the 2008 economic crisis. Key factors included that activities happened in the public realm, people had training in political organization, from a DIY attitude, there were commissions and working groups to join, there was food to cook, freely serve and clean up after, there were tense moments of holding the space against police lines and threats of violent attack with rubber bullets. A correctly hit note can quickly spark similar activities in other places, as a "Rhizomatic Revolution"; Emerging technologies enabled two occupied squares in two occupied cities to connect, together in rage.

Active hope is critical to grassroots activism: The belief that hope alone is not enough, that real transformation is only possible when pathways for real change have been identified. My two studies from Portuguese speaking countries examine how differing colonial mindsets affect both thinking and action, when working for system change. Chico Mendes, the climate activist who died defending the Amazon rainforest in 1988, declared "Environmentalism without class struggle is just gardening". Social movements seek to understand and challenge the structural elements that cause and maintain inequality. Western blindnesses exist and needs further challenging, especially in unseen and unintended racist dynamics from a supremacist culture.

ECOLISE's purpose is to engage in, support, and facilitate accelerated learning and collaboration among community-led initiatives, their networks, and partners to catalyse systemic transformation within and across society. They do this by mainstreaming and strengthening community-led climate action. Some of my experiences in ECOLISE worked well, others did not. My work from 2019 – 2024 is divided into three specific periods: 1) Building Bridges & Connecting Communities. 2) Navigating Conflicts 3) System Change?

1: Participation with UrbanA led to developing communities of practice with ECOLISE's network of members and wider groups in the climate justice movement: Connecting them with indigenous groups and Spanish based movements while attending the 2019 COP25 in Madrid; Facilitating the Transformative Cities People's Choice Award to build the Atlas of Utopias, to showcase how citizens, movements and municipalities are already creating change through cooperation, solidarity and democratic participation. I invited Raquel Rolnik as guest speaker. Developing *Communities for Future* and *European Day of Sustainable Communities* work.

2: I was elected co-president during a most tense time. Conflict can lead to transformation, when done right. Despite efforts for inclusive processes to deal with past hurts, the core group did not fully heal. Good people care management tools were developed for any future conflicts.

3: In 2023; Policy work culminated in the launch in Brussels of ECOLISE's radical "Time For Collective Action Manifesto", calling for systemic change. ECOLISE was a supporting partner of the Beyond Growth Conference in the European Parliament. As part of the Restore Nature coalition, we helped push the European Parliament vote for the Nature Restoration Law. With OXFAM the "Make Rich Polluters Pay" campaign's "Ticket to the Future" project connected 150 youth climate activists in Barcelona, including from indigenous communities suffering death due to extractivism. The violent attack by Hamas on October 7th 2023 and following Genocide in Gaza created division in ECOLISE and other social movements: Climate justice illiteracy, exacerbated by blind European racism regarding ongoing global conflicts, meant organizations remained silent, despite wider community pleads for action.

UrbanA worked at two levels: Macro supporting 4 Arenas in Europe over a 3-year period, and locally in Lisbon by developing a CoP to explore how what is required for Lisbon to become a sustainable and just city. A walking tour and day of interaction in Mouraria in 2019 was followed up by developing a translocal CoP between 3 communities for 2 years, in Bela Flor, Ajuda and Marvila. An online city series event asked "Is Lisbon a Sustainable and Just City?" and invited Lisbon's housing movement members about a range of issues including urban greening, evictions, gentrification, civic engagement and local community solutions in this fast-changing city. A Knowledge Commons (wiki), *UrbanA Handbook* and *17 Keys* were created

3) What healthy places are emerging, at various scales including cities, from community responses to ecological emergency?

The work shows that there are a vast amount of healthy places emerging, at various scales in various parts of the planet, to respond to ecological emergency. My selected grassroots activism examples examine specific moments in time where models and methods can be built upon for wider system change. The engaged research and wider exploration, shows where the old system is in decline, but where and how another world is already quietly emerging at the fringes.

Two grassroots examples are from different cities I lived in for a period of years. Dublin's squatting action led to derelict land transformed into community gardens for a number of years, new relationships forming, laws being changed and a bicycle infrastructure built by the canals. The 2011 Spanish Revolution led to a temporary reuse of many public squares around Spain, and beyond, that demonstrated different ways of political organising and listening to each other. This built mechanisms that eventually led to citizen election victories in 8 cities, including Barcelona, that improved city mechanisms of citizen participation in shaping local territories. Two examples were "away games", places where different sized citizen movements descended in a network fashion, for short and intense moments: Firstly, in Banja Luka in Bosnia, to explore things and open dialogue just after the Balkan war. Secondly in Copenhagen, to attempt to "Reclaim Power", to take on the capitalist system leading to planetary destruction. That moment saw the creation of communication spaces, coupled with illegal and violent repression from the state to crack down on social movements, including in Christiania ecovillage within the city.

The Brazil and Portugal moments both explore people's attitudes regarding how change happens. Since 2007 new citizen led movements in Curitiba have been making greater levels of impact in the city. During the COP in Paris, the Curitiba Climate Hub offered a means to connect urban social movements and explore how abstract climate topics translate into concrete objectives in a rapidly changing city. The Eco Neighbourhood proposal follows the patterns of nature in a series of river's tributary system is a network: how fractal governance could enable community-led ecocities function within bioregions, where communities organise in their water basins, or catchment areas, of the river systems they are part of. The bicycle movement Cicloiguçu asked Goura to stand for elections, he eventually won, and greater citizen-led proposals for the city are being implemented, such as bike lanes and an inner-city calm area. All demonstrating that "There is always a way", once people believe change is possible.

Lisbon is a changing city, but despite increasing stresses, social movements have not been able to resist, or fight against, changes imposed on them and their city. "The English Estate" example highlights undemocratic activity for investment during climate and biodiversity crises.

The engaged research of ECOLISE and UrbanA did not create or develop specific healthy places, but their work identifies, supports and weaves together many different communities, projects, people and places into an ecosystem of various communities of practice, at different scales and focusing on different criteria, to widen, deepen, accelerate and expand the impact.

ECOLISE is a meta-network of different sized community-led groups working at various scales within Europe. The three main global movements at the core are; Transition Network (1,200+ Transition initiatives), the Permaculture movement (3 million practitioners globally), and GEN (15,000 ecovillages), whose member Findhorn ecovillage featured as the cover photo for the 6th IPCC report on "Mitigation of Climate Change" in 2022. The ECOLISE member FCUL, Lisbon University's Science Faculty, was part of UrbanA. FCUL's students and staff created a 150m2 mini forest, *HortaFCUL* (FCUL garden) in 2009 and a Permaculture Living Laboratory (PermaLab) in 2015, a 600m2 permaculture research garden and public transition project that has fruit trees, a pond, various systems of compost, greenhouses and a social area.

The Atlas of Utopias developed between 2018 and 2022 identifies 41 unique solutions from all over the world that highlight cities and collectives working on solutions to ensure access to water, food, energy and housing. It showcases how citizens, movements and municipalities are already creating change through cooperation, solidarity and democratic participation.

The Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) was created in July 2019. In March 2020 Amsterdam City Council announced it was embracing "Doughnut Economics" and hoped to turn the city into a "Doughnut City". "Citizen-led groups focused on the doughnut that are forming in places including São Paulo, Berlin, Kuala Lumpur and California bring the potential to transform their own areas from the bottom up". The DEAL network is growing rapidly around the planet, at all scales; municipalities, cities, even countries. UrbanA's 3rd Arena in Berlin (online) in 2021 included members of Berlin's DEAL group. For Amsterdam City Council's "Cities for Change" summit in 2021, ECOLISE highlighted Lisbon work in Barreiro of the Community Innovation Laboratory (LABIC) in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods project.

Because good governance is the key to healthy social places, the decision-making tool Sociocracy is used by many CLIs, including the Brazilian *Ecobairro* (Econeighbourhood) project in São Paulo. The Vila Mariana City Council use it to transition to a local, circular and participatory governance in which community members are encouraged to act responsibly, by moving from micro to macro; individual, home, block, neighbourhood, network. In Rojava, a feminist, anti-capitalist society began in 2012 in the mostly Kurdish Northern region of Syria. They declared autonomy from the state and developed democratic confederalism for their real democracy, using the *Tekmîl* process of fractal networks of grassroots people's assemblies.

Citizen movements won local elections in eight Spanish Cities in 2015, Barcelona elected its first woman mayor, Ada Colau, an *indignado* and leader of the housing movement PAH. Their citizen platform *Barcelona en Comú* work on a municipalist only platform, seeking power only at city level. To advance a feminist democratic revolution, they helped create the *Fearless Cities* municipalist movement in 2017, for all cities, because "the real change must be global".

A little under 80% of the world's biodiversity is under Indigenous stewardship. The legal Rights of Nature victory of the indigenous Whanganui Māori tribe in New Zealand in 2017, saw their sacred Whanganui River granted the status of a legal person. In 2022 Spain's Parliament passed a law to recognize the legal personhood of the *Smaller Sea* in Murcia, thus making it the first ecosystem protected by Rights of Nature in Europe. Ecological Jurisprudence is an approach to law that recognizes humans are part of Earth's living systems. Spain has 5 official active initiatives; A Portuguese group is exploring how to grant legal rights to the Mira River bioregion. People involved are part of the re-rural learning centre Co•Re in São Luis village in Alentejo. It is Portugal's pioneer project for ECOLISE's Regenerative Communities Fund that launched in 2024 to financially support regenerative communities in Europe.

Rewilding initiatives are gaining ground through various formats, and at different scales. Since 1998 the *Instituto Terra* (Earth Institute) in Minas Gerais, Brazil, has planted 2,347 Hectares with 3,3 million trees from 300+ seed species collected within a 200 km radius, resulting in the return of 235+ animal species. John Liu founded Ecosystem Restoration Camps in 2017 to restore damaged ecosystems on a large scale. They have 98,000+ hectares under restoration, run by 80+ Initiatives in 40+ countries. In Ireland, initiatives including Hometree are attempting to bring back the indigenous Atlantic rainforest, along Ireland's west coast. Through re-learning the Irish language, Gaelic, people are seeing rivers as goddesses, again.

Local food production is a key component for resilient, regenerative ecocities. Havana's "special period" led to an urban transformation that inspired the *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes* (CPUL) concept. Middlesbrough City Council invited designers to create a CPUL in 2007. 80 locations became productive growing points, of various sizes, across the city. The eight-month project culminated in a town meal outside the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, where up to 8,000 people shared meals from the food that had been grown.

UrbanA's work in Lisbon supported three somewhat marginalised communities that received funding support from Lisbon council's BIP/ZIP project which was praised internationally for its innovation in improving co-governance and civic engagement in Lisbon's most sensitive urban areas. The translocal CoP of Bela Flor, Ajuda and Marvila involved local food production and democratic decision making for community-led urban transformation.

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Annexes

A. Home

Figure 0.1 The Blue Marble (NASA, 1972)



B. Architectural Moments

Table 16: Architectural Moments (1996-2024)

#	Project Title	Period	#	Project Title	Period
1	Docklands Wander	Nov 2000	21	Transition Barcelona	June 2008
2	Haven House	June 2001	22	Towards a healthier, happier, eco-effective Barcelona	July 2008
3	Samogar Art Gallery	July 2002	23	Gracia community garden	Feb 2009
4	ECOTOPIA	August 2002	24	Reclaim Power	Dec 2009
5	RTS Dublin	Sep 2002	25	Mas Franch Permaculture	July 2010
6	Eco Building in Bornholme	Oct 2002	26	Spanish Revolution	May 2011
7	UK Stop the War	March 2003	27	Pagan wedding	June, 2012
8	Ecocity Banja Luka	April 2003	28	Cyclists Square	Feb, 2014
9	Mayday Indymedia Centre	May 2004	29	Curitiba Climate Hub	Dec 2015
10	Red archive	May 2004	30	Ecocity Curitiba	June 2016
11	Wandering Workshop	July 2004	31	Indigenous Support	Oct 2017
12	Botanic Spine Dublin	April 2005	32	Critical Mass Ayacucho	Dec 2017
13	Stirling anti-G8 ecovillage	July 2005	33	Lisbon UrbanA Walking Tour	Nov 2019
14	Mayfield Muralismo	July 2005	34	N30 Indymedia + 20	Nov 2019
15	Seomra Spraoi Theatre	June 2005	35	Global Greening	Mar 2022
16	Streaming from the Gaff	Oct 2005	36	We Are Nature	Mar 2022
17	Metavilla	Sep 2006	37	River walks	2022
18	WSF radio Kenya	January 2007	38	Ticket to the Future	Oct 2023
19	CSOA El Barco	Feb 2007	39	The English Estate	Oct 2023
20	Climate Camp Heathrow	August 2007	40	Palestine Walk, Lisbon	June 2025

From this group, the following 6 moments are selected and explored as case studies below:

1. Eco city Banja Luka, Bosnia (2003)
2. Botanic Spine Dublin, Ireland (2005-2006)
3. Reclaim Power, Copenhagen, Denmark (2009)
4. Spanish Revolution, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain (2011)
5. Cyclists Square, Curitiba, Brazil, (2014)
6. The English Estate, Cascais, Lisbon, Portugal (2022-2025)

B.1 Quinta dos Ingleses

Full audio and blog post online[256]

A cup of tea with the Forest Guardians at Quinta dos Ingleses in Carcavelos

DC: We are here in the **Quinta dos Ingleses**, in the forest, the little Hare's Corner, beside the sea in Carcavelos with some of the guardians of the forest. So, first of all, could someone tell us briefly about what is the situation with the Quinta dos Ingleses, what's happening, and what's happening with you people here in the forest right now?

BS: Today we are here because this is a really big forest. And the last, piece of green land in the coast of our region. Our region is one of the healthiest regions, or municipalities, in the country. And also, they win lots of prizes, like "Green region", "democratic region", "innovation region". But what is happening is that there is this project since the 60s, where they want to build in the forest, cut the trees and leave everything in concrete, especially for a hotel and luxury houses. The people have been against this for generations, generations, generations, and postponing this. Right now, we are in a really crucial moment because the municipality, the construction company, are starting full-on with a process in courts that is not still heard, and they are going full-on. We made petitions, we made court statements. But the legal way doesn't work. So, yesterday we did a really beautiful thing, that was opening the forest that has been always open to everyone, so the people can enjoy, breathe here, and remember that Nature is for all, and they cannot close it. So, we are here till now and it's been very beautiful.

DC: Very good, very good. So, it's about 50 hectares of a green space called the **Quinta dos Ingleses**. Could someone just tell us a little history of the **Quinta dos Ingleses**, where that's come from?

AS: I don't know a lot about it, but I know it is, like you say, 52 hectares of green land. And there's a private English school in the middle of it. It is actually a unique situation for a woodland, just 150 meters away from the beach, from the coast. So, I think to fill it all with concrete in this, you don't understand how such a project can go ahead in the 21st century. It's

[256] https://wearenature2030.wordpress.com/2025/05/22/quinta-dos-ingleses-occupation-2025/

just unbelievable. It's called **Quinta dos Ingleses** because at the beginning of the century, some English were here to help set the cables that went under the ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, that connected to the states, and even, I think, there was a plan to India and all that. So, they were here and they were established here, and they created tennis courts and football courts, and cricket, and all that, and they worked here for many years, that's why it is called **Quinta dos Ingleses**. It has a lot of patrimonial value, architectural and archaeological, and not to mention the nature value of it.

BS: And also some of the previous story, this forest is actually really ancient. We have here roads from Roman times. And the first registers of the **Quinta dos Ingleses** was actually a Nurses Hospital, and it's called Quinta de São Antonio, St. Anthonys Estate. And for example, lots of people who worked in the big houses here from the 50s, the 60s, they used to call it Quinta San Antonio, not even **Quinta dos Ingleses**, and people really remember this in their affective memories of Coming here when they go into the beach, having lunch here, it was really a space not only for elitist people, but that everyone could enjoy. And **Quinta dos Ingleses** was gaining this name because the English were being more pro-eminent, and then the rights of this land were passed to the San Julian's school. And now the rights are part St. Julian School and Part to Alves Ribeiro, which is the construction (company).

DC: I'd like to hear a little bit about the actual movement of the **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses**, what some of the steps have been recently, especially about the legal side, there's been recent court cases.But also then about the level of support in the wider community of Carcavelos and Parede, and what sort of processes of engagement have happened with the **Junta Freguesia**, the local council of Parede and Carcavelos, and then at the higher level, at the municipality of Cascais.

JS: So, the rising of **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** happened really as a big force against all the control that the municipal camera has all over the places here in Carcavalos. The **Camara Municipal Cascais** (Cascais City Hall) has a lot of influence in a lot of places around here; the beach jobs, the football field, St. Julians, whatever… And **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** brings a big voice about "Whoa, stop. There's a big forest here that YOU are complicit in destroying. And we need to talk about that. You have a responsibility in organizing a big crime against all this community, and we're going to start sensibilizing (awareness raising) about that. Of course, because of the control of the municipality over all the places is in Carcavelos, it's hard for the

stores and the commercial and local companies to get engaged by **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses**, because they are dependent on the financial efforts of the Camara Municipal. So, it was a way for them to maintain control over the places next to the **Quinta dos Ingleses** that benefit directly from the forest. But although that **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** has been a rising a lot in popular support in big manifestations (demonstrations), sometimes with more than 1,000 people. So, it's really a cause that is easy to understand the importance of. Because of our climate circumstances and the loss of biodiversity, cities depend more than ever on these kind of forests that can provide so much nature services that are so good to help us confront that. So, **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** has been getting a lot of engagement and popular support.

DC: What about the process of the legal things that have happened? Especially about recently Cascais, I think, was awarded a prize for its super democratic principles, but yet, we hear about some undemocratic processes, especially about this area.

IS: I don't know all the details of the legal process, but I do know some of it, so I can speak about that. **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** has legal support from some lawyers and they have demanded accountability from the town hall, the Camara Municipal. They put an action against the town hall. There are, I think, at least two different ones. There's one regarding the **Quinta dos Ingleses** and they tried to put a legal stop to the advancement of the works, because there was voting in the municipality. And by only one vote, of one person from the junta (local Parish Council) who had the possibility to stop all of this. I think it was a few years ago, maybe? (2014 mentioned). Was it that that long ago? I thought it was 2019 that there was a final vote? And this one person changed, they said they were going to vote against this building project in the forest here, and this person voted in favor. And we think, probably, that they there could have been some bribing, or even intimidation, because we have heard cases that people have been intimidated, which is terrible, you know, it's corrupt. So, then the project was allowed to go ahead. Also, the town hall made this plan, PPERUCS (Plano de Pormenor do Espaço de Restruturação Urbanística de Carcavelos Sul = Layout Plan for the Urban Restructuring Space of South Carcavelos), which is a plan to order the territory of the south of Carcavelos. And the plan goes against other laws that say you can't build 500 meters from the sea. And obviously, this goes against that. But the town hall has decided on its own "Oh, yes, we're going to approve this, even though the law says you can't do this". So there's lots of illegalities here, and then obviously one vote, and they decide we're going to advance the building works. That's when they put all these fences around, so people couldn't see, mainly, I think, because they didn't

want people to be able to see quite as clearly the destruction, so they wouldn't protest. And so, they could start building. Then **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** puts legal action to try to stop them. And it stopped. So, they won the right for it to stop. But the judge who is involved then decided that before the final decision was made, that they would allow everything to keep going, for part of the building work, because apparently it could be replaced if the decision then was against **Alves Ribeiro** (Construction Company) and their building. But obviously, when they cut trees that are over 100 years old, you have to ask, how can you replace that? You know? You can't. You can't bring a 100-year-old tree and put it back, when the decision comes out. So obviously there's a lot of corruption going on, and a lot of financial interests here, and we believe that this town hall has sold this council to the highest bidder, whoever wanted to make more profit, and obviously they have profited as well. Oh, just to say though, but for example, the government has already recommended that this becomes a park to the Camara. But the Camara has to be the one to put in place everything so that it's turned into a park. But in fact, it is more expensive for the Camara and for the taxpayers to allow **Alves Ribeiro** to continue this building work, then it would be if they decided to take back the land and make it a park, because there are European funds in place. So it would be more profitable for the Camara to keep this as a park, even though there's obviously legal complications and having to compensate **Alves Ribeiro**. It is less profitable for them to continue, so it makes no sense.

DC: That's looking at the idea of profit and money, or loss of money, from a purely financial viewpoint, because now as we're entering deeper into Climate Breakdown, Climate Emergency, Biodiversity Emergency, things like this are possibly what can save the future o your children, your future grandchildren, the future of this community, no?
So, I know Portugal did talk at the national level, Portugal did talk about Climate emergency, but they didn't make a full declaration of climate emergency, like other states did. But then also, I'm wondering, at the more local level, at the municipal level, and even at the **Junta Freguesia**, at the council level, was there declarations of emergency, or is that something that you have looked at or explored about maybe trying to get the people to declare emergency, and using that as a starting point to keep this alive?

JS: I don't know a lot how to answer this question, because all the things I heard about emergency, and loss of biodiversity, and problems of climate change here in the municipality, is just as a greenwashing strategy, to hide up the real problems. It's one of the municipalities that organize more things about conferences, about the climate, and sustainability, and stuff, It

just feels like green capitalism, as a field to emerge into real problems that are, once again, getting highlighted. We have Nova SBE (Nova School of Business and Economics), one of the biggest named universities in Portugal, really recent, of economics, right here, right next to this place, that don't have any declaration about this crime, and probably has people involved into them. And then, they have organized conferences, Conferências do Estoril (Estoril Conferences), where there is a lot of people around the world and stuff that is like what we are trying to do here, connecting roots of international people with local fights. But there is just a superficial way to say to the world that they are doing that when It's really superficial and with a lot of financial interests, once again.

IS: Regarding climate change, I feel like Portugal has a history of not being very good at prevention. It's more like "Oh no, the disaster's happened now, what do we do?" I think it's just another case of that, Basically, in this country. But I can say that living here, recently, there have been some storms that have been unlike anything. I've lived here my whole life. There have been storms here recently that have been unlike anything I've seen before, with sudden flooding, because it starts raining, and in half an hour, there's a river of water going down my streets. You can feel that it's creeping up on us. But a lot of people are still unaware of how dramatic it's going to become. And of course, this is one of the last green spaces close to the ocean, all the way from Lisbon, all the way up to Cascais. Then Sintra does have some green areas there. But we really need this area here, to protect the coast. For example, the buildings that are built here, the **Quinta de São Gonçalo**, which is next to **Quinta dos Ingleses,** I know for a fact from people who have built some of the buildings here, **t**hat if you dig deep enough, we are building on water. So everything they're building here in **Quinta dos Ingleses**, surely, if they're going to have five floors underground, of parking or whatever, It's very precarious, you know? It's built on foundations that have water underneath them. It's very movable. It's not something that makes a lot of sense. It only makes sense to people who are thinking about profits and obviously building these luxury apartments that some people have said will go for 4 million euros. This is not for the population that lives here. It's just going to increase the amount of people. They want to cover most of this in concrete. And of course, that's going to cause more flooding, and less stability. There's just so many reasons for this not to go ahead regarding Climate change, and overall well-being of the population who live here. It really makes no sense. In terms of a climate emergency, I don't think they've declared that here, they haven't. but we've heard that there's tornadoes now in Alentejo, and these crazy things happening. I don't think the territorial planning of Portugal is very well done. For example, you

hear about cities like Paris, and even Madrid, where they're taking areas that were once full of concrete, and they're making new gardens and planting lots of trees.For example, I lived in London, and in London, there's so many parks, and there's a lot of green areas, and it's actually quite good, I would say, for the size of the city.And here in Lisbon we have some green areas, but the planting is so poorly made, and this is just another example, you know, like, this is the last really big, 52 hectares of green, and we have the town hall, the mayor saying "There's nothing green about this place". We're standing here in this amazing place surrounded by green everywhere, there's still quite a bit of green here to save, even though we want to make everything green again, even what's been destroyed. It's unbelievable. He's telling outright lies that it's not green. Come and visit, come and see inside here, come and see at night, you can see the *pirilampos*, fireflies? It's full of fireflies at night, it's beautiful. I've never seen so many fireflies in my life. It's just a really beautiful place and full of birds. We haven't seen that many animals, but obviously they've run away, or they've been removed. But there are traces of rabbits still, so that's nice. You used to see rabbits coming out of the Quinta sometimes at night. So, it's really beautiful. It's crazy that they want to destroy it.

DC: So, moving from that side of what the current situation is, If we start thinking about, almost like dreaming now, about how to win. What processes could happen? What's future scenarios could you see happening to really start to change this, so that the forest stays, and that things actually get better for the wider culture, the wider economic realities of people in Portugal, Everything. I know that this group have been using culture in a very beautiful way to celebrate the magic, having pianos and magical moments happening here in the forest. So, could you tell us a little bit about the dreams and the ways that you think you can win?

JS: Just sharing a fast thought, because I think all of us have a lot of dreams about this place. Not many years ago, there was happening this festival of reggae here, called Musa, that was probably maybe the best reggae festival in Portugal. It was a really big event happening in **Carcavelos** all summer, with a lot of people coming. That was just close to the beach in between the Quinta and the beach, and it was magical. People would camp around **Quinta dos Ingleses** and it was a beautiful way to celebrate Reggae, the way Reggae should be celebrated, with forests, and with the celebration of nature. So there was this big cult that **Camara Cascais** firstly tried to remove from the mind of people, to disconnect this idea of culture and celebration of nature. So one of the dreams would be to recover that big festival, Musa, and having this big

festival of reggae and a lot of artists here celebrating. (Other voice says "Or maybe having our own festivals")

IS: Actually, I was looking at the **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** materials, they have a lot of things online, it's really interesting to look at. They have a whole dreamed project of how the Quinta could be reconfigured. Because obviously the space has been neglected, because nobody has cared enough to keep it a bit more tame, and to prepare it, so that people can do more activities here. But the project that's on the website of **SOS Quinta dos Ingleses** is beautiful, because it predicts museums for some of the historical parts, it predicts a forest school, different kinds of gardens and different kinds of areas. It could be a place full of life and activity, but in the middle of nature, celebrating nature, celebrating the history of the space, instead of something soulless, like, a shopping center and just buildings for millionaires, you know?

AS: This project that exists on the site of SOS was conceived in such a way that people could answer "how do you see"… the situation in relation to trees, or how would you use the Quinta, what would you like to see in it, what kind of vegetation would you like? And so, people answered, and then they created a kind of project that took into account what people dreamt for the Quinta. It's very nice to see all kinds of ideas that people have, like bike paths, or places where children can just run around, or Picnic areas, whatever. Some people gave their inputs as to how they see this space, and how they can use it. And another thing I would like to add too is that this situation of this big piece of woods, next to the beach, it's just magical. You and you can so easily think how the beach very fast gets completely overcrowded, but you can say I'll go and take a swim in the sea, and then I come back, not to the beach because you can't sit there, you come back to the Quinta and enjoy like we are here now, around a nice cloth you just can see and enjoy being here. It's a kind of extension. I see it like that, an extension of the beach and a place where you can rest. People have many ideas about how they would like to use this place.

DC: One factor that I think is often forgotten about, I know we mentioned that there is water under the ground, are the rivers. There is a river going through the Quinta, we have the little Sassoeiros, it's not a very, very big river, it goes up a few kilometers. As I understand, in the past, was there more water in the past? Do people have memories about going there and things happening around that? As we "develop" (entra aspas, in inverted commas), build more of this concrete world, we are destroying the rivers. And the river is beside now the main road, going

up off the marginal (main coastal road), no? And Portugal has a big factor of drought in this climate. So, could you speak a little bit about that river, or memories of how it was in the past?

IS: Well, I know that there was more water, and there used to be animals that would live by the river. There used to be ducks as well that would come down. I don't actually have memories of how it was before, but obviously the drought is undeniable right now, and the river is dry. But even now, if you go and walk there it's full of vegetation, it's full of life. There's the fireflies at night, it's the place where you see the most fireflies, right by the Ribeira (little stream). Oobviously, it would be beautiful if it was in better condition and better taken care of. It's ironic, yesterday we were walking around, and we can see that, for example, St. Julian's, or even if you look at Nova University, instead of considering things that are being talked about all over the world, like native plant species and planting more wild sort of lawn, they have grass. Every day it gets watered and we're running out of water, and they're wasting water. It is criminal.

BS: My father used to tell us that when he was little, he was always going into Quinta dos Gafanhotos, which is a place that was open. It was also a Quinta, but it was open where the Sassoeiros river passed. It was so beautiful. It was like his therapy, literally, when he was so overwhelmed with life, like with little children. And he went there, and it was so beautiful. He always walked with me and my brother, and always told us "We are so lucky, because when I was little, this was all green. Now you can see the green and the concrete coming, coming. We are so lucky that we still see green, because maybe your children will not see any green". He was always telling us this. We really need to stop this process, that they say is Progress, but we know it's destruction for everyone.

CA: That's it. Nature progress is the way. These are the words that I can say to the people, that progress with nature is the way. Alright?

DC: We will finish up soon, but maybe just to share one bit of hope. I think it's always helpful to hear stories of hope, because it helps us imagine that we can win, whatever our local situation or fight is. Recently, just in 2017, and again about the rivers, the indigenous Maori groups in New Zealand, in Aotearoa, I can't pronounce that very well… The Whanganui community were fighting for 140 years for the rights of their river, which they have a spiritual link with. They say "From the mountains to the sea, I am the river, and the river is me". They see themselves

as being people of the river, and vice versa. But after 140 years, they managed to change, after fighting the British system and then the New Zealand system, they won the "Rights of Nature" for their river. Now that's starting to change and move around the world, and other states and communities are starting to see this could be a legal tool to bring about system change. They just say that they have two guardians that represent the community, and they're mandated by the community about what the river needs, and not just the line of where the water is, but the whole basin, the catchment area, the *bacia*. So that all that happens in there has to be okayed by the community who live there, that drink the water, eventually, to keep alive. So, maybe, if the Sassoeiros community were able to nominates two guardians, that could open up maybe a legal process to maybe another way to try to change things and hold on to this space beside the Sassoeiros. I know there's other communities that are starting to make contacts with those other communities, and I think that's part of the challenge, to work at all the levels. To work at the very super local. But then to see others and try to make connections: "Oh, you were able to win there, how did you do that? Could we do that here? Let's try. What works? What doesn't work? Oh, those, that group over there, they might have another tool to help you". So that's just something I think could be maybe helpful? But in finishing up, and firstly, thank you very much for the time, and for having the courage to cross the line, to engage in an illegal action, to open up the space, to invite people to come in, to be in the space again, to see fireflies, or people to walk in a space that was shut off. Hopefully more people will come and support and get involved, and dream about a better future together. But in terms of finishing up maybe. A question of how can the wider international community help the **Quinta dos Ingleses**. Is there things that people in Peru, Brazil, New Zealand, Ireland, Palestine, can do to help you? Or what do you need? How would you like to go forward? There's a few questions there, but maybe we'll just finish now, maybe just one last going around, if you just want to share a little something.

BS: Really, I think our weapon as people is solidarity, always. People around the world can share and connect, because this is not just part of Carcavelos local level, it's part of imperialistic projects that is happening everywhere, and it shows different faces. It can be, being predatory against nature, or can be having genocidal wars, or can be oppressing lots of people. So, we really need to be connected. And maybe if there's a big international voice against this project, Camara Cascais, which is so careful with its public image, and also with the construction (company) of **Alves Ribeiro** that don't want to have his image dirty, maybe they will hold on.

AS: Yeah, I was going to say the same. Maybe the only way now is either in courts, and the courts decide this project cannot go on, that it doesn't have any sense in this 21st century. It was okay in the 80s, now it isn't anymore. That would be one possibility. Then with international support, I think it's shaming **Camara Cascais**, and St. Julian's, and **Alves Ribeiro**. Maybe if they care about what is said about them. Pressure. International solidarity as a means of pressure. That's how I see that it could work, hopefully.

IS: Yeah, there does seem to be kind of a strange movement in Portugal. That is intensifying of Construction companies wanting to build in areas that are protected, or that have been protected up until now, like we have in Tróia, or Seixal. There's quite a few different places. Those all involve the same company, **Alves Ribeiro**, which is a family-owned company. They are the 5th richest family in Portugal. They don't need to make this obscene amount of money, they are very, very rich. And, there does seem to be foreign interest as well in these natural territories in Portugal, especially, for example Tróia. There's a lot of famous names that are buying properties in that area, and they're trying to kind of shut out the local population. I know from people who go there on holiday that you can't go to the supermarket there, it costs four times as much as any other supermarket, and that's how they're trying to price people out of these areas and trying to make them exclusive, luxury communities for people who aren't from here. Obviously, we like the international community. Portugal has always been a welcoming place for foreigners. We like to speak other languages and we are a friendly people. It's strange, there seems to be this kind of takeover of the best natural spaces in Portugal. It's good that different communities become aware and come together to try and have more power in numbers. What we need is numbers. What we've done coming in here… You said we did something illegal. Well, we don't see it as illegal, and that's why we're here. We are quite calm about what we've done. Because it's what we used to do, you know, we used to come in here, it used to be open, and now they just put these fences as if to say, oh, now you can't come in, but it was still private property before, and people use it for decades. So it's not anything different to what was being done before. By coming in and showing people that it's possible to come in and claim the space for themselves, because they are from this land, and they do have access to it, and they do have a right to it. The Constitution of Portugal says that we have a right to live somewhere with good conditions and to have a good life where we live. We don't have to accept this invasion of people who want to build and make money and then leave, and leave everything destroyed. We believe that we do have power as the people, you know? All the people in the town halls, they are mandated by us. We vote for them to govern. We pay them tax to govern the land, and they

can't just do everything they want, and then leave, and leave everything destroyed. That's what we're trying to show people, so that they will join us, that they will fight for their rights. I feel like everywhere in the world, there is a lot of a need for people to disobey the governing powers, because the governing powers are really not working for the people right now. And in terms of international community, of course, solidarity. I think people everywhere should be fighting like this for nature, and for the spaces they live in, so that people can live well in a good place, and everybody has the right to that.

JS: I think you said it all. I think all these problems around the world has a common nemesis, of all of us. So, solidarity is super important, and it's super important to identify that the enemy is common, and we have to give it names, to know how to fight him.

TA: Basically, we are open and friendly. But we are not for selling. So, we need that everybody talks all about this. To speak and participate, and talk with other persons, because solidarity International is very important for us in this moment.

BS: I just wanted to say also that solidarity can mean coming together with the different people, with different histories of resistance and learning with them. Because I think here, in Portugal and Europe, people still believe so much in institutions. What is happening here happened already centuries ago in the Global South. Indigenous people are fighting for centuries for the forests, the rivers. Now it's happening in our country, but people have been fighting much longer ago. Maybe they can transmit more courage to cross more lines, because we are doing nothing wrong. We are fighting for the life of all.

DC: Well, thank you very much, everybody. Muito Obrigado (Thank you very much). You are the guardians of this forest, and this river, and you are brave. It's beautiful, so thank you very much, and Viva a Quinta.

C. Grassroots Activism

C.1 Lisbon walk for a Free Palestine

(Transcript of 5-minute speech I made outside the Israeli embassy, after the "Lisbon walk for a Free Palestine" event June 15th 2025. Video is publicly viewable on "Lisbon for Palestine" & "We are Nature" social media channels[257])

Shalom, Salam, Síochán, Paz, Peace.

Good evening to the people in the Israeli embassy in Lisbon. We come to you today in peace. We have marched here today because we are very angry that there is illegal ethnic cleansing going on. There is apartheid going on. There is war crimes going on. There is genocide going on. This is not anti-Semitic. This is not anything to do against people who are Jewish, not in the slightest. We are against all forms of hate. (Crowd clap and roar). We stand for respect and tolerance for every single human being, regardless of colour, race, religion, sexuality, whatever. Everyone has the right to a good existence.

Israel, many of us have been in Auschwitz. Many of us know the Jewish story. But, when we say "Never Again", it was for everybody! Not just the Jewish people! (Crowd clap and roar). And, if you really understood your history, you would respect that.

As well. Today, many of us have walked from the sea to the river, to the centre of criminal massacre and genocide. We would like to remind you that we stand with many Jewish people. We remember the words of Gabor Maté (Crowd clap and roar). An Auschwitz survivor who was crying because of the horrors of what your state is doing. Jewish Women like Naomi Klein, Amy Goodman, and many other people, Israelis, like Ilan Pappé. Everybody who is standing up for justice and against the horrors. (More names come from crowd: Finkelstein…) Everybody… the list is so, so, so long. There are many people. We stand with and behind them. We could spend 3 days listing all the names. (Crowd clap) The important thing is that we learn the lessons. The lessons that they said never again. We are reminded that when it came to Nuremburg after World War II, the people said "Oh, I was just doing my job". This rises up the question of complicity.

[257] https://www.instagram.com/p/DPQ2XxfDuPV/

Finally, the European states are saying the word Genocide. Last week, Spain and Ireland have used that word. Mary Robinson of the Elders is saying Genocide. They are calling it out for what it is. (Crowd clap and roar) We have walked today because we care. But also, to point, to tell you, to remind you, that something has shifted in the last few days. People have started calling it genocide. But as well, Germany are now standing on the side of Palestine. That is massive. (Crowd clap) We see the Cultural movements that are trying to boycott and being silenced, like Kneecap and Fontaines D.C. (Crowd clap) We see more groups and artists standing behind and with them. You know the game is over, and that's why you have attacked Iran. That is why you attack anything, to take attention away from what is going on.

Why did we march today? Because there are 10,000 people trying to come across North Africa, to Cairo, to come to the Rafah border. In peace, to bring food and aid into the people, the children... The people that you are killing. The world has woken up, and you know that. You know it's only a matter of time before all the rest of the world is also onside. We see Barcelona breaking trade links with Tel Aviv. (Crowd clap and roar) We see Italian cities doing the same. Every city of Europe will do the same. We will break your system through boycott. (Crowd clap and roar – hard to hear)

Many people have walked today from many cultures. Some of us are Irish, we know. The Irish who are here today, we are the ones who survived the genocide, who survived the famine in our land. They call it famine as well, and we know it wasn't. So, we know the games you play. But now we know, that you know the game is over, and it's only a matter of time.

So, yeah, complicity. To the workers in this embassy. There will come a time when you have to make the hard decision. Do you stay or go? (Speaking now in Portuguese, here is translation) For the police who are here today also. Complicity. When will the day come to say its correct or not, to support a genocide. (young kid corrects speaker on correct pronunciation of G word). The day will come. We will have the equivalent of Nuremberg. It will probably be in Cape Town, South Africa. The South Africa regime fell. The Irish regime fell.

The Palestinians will have peace, and we know that. We know it's only matter of time.

So, Free Palestine (Crowd clap and roar)

C.2 Shaping the Future: Strategies and Challenges in Climate Activism

The final draft submission of the PhD thesis was December 31st 2025, then there was a wait for jury response. Finally, there was the call for corrections in June 2026. Three small public sharing from the work happened in early 2026, so all are shared here. All came from previous work done on the WAVE project, around the themes of youth climate action and climate justice. The Portugal WAVE team invited me to give a webinar in February. I was then interviewed by them. From the work I was asked to do a video interview for with the ECCOS team in Portugal.

OPEN WAVE WEBINAR : Shaping the Future: Strategies and Challenges in Climate Activism

- 11 Feb 2026
- 18:30 Lisbon | 19:30 CET
- Via Zoom | 1 hour | Free participation

Facilitated by Duncan Crowley, Irish climate justice activist from Portugal's Degrowth Network, past co-president of ECOLISE, action researcher at ISCTE and the University of Lisbon, and PhD student in Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories. Together with Duncan, we will explore key challenges climate movements face today and practical approaches to build stronger, more effective action at local and European levels.

PDF of presentation available publicly. PDF has many links to resources, videos, podcasts, articles and more.

Blog report: https://wearenature2030.wordpress.com/2026/02/10/shaping-the-future/
Video or presentation (1 hour): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylbuzRNsh64
PDF report: https://wearenature2030.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/crowley-wave-feb-2026_compressed.pdf

- Social media sharing:

Insta: https://www.instagram.com/p/DUbslgBje2S/
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7425991886382923776/
Facebook: https://tinyurl.com/sduf4p6m

C.3 What does it mean to win? Climate Action with Duncan Crowley

The WAVE Portugal group interviewed me for their final podcast, number 32. Marie Sztana[258] from Dublin and myself met in Setubal to have a lovely chat about activism, architecture, life. The podcast was recorded in March and published, or "dropped" in podcast speak, on April 8th.

- What does it mean to win? Climate Action with Duncan Crowley

What can rivers teach us about how we create change?

In this episode of WAVE–Arrábida, we sit down with Duncan Crowley - an architect, action researcher, and climate activist exploring how communities respond to ecological crises through regenerative and nature-inspired approaches.

Together, we explore what it means to rethink climate action, from the ground up - moving beyond linear solutions and learning instead from living systems. Duncan shares insights from his work in climate justice, community-led initiatives, and research, inviting us to consider new ways of organizing, collaborating, and imagining the future.

The podcast notes linked to my short 4-minute play "The cloud that kills the river" on Insta[259].

- WAVE Arrabida

Wave Portugal Linktree: https://linktr.ee/WAVE_arrabida
The WAVE Arrabida podcast: https://open.spotify.com/show/6Y2tT3B2m7sVoSatz39d8l
The WAVE Arrabida podcast, #32: What does it mean to win? Climate Action with Duncan Crowley https://open.spotify.com/episode/3XtIliX9iTgTJWpQEwuUbf

- Social media sharing:

Insta: https://www.instagram.com/p/DXOkRaGChxY
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7454841957610266624/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/100001447129203/posts/26748980304733511/

[258] @life.on.marsz on Instagram:
[259] The cloud that kills the river https://www.instagram.com/reels/DT8kNmcgPXN/

C.3 Why Modern Society Feels So Wrong?

Arising from connections made with the WAVE Portugal community, I was interviewed by Guilherme Garcia for his ECCOS YouTube channel. They selected the video title and released a number of reels on their social media channels.

- Why Modern Society Feels So Wrong?

Architect, researcher and founder of the "we are nature" movement[260], Duncan dedicates his work to exploring the relationship between communities, cities, citizen participation and ecological regeneration.

This episode also marks the beginning of a new phase for ECCOS - we will continue to publish conversations in Portuguese, but we will also bring in more international voices and episodes in English, thus creating more bridges between Portugal and the global regenerative movement.

In this conversation we talk about regeneration, degrowth, urban transformation, community and a simple but profound idea:

We are not separate from nature. We are nature!

- ECCOS: Together, we are Echoes of Ecology!

Youtube vídeo: Why Modern Society Feels So Wrong? (1 hour)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuTfndTFgOw

- Social media sharing:

Insta: https://www.instagram.com/p/DZP9pU5DB5l/
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/duncancrowley_why-modern-society-feels-so-wrong-activity-7471075441483796480-OKZ8
Facebook: https://tinyurl.com/3wky3kb5

[260] I am not the founder of this movement, merely identify with it and use the phrase, inspired by Isa Fremeaux & Jay Jordan's quote, activism and work: "We are nor fighting for nature. WE ARE NATURE defending itself"

D. UrbanA

D.1 UrbanA Challenge: Postcard from the Future (2050)

Life in the sustainable and just city begins with the dawn chorus, listening to the birds that live around the rivers, all the trees, all the fruit trees that are in this neighbourhood. This is after the great transition happened in the last 30 years. Now in the year 2050, Things are a lot better than they were back in those dark times of climate breakdown and climate emergency. The change happened because normal people just said, we've had enough, we have to do something. And they found ways to start just changing their own backyard, becoming part of their communities, reconnecting, developing visions of what this future sustainable and just city would look like and then actually taking concrete steps to make it all happen. There was tough times, there was challenges. But people came together, the resilience that was shown was incredible. And people found that community is all it took. All it took was to get to know your neighbours, at all the different scales, as well though. So inspired by the *Tekmîl*[261] process that came from Rojava, out in Syria, in those dark times. People started organizing in assemblies, using the sociocracy model, from the street, the block, the neighbourhood, and then into the municipality, the wider city and the bioregion. And that ability for people to participate in the construction of the future that they wanted, that was the key to making these sustainable and just cities. And it sparked and it grew everywhere. The trees, the life came back so much, the birds.. People watching the birds on their balconies. Watching Mr. And Mrs. Blackbird coming down and eating food, other little birds flying around. People were starting to eat the city, starting to eat their neighbourhoods, the fruit trees, the physalis that were growing, everything. People were involved in the political process. It went so much further than how it had been before, when people voted for this political party or that one, the ones that you least dislike, to an actual process of people engaging with each other about the issues that they want, to facilitate the change. It was a strange process. But it had to be done, because the alternative was the end of the human species. And once people realized that, it kicked in, the spiritual dimensions of that kicked in. And people found that they could solve the problems, just by getting together, and working it all out, together, at all the different scales.

[261] *Tekmîl* is the Kurdish word for report and is the key for the fractal communication process of assemblies, as explored in other chapter of the phd, section…

Postcard from the Future (2050) – Analysis & Context

This was my contribution to the 13th episode of the UrbanA podcast[262], which was published on March 1st 2021, entitled "Participation and the Distribution of Urban Space". In the last 3 minutes of the podcast my sharing was played. Image 40 captures the place and time of day for this imagination journey: The dawn, overlooking neighbouring rooftops, Parede, Cascais.

It was my response to the UrbanA Challenge, which was a call out to the CoP for an audio responce to the question 'What is a sustainable and just city?' in a maximum of 3 minutes. Inspired by a number of styles, I felt a postcard from the future would be an apt sharing. I imagined what my home and neighbourhood would look like, feel like, sound like, even taste like in the year 2050, and I shared that vision. I made the recording from our home at about 7am in the morning, I start by capturing the sounds of the Blackbirds, who were singing the dawn chorus around me. At this time in February 2021, we had a regular couple, whom I called Mr and Mrs Blackbird, who often visited our balcony and for whom I left food out for. (see below section for more on that topic; connecting with the (non-human) locals). The podcasts main section was an interview by UrbanA & ICLEI's Sophia Silverton, with Isabell Eberlein and Denis Petri from Changing Cities[263]. The last section, where I speak, was introduced by the normal podcast hosts Ian Cook and Kate McGlin from The CEU Podcast Library, who then were part of the Central European University, which was then based in Budapest, Hungary.



Figure 0.2: The magic of the dawn (Author, 2021)

[262] UrbanA Podcasts page on wiki: https://wiki.sustainablejustcities.eu/UrbanA_Podcasts & Podcast on CEU: https://podcasts.ceu.edu/content/participation-and-distribution-urban-space & Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/episode/57GTLpB9DDmuIxViSZf79l?si=oRphatTPTPa72PbhMr916w
[263] Changing cities https://changing-cities.org/

Postcard from the Future (2050) - Autoethnographic Assessment

Feeling at Home

Imagining a beautiful and better future, in all the senses, is what drives the work. Having engaged in deep processes to imagine alternative futures, on a number of occasions, through guided meditations with the ECOLISE world and the wider ecosystem (Transition, The work that reconnects and Regenerative Development), these processes lead us to imagine chiefly the components of WHAT and HOW. The basic human needs of belonging are major drivers here: The need to connect to place, to feel a sense of belonging, a connection with the physical place and with the people that live there, to be to an active participant in the ongoing story of building the unique and special culture in that place. To have great friends to share incredible experiences with, to be part of a community, to be there for the highs and the lows, to be able to contribute to building, maintaining things and facing challenges. To connect with the natural world of your place; the waterways, greenspaces, areas where certain bushes and trees give fruits at special times of the year, or where super scented flowers bloom in spring. Or where you come to recognise birds, or find out where dragonflies or octopuses live, or know where and when to look to best watch dolphins jumping at sea. To feel you are in the right place, that it nourishes you and that you help nourish it. To know where the place and people have come from, and are trying to get to. Where the place, the people, the nature, the story, all begin to feel like an extension of yourself and your family. To feel at home and to love your home, at all the scales.

When imagining what a transformed future might be like, we first start with where. Where are we? Do we find ourselves in the same “home” we live now, is that the apartment, house, or shared accommodation we now live in, or does our future involve us living somewhere completely different? Scale matters here, is “home” the building, the village, urban neighbourhood, or something bigger, are there limits for each person’s sense of home? Is it the same town, region or country, or somewhere totally different? For such processes, you need to be in a safe space and led by a competent facilitator who can gently slow your head down and allow you to get into a more relaxed state, to be led into a meditative trance, to be brought on a time traveling journey. With the group we share the same values and work with, we imagine moving through time, having seen our work make greater and greater impact, from one year to another, over a number of years, even decades to where we have helped bring about the great transition, where the world that we dreamt of and worked for, has finally come into being. At times, in such moments, I didn’t find myself being at home in the place I was then living, I

imagined myself back in my grandmother's home, the small farmhouse in Lahinch, in the West Coast of Clare, where my mother had lived before moving to Dublin, and in the surrounding lands that many of my people have come from. In my meditation to the future, I had returned there, I was living there, waking up there. In many ways it was the same place, but in other ways, that it had changed, as if extra layers had been added to it, that it had been improved, become fuller. In other later processes I found myself imagining myself waking up in the apartment I now live in, in Parede, where I have lived since 2020, having moved here from Ajuda when COVID hit. For this **Postcard from the Future** exercise, I was in Parede in 2050.

As I was slowly waking up in my bed, In Parede, in 2050, I was taking in all the things I have been connecting with since 2020, but that I imagined I had developed greater feeling for and relationships with in the transformed future. It was dark, but getting light, the dawn of the day. It was dark and there was general quietness from the manmade world. But "Life in the sustainable and just city begins with the dawn chorus", the birds were singing, to greet the day, go about their daily routine, to get to work. Beautiful songs were been sung by the blackbird on the balcony, somewhere else where distinct chirps of the Black redstart and somewhere else was the diverse array of sounds of a starling. All magical. From my bed and with my eyes closed still, I could hear the Blackbird's short quitter chirp, and even the little quick steps as he, Mr Blackbird, quickly danced along the balcony railing to over where the seeds were left out in a bowl. He's stopped. A few more short chirps. The coast is clear. Then the short whistle sing song, to tell his partner, Mrs Blackbird, that all is good. I open my eyes and watch the morning ritual. She flies down and lands beside him on the railing directly above where the bowl of seeds are on the balcony floor. Ever vigilant, he is keeping watch. She flies down first. She eats some seeds, potters and looks about, eats a few more than happily flies off. Then it is his turn. He flies down and does the same. Enough eaten, he flies back up to the railing, sings a quick little bar and he's gone.

Over the 30 years, there has been an increase in the birdsong about my home, as there are more birds living here, as well as more types. We have seen the return of many who nearly died off in the darker years of near biodiversity collapse of "the twenties". In 2050, the surrounding landscape of the territory my home exists is so much more lush, for all "the birds that live around the rivers, all the trees, all the fruit trees that are in this neighbourhood".

The meditation into the future asks us to explore other senses too. What do we smell when we wake up, how does the air feel, is it healthy and clean? We imagine getting out of bed and starting our day. How do we feel? Are we woken up by an alarm and noise. To we get up, rushing like crazy? Is our mobile the first thing we check, to make sure no important emails or

WhatsApp messages have been missed since going to sleep? Or do we wake with calm, go out to the balcony to greet the rising sun over the surrounding rooftops of neighbouring apartment blocks? How do we feel as we begin our day, how do we greet our partner? Do we wake and rise together, or stay in bed for a little cuddle first? How do we feel as we walk about our home, is it a happy home, full of love? Where do we get our water from? From the tap, or the blue bottles left out yesterday. What about breakfast, where has the food come from. What time of the year is it, is there in season fruit, has some of it come from the balcony and plants in the home? Has more of it come from the local community garden we spend many hours in, with friends of all ages from the neighbourhood? Does more of it come from the food cooperative we are part of that we have sometimes gone to help plant or harvest things, or to spend time there with the people we now have as good friends? Perhaps our lovely fresh bread was given to us as a present from a neighbour's child, made with great care in the local school where food and health are now core subjects on the national education curriculum?

From the home, we move to the world around it. What has changed in those 30 years? The river that used to be very unloved and overlooked has become the main axis for life in the transformed neighbourhood, to bring precious water to the many new planted areas, but also as a cool and lush route to follow up from the coast to get deeper inland to more projects and communities. The neighbourhood has been transformed by agroecological forests, or agroforestry systems. There are more wild areas and social areas with benches and free libraries under the canopies of diverse fruit trees, there are loads of different types of edible plants and berry bushes around the seating areas. The transformed landscape in 2050 is one where "People were starting to eat the city, starting to eat their neighbourhoods, the fruit trees, the physalis that were growing, everything". In fact, the new ecological land use system in the water catchment areas of the Marianas River has been so successful due to the leadership of its 2 river guardians, that the streams water is now so clean that it is drinkable again. People can even drink the city.

Regenerative & Community-led local development

Moving from the what to the how, we see how local communities took gradual steps between 2020 and 2050 to bring about this wonderful transformation. How did it first happen? Because with the increase of ecological and societal collapse during "those dark times of climate breakdown and climate emergency", people became more vulnerable and scared. Scared of worsening food and water shortages, of spikes in violent attacks and the old economic system

crashing to where people's hard-earned savings were of little or no value: "There was tough times, there was challenges... The change happened because normal people just said, we've had enough, we have to do something". Quickly the idea of system change moved from being a crazy idea from the margins of society, to something incredibly practical and desirable: "It was a strange process. But it had to be done, because the alternative was the end of the human species... People found that they could solve the problems, just by getting together, and working it all out, together, at all the different scales". People moved from the previously cynical old ways of doing politics "to an actual process of people engaging with each other about the issues that they want, to facilitate the change… inspired by Rojava, in Syria, people started organizing in assemblies, using the sociocracy model, from the street, the block, the neighbourhood, and then into the municipality, the wider city and the bioregion". Despite the initial massive challenges, "people found that community is all it took". People begun to take greater responsibility, for themselves, their community, their rights, their safety and security, their future. In Portugal, the old refrain of "*Mas é Cultural Pá*" (It's cultural, man) begun to be less bandied about, instead people would come together to see what their local world needed, to see what their neighbours realities, fears, hopes and dreams were, to find out what practical skills, services and resources they possessed, and equally what ones they were in need of most. From this "they found ways to start just changing their own backyard, becoming part of their communities, reconnecting, developing visions of what this future sustainable and just city would look like and then actually taking concrete steps to make it all happen".

While life is infinitely more enjoyable and fulfilling in 2050, and most people would agree that they have a far better life-work balance than they had 30 years previous, it does not mean that there is little to do. Living in a post-capitalist and post-growth society means that people have a "living wage" of sorts, not exactly the "Universal Basic Income" (UBI) of direct payment of bank cash to your account, but credit within the local system that allows for exchange of goods and services in the local ecosystem, which is added to by doing work in the areas that the communities need, as circumstances dictate: Fixing things after a storm or upcycling old energy infrastructure, or leading education modules in the local school for kids or evening school for the wider community. Or participating in the local artistic and cultural community spaces, where so much of the community explores visions of the future and shares stories together. Things never stop, there is always an excitement about working, living, or socialising together. Life in 2050 is driven by a collective sense of adventure, to live life to the full, to serve the wider community and enjoy this short time together. What a world away from the twenties.

D.2 UrbanA Related Publications

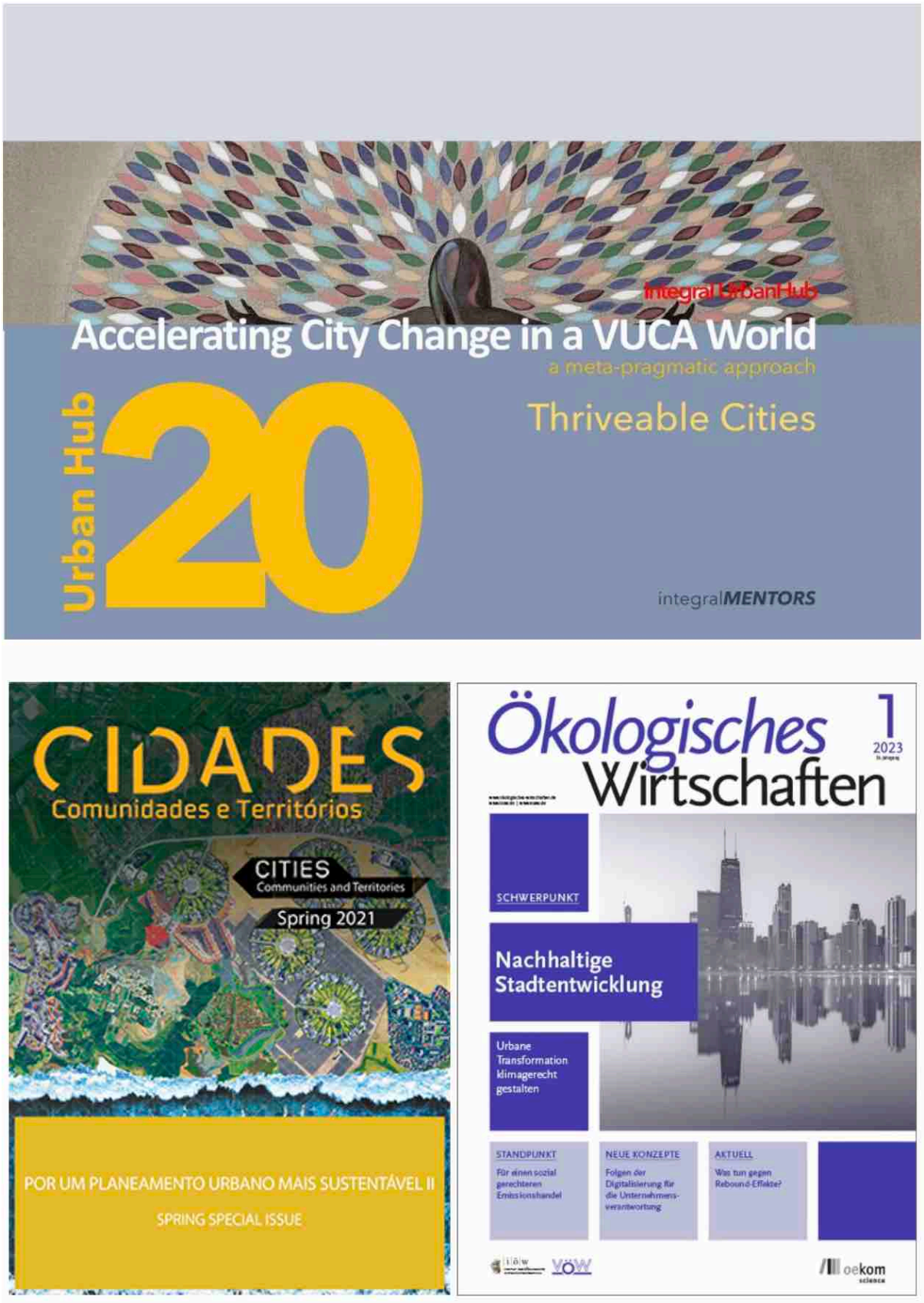


Figure 0.3: UrbanA Publications (Urban Hub 20, 2020; Cidades, 2021; Ökologisches Wirtschaften, 2023)

E. ECOLISE

E.1 ECOLISE Members, July 2025

Table 17 ECOLISE member groups, July 2025

European Networks	Members creating a community-led movement across Europe.	
1	Baltic Ecovillage Network (BEN)	Sweden
2	European Community Organising Network (ECON)	Slovakia
3	Global Ecovillage Network Europe (GEN EU)	Scotland, UK
4	ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability	Germany
5	RIPESS Europe – Social Solidarity Economy Europe	Luxembourg
6	Transition Network	England, UK
National Networks	**Members supporting community-led initiatives at the national level**	
1	Centre for Ecological Learning Luxembourg (CELL)	Luxembourg
2	Collectif pour une Transition Citoyenne (Citizen Transition Collective)	France
3	Danish Ecovillage Network - Landsforeningen for Økosamfund (LØS)	Denmark
4	Estonian Ecovillage Network MTU	Estonia
5	Evolving Cycles	Greece
6	Finnish Permaculture Association	Finland
7	Finnish Village Movement	Finland
8	GEN Germany (GEN GE)	Germany
9	GEN Switzerland	Switzerland
10	GEN Netherlands	Netherlands
11	Institutul de Cercetare în Permacultură din România	Romania
12	Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)	Ireland
13	Jalotus – National Transition Hub,	Finland
14	National Network of Local Action Groups in the Czech Republic – NNLAG	Czechia
15	Permaculture Association	Britain
16	Permaculture Institut e.V	Germany
17	Permaculture Denmark	Denmark
18	Permaculture Sweden	Sweden
19	PVN Albania	Albania
20	Red de Transición España (Spanish Transition Network)	Spain
21	Red Iberica de Ecoaldeas (Iberian Ecovillage Network)	Spain
22	Rete Italiana villaggi ecologici (Italian Ecovillage Network)	Italy
23	Romania in tranzitie (Romania in Transition)	Romania
24	Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN)	UK
25	Stödföreningen för omställningsinitiativ (Transition Initiatives Support Association)	Sweden
26	Sunny Hill	Slovenia
27	Transition Belgium	Belgium
28	Transition Italy	Italy

29	Zeleno Doba (Green Age Serbia)	Serbia
Local Initiatives	**Members working for change in their local communities.**	
1	Liberta Care Foundation ()	Netherlands
2	Omställning Järna (Transition Järna)	Sweden
3	Salies en Transition (Salies in Transition)	France
Specialist Organisations	**Members engaged in education, advocacy, capacity building and development to support transformative community-led action.**	
1	Arkbound Foundation	Scotland, UK
2	Carraig Dulra (Rock of Nature)	Ireland
3	Iscte Centre for International Studies - University Institute of Lisbon (CEI)	Portugal
4	Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)	Wales, UK
5	CULTIVATE Living and Learning	Ireland
6	*Dutch* Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT)	Netherlands
7	Ecodorp Boekel ()	Netherlands
8	FCUL – Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon	Portugal
9	Gaia Education	Scotland, UK
10	Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)	Scotland, UK
11	Resilience Earth	Spain
12	Schumacher Institute for Sustainable Systems	England, UK
13	Solutions21	Belgium
14	Terra Livre (Free Earth)	Romania

From page https://ecolise.eu/who-we-are/members/

E.2 Message from the ECOLISE co-president (2022)

Acting as ECOLISE co-president in 2022, I presented this speech at the ECOLISE 2022 General Assembly (GA) on May 20 2022. It was an online event. Full message was shared publicly on MEDIUM[264] and social media channels. The posts references are shared at end.

Message from the ECOLISE co-president

Welcome and thanks.

Good morning, everybody. Let me start by offering a warm welcome and thank you to all those that are here today at ECOLISE'S 8th official General Assembly, our 2022 GA. I'd like to offer a special welcome to those for whom this is their first GA. Normally our GA's have been 2-day events in hybrid format, our community physically meeting face to face somewhere, accompanied by those participating fully online. All went online for the last 2 years due to COVID. This GA has just one busy day for us to deal with the business at hand. I'd also like us to remember that there are some friends who have been here with us in the past, who are not here today. Special thank you to Eamon O'Hara who helped bring this body into being, who has worked tirelessly to keep it going.. He is now stepping back a bit, but this is just a changing of the chapters. Thank you Eamon.

Why are we here?

In 2014 the European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability came into being; ECOLISE is a network of networks. But it's important we take a moment to reflect on why we came together in the first place. Our home, planet earth, is being radically altered by our oil addiction and loss of connection with nature, so much that last April's IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report stated: **'Now or never' if world is to stave off climate disaster**. Put simply, unless we humans are capable of quickly bringing about total system change, it could soon be the death of our own species. So, why do we do what we do? As **Isabelle Frémeaux** and **Jay Jordan** of **The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination** put it so beautifully during the COP 21 at Paris in 2015: **"We are not fighting for nature, WE ARE NATURE defending itself".**

[264] https://medium.com/communities-for-future/message-from-the-ecolise-co-president-f9751b46b606

Where are we at?

As many here know from last year, ECOLISE is in a challenging place. At last year's GA it came to light to many outside ECOLISE's core of council and team, including myself, that there were serious problems within the organisation. The advice offered to the new council of 11, and a divided and dysfunctional team, was to go into cocoon. We heeded this wise suggestion. Inspired by the transformation process of the butterfly, the wider network and world has seen little external activity from us, but a huge amount of internal activity has happened, to address our conflicts, redesign organizational structures, and experiment with communication processes to create safer spaces for dialogues to happen. Tough and challenging truths were shared as we began to listen to ourselves more deeply, together. Some people left the team and many left the council for different reasons (We've gone from 11, to 9, to 7, and now only 2 will stay on for the second year of their 2-year term). But, in sharing these sad realities, we have also seen a turning point happen within, in recent weeks. 3 new people have joined the team and lots of structural changes have begun, which we will explore with you here today.

Remembering our journey.

In 2019 something beautiful erupted. Thanks to **Greta Thunberg** in Sweden, **Vanessa Nakate** in Uganda and thousands of young climate strikers around the world, "**Fridays for Future**" was born. At Waterloo Bridge and other locations in London, intergenerational and intersectional communities of **Extinction Rebellion** showed that direct action still gets results. In 2020 ECOLISE had a wonderful, hope-filled GA, where our Keynote speaker **Daniel Wahl** urged us to remember E.F. Schumacher's wisdom: **"Perhaps we cannot raise the winds. But each of us can put up the sail, so that when the wind comes we can catch it"** and in September that year ECOLISE launched "**Communities for Future**", our action platform to mainstream regenerative and transformative community-led action. It really felt like our time had arrived.

Then we had our 2021 GA, conflicts escalated and much of the work stopped.
Now GA 2022… Together, here and now, we decide what our next step is to be…

Deepening our impact

ECOLISE has a superb toolkit ready for the service of humanity, but how useful are we really being? How many of the climate striker kids have heard of us? How many of those working in the policy labyrinth at Brussels know of us, or our solutions from the field? How many

communities in our European countries actually participate in the "**European Day of Sustainable Communities**"? How many of the thousands of people from our 49 different member groups actually participated in drafting our 6 **policy papers** we submitted to the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee) in Brussels last September? How many of us have read the **17 keys for Sustainable Just Cities** that our UrbanA project helped create? Does our work in any way help our members reach their goals? Can citizens at the edges easily be part of "Communities for Future"? Could ECOLISE be better, work better, serve better? If yes, what needs to be nudged to allow ECOLISE all it can be? Dear ECOLISE member groups and people thinking of standing for this year's council, how can you and your member group(s) be part of this regenerative transformation? What is needed for your group(s) to go further, building on improved interactions with other member groups in the ECOLISE community? By strengthening the network within ECOLISE, how best can we support the wider climate movements? From there, what's needed to bring about a global eco-social just transition?

An invitation to the fantastic adventure

ECOLISE is a very diverse community, with different roots and lived experiences, but have we a shared value system yet? Have we adequate and safe enough spaces and moments, both online and off, to meet, share, listen, learn, work and celebrate together? Can we agree on what we stand together for? Can we agree on what we stand together against? Can we collectively tackle the difficult question of **'What would it mean to win?'.** We need to not only "fight the good fight", but to fight truly believing that we will win. As **Angela Davis** said, **"You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time."** ECOLISE needs to tell itself and the world better stories, more appealing, adventurous, exciting and intriguing stories. Stories that make you want to just dive right in, roll up the sleeves and get involved. To be part of something that makes you feel fully alive. ECOLISE needs to make this both desirable and accessible, so that all wishing to be part of this **fantastic adventure**, can do so. For this, we need better dreams and more magic. For this we need to improve what we are doing here in Europe, but also as our place in an interconnected and interdependent planetary species embedded in its beautiful home. In fact, it was only by having those difficult conversations with ourselves over the last year that we started to become that which we need to be, to truly stand alongside those already at the front line of the climate justice battle. To win means connecting again to the indigenous wisdom we all belonged to, not so long ago. To re-member, to re-connect ourselves to our places. It also means building bridges of understanding

and solidarity across continents, languages and till now, unseen prejudices. We are one, our home is one, planet earth is one, mother earth is one.

Long live Mother Earth. VIVA LA PACHAMAMA

NOTES:

- Guardian: IPCC report: 'now or never' if world is to stave off climate disaster https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/04/ipcc-report-now-or-never-if-world-stave-off-climate-disaster
- The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination — Climate Games, COP 21 — Paris 2015 https://labo.zone/index.php/climate-games/?lang=en
- The Ecologist: COP21 actions go ahead: 'We are not defending nature — we are nature defending itself' https://theecologist.org/2015/nov/28/cop21-actions-go-ahead-we-are-not-defending-nature-we-are-nature-defending-itself
- Thousands block roads in Extinction Rebellion protests across London https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/15/thousands-expected-in-london-for-extinction-rebellion-protest
- ECOLISE General Assembly | 3 and 4 April 2020. *Tim Clarke*, GAIA https://www.gaiaeducation.org/blog/57009-ecolise-general-assembly-3-and-4-april
- Over 400 events in 14 countries mark the 5th European Day of Sustainable Communities https://communitiesforfuture.org/edsc/over-400-events-in-14-countries-mark-the-5th-european-day-of-sustainable-communities/
- Diverse voices & policy makers attend inaugural Communities for Future policy week https://communitiesforfuture.org/policy/diverse-voices-policy-makers-attend-inaugural-communities-for-future-policy-week/
- 17 keys for Sustainable Just Cities that our UrbanA project https://sustainablejustcities.eu/keys
- Turbulence 1 — 'What would it mean to win?'. June 2007 http://www.turbulence.org.uk/index.html@p=6.html

E.3 The Cloud that kills the river (2023)

Actors:

- Friend 1 Luis
- Friend 2 Pavel
- Friend 3 Siobhán
- Mister Meaney Hamish
- Mammy Anna

SCENE 1 – Somewhere in the present, by a lovely river

Friend 1 Aaahhhhh lets go down to the river, look
Aahhhhh, look at the beautiful river and all the trees

Friend 2 Look, look, look…
Watch, if you stay here you'll see a salmon, watch

Friend 1 Ahh look, the salmon and…
theres fishes that have jumped up the river
Ow wowwww, this is so amazing

(our friends cross through the river and look about on the other side)

Friend 2 Ah lets go over here
Oh look, theres hazelnuts,
Yum yum nnyum nnyyummm

(our friends eat some of the nuts)

Friend 1 Ahh look, theres berries over here
Yum yum nnyum nnyyummm

(our friends eat some of the wild berries off the bushes)

Isn't this the best place ever

Friend 2 AAhhhhhh, this is such an amazing place
I love this place sooo much...

Friend 1 This is the best place in the world

>>> BBRRRLLLOOOMMMPPPP (Pause for Time travel moment)

Narrator Now we're going into the future

>>> BBBLLLRRRRBBBBLLLLRRBBLLLHHH (Time Machine noise going into the future)

SCENE 2 – Somewhere in the near future

Mister Meaney — OOOhhhh Yeah Yeah (takes big puff of smoke from cigar..)
I like this place (With a hint of an American accent in his voice)
Its pretty natural..
What this place needs is jobs..
It needs development.
We could build a big data centre over there
Yeah, and then we could make loads of green tech jobs
And all the kids would become millionaires
And they'd want to do start-ups
and become really rich and be like me
and all have their beaches in Miami
Oh yeah,
I think Ill go back to my helicopter

(STAGE NOTE: At this stage Mister Meaney sees the local family who had been playing by the river and he goes over to speak with them)

Mister Meaney — Hey you people

Family — Yes, yes, yes

Mister Meaney — Do you like this place

Family — Yes we do

Mister Meaney — You guys want jobs?

Family — Oh yeah, we'd like some jobs.

Mister Meaney — Ok you guys, trust me, leave it with me, I'll sort you out, OK?

Family — Ok Mister Man, ok, thank you.

Mister Meaney — Ok

AUDIENCE + NARRATOR >>> BBBLLLRRRRBBBBLLLLRRBBBBLLLHHH
(Time Machine noise going further into the future)

SCENE 3 – Somewhere a little bit more in the future

Family - Hey, it's our birthday,
lets go to the river
and have a big party
like every year.
Lets go to the river…

>>> PPHHHRROOSSSHHHH (Suddenly the river is gone - Friends 1 and 2 move about excitedly in the place the river used to be)

Family -	Ehhhhh… Hey, what the hell.
Friend 1	Hey, where's our river gone? Look there's a bit of river here
Friend 2	Uggghhhh, aaahhhh… What's that smell? Ahhhhh that is HORRIBBLLLLEEEEE… Ughh aaggghhhh
Friend 1	It's a dead fish The fish are rotting, they're dead
Friend 2	There's no water here What's happened to our place? Ahhhhhhhh
Mammy	Are you guys ok?
Friend 1	Yeah Mammy… Look look Our river We're here for the party But look the rivers gone The rivers dead What's happening? I'm sooooo saddd This is my favourite place and its dying…
Mammy	It's OK, it's ok
Friend 1	What happened Mammy?
Mammy	Well, remember that man that came that said he was going to give us jobs?
Friend 1	Yeah
Mammy	Well, he built his big data centre

>>> PPPLLLOOOMMMPPPP (Now a big log is placed where the river used to be, to represent the data centre)

Mammy	And it won loads of architectural awards for being a fancy building, with loads of green tech, and LEAD star and all that sort of stuff… Well they took all the water to cool down the data

(Narrator pretends to use mobile phone with free hand)

Because when everybody was putting all their stuff in the cloud
They needed all these big data centres
And it took all our water

Friend 1 — Ahhhh my god, but that's so sad..
But what can we do?

Mammy — I don't know

Friend 1 — UUFFF…. Ahhhhhhhhh

>>> PPPLLLOOOMMMPPPP (Pause for Time travel moment)

>>> ZZZRRRBBBBLLLZZZBBBDDDLLLL (Time Machine noise to go back into the past)

SCENE 4 – Somewhere in the near future, again..

Narrator — OK; let's go back a little bit in time,
before there was any data centres,
When there was a beautiful river
And the whole family and friends were
playing by the river
swimming in the river
drinking the river
when down came the big man

Mister Meaney — Hey you guys
I've got a big idea
To make a big data centre

(STAGE NOTE: The mammy comes walking over assertively toward the big man)

Mammy — Excuse me Mister Meaney
But we have consulted with our community
And we do NOT want this big data centre
In OUR community

Mister Meaney — But I'm going to give you loads of jobs

Mammy — It's ok..
Were already making loads of jobs
In the eco-social just transition
We've got permaculture, agroecologia…
We've got the whole river of the Sassoeiras
Going all the way up
Planted gardens,
A whole food forest
All the way up there
This is now the model of ecological transformation
In ALL of Europe

	We don't NEED your data centre Go somewhere else
Mister Meaney	But, but, but (somewhat flusteredly)
Friend 1 Friend 2	Hey, you leave my Mammy alone Yeah, we don't like you Mister Meaney Why don't you get out of here..
Friend 3	Hey you guys, Don't worry about him Lets just have FUNNNNNN…
Mister Meaney	Ahhhhhh.. I'm just going to have to go to Africa or somewhere and ruin another place.
Friend 3	YYYeeayyyyyy Let's go swimming
Friend 1 & 2	WWWWOOOOOHHHOOOOOOO



Figure 0.4: The Cloud that kills the river (Author, 2023)

The Cloud that kills the river – Analysis & Context

"The Cloud that kills the river" is 4-minute interactive theatre piece that the author shared with the *Quinta dos Ingleses* community on October 23rd 2023, as part of a day of cultural resistance to the Cascais Council plans to destroy this little green zone for "Development", while we are in a state of Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Emergency. The "actors" for the play were Hamish and his "We Are Nature" crew. It was the first public showing of the play the author co-created in Barcelona the previous weekend, as part of the Fixing the Future

festival with ECOLISE (described below). Image 41 is a still from the video from that day, which can be viewed online[265], on Facebook. The play is narrated by the author, has 4 parts and includes the use of a magical time machine, which needs audience participation to function.

Figure 42 (page 122) shows this "We Are Nature" Ahimsa Army / We Are Nature actors' group, left to right: Anna a Ukrainian Teddy, Pavel a blood red Peruvian Forest birdy, Luis an old Spanish Republican Hummingbird (Under Pavel), Hamish a climate refugee penguin from the South & Siobhán a hare from the "Hares Corner" of the *Quinta dos Ingleses*.

The Cloud that kills the river (2023) - Autoethnographic Assessment

Love of Place / The best place in the world

There is something so simple, so powerful and so pure about the setting for this little adventurous tale; family and friends out in their special place to celebrate a child's birthday. A place by a beautiful river where fish can be seen jumping upstream, where nuts and berries can be eaten from the many trees along the river edge, in a place of exceptional beauty, in the wilds, in pure nature. A place so special that 1 young friend proclaims "AAhhhhhh, this is such an amazing place I love this place sooo much", to which their friend agrees and responds "This is the best place in the world".

Although intentionally presented from the child's perspective, this section set by "a lovely river" poses the question to readers if we have places in the natural world that we feel so connected to, that we hold as dear, that indeed, we too love as much, as our young characters. To be so in tune with nature, to know of such places to watch fish swim and jump upstream, places to pick hazelnuts and wild fruit. Do we value such places in our contemporary society?

A secondary level here is related to accessibility and democracy. The initial scene is set "somewhere in the present", in today's world. We are not told where exactly this river is, it could be anywhere. Most likely, it is a place quite easily accessible from a major city by public transport, a wild zone that seems well known to the family and friends; their special place. Countries that value and care for these places, especially where rivers flow freely and nature has been allowed to grow freely, often have mechanisms to enable their citizens have access to such magical places. Such places should be open to the public, everyone should have access to these wonderful places. In many European countries, the public do have access, but not in all.

[265] The Cloud that kills the river https://www.facebook.com/fuspey/videos/863265715348377/

Another important aspect present in this scene, relates to safety and play, especially in how children enjoy time together, communicate, teach other, learn by doing. Although we know from the theatre notes that “Mammy” is here, she does not get involved. She is there, but happy to watch over the kids as they play. The children seem well used to this place. They seem fearless, as “our friends cross through the river and look about on the other side”. They pick and eat wild fruit and nuts. Mammy knows they know what they can eat and what they cannot eat, there are no calls of “drop that, don’t put that in your mouth, don’t eat that”. This seems to be a family extremely used to this place. Perhaps Mammy did the same when she was their age? It feels like the place acts as an outer shell for their world. There appears to be an inherently regenerative relationship between people and place, it seems to be the best place in their world.

The promise of green tech, sustainable development? (Or work & jobs for whom exactly?)

Thanks to the dynamic nature of this play, we quickly move to “somewhere in the near future” for scene 2, where like so many moments and places in life, things can take a rather quick and strange twist.

We find ourselves in the same beautiful location as before, but we meet a very, very different character, whom we see from the text notes is called “Mister Meaney”. In some cultures, a "Meany" is an informal term, often used by children, to describe someone unkind or mean. This man enters this wonderful location, taking a big puff of smoke from his cigar and has a hint of an American accent in his voice. Unlike the children, he does not seem to have a strong connection with this place, he seems to have no love for the place, the nature, the river, the animals or the trees. He proclaims “It’s pretty natural”, adding strangely and seemingly out of place “What this place needs is jobs. It needs development”. Perhaps he has come here because of the river and its flowing water? He tells us his reason for being here “We could build a big data centre over there”. Such development would lead to “loads of green tech jobs”. His vision of a green tech future is perhaps that of the green capitalist. Realization of his vision would mean “all the kids would become millionaires... And they’d want to do start-ups and become really rich”, just like him. If they reach his level of wealth, they too will “have their beaches in Miami”. Set to leave by his transport of choice, a helicopter, Mister Meaney sees the family and goes over to speak with them. From their short conversation we learn that the family likes this place and that they would be in favour of more jobs. He leaves the family reassuring them, saying “trust me, leave it with me, I’ll sort you out”. We are not fully sure where Mister Meaney’s values lie, does he actually care about nature, the environment and local communities, or is he really just driven by greed and profit, finding that the new desire for all

things sustainable is the quickest way for making a quick buck. Or perhaps he does hold legitimate concerns for the environment and he is just following the current trends of green development, as still advocated for by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 8, and current EU policy, which only sees unending sustainable development as the key to improving our world.

With another bit of audience involvement, the time machine moves us into scene 3 "Somewhere a little bit more in the future". Here things have indeed taken a very strange and sinister twist. It seems to be another year for the friend's birthday and they have returned to their special place with the same joy as ever before. But upon arrival, the find the river is dying, the waters have dried up and those wonderful and much-loved fish have been caught in low pools whose waters gradually receded. The children get a whiff of a strange smell, with Friend 2 proclaiming almost violently "Uggghhhh, aaahhhh... What's that smell? Ahhhhh that is HORRIBBLLLLEEEEE... Ughh aaggghhhh". All the fish or dying or have died. They are rotting, it is the terrible smell of death that the kids smell, perhaps for the first time? The children are distraught, they don't understand, Friend 1 exclaims "What's happening? I'm sooooo saddd This is my favourite place and its dying..."

At this stage Mammy enters the dialogue for the first time, firstly to try to comfort the children and soon after to explain what has happened. The man who promised to give the community jobs built "his big data centre". It turns out he chose the location as such information infrastructure needs a lot of fresh cool water to cool down the workings of the centre. So, in the time between scene 2 and 3, the data centre has sucked up all the water, thereby killing the river. Mammy also tells us that Mister Meaney's building "won loads of architectural awards for being a fancy building, with loads of green tech, and LEED star and all that sort of stuff". This is perhaps a bit of a low blow against the architecture world and even the supposed sustainable and green development communities. For so long, the ethical side or impacts on the environment or for affected communities, seems to have come second place to the appearance of the architecture, as a visual form, a piece of sculpture or an art piece. For so long it seemed, architecture was judged by how many beautiful pictures of building appeared in the leading architecture magazines. Also, despite the best of intentions from the green LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) community of architects and urbanists, the answer seemed to always be to build. Maybe at times the best thing to do, is not to build at all?

Mammy also later adds an important little bit about everybody "putting all their stuff in the cloud". This could include all the millions of well-meaning eco people who choose not to print or use paper but who add huge quantities of digital data to the digital "Cloud", not knowing that

it too needs physical infrastructure to house the data, and that as the rate of use grows exponentially, so too does the need for more and more, bigger and bigger, data centres. This is key to the strange title of this odd little theatre piece, now we know why it is entitled "The Cloud that kills the river". Speaking of all these well-meaning eco people, especially the younger ones whose days involve hours of endless scrolling of short vids on Instagram and Tik Tok, she says "They needed all these big data centres. And it (the cloud) took all our water".

Scene 3 finishes with an all too familiar ending. Faced by such a horrifically violent act against a place much loved by the family, Friend 1 asks the eternal question "what can we do?", to which Mammy responds dejectedly but honestly "I don't know". This is perhaps the key to this thesis; to explore what normal people can do in the face of absolute destruction of all that they hold precious, which sustains them, that gives them meaning and joy. The home they love.

An alternative reality, where politically organized communities stand up for themselves.
With the final flash of the time machine, we zoom to another reality. We go back to where we were before, but this time an alternative version of events plays out. In this altered reality, we see a small example of how organised communities can respond to pressures for economic change. This short scene demonstrates how an eco-social just transition might be brought about. We see how this little community that is highly connected to place deals with a critical moment. Being regenerative and community-led, they understand and protect their world, and engage in processes for wider, improved ecological, social and economic transformation of their territory, with a range of other communities they are part of, at all the varying scales in the place they call home. At its heart, we see an example of how normal citizens, families and communities who are politically organised, can respond to power and the allure, push, manipulation or even threat of short-term consumer benefit, even if it is supposedly in the best of their interests. Often in such scenes, a so-called "normal family" might feel intimidated by, or deferential toward such a seemingly powerful, rich, respectable type, especially if he has the look of a big cigar smoking, helicopter and Miami beach owning business-man, such as Mister Meaney.

In this transformed future, it is the woman, the mother, who takes control of the situation. She is with her children as they play by the river, watch fish swimming and eat berries and nuts. But perhaps the wider community she is part of, already know of plans to "develop" their beloved, indeed sacred, space. Perhaps they have already engaged with the business, political and economic groups behind the plans? We don't know. Meaney comes over to the family, perhaps already believing his plan will be easy to build. Perhaps he has even made friends with, or paid off, local political figures? He comes over to the family, arrogantly, he does not bother

with trivial formalities, saying hello, wishing them well, asking they how they are. Instead, his first words are to tell them "Hey you guys. I've got a big idea. To make a big data centre". But upon seeing and hearing his utterance, it is Mammy who takes control of the situation. She knows him, or perhaps of him? Perhaps she has imagined this day, perhaps all her community has? Perhaps they have practiced the moment when their community will come to face to face with the forces they believe threaten their place, their joy and happiness, their future? Either way, it is Mammy who "comes walking over assertively toward the big man". She utters her first words to him, politely, yet firmly. It is her who lets him know that she knows him, his name, and all that he stands for. Not only that, but she swiftly, and in no uncertain terms, lets him know the lay of the land. Mammy calmly says "Excuse me Mister Meaney. But we have consulted with our community And we do NOT want this big data centre In OUR community".

A regenerative and Community-led model of ecological transformation.

Meaney's response is the age-old excuse of more and more and more development; "But I'm going to give you loads of jobs". This is not to say that jobs and work and a healthy dignified economic reality are not important, they totally are. The question here is exactly what type of work are we discussing, what are the impacts and effects of such work? Is it exploitative, destructive, or extractive? Does the economic activity, or the work and jobs, negatively or positively affect both the physical place and the community of that place, where it is applied, inserted, or attached? We have already seen what Meaney's plan leads to; the death of the river, the destruction of a very special and sacred place for a small family; the sheer trauma the young children felt when they witnessed the killing of the place they felt safe in and deeply attached to, accompanied by that most active of our senses, smell, as they literally can't help but breathe in the pungent and utterly rotten odor of putrefying fish, as they bake and rot in the sun.

Mammy and her community have also been concerned about work and jobs, but in this version of events, she and her community have already taken responsibility for this. And it seems have been doing so for some time. They have been active in coordinating, building, farming, carrying out education programs and developing a different sort of economic reality for their place. Not just for this spot by the river, but within the wider ecosystem it is part of. She tells Meaney that "We're already making loads of jobs". From this, we can establish that it is possible to have an improved economic reality that, unlike the false solution of Meaney's "Green Tech" option, does not destroy the river. Mammy neatly sums things up, her reality is part of the "eco-social just transition". Speaking of "Our community", she tells him of the main

principles of this new economy "We've got permaculture, agroecologia...", both based around working with nature, diverse and intense food production and landscape systems. She informs us about the scale and main organizing principle of this community, it is "the whole river of the Sassoeiras". Now we, the audience, are given a key clue to tell us where we are. For those that know, the *Sassoeiras* is the smallish 15km stream which runs through the heart of the *Quinta dos Ingleses* in Carcavelos, just outside Lisbon (Where this version of the play is being put on and where the author is active). Mammy tells Meaney that their work goes "all the way up", that upstream they have a "planted garden". Not only that, she adds that in fact they have "A whole food forest". We can only imagine how amazing, lush and loved this place is. She then goes even further, adding the massive and extra benefit this ecological and economic work has led to. Their work is now "the model of ecological transformation. In ALL of Europe".

We can imagine that members of similar communities from around Europe, and perhaps beyond, come to visit, to see first-hand how they have organized things. To see the physical side of the work: What permaculture, farming and agroforestry techniques have they used to grow food: To develop wormeries in houses to compost food waste whose deeply rich, new black soil is then added to what were degraded lands by the river edges: To develop swales, water catchment areas and ponds that have led to huge increases in the return of frogs, bees, butterflies, dragonflies, birds and so much more of the native species, many of whom were previously thought to have gone extinct: To amazing new fresh and cool outdoor public parks that have shading in the summer time and freshly flowing water that are much loved by all ages of the local communities, especially the ones who come to pick fresh berries from the blackberry and strawberry bushes: To local outdoor education classes happening with the children in the local schools, who now can distinguish all the various bird songs and who do citizen science work to monitor the water quality for where their local ponds enter the *Sassoeiras*… But perhaps there have been many other visitors from the communities translocal networks who have come to see, learn and participate in the non-physical side of the work: To see the governance methods of the community, the many local assemblies of housing residents groups, schools, culture groups, garden, farm and river guardian groups: To see how conflict is dealt with and how people use sociocracy to reach decisions, and how people work at various scales in the community, from the super local of the block, right up to the full river basin, or catchment area, of the *Sassoeiras*. To see the cultural processes they use, to imagine an even better future, the meditative dream states they use when they time travel to the future, to the co-creation of their "Energy Descent Action Plans", or EDAPs for short: Or when they do online education and training programs, that bring in extra financial value to further work on the

ground, to give dignified work to their education team: Or for the fun and laughter they all have when they have a beach Olympics on Carcavelos beach, or when some of them meet up for a group swim at sunrise.. Or when they put on theatre in the parks: Or when they come to join in, through their *Mutirão* process, the big group harvest and party times, when extra hands are needed to pick and save the locally produced food. Or the more solemn moments, to see how a community comes together when people have problems, or elderly people's journeys come to an end and how their lives are celebrated by all those who knew and loved them. We don't know all that goes on in this little corner of the world, but we can only imagine the inspiration it is already providing for other communities who also wish to have an improved quality of life, who also wish to improve their beloved territories. Perhaps this community and their specific model of ecological transformation is already helping accelerate all others to do likewise?

Unity, solidarity and community strength

Having already told Meaney in the opening section of dialogue that the big data centre was not wanted by the community, followed by outlining the reasons why, Mammy closes her short dialogue by reinforcing her community's position: "We don't NEED your data centre". To add to this, speaking calmly and strongly, she is now the one who can dictate the situation, when she orders Meaney to "Go somewhere else". Perhaps not being used to stood up to like this Meaney has become somewhat flustered, merely being able to respond, pathetically "But, but, but".

At this point, to demonstrate unity, solidarity and community strength, the children return. They are the ones dictating their community's future now. Friend 1 tells Meaney in no uncertain terms "Hey, you leave my Mammy alone" and is fully backed up by Friend 2, who states "Yeah, we don't like you Mister Meaney Why don't you get out of here".

Interestingly, by the end, Mister Meaney has become irritated, yelling Ahhhhhh. But, his final phrase perhaps tells us, or confirms, that he has not been led by good intentions, and perhaps knew full well all along, what the consequences of the development project would entail, when he openly states "I'm just going to have to go to Africa or somewhere and ruin another place".

The final mini section ends in the way all good stories should, with joy and celebration. Having already forgotten about Meaney and his project, the kids are back where we first met them, at their beautiful and much loved river, their most favourite place it the world. Celebrating their little victory, Friend 3 invites the rest to go swimming in the river.. to which her pals respond with the utmost of joy and positivity "WWWWOOOOOHHHOOOOOOO".

F. Ecovillages (Continued)

F.1 Cloughjordan, Ireland

CJEV incorporated the following ten "Eco Village Elements" into the design of their community, as both a physical place and ecological process, but also as a community with attention to a governing systems that uses a more participative form of democracy:

Eco Village Elements

A Sustainable Village is comprised of many parts. These parts are inter-connected and work together to comprise the whole. Below are listed the primary elements but these are by no means the definitive list and others will surface as the project unfolds.

- **Common lands**

Approximately one-third of the site will be designated as common land. It will be open to all residents and will include ponds, wilderness areas, orchards, forests and walks. The interaction between private plots and the common land will be seamless, blending from one to the next without difficulty.

- **Food production**

The Village will produce as much food on-site as possible. Food growing will be encouraged in a number of ways. Housing plots will be designed to maximise an individual's growing potential on their own site and a planned and productive permaculture garden will be developed throughout the estate as a food resource for all. Other land will be available for intensive organic farming as a going concern for a farmer within the Village.

- **Water**

The Village will be designed so as to maximise all available water on site; this will be achieved by means of ponds, lakes and dams. The water will be used productively for aquaculture and irrigation. Ideally the site will have its own spring, however, if not, each house will have a mains connection while also harvesting rainwater.

- **Waste water management**

The site will be connected to a reed-bed sewage treatment system to purify both sewage and grey water. The number of systems will depend on the particular site. Biological wastewater treatment systems not only treat contaminated water; they also provide natural habitats, a useful supply of compost material and an attractive landscape feature.

- **Energy**

It is intended from the outset that the site will be connected to the national grid, but in the long term its aims are to be autonomous in terms of energy provision. This will be achieved using windmills, solar cells, small hydro-turbines, bio-mass generators and energy efficient design. But such options are dependent on the site chosen.

- **Education**

Training and education are a vital part of the Village. As a charity Sustainable Projects Ireland can apply for college status. This will allow the company to develop a comprehensive education program aimed at all facets of sustainable development. Much work needs to be done in the area of education if we are to teach society the advantages of a sustainable lifestyle.

- **Democracy**

Democratic structures based on consensus voting systems will encourage the concept of partnership, which is central to democracy. From the outset the community will explore and discuss ways in which real democracy might be applied within its own sphere of action.

- **Community**

The Village recognises the importance of the greater local community and from the outset this is central to its aims for a clean, safe and healthy democratic living environment for all. Facilities such as child-care, health care and recreation are integral to the Village. The community should be diverse and include all ages and work for the betterment of the local area with the local community

- **Children**

The Village will house a Small School where a stimulating learning environment can be created. The site itself will also be an exciting and playful landscape for children.

- **Recycling**

Provision will be made for the removal of household and commercial waste to a recycling centre, providing a potential business opportunity.

F.2 Friland, Denmark

Friland[266] is a Danish ecovillage (Fig 33). It is a wonderful place I got to visit, live and work in for two weeks during the summer of 2003, as part of the EASA's summer school called "Sustainable Living". Friland is situated in Northern Denmark. They are in the middle of Jutland, beautifully situated in the national park of Djursland near the sea and forests[267]. The brief description of this community and project is (Friland, 2025):

> The Friland Cooperative was founded in 2002. Since then, Friland has expanded twice. In 2019, Friland houses 45 households with approximately 75 adults and 35 children. Friland is an eco-village where people experiment with organizing their everyday lives differently, with an emphasis on sustainable lifestyles, debt-free living, and self-employment.

Friland is a member of the National Danish Association for Eco-Communities, Landsforeningen for Økosamfund (LØS)[268], who in turn are one of the member Networks of GEN Europe. LØS founded in 1993, their governance method is sociocratic council and their member base includes 27 established ecovillages, plus around 50 supporting and aspiring members. LØS's mission and vision is "Connecting Danish ecovillages, supporting new communities with the goal to re-establish whole circulatory systems on all levels in nature and people". Their core 9 values are shared by all who participate in the community:1) Sustainable Building 2) No-debt = Freedom 3) Business at Friland 4) Hand, Head and Heart 5) Community at Friland 6) No Waste 7) Energy and Resource Consumption 8) Sewage 9) Friland's Land. Each is explored in more depth in Annex B.



Figures 0.5: Friland ecovillage (Friland, 2025)

[266] Friland Website https://start.friland.org/
[267] Google maps address: Friland, 8410 Rønde, Denmark https://maps.app.goo.gl/FfEvLJp4vKFNRrRu9
[268] Landsforeningen for Økosamfund (LØS) https://okosamfund.dk/

- **Sustainable Building**

The residents of Friland resident build experimental houses using natural and recycled materials. Residents try to build with as low an environmental impact as possible, and test alternative materials and construction methods.

The houses at Friland include straw bale houses that are plastered with clay, and wood-clad houses insulated with wood fibre, sheep's wool, flax and hemp. Alternative foundations are made with, for example, compacted seashells, and many houses have green, living roofs.

The buildings at Friland must comply with the national building regulations.

- **No-debt = Freedom**

One of Friland's objectives is to be debt-free. The desire is to build and live with low costs and achieve financial freedom.

The residents of Friland cannot get a loan with security in the land or houses, and the selling prices of the houses are regulated with a maximum price per square metre – to avoid speculation in land and house values.

- **Business at Friland**

It is the intention that at least one person in each household is self-employedor works from home. Local businesses provide the basis for a living village environment and offer an alternative to commuting.

Part of Friland is set aside as a business area. This Friland Enterprise area is used by Friland residents and people from the local area

- **Hand, Head and Heart**

To ensure diversity and dynamism, residents of Friland have a range of business and cultural backgrounds. Emphasis is placed on both the practical, intellectual and human qualities of the people admitted to the community. There are approximately 10 nationalities at Friland.

- **Community at Friland**

The shareholders' Association holds a common meeting with a communal meal approx. six times a year and also arranges community working days.

Other common activities take place through the initiative of one or more residents. It may be a food cooperative, handicraft evenings, a music café, Christmas party, common garden, etc.

- **No Waste**

One of Friland's goals is to minimise the production of waste, both in construction and in daily life. Waste is sorted and recyclable waste is returned for recycling.

- **Energy and Resource Consumption**

Denmark's energy and resource consumption needs to be drastically reduced if the world's resources are to be distributed equally.

At Friland, residents are experimenting with reducing energy and resource consumption, for example by highly insulating our houses, building smaller houses and utilising renewable energy sources. Many houses have a masonary stove as the main heat source. These fireplaces utilise the energy of the wood very efficiently, by burning the wood at a high temperature, thereby promoting the combustion of gases and minimising particulate emissions.

- **Sewage**

Residents are responsible for the disposal of their own wastewater, either in individual or joint systems. The wastewater systems are based on plant evaporation, filtration and biological purification, which means that residents need to be careful about what enters their wastewater, through soap products, cleaning agents, cosmetics and medicine.

- **Friland's Land**

The land is owned by a foundation that lends the land to the community.

Each shareholder has a plot of land where houses and private gardens can be built. In addition, Friland includes common areas with a playground, lake, fruit trees and vegetable garden.

The common areas are maintained by the members of the association.



Figures 0.6: Friland Ecovillage (Friland, 2025)

F.3 Auroville, India

> Auroville (City of Dawn)[269] is an experimental township in Viluppuram district in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, near Puducherry in India[270]. Inspired by the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, Auroville was founded in 1968 by the Mother (Mira Alfassa) in accordance with her dream of a universal township living in harmony with itself and the wider world. (GEN, 2025[271])

The centre of the circular design of Auroville is just 5km from the centre of Puducherry, previously known as Pondicherry, which was the capital town known as "the French Riviera of the East" of the Indian French Colony that lasted from 1674 until 1954. The Mother (Mira Alfassa, 1878-1973) was a French-Indian spiritual guru, occultist and yoga teacher, born in Paris in 1878 to a bourgeois Sephardi Jewish family from Turkey and Egypt. She moved to Pondicherry in 1920 and in 1926 co-founded the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Sri Aurobindo was an Indian yogi, maharishi, and Indian nationalist, who had been involved with a revolutionary movement in Bengal and moved to the French Colony to avoid arrest in 2010. He moved from politics to spirituality and developed the spiritual practice called Integral Yoga.



Figures 0.7: Auroville. L: Masterplan R: Bonfire Meditation (Auroville, 2025)

Auroville aims at becoming a model of the 'city of the future' or 'the city the earth needs'. It aspires to have 50,000 inhabitants. It is currently a big village or small town of 3,300 residents from 60 nationalities, of which about a third are Indian. It is a circular form with an outer green

[269] Auroville website https://auroville.org/
[270] Google maps address Auroville, Tamil Nadu, India https://maps.app.goo.gl/aaTYQLUdvBTT7VnD8
[271] GEN, Auroville https://ecovillage.org/ecovillage/auroville/

belt, the city area diameter is 2.5km, and 5km with the green belt (Fig 44 L). Alfassa's design was developed and buildings begun by French architect Roger Anger. 5,000 people, including representatives of 124 nations including all the States of India, assembled near the banyan tree at the centre for the inauguration in 1968, Auroville's brief timeline reads:

> The concept of Auroville - an ideal township devoted to an experiment in human unity - came to the Mother as early as the 1930s. In the mid-1960s the concept was developed and put before the Govt. of India, who gave their backing and took it to the General Assembly of UNESCO. In 1966 UNESCO passed a unanimous resolution commending Auroville as a project of international importance for the future of humanity, thereby giving their full encouragement (Auroville, 2005)

Auroville's green belt is an environment research and resource area. It includes farms and forestries, a botanical garden, seed bank, medicinal and herbal plants, water catchment bunds, and some communities. Auroville intents to be a self-supporting township. It consists of guest houses, building construction units, information technology, small and medium scale businesses, producing and re-selling items such as handmade paper for stationery items. Over 5,000 people, mostly from nearby localities, are employed in various sections and units.

Litfin notes that "when criticism is leveled at ecovillages, I tend to defend them… Like pioneer species, ecovillages are preparing the ground for a viable future, and we can all learn from their experiments" (2014). Auroville has heightened local socioeconomic instability outsider its 5km circle: "land prices have soared, motorbikes and tacky shops have proliferated, and gang activity has escalated". She wondered "What can human unity possibly mean, under conditions of extreme economic inequality?" Behind all the hopefulness that exists in Auroville (Fig 44 D), an idea born during the French colonial regime, she perceived a shadow, saying this "experiment in human unity can be seen as a dressed-up version of neo-colonialism":

> Participating in this experiment are some 2,000 individuals from 40 countries. Aurovilians are, however, primarily from Europe and tend to be quite well educated. This means that Auroville is, actually, a bunch of highly educated white folks plunked down amid 40,000 Tamil villagers living at subsistence level. So, Auroville's experiment in human unity can be seen as a dressed-up version of neo-colonialism, with all the subjugation and exploitation that the term implies. Almost all the physical work in Auroville is done by Tamils.

F.4 Sterling (temporary) Ecovillage, Scotland, UK

- **The Overall Site Design**

The kitchens and barrios (neighbourhoods) functioned well, and some became true social spaces. The Irish barrio built a firepit, surrounded it with straw bales (which they purloined from the central fire circle) and every night were gathered around, playing fiddle, singing, reciting poetry, or having discussions. Having to confront this issue (noise at night), and the issue of drunkenness that went with it, gave the group a chance to wrestle with the very real-life applications of issues that are generally theoretical: how to balance individual freedom and social responsibility? When does the common good override an individual's desires, who decides and how? How do we enforce agreements when we are reluctant to use force?

- **Composting Toilets:**

Handwashing stations were provided near every bank of toilets, and people were encouraged to wash their hands after use and before eating. However, by midweek about forty people were down with a stomach ailment, that proved to be a virus, but for a short time there was fear among the medics that it was some bacterial dysentery or parasite.

- **Greywater:**

The Newcastle system had our most elaborate and successful biofilter—a bathtub filled with 1/4 inch gravel, with a baffle in the middle and plumbed with an outflow from the drain. The sink drained directly into the tub, with a mesh-lined basket to catch food particles. The biofilter was inoculated with pondwater, as well as lactobacillus and essential microorganisms that students in our permaculture course in May had cultured. It drained into a soakaway that we enlarged into a series of ponds, adding water plants and duckweed and azolla contributed by the Living Machine at Findhorn, the greenhouse/tub system that handles the wastewater of five hundred people. Michael Shaw, the engineer who designed the Findhorn system, was enormously helpful to us as well, and personally built the ninth barrel toilet when he came down to camp.

- **The Process and Organization of our Permaculture Team**

we did succeed in teaching many people about permaculture, and in creating systems for the camp that demonstrated some of its priciples and practices. We built nine compost toilets and more than twenty greywater systems in just a few days, maintained them throughout the week, and disposed of the results in eco-friendly ways. We composted the kitchen waste of thousands of people and left a resource for the community allotment. We created a camp that helped foster the social relations of shared power and responsibility. And we learned a tremendous amount.



Figures 0.8: Stirling Eco-village & G8 Protest (CrimethInc, 2005)

G. Ecocity World Summits

Melbourne / Curitiba, Page 208)
Figure 0.9: Ecocity Summit Curitiba, 2017. (Author, 2023)

Rotterdam, 1 - Page 208)
Figure 0.10: An emerging municipalist culture in Curitiba. (Author, 2022)

Rotterdam, 2 Page 209)
Figure 0.11: Community-led Ecocity transformation. (Author, 2022)

London, page 2010
Figure 0.12: Urban walking tours as a tool to Connect Communities and green our cities (Author, 2023)

G.1 Melbourne / Curitiba, 2017

Poster at page 384. Infos in Case Studies, page 230

G.2 Rotterdam, 2022

1) An emerging municipalist culture in Curitiba. From direct action to citizen-led governance, 2007 - 2018.

- Common agreement is that Curitiba is not an Ecocity today, nor a Sustainable City. The city showed innovation in previous years, but the wider city struggles today with a quickly growing metropolis.
- Since 2007, Curitiba's urban landscape has been transformed by direct action focused social movements based on radical ecology, citizen participation, inclusivity and a vibrant political culture.
- In 2016 Goura was elected as a Curitiba city councillor, representing radical eco activist social movements. Many proposals and laws were implemented. In 2018 he was elected as a Deputy in Parana State and as chairman of the Commission on Ecology, Environment and Animal Protection.

- The Curitiba Ecocity festival lasted 5 days in July 2017. It had 5 themes, 14 events and 160 participants. More than 30 different groups helped co create or participate in the programme.
- Curitiba city consists of 6 river basins. The basins and their fractal like sub basins can form base for eco neighbourhoods, ecobairros. A micro basin of the Rio Belem, the Pilarzinho, has a size of 5km2. There, the Jacu community garden could become a catalyst for the first ecobairro of Curitiba ecocity.

2) Community-led Ecocity transformation. Developing an urban systems Community of Practice ecosystem

- Fixing planetary urbanisation requires global ecocity transformations. Sustainability isn't enough, Regenerative work needed.
- Regenerative planning enables nested communities blossoming to transform their worlds, at all scales; backyard, neighbourhood, city, bioregion. Whole systems approach use leverage points to transform the way humans inhabit the earth
- Scaling ecovillage approaches to ecocities demands locally owned, participatory processes remain intact, as outlined by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)
- Fractal-like, multi scaled, community-led, bottom up governance models exist now (Rojava, Ecobairro São Paulo, Barcelona)
- Active citizens become mutually-evolving participants in their ecosystem through collaboration. When municipalities listen & open tools, knowledge and experiences to the politics of everyday life, regenerative visions emerge from squares & gardens
- Tejo Basin is Lisbon's bioregion. The Coina and Alcântara river basins within this are explored. Bela Flor is in Alcântara basin. - Alcântara literaly translates as "The Bridge" in Arabic (الجسر (, old stories and knowledges form part of future areas story.
- While Lisbon was Europe's "Green Capital" in 2020, it was also deemed the European capital of gentrification and evictions.
- Participative Action Research is ongoing with the "Lisbon Hub" group of BAM (BelaFlor, Ajuda, Marvila) to see how the UrbanA project can "help manifest the dream of a Sustainable and Just Lisbon", feeding into the H2020 project UrbanA over 3 years.

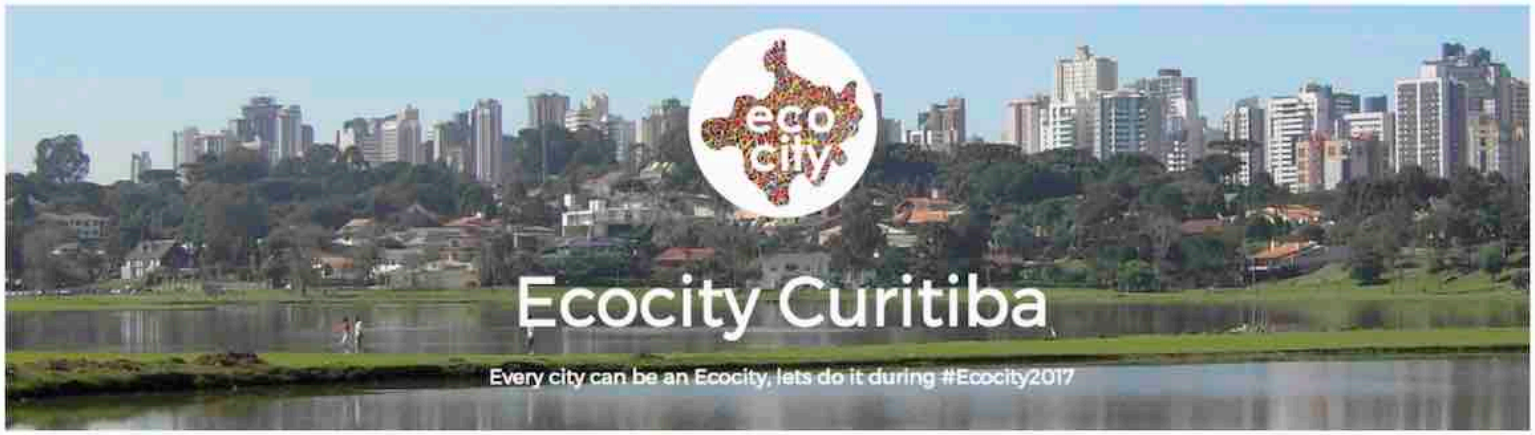
G.3 London, 2023

3) Urban walking tours as a tool to Connect Communities and green our cities

Methodology: Seeking to connect communities to enable community-led regenerative transformation of local territories by the people that live there, this Lisbon based action research in recent years developed a particular methodology based around local walking tours. Working with a number of both formal and informal communities and projects (Ecocity Lisbon, UrbanA, Degrowth Portugal, Umundu, We Are Nature, European Day for Sustainable Communities, Rede Rotas Vivas, World Rivers Day), the walks were open public free events that focused on different local areas in the wider metropolitan area of Lisbon.

Objectives: The initial aim was to stitch together different parts of the city and communities active therein. Secondary objectives included; create an interesting and appealing social event to connect different communities (local, academic, activist, friends, new migrants); deep investigation of different territories to find out what groups are active on the ground; invite different actors to co-create a walking tour where a new audience will be brought to their project or social struggle and they get to tell their own story; provoke a dynamic through the event that seeks interaction with residents on the day, to gain insights in histories, local struggles, or hopes for an improved future; map local citizen initiatives and add them to the online Ibero-American network mapping community CIVICS.CC.

Outcomes: Some tours had an experimental aspect, knowing that areas might be blocked, and therefor dangerous, but on these occasions participants were warned of the risks. For other tours, a strong nature component existed, following urban rivers, or streams (some now hidden in underground channels), to invite a group visioning of what a more regenerative territory might look like. In some cases involving the academic UrbanA project, the walk was finished with a group talk, where representatives from different projects were invited to explore dynamics of what a just and sustainable city might look like. In recent months, Cascais council awarded a small "Reinvent your neighborhood" funding grant to the "Rede Rotas Vivas" (Network of living routes) project to develop this methodology, focusing on the 15km long river basin of the "Ribeira das Marianas".



Uma série de eventos em Curitiba para investigar o que é uma Eco cidade e darmos passos para mudar Curitiba. De 12 a 16 de Julho de 2017, em vários locais e horários. Um evento local para conhecer projetos e pessoas, identificar problemas e criar soluções, juntos. Alguns eventos tem vagas limitadas, então é importante fazer sua inscrição na página fb.com/EcoCityGroupCuritiba, ou mandar um email para ecocitycuritiba@gmail.com

Programa do Ecocity festival			Ecocitycuritiba.wordpress.com	
Data	Amanha (9-12h)	Almoça (12-14h)	Dia (14-17h)	Noite (18-20h)
Tema do dia		Tecnologia e economia		
Quarta-feira: 12			Visita técnica Reciclagem Eletrônicos	Porque lixo não existe! Filmes & Bate-papo
Onde:			Fazenda Rio Grande	Jupter
Tema do dia		Natureza e Alimentação		
Quinta-feira: 13	Caminhada por uma Curitiba comestível	Almoça saudável Mercado orgânico	City tour na rua	Nao só sereias ou faunos Filme + Bate-papo
Onde:	Ruas da cidade	Mercado municipal	Ruas da cidade	Bicicletaria Cultural
Tema do dia		Comunidade e Mudança		
Sexta-feira: 14	Cidades, participação cidadã e os ODS	Piquenique Chico Mendes	Facilitando a Transição	Curitiba como uma Cidade Ecocomunitaria
Onde:	Sede 350	Bosque Gutierrez	Casa da Transição	Escritório Verde da UTFPR
Tema do dia		Cultura e Espaços Públicos		
Sabado: 15	Mutirão por uma cidade sem lixo	Piquenique Gomm	Fórum na rua	Curta ao ar livre Eco Cinema na rua
Onde:	Parque Gomm	Parque Gomm	Praça de bolso do ciclista	Espaço não vazio, Ahu
Tema do dia		Agua e Mobilidade		
Domingo 16	Pedalada Rio Barigui Bici-Rio	Piquenique Fazendinha	Pedalada Rio Barigui Bici-Rio	Festa Subtropikal
Onde:	Praça de bolso do ciclista	Parque Guairacá	Rio Barigui	Casa do Centro Europeu

#Ecocity2017 – ECOCITY World Summit

A série ECOCITY Summit é organizada pela Ecocity Builders e acontece a cada dois anos desde 1990 e em 2000 aconteceu em Curitiba. E agora em Julho, em Melboume na Austrália, teremos um fórum importante que aborda os complexos desafios que a humanidade enfrenta em um mundo de rápida urbanização, o ECOCITY 2017: Mudança das cidades: resiliência e transformações urbanas Este fórum reunirá uma mistura diversificada de pesquisadores, tomadores de decisões políticas e cidadãos com foco comum em identificar e criar caminhos para cidades mais sustentáveis, resistentes e equitativas.

Curitiba estará participando com um evento paralelo local, reunindo universidades, ONG's, negócios locais, movimentos sociais e coletivos, em um festival de eventos de 4 dias para conectar a rede e sonhar grande, Curitiba como uma Ecocidade.

Grupos Participando

An emerging municipalist culture in Curitiba.

From direct action to Citizen-led Governance, 2007 – 2018.

Ecocity World Summit 2021 Rotterdam & Online, 27-30 September

Duncan Crowley @fuspey
duncan_crowley@iscte-iul.pt
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Community-led Ecocity Transformation

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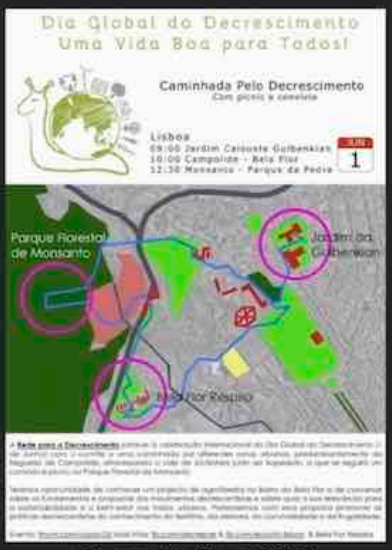




Urban walking tours as a tool to Connect Communities and green our cities

Duncan Crowley, ISCTE, Lisbon, Portugal
ECOCITY world summit 2023: 6-8 June 2023, Barbican Centre, London

Posters (A4)



Degrowth (June 2019)



Ecocity Lisboa (Sep 2019)



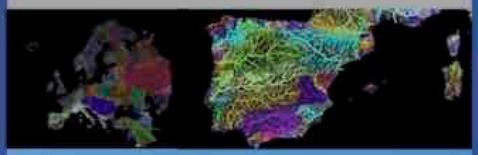
UrbanA (Nov 2019)



Rede Rotas Viva (Sep 2022)

Methodology

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Rede Rotas Vivas, World Rivers Day 2022

Objectives

The initial aim was to stitch together different parts of the city and communities active therein. Secondary objectives included; create an interesting and appealing social event to connect different communities (local, academic, activist, friends, new migrants); deep investigation of different territories to find out what groups are active on the ground; invite different actors to co-create a walking tour where a new audience will be brought to their project or social struggle and they get to tell their own story; provoke a dynamic through the event that seeks interaction with residents on the day, to gain insights in histories, local struggles, or hopes for an improved future; map local citizen initiatives and add them to the online Ibero-American network mapping community CIVICS.CC.


UrbanA tour of Mouraria, Lisbon, 2019

Outcomes

Some tours had an experimental aspect, knowing that areas might be blocked, and therefor dangerous, but on these occasions participants were warned of the risks. For other tours, a strong nature component existed, following urban rivers, or streams (some now hidden in underground channels), to invite a group visioning of what a more regenerative territory might look like. In some cases involving the academic UrbanA project, the walk was finished with a group talk, where representatives from different projects were invited to explore dynamics of what a just and sustainable city might look like. In recent months, Cascais council awarded a small "Reinvent your neighborhood" funding grant to the "Rede Rotas Vivas" (Network of living routes) project to develop this methodology, focusing on the 15km long river basin of the "Ribeira das Marianas".


Rede Rotas Vivas, Zambujal (Jan 2023)

Research Units: DINAMIA'CET CENTRE FOR SOCIOECONOMIC AND TERRITORIAL STUDIES; cE3c centre for ecology, evolution and environmental changes

Universities: Ciências U.Lisboa

Other: ECOLISE

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