



CREATIVE COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES



**PROJECT PRESENTATION &
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**
DRAFT JANUARY/2007



COLOPHON

The Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles (CCSL) project is supported by the Swedish Ministry for Sustainable Development in the framework of the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles within the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, usually called Marrakech Process.

The Marrakech Process is lead by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

CCSL is coordinated by DIS-Indaco Politecnico di Milano in Italy and by Strategic Design Scenarios (SDS), in Belgium, with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) as main partner. In a further stage of the project, local partners will be defined in Brazil, India and China.

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PRESENTATION

THE PROJECT

Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles (CCSL) is an on-going research project that deals with *creativity* and *sustainable lifestyles*. More precisely, it discusses the potentialities of collaborative everyday life creativity (the *creative communities*) in generating and diffusing new and more sustainable ways of living in the urban environments of emerging countries (with a focus on Brazil, India and China).

Examples of these creative communities initiatives are: *self-managed services for the care of children and the elderly*; *new forms of exchange and mutual help*; *alternative mobility systems*; *socialising initiatives to bring cities to life*; *networks linking consumers directly with producers, etc.* (**ANNEX 1** presents some real cases).

For more examples see on: www.sustainable-everyday.net/cases).

CCSL seeks to compare some European experiences with ones that can be observed in the growing urban populations of emerging countries. In particular, three major topics are considered: (1) the nature of the groups of people who generate these innovations (the *creative communities*); (2) their role in promoting new and sustainable lifestyles (the *promising cases*) and (3) the possibility to make these promising cases more accessible, effective and replicable, thanks to some appropriate initiatives (the *enabling system*).

The project is part of the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, within the United Nations 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, usually called Marrakech Process.

Its total duration is 12 months, and it started in October 2006.

QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

- Considering creative communities in different countries: what are the similarities and differences between them? In particular: what can Europe learn from the emerging countries, and vice versa?
- Considering creative communities in emerging countries: do these cases indicate the direction for sustainable lifestyles? In particular: do they indicate sustainable lifestyles for the growing urban population of emerging countries?
- Considering creative communities as successful cases of grass roots innovation: how have they been improved and replicated? What kind of specific initiatives have been promoted?
- Considering the issues involved in improving and replicating such cases: could the communication and design capabilities that have been applied in some European cases be usefully adopted in the context of emerging countries?

Given these main research questions the CCSL objectives are:

- To better understand the previously presented CCSL working hypotheses and topics, verifying their consistency and implications.
- To make the cases of creative communities clearer and effectively communicable.
- To build a first network of organisations and institutions interested in promoting *collaborative creativity for sustainable lifestyles*.

These topics will be discussed involving local organisations (NGOs, institutions and associations) in China, India and Brazil.

It should be remembered that the CCSL project is a relatively “light” initiative. If successful, it will have to create the preconditions for a future, more articulated programme of research and action on these same topics.

ACTORS

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BACKGROUND

The 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, usually called Marrakech Process, is a programme led by the United Nations Environmental Programme

(UNEP) and by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Its aim is to catalyze and guide the transition to a more sustainable global economy.

Within the Marrakech Process, the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles is an initiative supported by the Swedish Ministry for Sustainable Development. Its specific goal is to develop and implement sustainable policies to change consumer behaviour and to promote more sustainable lifestyles.

In this framework, the Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles (CCSL) project has been established to build on the results of a recently concluded European research called *Emerging User Demands for Sustainable Solutions (EMUDE)*. This research had been funded by the European Commission 6th Framework Programme. Its main aim was to explore the potential of grass roots innovation and pinpoint emerging patterns of sustainable living.

With reference to Europe, EMUDE identified a large number of promising cases and, on this basis, developed a set of conceptual tools to deal with them, to orient policy makers and to define research and design guidelines in order to promote their consolidation and diffusion.

The EMUDE results have been integrated in the *Sustainable Everyday Project (SEP)*: a web platform dedicated to sustainable social innovation in everyday life, with an open database of promising innovation cases. For more of them, see: www.sustainable-everyday.net/cases

CATALOGUE IN PROGRESS
Selected cases of creative communities

NOTE

This document presents a preliminary selection of cases of creative communities around the world. The European cases were researched within the EMUDE project, whereas non-European cases were mostly researched as part of the CCSL project.

The cases are grouped by type of *service idea* (Purchase groups, Community supported agriculture, Urban community gardens) or by function of urban everyday life addressed (Mobility, Housing, Children, Elderly and community care, Urban environment care).

INDEX OF CASES

Purchase groups

GAS GRUPPO D'ACQUISTO SOLIDALE – GROUP PURCHASING ORGANISATION, Italy (EMUDE case)

LIVING CONSUMPTION CO-OP, Taiwan

CLUBE DE COMPRAS - SOLIDARITY PURCHASE GROUP, Brazil

Community supported agriculture

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AGRICULTURE, China

LES JARDINS DE CERES – CERES'S GARDEN, France (EMUDE case)

LOCAL FOOD LINK VAN GROUP, UK (EMUDE case)

Urban community gardens

ORTI DEL PARCO NORD – PARCO NORD VEGETABLE GARDENS, Italy (EMUDE case)

COMMUNITY VEGETABLE GARDEN, Brazil

Mobility

WALKING BUS, Italy (EMUDE case)

MCS – MILANO CAR SHARING, Italy (EMUDE case)

HITCHHIKE SOLIDARITY NETWORK, Brazil

Housing

LODGE A STUDENT AT HOME, Italy (EMUDE case)

LIVING ROOM RESTAURANT, The Netherlands (EMUDE case)

Children, elderly and community care

NURSERIES AT HOME, Italy (EMUDE case)

LUOSHAN COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTRE, China

RACIBOROWICE SENIOR CLUB, Poland (EMUDE case)

OMAABI – SELF HELP COMMUNITY, Estonia (EMUDE case)

Urban environment care

NOMADIC GARDEN, France (EMUDE case)

NEIGHBOURHOOD SHARES, The Netherlands (EMUDE case)

GAS GRUPPO D'ACQUISTO SOLIDALE – GROUP PURCHASING ORGANISATION

How people buy quality, ethically produced food directly from producers.

Italy, Milan

www.retegas.org



Promoter

GAS Lambrate

The solution

A Gruppo d'Acquisto Solidale (GAS) consists of a group of people with the same beliefs in sustainable and ethical consumption who decided to collectively buy large quantities of essential basic products such as pasta, olive oil, from small local producers and distribute it among themselves. In this way, shopping is both cheap and convenient, and provides the satisfaction knowing where the products came from, that they're supporting small producers of quality products and respecting fair trade by paying the right price. There is no additional cost for packaging or advertising products and logistics are optimised. The group meets regularly to decide which producers best fit their selection criteria of benefiting both producers and users. A list of products and quantities is organised and, based on this, the group orders the products directly from producers.

The background context

Conventional models of purchasing food do not show how it is produced and distributed, or give any guarantees of respect for human rights and the environment. Consumers are increasingly dissatisfied by the products offered by large distributors such as supermarkets (which normally exclude small producers from their trade), and are looking for quality, transparency and traceability. They would like to actively find out about the background of the product rather than being a passive consumer. Consequently alternative forms of shorter supply chain are emerging.

Current state of development

GAS was initiated in 1994 and is still developing. The Milan group is slowly increasing, but there remain few groups as they develop locally, mainly comprising friends sharing the same vision. They want to make sure that each new group has the same values as the first, and considering that people have different points of view or values, the concept is hard to spread

rapidly. They don't want to dilute the core values of fair trade and human rights. GAS is an informal association, with members doing their part voluntarily without specific set of rules, but with responsibility and with respect for others. Even inside the groups, all the processes and developments are discussed in a relaxed atmosphere, with all opinions considered. There is no strict organisational structure, and it runs on a family-friendly basis, where all the costs are shared evenly and accordingly. Members place their order through email/phone and pay in cash.

Benefits

Society. Being together with friends in a relaxed atmosphere, discussing which product to buy that fits the group's objectives of avoiding exploitation, and being high quality and of known origin, generates a feeling of satisfaction. The small number of people in each group makes communication easier.

Environment. There is less packaging waste, less need of energy for cooling and freezing (food is fresh and seasonable) and less pollution from delivery, as the products are bought in bulk. Some of the products are organic so benefit the ecosystem.

Economy. A side-effect of GAS's action is improvement in family economy, because of the economies of scale. It also maintains the survival of small local producers, giving them an alternative distribution channel to the supermarkets.

The experience

Regularly spending time with other people regularly to discuss products and producers. Finding new farmers and products to include.

Behaving ethically.

Future development possibilities

Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other.

Creating a platform of technical services to support local small farmers and food producers.

Designing dedicated packaging and logistics to be used in the network by small producers.

Research

Politecnico di Milano, Italy.

Luigi Boiocchi, Annjosephine Hartojo

For EMUDE

LIVING CONSUMPTION CO-OP

Collective Purchase Centre

Taipei, Taiwan

<http://www.hucc-coop.tw/>



Synthesis

The initiative relies on the purchasing power of consumers seeking a healthier and safer lifestyle, with direct participation in production. It opens up a direct conversation between producers and consumers.

Description

The co-op started in January 1993. Products are mainly everyday food, such as vegetables, eggs, milk, rice and fruit. To cut down the costs, small well-organised purchase groups were formed and became responsible for collecting the orders, delivery and other logistic matters conducted regularly every week or/and every month. The co-op also organizes many related workshops and events to raise consumer awareness on food production and encourage the search for better living and healthier food.

Context

With the development of modern agriculture, although the volume of agro-products increases fast, the quality of products is falling and also suffers from environmental pollution. Living consumption cooperation was created to face this challenge.

Development phase

The key innovation of the co-op is to promote green and sustainable agriculture production and consumption in such a way that all participants are directly benefited. In addition, a strong spirit of mutual help has been developed and a solid friendship to counter the cold, alienated social atmosphere of the city.

Who is involved and how

The promoter of the co-op is a women's association of Taiwan. They organize women to establish co-ops together. The co-op has many farmers and producers as supplier stakeholders and establishes steady purchase relationships. The co-op has also service points for the distribution of products.

Benefits

Social

- Products with more local flavours, using local farming methods or traditional lifestyles are encouraged, like some special vegetables in particular areas or some dried food or tea in some particular villages.
- Concerning the development of local agriculture under the influences of globalization.
- Concerning human rights and the living of minorities, like women, farmers, native people and the handicapped in rural areas.
- Better food supplies, which are more genuine, natural and nutritional, without adding artificial substances.

Environmental

- Decrease in consumption and less use of packaging (e.g. paper), better use of resources, including recyclable materials.
- Use of re-cycled material or containers for food packaging, e.g. re-cycled paper to hold eggs, use of re-cycled material to produce glass bottles for milk.
- No use of chemicals for seed treatment and less use of pesticides.

Economic

- Better management on soil, organic fertilizers only, healthier crops, better harvest.
- A more stable and reasonable price for the produce
- Empowerment of women, a self-development in the co-op.

Perspectives

The co-op is a good platform to decrease the consumption and production risk and restore the trust and credit system of agriculture production in an ecological and sustainable way. It's also easy to replicate because all the participants have strong common motivation.

Research

Hong Kong Polytechnic

CLUBE DE COMPRAS - SOLIDARITY PURCHASE GROUP

Buying food together

Brazil, Sao Paulo



Promoters

Parish Santo Antonio, with support from ITCP-USP Incubadora Tecnologica de Cooperativas Populares USP (incubator of social cooperatives of University of Sao Paulo)

Description

Located in Jd Lilà neighbourhood Capà Redondo district (Sao Paulo city periphery). Main actor is Church/Parish Santo Antonio, through Father Reinaldo (a grass-roots, socially active catholic priest). Clube de Compras is a nucleus of the Solidarity Network, supported by ITCP-USP Incubadora Tecnologica de Cooperativas Populares USP (incubator of social cooperatives of University of Sao Paulo).

He organises lists of orders with the local population and goes shopping himself to the “cerealista” area, a hub for the stock and transport of fresh produce in the city outskirts (production coming from the green belts, of Sao Paulo State and other states). He uses a car/van from the church. The food he buys is stocked at the church, and people who made orders come to get it. There is a written list of participants. Diffusion/dissemination is made through “word of mouth” and the circulation of leaflets. It is based on (non paid) voluntary work (Father Reinaldo and people that help sorting, stocking and distributing the food). A great deal of Clube de Compras activity can be considered as “food security”, targeted to very low-income people. Participants’ motivation is the access to cheaper products and an accessible distribution system (different from a regular supermarket/ grocery shop).

Research

Lara Penin, Politecnico di Milano

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AGRICULTURE

A network between urban people and traditional agriculture

Liuzhou, China

<http://tuguan.bokee.com/>



Synthesis

“Ainonghui” (the work group of Communities Support Agriculture) established a bridge between urban young people and natural (organic) agricultural resources. It established connections and a relationship of trust between urban communities and organic farmers.

Description

Ainonghui found farmers working with “natural” agricultural produce (rice, vegetables and poultry), using traditional/local seeds and natural methods, and agreed on the price of products and service. On the other side, they connected to urban people, activating their interest and involving them in the network, booking and buying the agriculture products and service. They have also opened a showroom/ store to be a connection between suppliers and consumers.

Context

Today, people in cities are more interested in rural life and slow food (although the Slow Food movement or philosophy is not known locally). With the industrialization of agriculture and environmental pollution, urban people are becoming more aware and eager to have more natural and healthy food. Since this is such a new trend, there are no information platforms for it and no related credit system.

Development phase

On a micro-scale, they have tried to organize the natural agricultural resources and keep the quality of products and process. And more and more people in urban communities would like to join this net work to get the high quality food from the network.

Who is involved and how

Ainonghui connects farmers who prefer to farm in an original way and communities who

would like to have their products.

Benefits

Social: It promotes sustainable agriculture and slow food, offers people more healthy food and experiences, strengthens the social fabric, and increases trust between people.

Environmental: Community Supporting Agriculture will promote sustainable agriculture, keep species diversity and decrease the negative effect of modern agriculture (such as chemical fertilizer) on the environment.

Economic: It promotes small-scale economy in the country, especially local agricultural trade and tourism to increase the income of farmers.

Perspectives

It's a typical case of bottom-up system and self-management, where the recovery or establishment of trust between farmers and urban people is a main point of interest. The difficulty lies in the expansion of the network, since it will not be easy to sustain the trust links (in a larger network).

Research

Miaoesen Gong, Politecnico di Milano

LES JARDINS DE CERES – CERES'S GARDEN

Paris, France

www.jardins.ceres91.net



Promotors

Les Jardins de Cérés, Association

Solution

People interested in healthy lifestyle and preserving the environment obtain organic food from local farmers, and also support their production.

'Les Jardins de Cérés' is consumer group which wants local farmers to produce food organically. To do this, the group orders the produce in advance, before it is even planted, and guarantees to buy the crop. The association is inspired by the AMAP (Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne) system, well known for some years in southern areas of France. An AMAP is basically a group of customers (organised by the farmer) who buy goods from one particular farm. In this system the customers adjust their demand to what the farmer can offer seasonally. Members of Les Jardins des Cérés have persuaded a cereal farmer, with about 250ha, to use one part of his farm to grow organic potatoes – the simplest crop. The members of the association helped the farmer during the process – they cleaned the 400-year-old cellar and created storage places, and helped plant, tend and harvest the potatoes – and in doing so developed a close relationship.

Background

Palaiseau is a small town in the suburbs of Paris, which has becoming more and more built up, with shopping malls and industrial areas eating into farmland over the past few years. Several groups formed to protest against these developments. Isabelle Morgan, living in Palaiseau, joined a demonstration organised by a group campaigning against the construction of a new shopping centre on a huge stud farm. She realised that just protesting was not offering any solution, so she contacted existing associations to increase the impact of their actions. During

this process she heard about the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) in the USA and saw the model as a solution to the problem. Looking for similar organisations in France the group found the AMAP. After contacting several farmers in the region, Isabelle Morgan and her friends met Emmanuel Vandame, a farmer willing to try such a venture.

Not satisfied by his work through conventional farming methods, Emmanuel Vandame, the farmer was close to closing his business. With the project he saw a chance of making his living without subsidies from the state, working in a more human context and helping him try organic farming. 'We are going to double the cultivation area ... community-supported agriculture is on its way.'

Current state of development

Les Jardins des Cérès was founded in December 2003. For the first year of its existence its 150 members ordered a batch of three tons of potatoes, which were grown on the Plateau de Saclay close to Palaiseau. The process created a social network, where people share their environmental convictions, experiences and ways of life. The farmer was paid in three parts: first third in advance to pay for the plants and the tools; the second third half-way through production, and the third part when the potatoes were harvested. The price for one kilo was evaluated in advance by taking the average price of organic potatoes. The association doesn't get any external financial support: the members pay a yearly fee of 10 euros for pay for renting a meeting room, telephone calls, internet connection, and publicity – leaflets and website.

Benefits

Society: Through creating a direct producer/consumer link farmers get to sell their products for a good price and work under better conditions, and customers can buy high-quality locally produced products for a good price. By improving the economic situation of the farmer these organisations may well slow down the industrialisation of the countryside. The members very much enjoy the social network, and are very aware that the project needs social connections in order to work. Knowing the producing farmer is also a benefit for both consumer and farmer.

Environment: The project offers an alternative to the industrialisation in the area of Palaiseau, while supporting and developing local organic agriculture. By offering the farmer a good price for his produce the association lets him earn a living, so he is not forced to sell his land for development. The project supports keeping green areas around the town. The farmer, who used to only grow cereals in a conventional way, is now interested in expanding organic cultivation step by step. Also, by promoting a direct producer-consumer-link the association reduces distance produce is transported.

Economy: Any economic benefit in the first year was mostly for the farmer, as the association paid the 'shop-price' for the potatoes to help the farmer buy the necessary tools, get to know the organic process, etc. Over the coming years they will steadily decrease the price so that consumers also benefit economically.

The quality of the experience

Supporting a local farmer in using natural methods of cultivation. Being in touch with the local area and getting the best from it. Taking part in the farming activities, and getting back to nature

Future development possibilities

Creating multi-channels and multi-media communication platforms between producers and consumers. Designing dedicated packaging and logistic solutions for a network of small producers

Research

ENSCI Les Ateliers, Paris, France

Milamem Abderamane-Dillah, Andreas Deutsch, Luiz Henrique Sà

For EMUDE

LOCAL FOOD LINK VAN GROUP

Fresh mineral water and organic food is delivered to their home for a reasonable price, while helping small producers of quality food sell and deliver directly.

United Kingdom, Skye, Scotland



Promotors

Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Van Group

Solution

Local Food Van Link, in association with other groups, helps increase local food production by distributing produce around local community. Skye and Lochalsh Food Link is a voluntary association of local producers, caterers, retailers and consumers with an interest in promoting fresh, locally produced food. A shared van links the network and distributes local produce all over the island. The group was initiated in April 2000 by a couple of local producers who decided that rather than delivering every product themselves, they would use a van to drive a set route twice a week, picking up the orders from the producer and delivering them to their customers. By doing so, not only one could save on petrol but also ensure the delivery of local produce all over the island, creating a more sustainable community. The solution both ensures the future of local food producers by distributing their goods, and promotes important aspects of economic and environmental community life and the health benefits of locally grown fresh produce.

Background

Food distribution was made difficult by the large distances between producers, retailers and consumers, decreasing the availability of local food produce on the island. To improve this situation, the food link van was initiated on a voluntary basis in 2000, with a try out period of six months. Following its success, Food Link Skye and Lochalsh was incorporated in 2003 as a non-profit making company to manage the award-winning foodlink van and secure its future as a viable local distribution service.

Current state of development

Within the last five years the food link has vastly increased the amount of local produce staying within Skye and Lochalsh from £8,500 to over £60,000. The van group comprises approximately 15 producers and 40 customers spread all over the island. The funding it received in 2003, allowed the group to buy a larger van which enabled them to deliver even

more produce and help the van to become self-sufficient. At present, the van runs on Tuesday and Friday, normally between March and October. The customers pay the price of the produce they order, and a 10% levy is paid by the producer to the company. This money is used for petrol, van maintenance and pays the wages of the van driver and the marketing co-ordinator.

Benefits

Society: The Food Link Group aims to build strong sustainable networks between local producers and consumers in order to stimulate local food production. They believe that there are sound economic, environmental, health and community benefits to be gained from sourcing food directly from where it is produced. The Skye environment is said to produce some of the best quality food in Britain, free from pollution, genetic modification and other harmful substances.

Environment: The use of one shared vehicle for a group of 40 farmers clearly minimises congestion and pollution. Detrimental environmental impacts of conventional agribusinesses can be avoided through the promotion of small-scale local production that underpins the notion of healthy and communal living on the island. The consumption of fresh and seasonable food reduce the need of energy for cooling and freezing.

Economy: The scheme's future aim is to both reinforce the notion of self-sufficiency through local produce and increase cooperation between producer and customer on the other. Making such high-quality food available to local people and visitors encourages aspects of local and family economy and ensures the future of sustainable agriculture on Skye.

The quality of the experience

The luxury of receiving food to the door, with confidence about its provenance. The feeling of being in contact with the surrounding region and getting the best from it. The feeling of belonging to, and pride in, the network.

Future development possibilities

Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other. Creating technical services to support farmers and food producers. Designing dedicated packaging and logistics to be used in the network by small producers. Developing place marketing.

Research

School of Design, The Glasgow School of Art, Scotland.

Emmy Larsson, Julia Schaeper

For EMUDE

ORTI DEL PARCO NORD – PARCO NORD VEGETABLE GARDENS

People over 60 raise vegetables and fruit in town, spend time together, and enjoy the open air.

Italy, Milan

www.parconord.milano.it



Promoter

Consortium Parco Nord

The solution

Vegetable Gardens is a service provided by a consortium of six local authorities around the Parco Nord park in the Milanese suburbs. Under the Vegetable Gardens participants can rent an allotment very close to residential areas to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

The service is open to pensioners, housewives or the unemployed over 60, and gives them the chance to socialise and enjoy outdoor activities. Users can grow whatever they wish, but have to maintain their part of the garden and look after common spaces. Once in a while they are asked to participate to meetings and training seminars. Rent, on a six-year renewable contract, includes a storage chest, concrete tiles for paths, water, and disposal of non-compostable waste.

The background context

Parco Nord is a big semi-urban park very close to residential areas. As many other parks, it suffers from a lack of maintenance, and has huge unused spaces that could be devoted to many other uses. The consortium that manages the park wanted to both solve the problems of the park and find a solution to the isolation experience by many people, especially pensioners, especially in urban areas which lack public spaces or facilities for children, teenagers and the elderly. A few years ago, parts of the railway embankments had been given to retired people to farm: this inspired the idea of dividing up parts of the park to and giving them to potential urban farmers.

Current state of development

The scheme started in 1996 and has stood the test of time. It has incorporated lessons learned from the many similar initiatives in Milan and elsewhere in Italy and the world, under

which an estimated 200 million urban farmers cultivate for 700 million people. Although the concept is widespread, Parco Nord's system is unusual in having a public competition to be given an allotment. Once a farmer is in, they pay a very low rate (around 26 euros per year) for use of the garden and dedicated services, but they have to buy seeds and plants themselves. Ökosahver feels it needs to expand its product range, but as the Estonian climate doesn't allow fresh vegetables to be grown all year round, possible expansion may have to use canned food.

Benefits

Society. Caring for their own garden gives participants entertainment, improved family finances (thanks to the production of vegetables) and the opportunity to remain active and be useful. The social advantages are re-vitalisation of the city, by introducing new day-to-day activities, and regeneration of public space, by managing the public area of the vegetable gardens. The one limit is that is only for elderly people.

Environment. It creates a well-kept area of parkland near the city, and by producing some vegetables for local consumption reduces the demand for food from further away. It encourages the use of organic home waste as compost and promotes a culture of natural food.

Economy. It improves and maintains the quality of a green area for low cost, and may stimulate small-scale local enterprise: gardening shops, selling or rental of gardening tools, or co-operatives of professional gardeners.

The experience

The satisfaction of growing fruit and vegetables themselves.

Meeting other people with the same passion for gardening.

Enjoying open-air activities.

Future development possibilities

Creating services and tools to support non-professional farmers and gardeners.

Creating networks for enthusiasts to share experiences and skills.

Research

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

German Espinoza, Elvis Meneghel

For EMUDE

COMMUNITY VEGETABLE GARDEN

Projeto Horta Comunitária - Program of Food Quality Improvement for the Suburb Inhabitants

Boa Esperança- MG, Brazil



Promoters

Communitarian Association of Boa Esperança, Cláudio Lúcio da Silva and Inhabitants of suburbs in Minas Gerais

Solution

Most suburban areas in Brazil suffer from government disregard to certain social aspects. They are usually poor and the most needy areas in the cities.

This project was created to combat hunger and to increase the sense of citizenship in needy suburban districts in the state of Minas Gerais. With the support of Banco do Brasil Foundation, the idea of cultivating a community vegetable garden appeared in the district of Boa Esperança, in the south of the state. At that time, Cláudio Lúcio da Silva was the local community association president. He had the idea of asking the owners of fallow land in the district for authorization to cultivate vegetables there. It was advantageous for the owners, because they no longer needed to spend to cleaning their land, which would also be enclosed against invasion. The Foundation financed the material that was used to begin the planting, such as fences to surround the land, soil and manure. The first five water bills are also paid by the Foundation. The residents help to clean the land, to buy seeds and to maintain the plantation. In this way they learn to, later, manage the project by themselves. Part of what is picked goes for donation to the suburb inhabitants; the other part will be sold at low prices to the rest of the population. The collected value will be reinvested in the vegetable garden.

Besides supplying families with food, the planting serves an important social purpose by offering work to the unemployed and integrating residents of the district. Senior citizens and children feel useful; neighbours who once weren't friends, now are socializing better and unemployed people who used to drink all day come to work voluntarily.

The project has also thrilled and inspired other neighbourhoods in Minas Gerais, such as Ribeirão Neves, which has copied the Boa Esperança's successful experience. The data transfer is made through the distribution of explanatory books and videos prepared by the

Communitarian Association of Boa Esperança.

As the result was positive, Cláudio Lúcio da Silva enrolled the project in the Banco do Brasil Foundation social technology contest. After president Lula's election and the creation of Programa Fome Zero (a program against hunger developed by him), the government enlarged the database and founded the project Horta Comunitária, which is today part of the Public Food Safety Program. He was also candidate for alderman, but he wasn't elected.

Benefits

- It supplies food to the low-income population in Minas Gerais
- It improves the quality of nutrition, with vegetables cultivated without the use of pesticides
- It reduces eating expenses
- It eliminates fallow land in cities
- It reduces rubbish and garbage in urban areas
- It reduces violence by eliminating waste land, where lots of crimes used to happen.
- It gives kids, the unemployed and old people an activity
- It increases social integration between the populations in each district

Active welfare, why?_

- The inhabitants of suburban Boa Esperança and other districts are generating benefits for themselves
- The inhabitants of the districts manage the maintenance of the vegetable gardens autonomously
- The Communitarian Association of Boa Esperança with the initial support of Banco do Brasil Foundation created the solution
- The project is social because it reinforces neighbourhood socialization inside each participant district

Research

Welfare Observatory

WALKING BUS

Children get to school by themselves - enjoyably and safely

Milan, Italy

www.iwalktoschool.org



Promoters

School of via Bottego, Milan

Solution

The walking bus encourages children to walk to and from school in the safety of a group under supervision of one or more adults. Safe routes are created and become a fun part of children's daily routine. They meet their friends, talk and play, and share experiences outside the school. Gradually this builds up the children's autonomy and personalities. It is also good exercise, and frees up time for the parents, who would otherwise have to take the children to school. What's more, it improves children's road safety awareness, improves pedestrian safety, and creates friendlier neighbourhoods as people get out and interact with one another. Finally, it reduces traffic pollution and accidents involving child pedestrians.

Background

Walking bus is an initiative by some teachers at an elementary school in Milan to improve the health and the well-being of children. In Milan, a large part of daily traffic congestion is caused by taking children to and from school by car. However, it's difficult for children to walk on their own, because of unsafe roads and pavements often being blocked by parked cars. The walking bus protects and organises the groups of children. Nowadays, there are very few costs.

Current state of development

The pilot project began in 2000 and finished in August 2004. Now, the programme continues

with volunteers of grandparents, friends and teachers. The system is based on an idea first proposed in the USA and UK, which had the same or other kind of problems in implementation: little support from the public administration and bad infrastructure. In Milan the solution has been enriched with many activities inside and outside the school, such as cultural and art festivals, board games and art work which have increased the neighbourhood's respect for children and the environment.

People

Children are the main users of this scheme, and like it because it gives them the chance to socialise with each other outside school. They would like to adopt the solution permanently, getting more and more autonomy over the five years of school.

Its success is due to the interest from the school's director and teachers and to the curiosity of children about doing new activities with new people. But there are problems: parents are still scared to let children walk to school alone and public administration doesn't support this project.

Benefits

Society: Walking to school means that people don't use their cars; this reduces traffic, accidents and pollution, and eases congestion on public transport. On a social level, the system recreates the sense of neighbourhood that existed a long time ago but has been lost in big cities. Developing this system could see schools as promoters of new ways of living, involving the whole community and increasing its responsibility towards children.

Environment: This system reduces traffic jams, air and noise pollution near schools and makes the streets more pleasant to live in. It also reduces fuel consumption, thus improving the environment.

Economy: This solution both gives parents time to do other activities, and saves money on fuel.

The quality of the experience

The children have the fun of going to school together on a daily urban adventure. Elderly who help have the satisfaction of feeling useful in society.

Future development possibilities

To create communication tools and infrastructures to help children become independent and skilled.

Research

Emilia Douka, Luca Peluso

Master in Strategic Design, Politecnico di Milano

MCS – MILANO CAR SHARING

City residents have the use of a car whenever they need it, but without owning one.

Italy, Milan

www.milano-carsharing.it



Promoter

Legambiente, MCS

The solution

MCS is a self-service car rental system which enables residents to use a car without the expense and hassles of owning one, and saving money. It is an alternative solution to the urban commuting, based on the easy access to a car whenever it is needed. The concept could be an intelligent solution for such cities, as Milan, with lots of problems caused by traffic. The first objective of car sharing is to teach people that the car is not a status symbol and that it can be used only when you really need it. Once users have subscribed, they get an MCS card with a personal code on it that allows them to make reservations via the call centre or the website. They can choose the car and the garage to collect and deliver the car. The garage records the kilometers driven by each client, and charges them at the end of the month.

The background context

As many other big cities, Milan has the problems of traffic jams, pollution and lack of parking, especially during rush hours, mainly caused by private cars. Mostly people prefer to own a car rather than use public transportation or alternative transport. In other major cities in Europe, alternative transport solutions such as car sharing have been available for many years and in some cities, such as Berlin, are very popular. Nowadays the costs of owning a car are very high. It would often be cheaper to pay for the car only when you use it, and for the time you use it. Also it can be time-consuming and to find parking and maintain the car. The car-sharing concept deals with these issues.

Current state of development

Legambiente introduced the car-sharing service was introduced to Milan in September 2001. It started with three cars, a garage in and a website. By 2005, the MCS had several vehicles in three different categories and 13 parking areas. There are more than 200 members using the service each month. The scheme is working well, in the opinion of the users and

organisers, but the system could work even better on a larger scale. What is missing, on the practical side, is some technological investment to optimise the service and some support from the public administration; on the communication side it needs more promotion which could really change peoples' mind-set about private commuting. The annual membership cost between 70 and 100 euros, the hourly rate is 1.80 euros from 7:00 to 24:00 (it is free between 24:00 and 7:00) and the cost per km is 0, 32 euros per km, including the fuel.

Benefits

Society. Society gains an innovative, economic and ecological system as an alternative to the traffic problems caused by private care ownership. On individual basis users save money, time and stress and get awareness about the costs (money, environment, use of public space) of using cars. Ideologically Car Sharing might remove some of the status aspect of private cars.

Environment. The cars chosen for the MCS system are low-emission and fuel-efficient, so are less likely to pollute the environment. They are also compact to take up less parking space and avoid obstructing roads and sidewalks. MCS parking areas are strategically located near public transport hubs to encourage commuters to use the existing public transport infrastructure, and thus reduce pollution.

Economy. For people driving fewer than 10,000 kilometres in a year, using the MCS system works out as 4,000 euros cheaper per year than owning a car.

The experience

Being part of an elite of trend-setters, trying to improve city life.

Having a range of cars to sample.

Behaving in a sustainable way.

Future development possibilities

Developing technical services to support community sharing.

Designing cars suitable for easy and frequent personalisation.

Developing low-emission cars.

Research

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Mario Aloï, Mine Gokce Ozkaynak

For EMUDE

Benefits

- It reduces the level of polluted air, helping the environment
- It reduces the heavy traffic on the streets
- It helps people find others with the same interests
- It helps people pay the car's expenses
- It reduces the stress caused by the traffic and the long time driving a car
- It gives company to people when they are driving
- It helps other people to get transport

Active Welfare, why?

- The people who give a lift to others also benefit by knowing a new person and reducing the expenses
- The drivers manage the lifts autonomously or can be helped by the university or school to find a lift partner
- The solidarity lift was created by drivers who wanted to share their car with others and people who needed transportation
- It generates sociality between people who do not know each other

Research

Welfare Observatory

LODGE A STUDENT AT HOME

Intergenerational house sharing helps students find cheap, family-style accommodation, while giving lonely, but independent, elders help, companionship and financial support.

Italy, Milan

www.meglio.milano.it



Promoters

Associazione Megliomilano and Provincia di Milano

Solution

Megliomilano realised that independent elderly people could provide young students with low-cost accommodation in exchange for a little household help. A campaign generated a lot of offers from elderly people who had at least one room free in their house; many students also submitted requests. A psychologist was employed to visit the houses, interview the students and elderly people, and match the two together. Megliomilano keeps track of everybody involved through weekly feedback, gives both parties free legal assistance and support from a psychologist support, and organises monthly meetings with all users of the service.

Background

Large European cities like Milan have a huge demand for student accommodation; in 2003, nearly 20,000 places were needed in the city. An increasing number of elderly people living alone need a little help with everyday activities. In addition, room prices in Milan are some of the most expensive in Italy, forcing students to live in nearby cities and to commute to college. As the Milan universities cannot offer a solution to these problems, students often decide to study somewhere else, and Milan loses out both culturally and economically. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of elderly people need help to live independently in their own homes.

Current situation

Megliomilano's campaign was launched in June 2004. A pilot project of the first 12 intergenerational house-shares started on November 2004, in collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano. Intergenerational house sharing had already been successfully developed in Piacenza and Como, two small towns in Italy. The problem in Milan is on a different, much bigger, scale - similar to Barcelona and London which run similar schemes. By 2005, 30 intergenerational house-sharing cases were under way, all monitored weekly for feedback. The

cost per room varies from 150 to 250 Euros per month, paid directly to the house owner. MeglioMilano provides the resources, with a little funding coming from (RAS), a private company. As the service is still at the pilot stage, there are not yet any financial figures to study.

Benefits

Society: The service gives an immediate solution to two big problems in Milan: the lack of accommodation for students and the need of company and little assistance for elderly people living alone. At the same time it reduces the generation gap, and provides new ideas dealing with problems of elderly people. Two problems are emerging: sometimes the elderly people are using the students as nurses, which was never the aim of the service; and a female bias is evident: Elderly people look for female students, and students look for female elderly people. This reduces the opportunities for males, both elderly and students.

Environment: Reducing the number of student commuters has the potential to reduce traffic, pollution and overcrowding on public transport. Sharing of buildings, rooms and facilities allows to reduce the need for heating per person, and produce a more efficient use of the buildings.

Economy: There are clear economic benefits for both users of the service: The elderly people get financial and practical help; while students get access to low-cost rooms, so can afford to live and study in Milan and enjoy the cultural life of the city. The providers are currently using funds from the private sector and their own resources, but this will not be enough for much longer.

The quality of the experience

For the elderly: to have, everyday, someone to provide supportive care that they can rely on. For the students, it seems to be like finding a new grand-father or grand-mother.

Future development possibilities

As populations age, large numbers of households in Europe will contain elderly people who have unused rooms. The Milan system of matching these people with roomless students is one response; another could be a service that enables older people to pool resources in other ways and among themselves, not just with students.

Research

Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Ahmet Ozan Sener, Anna Zavagno
For EMUDE

LIVING ROOM RESTAURANT

People who love cooking use their skills to cook for a larger group.

The Netherlands, Oosterhout NB

<http://home.planet.nl/~huiskamerrestaurant>



Promoters

Maaïke Hengel, Wouter Hengel

Solution

The 'Living Room Restaurant' scheme is a way for people to get a cheap dinner and meet other people, in a home setting. After reserving a place via email or phone, people can literally come and sit at the host's dining table. After a short chat between all the guests, dinner is served, comprising two appetizers, main course, dessert and unlimited drinks. Guests can choose the background music and help with clearing the table between each dish. The hosts sit on the ends of the table and switch places between courses so they can talk to everyone there. The evening lasts as long as the guests and hosts want, and costs 15 euros.

Background

Many older people are cut off from society, and often miss being able to cook for and entertain their children and family, once the children leave home. The people who started the scheme want to make friends, be socially active and create a support network. They love to cook and want to offer a cheap alternative for people who like to go out to dinner.

Current state of development

The scheme started in February 2005, and other similar networks have also set up recently. The members will keep going with the project while it is still fun, and quite happy with the current set up and are not looking for any changes or expansion.

Benefits

Society: The Living Room Restaurant's benefits are mainly to individuals, rather than groups, as it enables otherwise lonely people to make new friends. The evenings are arranged so that the almost nobody knows each other at each party.

Environment: There are no significant benefits to the environment.

Economy: The hosts make no profit, but nor do they make a loss. Most of the benefit is on a

social level. They shop in regular supermarkets and they do not need a restaurant licence as it is so small-scale.

The quality of the experience

Demonstrating one's own skills and capabilities. Meeting new people with an open attitude in a cheerful environment. Being pleasantly surprised by the culinary ability of neighbours, and discovering their home.

Future development possibilities

Finding buildings large common areas and professional kitchens for social events. Ensuring hygiene in the cooking and dining equipment.

Research

TU Eindhoven, The Netherlands
Ivo Stuyfzand, Eric Toering, Mathijs Wullems
For Emude

NURSERIES AT HOME

A flexible, customised professional day nursery for small groups of infants, at a reasonable price, and with a socialising environment

San Donato Milanese, Milan, Italy

<http://www.comune.sandonatomilanese.mi.it>



Promoters

Social cooperative Solidarietà è Progresso, Municipality of San Donato Milanese

Solution

The service is run for the municipality of San Donato Milanese by a cooperative of 80 members started in 1999 to organise services for infants, the disabled and the. It offers professional nursery care to small groups of two or three children under three years old. Children are assigned to a childminder, who looks after them in her own home. The carers look after and educate the children, and take them also to other activities for infants organised by the local authority to help in the baby's social development. The service is focused on two main concepts: having a maximum of three children per house, making it easier for the childminder to take them out on her own, and that the childminders should be well-trained. The scheme offers new job opportunities, especially for immigrants, and a new, flexible and personalised kind of childcare. The parents have to drop off and pick up the baby at the carer's house and provide the baby's food.

Background

Developed as an industrial area back in the 1960s, San Donato Milanese is home to many young professional people and immigrants, all living away from their families and their help in raising their children. The number of children keeps increasing, and the existing nurseries cannot satisfy the community's nursery needs. In 1999 more than 60 families were denied places at the nurseries. The local authority developed the service with the cooperative in 2000.

Current state of development

At first, the families only used the service because there were no spaces in the existing nurseries. But today, even if places are available, and even though this service is a little bit more expensive, some parents prefer it to the nurseries. What's more, families that start using the service for one year usually stick to it until their babies are three. In 2002, the service started being open to foreign residents and using foreign childminders, which was considered an important step in the development of the service. Childminders are paid 3.30 euros an hour per child. The costs are shared between the local authority and the family: 20% is paid by the family, 20% is paid by the local authority and 60% is divided between the two according to the family's income. The cooperative supplies nappies and changing equipment, mattresses, pushchairs, high-chairs and toys. The initiative brings a monthly income for the cooperative of around 35 000 euros, which is partly reinvested in the service.

Benefits

Society: This service both offers parents a flexible solution to the problem of nursery places and supports the children's early socialisation. It provides jobs for otherwise unemployed childminders, which was especially important to immigrant residents who otherwise had had to have their children looked after by relatives living far away due to delays getting their visa. By working for the cooperative they can both take care of their own children and work for the community.

Environment: The solution optimises the use of existing private structures for semi-public and business activities, and reduces the number of journeys between homes and nurseries.

Economy: Using the childminders' own homes is a less costly and quicker solution for the local authority than building and administrating new nurseries. The service provides an income to previously unemployed childminders.

The quality of the experience

For parents, being able to have a trusted, homely nursery so nearby. Being able to take part in the education of their own children and making a small home-based business using their own skills.

Future development possibilities

Creating dedicated spaces for common services (such as small private kindergartens) close to, or inside, residential buildings. Developing methods of allowing teachers and parents to communicate in real time.

Research

Begum Arseven, Chiara Zappalà
Master in Strategic Design, Politecnico di Milano

LUOSHAN COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTRE

Restore the trust and responsibility to community

Shanghai, China

<http://www.shymca.org.cn>



Luoshan Community Service Centre



Synthesis

The Luoshan Community Service Centre is currently the only group house for elderly people in an open style, combining a service centre for youth with the service centre for the elderly. This creates an opportunity for the elderly to communicate with people from outside.

Description

The centre consists of 4 parts: a Service Centre for the Elderly, a Service Centre for Youth, a 999 Hotline and a Community Education Service Centre. It is run by the people of Luoshan community and supply service for themselves, which restores the trust and responsibility of people to manage and use it.

Context

Society in China has been changing rapidly and the traditional administrative infrastructure has not been feasible for the new city communities. . Communities still play very little role in social solidarity and public services for the people in them.

From the YMCA perspective, it is retained today as a largely secular (or else inter-religious) organisation. Its model of governance has created a diversity of YMCA programs and services, with YMCAs in different countries and communities offering vastly different programming in response to local community needs.

Development phase

The main innovation of this case is the change of one idea: people don't have to be managed but can manage by themselves. The Centre supplies an opportunity to everybody to have trust and responsibility within the community. Luoshan community service centre is an emerging type of community management.

Who is involved and how

The centre is promoted by YMCA shanghai (Shanghai Young Men's Christian Association) with support from street government which provides hard conditions and policies. But it is

managed by community members themselves.

Benefits

Social: The centre supplies many public services for the people and increases the communication and interaction between people in the community. The life of people improves through community involvement.

Environmental: Some activities of the centre could increase the ideas of environmental sustainability in the mind of people.

Economic: People can have many services in the centre for free or for a very low price instead of general prices outside, which decreases living costs for people there.

Perspectives

The centre has been established for 10 years and has had great success in guiding the social infrastructure development in a healthy and sustainable way. Self-management and community involvement are the direction of city and community development. .

Research

Miaosen Gong, Politecnico di Milano

RACIBOROWICE SENIOR CLUB

Old, sick and disabled people are supported in daily life.

Poland, Krakow



Promoters

Senior Club association

The solution

The Senior's Club provides a place for making friends and sharing experiences and memories. The main aim of the initiative is to organise the spare time of elderly and ill people, who after working hard for many years, often on farms, have some free time.

The pensioners and retired people meet every so often in a parish hall made available for them. Over tea and homemade cakes they take part in performances and stage shows, with sketches, songs and dance. The club even organises field trips and even pilgrimages. They also organise take care of the lonely and home-riden together. This initiative came about thanks to Wiktoria Mysliwiec, a Michalowice regional councillor.

The background context

Raciborowice is a small farming community, with a population of 1,000, around 15 km from Krakow. The culture and social life is concentrated mainly around the parish church, which also operates as a small cultural centre. The residents either work as farmers or commute to Krakow, so it is mainly elderly people, or pensioners, who have free time. This is a very small place, so has few opportunities for cultural or social life. The elderly, despite being healthy and potentially active, used to spend most of their time in their homes.

Current state of development

The Senior Club has been running since 1993. There are similar schemes all around the world, since it is a natural sort of activity for the elderly, but in Poland they are rare. The pensioners' circle initiative in Raciborowice has so far only been replicated in small towns, even though administrative authorities are happy to support, and even sponsor, such clubs.

The circle in Raciborowice works mainly thanks to the very low but regular contributions of its members (about 12 zł = 3 Euro a year), but it is also supported by the administrative authorities and the parish church, in which it operates. The circle has no full-time staff and nobody makes any money from its activities. Participants often receive large discounts on the trips.

The benefits

Society. This scheme plays a valuable role in society. The attempt to give the elderly, often excluded and considered economically useless, a new lease of life is a great social service. Their families are also glad for them to have a way of spending their time, as it both gives the families and break and saves the elderly from stagnating and feeling useless, which leads to depression and infirmity.

Environment. Only slight connection. There are no direct advantages or disadvantages for the environment, the emphasis is more placed on societal benefits.

Economy. The club is self-sufficient in both organisational and financial terms.

The experience

Feeling useful in the society, running a service which supports other people. Meeting other people with the same expectations and needs in terms of leisure time, though not having to do anything special.

Future development possibilities

Designing buildings which allow social activities in common spaces, not driven by business needs. Developing services to employ elderly people with long work experience in activities which can even make them money.

Research

Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland
Dominika Konieczkowska, Magdalena Misaczek
For EMUDE

OMAABI – SELF HELP COMMUNITY

Elderly people support each other, earn extra income and dine out cheaply

Estonia, Tallinn



Promoters

A group of elderly people

Solution

The self-help community of elderly retired people runs a shop and a little diner, providing opportunities to socialise, sell home-made handicrafts and eat out for the lowest prices in town. The community began as a few pensioners making handicrafts together, and selling them when they got the current building. It now has 48 pensioner members. Its building, near the city centre, with a ground floor acting as handicraft shop, cafeteria and hairdresser. The cafeteria is where elderly and lonely people meet up, hear live music once or twice a week, and eat very cheaply. The prices in the handicraft shop are also low. Most of the goods are made by members, with some from outside craftsmen, but the shop will only sell beautiful things. Self help was created to give old people a new lease of life and a new sense of 'family'. Most old people in Estonia are very poor. Self Help Community is always looking for outside help, because their financial situation is not quite enough to keep going independently.

Background

Estonia is at a political stage when lots of the population feel insecure. Pensioners and widows find it especially difficult to find their place in today's fast-moving society. During the political changes of the past 12 years ago, society has become more focused on the young. The welfare system is not very highly developed – pensions are low and lot of old people have financial problems.

Current state of development

The organisation has been going since 1992 and is working well. Whether it can keep going in the future depends on money. If the government could give just a little support the group would have no problems carrying on. Profit is only made in the handicraft shop, which keeps 10% of the price to pay for electricity and firewood for heating. Every member works in the shop for free, although they might get some food stamps for the cafeteria, and does a shift three or four times a month.

Benefits

Society: Elderly people, who feel in good shape rich in experience, can keep being active and useful in the neighbourhood. They can help the others and the others help them. A very important task of the Self Help Community is maintaining Estonian national handicrafts, keeping the tradition going and passing knowledge to younger people. Now it has joined the EU, Estonia a small nation needs to keep its own cultural traditions and national character.

Environment: The handicrafts use local and traditional materials and resources, and their manufacture suits the local environment.

Economy: Estonia's cost of living is increasing. Omaabi enables consumers to buy things for cheaper prices, and the elderly can buy cheap food and services and get benefits from their work.

The quality of the experience

Feeling useful in the society, running a service which supports other people. Meeting other people with the same expectations and needs in terms of leisure time, though not having to do anything special.

Future development possibilities

Designing easy-to-use handicraft tools for amateurs. Developing multiservice meeting centres for retired people, integrating different activities and open to the all residents.

Designing buildings which allow social activities in common spaces, not driven by business needs.

Research

Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonia

Maris Korrol, Krista Thomson

For EMUDE

JARDIN NOMADE — NOMADIC GARDEN

Residents transform an abandoned plot into a shared neighbourhood garden.

France, Paris

www.qsb11.org



Promoters

Association Quartier Saint Bernard AQS

Solution

This run-down eyesore was transformed into a dynamic, locally run community garden, meeting and events space. The 270 square metre shared garden is a platform for a multitude of activities; it inspires interaction between generations and involvement with local schools. The Jardin Nomade offers a free and open space where locals of all age groups can meet and have fun. A monthly meeting is held by the Association du Quartier Saint Bernard (AQS) to exchange information, organise events and deal with any problems. Claudine Raillard, a professional gardener, performs the general management and supervision of the garden, draws up contracts, distributes individual garden plots, gives gardening advice and programmes activities, undertakes environmental research (such as water collection) and organised the brick architecture (hut) project. The AQS organises monthly meetings, within and beyond the neighbourhood by holding social events, such as soup parties, making sure that something is always happening in and around the garden.

Background

The Jardin Nomade (JN) is in a quiet residential part of Paris, between two busy streets to the east of the Bastille. Despite the influx of young people and tourists attracted by the lively shopping, café and bar activities, there is still a strong local spirit in the neighbourhood, and fiercely supported by local associations such as the AQS. On the initiative of local residents, supported by the AQS, JN was developed as a community garden, built on a site which had been abandoned for almost a decade. Local residents and families undertake the daily care and cultivation of the vegetable garden, and local schools provide environmental education activities for the children.

Current state of development

After several years of trying and a change of municipal leadership, in 2003 JN came to life.

From an empty plot, the first flowers and vegetables were harvested in 2004. The garden was blooming! The JN is now authorised to remain on site until 2010. JN has inspired the design of the Main Verte system — an environmental charter created by the Ville de Paris parks and gardens department which underpins the protocol for use of the garden, and sets out rules for environmental behaviour. The charter has served to inspire other similar projects in Paris and periphery. The garden is matured and the success of the neighbourhood dynamic widely recognised. Originally designed to be moved on once the city-owned plot is reclaimed (a multimedia centre is scheduled to replace the garden in 2010), locals hope that the city will make the garden permanent. This seems more and more likely. City Hall loans the site, provides infrastructure (water and electricity), servicing (waste management) and equipment (fencing, soil, growing boxes). JN provides management, supervision and gardening advice, and distributes the 54 garden plots. Each cost 21 euro each, of which 50% goes to JN, and 50% to City Hall.

Benefits

Society: JN inspires inter-generational interaction, involvement with schools (which can extend activities outdoors to a safe, local city venue) and associations, and creates a healthier environment. Claudine Raillard (AQSBS) is devoted to community action and increasing environmental awareness through city gardening. Teenagers are taking an interest in the garden since young graffiti artists painted the mural on the back wall, making the garden visible from far away. Even elderly and unemployed are finding roles and exchanging expertise.

Environment: The Main Verte (Green Hand) charter supports such initiatives as part of Paris city-wide policy for sustainable development; this encourages local consultation/participation, 'greening' the city, etc. The charter states that all sites must respect the environment, develop biodiversity, and encourage actions to develop environmental and civic responsibility, especially in the young.

Economy: The garden is maintained for very low cost, thanks to the enthusiasm of the plot hirers. The system is possibly over-reliant on goodwill, unpaid workers.

The experience

Pleasure in taking care of one's own and common environment and feeling responsible for it. Pride in making and maintaining a better neighbourhood. Expressing oneself in creating original garden designs.

Future development possibilities

AQSBS used growing boxes designed by students. City Hall may sponsor a series for use in other projects. Windmills/decorations were developed by a designer with local children from plastic waste. Association AKARAS constructed a hut on site with locals, to demonstrate brick architecture. Main Verte has inspired 18 working projects and 30 proposals for future sites

Research

ENSCI Les Ateliers, Paris, France.
For Emude

NEIGHBOURHOOD SHARES

Inhabitants improve living conditions in their village environment.

The Netherlands, The Hague

www.urban.nl



Promoters

The International Institute for the Urban Environment (IIUE), NV Woningbeheer and the department of Nature and Environmental Education of the City of The Hague

The solution

Residents have taken over responsibility from the local authority for certain maintenance tasks for their neighbourhood. A residents' association decides, with the local authority, what work needs doing, then organises it among local residents. Although the local authority pays for the work, responsibility is devolved to the residents' association. The local authority and environmental organisations give the residents practical advice, and environmental awareness.

The background context

The idea of resident involvement emerged from a discussion group called the Denktank (think tank). This panel of resident and local authority representatives continue to have monthly meetings where they share ideas about how to improve the neighbourhood.

Current state of development

The system, neighbourhood shares, began planning at the beginning of 2004 and started properly in autumn 2004. It was initiated by International Institute for the Urban Environment, NV Woningbeheer (a company organising communal maintenance projects of houses in private ownership) and the department of Nature and Environmental Education of the City of The Hague. It is one of the first examples in the Netherlands to take such an initiative on a local level.

Benefits

Society. The residents learn how to take care about their own environment by themselves, and become motivated to complete maintenance tasks. By completing its own maintenance, and learning how to value and take care of its own environment, The Hague could become a good example for other cities.

Environment. By tending gardens and tidying streets, the project has made this corner of The

Hague a healthier place to live.

Economy. The system saves the community money. As well as the responsibility for neighbourhood maintenance, the local authority has also transferred the municipal budget reserved for these tasks to the residents' association. A neighbourhood maintenance fund has been created which is managed by the residents; shareholder meetings decide how to invest the money in upgrading the neighbourhood.

The experience

Pride maintaining the beauty and cleanliness of the neighbourhood.

Future development possibilities

Creating a technological platform for sharing tasks and managing activities.

Research

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For EMUDE

LOCAL WORKSHOPS

Work organisation and local partners' roles

The main activities of the Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles (CCSL) project are organised in three parallel workshops in Brazil, India and China. The aim of each *local workshop* is to pursue the general CCSL aims at a local level:

- To better understand the local consistency and implications of the CCSL working hypotheses.
- To make the cases of creative communities clearer and more easily and effectively communicable.
- To build a first network of local organisations and institutions interested to promote *collaborative creativity for sustainable lifestyles*.

WORK ORGANISATION

By the expression *local workshop* we intend a programme of different, distant and face-to-face, “light”¹ actions. They will be:

- interviews with relevant experts and operators
- collection of local promising cases and assessment of their nature and possible implications
- confrontation of these results with the ones of other (European and non European) experiences
- organisation of a one-day seminar with a selected number of interested experts
- editing of intermediate and final results in a highly communicative way.

These actions will be collaboratively carried out by the *CCSL central team* and by the main *local partners*. The collaboration between the central team and the local partners will largely be by e-mail, using a specific *CCSL web site*, that will act as platform for all partner activities (and for all the three local workshops).

This programme will last 6 months, *January – June 2007*.

During this period, the intermediate findings of the three country-specific workshops (in Brazil, India and China) will be confronted and used to stimulate the different local discussions (and will be presented as mid term results in international meetings)

¹ It has to be kept in mind that CCSL is a first step in a hopefully longer process

At the end of this period, between *July and September 2007*, the three workshops' results will be integrated by the central CCSL team, while continuing discussion with the local partner who will participate in the final results.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

A view on the context. To build a (*very synthetic*) framework for the workshop activities and results. More precisely, this means:

- editing relevant data on the specific context
- preparing a (short) bibliography of relevant papers, books and web-sites
- indicating a list of potentially interested institutions and experts

Interviews with experts. To hold 3-4 interviews with relevant experts and operators, in order to have their opinions on the CCSL working hypotheses and on related open issues. In particular, these interviews will cover the following main issues:

- The experts' impressions on the creative communities phenomenon and on its potential role
- The local meaning of some keywords, such as: community, creativity, social innovation, sustainable life styles,
- The experts' ideas on if and how it may be possible to empower existing creative communities and to promote their replication

Promising cases. To collect a selection of local promising cases and assess their nature and possible implications. The final results will be at least 5-10 good and well documented cases, and to comment those according to the following aspects:

- Comparison of the local cases with the other (European and non European) experiences
- Evaluation of their social and environmental sustainability
- Evaluation of their replicability and on their potential impact on the whole society.

Organisation of a one-day seminar. To organise a seminar, with a selected group of invited experts, that could be named: "the Creative Communities day". The seminar goals are:

- To assess the consistency of the CCSL hypothesis and topics, and the local meaning and implication of the creative communities with a wider group of interested people (representing a variety of different organizations).
- To arouse interest around these topics.

Scenario building. To design a first local sustainable lifestyle scenario, using the local cases as "building materials". The goals are:

- to facilitate discussion among the workshop partners on the potentialities and implications of creative communities, with the proposition of larger motivated visions (i.e. the scenarios).
- to prepare some original material that could be useful to promote the CCSL results at both a local and international scale.

Communication of results. To make the whole process visible and communicable both locally and internationally. The goals are:

- to facilitate the workshop discussion, thanks to the editing of the collected promising cases and intermediate results
- to arouse wider public interest around creative communities and the sustainable lifestyles that they could collaborate to build.

PARTNERS AND ROLES

CCSL central team.

It is a group of senior and junior researchers based in Milan (DIS-Indaco, Politecnico di Milano) and Brussels (SDS), with the support of some UNEP experts in Paris. This team coordinates the whole Project and will start and support the three local workshops in Brazil, India and China.

Main local partners.

They are the organisations that act as the main interlocutors with the CCSL central team in assessing and, if assessed positively, in consolidating and articulating the CCSL hypotheses . Their specific role is to collaborate with the CCSL central team in all the workshop activities and, in particular:

- define needed local context data
- define local contacts for interviews
- search for local promising cases and collect related information
- organise the one-day seminar and participant selection and invitation
- comment and edit the intermediate and final results

One-day seminar participants.

They are experts from organisations that are selected to participate in the seminar, provisionally named: "Creative communities day". Their role is:

- to read the preparatory materials and to send written comments
- to participate in the seminar and to contribute to the discussion
- to write final comments and considerations
- to propose some new promising cases

Design specialists.

It is a team of designers, from a local school of design, who participate as specialists in the whole workshop, but with a specific role in developing a scenario building exercise. Their role is to work in collaboration with the CCSL central team and with the local partners, to prepare and develop a "scenario building exercise". More precisely:

- to oversee the local partners' activities and to receive input from them on the nature and implications of creative communities
- to participate in the "one-day seminar"
- to organise a *two day intensive scenario building exercise*, on the basis of input from the local partners, in collaboration with the central team (who will bring the scenario building methodology)
- to format output material to be integrated into the CCSL final travelling exhibition.

CCSL BACKGROUND DOCUMENT 1
Creative communities and sustainable lifestyle.
The European experience

PREMISE: *This Background Document 1 is a short presentation of the concept of creative communities for sustainable lifestyles, as it emerged in the European experience. Practically it proposes the EMUDE research background and main results.*

Within the next few years, we will have to learn to live (and to live better, in the case of most of the inhabitants of this planet) consuming fewer environmental resources. And we will have to do so by establishing new social undertakings at all levels, from the local to the planetary, giving rise to a new sense of proximity and distribution among the human beings inhabiting this small, dense, and today more than ever depleted planet. In our opinion, this is the working sense we should attribute to the concept of *'transition towards sustainability'*.

The grounds for this statement are painfully evident to all (or, at least, to all those who do not close their eyes to reality). However, its implications might require further explanation, since they entail coming to terms with certain forms of systemic discontinuity in which, as a general rule, we are not used to thinking.

The concept of living well while at the same time consuming fewer resources and generating new patterns of social cohabitation is related to an idea of wellbeing (and, consequently, to a specific economic and industrial model) that is diametrically opposed to the one which industrialised society has engendered and propagated, to this date, throughout the world and which, put in a nutshell, can be expressed with the following equation: more wellbeing is equivalent to more consumption and less social quality. This pronounced difference proves a stark fact: it is simply impossible to take large steps towards sustainability if we limit our actions to improving already existing ideas and ways of doing things. Each step towards sustainability must involve a systemic discontinuity with pre-existing situations.

How can this discontinuity be achieved? This is not the place for an exhaustive discussion on how complex systems evolve and, particularly, on how systemic discontinuities are produced. We will simply state—since this is the theoretical basis of everything that is discussed in this article—that the groundwork for great systemic changes, for macro-transformations, is done by *micro-transformations*, i.e. by the radical innovations introduced into local systems. We will also point out that recognising and observing these micro-transformations make it possible for us to get a first-hand glimpse of the new systems that, at a given moment, could stem from these changes.

Not to be abstract, we will introduce these ideas moving from a concrete experience: the results of a European research, recently concluded, named EMUDE-*Emerging Users Demands for Sustainable Solutions*².

Diffuse social innovation

Let start from the observation of an interesting phenomenon of social innovation: the emergence in Europe of groups of active, enterprising people inventing and putting into practice original ways of dealing with everyday problems: from childcare and care of the elderly to getting hold of natural food; from looking after green spaces to alternative means of transport; from building new solidarity networks to the creation of new forms of housing and shared facilities and services ... (for more, and more detailed examples, see: www.sustainable-everyday.net/cases).

This observation has been also the starting point of the EMUDE research. Moving from here, its initial hypotheses were that these *cases of social innovation* presented promising signals both from the aspect of environmental sustainability and, moreover, from that of social sustainability. And that these signals might usefully point a new direction for technological and market research and innovation.

The field study carried out by this research has verified the validity of these original hypotheses, has shed light on the characteristics of these promising cases in the framework of contemporary society and has permitted to built scenarios that outline ways in which this promising phenomenon may evolve in future.

In particular, it emerged from the study that there exists a dynamic new form of creativity: a *diffuse creativity* put co-operatively into action by “non-specialised” people, which takes shape as a significant (though scarcely studied) expression of contemporary society. The EMUDE research has referred to these enterprising people with the expression: *creative communities, groups of people who invent sustainable ways of living*³.

² EMUDE has been a Special Support Action promoted in the framework of the 6th Framework Program (priority 3-NMP) of the European Commission. EMUDE is coordinated by INDACO, Politecnico di Milano and is developed by 10 research centres and universities and 8 European schools of design. EMUDE is finished in April 2006, but the same line of research is now continuing in another European research called LOLA-*Looking for likely alternatives* and in this CSSL-*Creative communities for sustainable lifestyles*, where the focus is on Brazil, India and China.

³ A more precise definition is:
Creative communities: groups of people who, facing everyday life in the new urban environments, organise themselves to solve a problem or to open a new possibility. And, doing so, invent and practice sustainable ways of living.

Creative communities. Creative communities are very diverse in their nature and in the way they operate. But they have a very meaningful common denominator: they are always the expression of radical innovations of local systems, i.e. discontinuities with regard to a given context, in the sense that they challenge traditional ways of doing things and introduce a set of new, very different (and intrinsically more sustainable) ones: organising advanced systems of sharing space and equipment in places where individual use normally prevails; recovering the quality of healthy biological foods in areas where it is considered normal to ingest other types of produce; developing systems of participative services in localities where these services are usually furnished with absolute passivity on the part of users, etc.

Moreover, all of these promising cases share another distinguishing feature: they are the outcome of the initiatives taken by individuals endowed with special design skills who set themselves specific objectives and find satisfactory tools to attain them; specially creative and entrepreneurial people who, without expecting to trigger general changes in the system (economy, institutions, large infrastructures), manage to reorganise the existing state-of-things producing something new.

Additionally, these creative communities have many common traits: they are deeply rooted in a place, they make good use of the local resources and, directly or indirectly, they promote new ways of social exchange. At the same time, they are linked to networks of similar initiatives being undertaken in different places, which enable them to exchange experiences and share problems at an international level (thereby turning them into cosmopolitan rather than merely local entities). Finally, and this is the aspect which most interests us here, they introduce new solutions that bring individual interests into line with social and environmental interests (which means that they have a high chance of becoming authentically sustainable solutions).

Emerging (implicit and explicit) demands. These creative communities and the promising cases they engender teach us a very important lesson: that it is already possible to take steps in the direction of sustainability. And they do this by offering us in advance specific examples of what could become “normal” in a sustainable society, fuelling up social debate and giving rise to shared views on this subject. At the same time they reflect, implicitly or explicitly, a demand for certain products and services, pointing to new market opportunities for the development of sustainable solutions.

The last statement has to be better explained. The promising cases that the creative communities are generating point to interesting lines for research and express the demand for a new generation products and services: the enabling technologies that could make these initiatives more accessible and more (environmentally, socially and economically) effective. For instance: experience of shared living facilities could become the starting point for a new generation of apparatus for totally new domestic and residential functions. Solutions that make a healthier diet and direct relations with producers possible could be stimuli for a new rationale in nutrition lines. Cases of localised production and self-production could spur the development of processes and products specifically conceived for this kind of de-centralised production. Experience of mobility systems alternative to the car monoculture, could lead to the development of alternative means of transport. And so on.

Weak signals of a (possible) future. Of course, these cases may be considered as minority and marginal. But this is a mistaken perception. On the contrary, they are the most promising aspects of great, on-going, social and cultural changes. In fact, they are based on, and motivated by, some profound *supporting trends* such as: demographic changes, the growing evidence of environmental limits, the on-going evolution towards a knowledge-based network society. In other words, the great changes that the on-going trends are generating are the ground on which a positively oriented *process of social innovation* (Young Foundation, 2006)⁴ is emerging and will hopefully grow and generate the sustainable ways of living that we desperately need. However, we must add and underline that today, the possibility for this emerging social innovation process to grow and become a mainstream tendency is only potential, or better, it is an opportunity⁵. And that its realisation will depend on several interwoven factors.

To sum up: fostering the transition towards sustainability is a question of establishing a 'virtuous circle' encompassing *social innovation* (which we recognise here in creative communities and in the new ideas and solutions they generate) and *technological and institutional innovation* (that can be implemented by the actors who, through their decisions, can advance the possibilities of success of promising proposals). On the other hand, setting up this virtuous circle requires first and foremost the development of the communication, design and strategic skills necessary to recognise, reinforce and transmit, in an adequate manner, the ideas and solutions generated at a social level, transforming them into original working proposals and endowing them with greater potential in terms of large scale dissemination, and to find ways to institute them in the most efficient manner.

The designers' role

Given this general framework, we can now discuss the role that could be played by design in this process. Take the idea of the virtuous circle which we have just described: surely design should use design-specific skills to be actively involved in the establishment of this circle: giving visibility to promising cases, highlighting their most interesting aspects; drawing a map of the existing state-of-things and building scenarios of potential futures; interpreting the questions which arise more or less explicitly, from promising cases; conceiving and developing systems of products, services and information to increase their efficiency and accessibility.

If this is, in a nutshell, what design should do, then the next question we can ask is whether design is capable of carrying it out. Personally, I believe that it is. However, in order to play this role, design must update its traditional cultural and functional legacy. Moreover, the very idea of what a designer is in our day and age must change.

⁴ According to the Young Foundation: "*Social innovation* refers to new ideas that work in meeting social goals" (Young Foundation, 2006). Another definition could be: "*Social innovation* refers to changes in the way individuals or communities act to obtain results (i.e. to solve a problem or to generate new opportunities). These innovations are driven by behavioural changes (more than by technology or market changes), which typically emerge from bottom-up processes (more than from top-down ones). If the way to achieve a result is totally new (or if it is the result that is totally new), we may refer to it as a *radical social innovation* (EMUDE, 2006).

⁵ As a matter of fact, the same trends are also generating different, and very dangerous cases of social innovation: from gated communities to new fundamentalism, just to mention two. This means that nobody today can say what will be the result of the confrontation and composition of these different directions. What will really happen and how, at the end, the whole system is going to evolve is as yet unwritten. .

In this new context, designers have to be considered, and have to be consider themselves, as social actors in a society in which, as contemporary sociology points out, “everybody designs” and in which a host of active minorities, the creative communities, are inventing new ways of being and doing things. In particular, designers have to accept the fact that they can no longer aspire to a monopoly on design and that today design is not only executed in design studios, but everywhere.

At the same time, they have to understand that they will continue playing a specific, and very important role. Moreover, designers have to understand that it is precisely because contemporary society is the way that it is that the role of design, and of the design practitioners, acquires even greater importance. In fact, designers can come to the fore in the great “diffuse” design arena, becoming “solution promoters”, bringing their specificities, such as their capacity to produce *visions of the possible* (i.e. the ability to imagine something that does not exist but could potentially exist) and to develop *strategies to materialise them* (i.e. concrete steps to transform potential visions into real solutions).

Design for social innovation. A new, different and fascinating role for the designer emerges from what has been said here. A role that does not substitute the traditional one, but that works alongside it opening up new fields of activity, not previously thought of.

The first step on this ground is to take the social innovation as a kick off point and use designers’ specific skills and abilities to indicate new directions for product and service innovation (in practice this involves moving in the opposite direction from that more frequently taken by designers i.e. where, starting by observing a technical innovation the designer proposes products and services that should be socially appreciated).

The second step designers must make is to consider themselves part of the community they are collaborating with. To be and act as experts participating peer-to-peer with the other members of the community in the generation of the promising cases they are working on, and their evolution towards more efficient and accessible systems.

These guidelines have important implications not only for designers’ practice, but also and even more, for the vision that they have of society and of themselves (in society). Moving in this direction, designers have to be able to collaborate with a variety of interlocutors, putting themselves forward as experts, i.e. as *design specialists*⁶, but interacting with them in a peer-to-peer mode. More in general, they have to consider themselves part of a complex mesh of new *designing communities*: the emerging, interwoven networks of individual people, enterprises, non-profit organizations, local and global institutions that are using their creativity and entrepreneurship to take some concrete steps towards sustainability⁷.

⁶ Social actors endowed with specific *design knowledge* and specific *design skills*: the knowledge that enables them to understand the full, macro-picture of how things have changed (and are changing), and the micro one, of local context characteristics and on-going dynamics; the design skills that are required to promote and enhance co-design processes in the new contexts and facing the new challenges. They are *design specialists* in that they use design tools to facilitate the convergence of different actors towards shared ideas and potential solutions: proposing solutions and/or scenarios; formulating effectively whatever emerges from the collective design group discussions; developing the ideas on which partner convergence has been verified.

⁷ The notion of *designing communities* emerged in the final consideration of the EMUDE research results (EMUDE 2006). The theatrical and practical background was also given by other important lines of research, such as the ones developed by Pierre Lévy, on *collective Intelligence* (Lévy, 1994), or by Hilary Cottam and

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CCSL BACKGROUND DOCUMENT 2
Creative communities and sustainable lifestyle.
The emerging countries experience

DOCUMENT IN PROGRESS – Version: 7th of January 2007

PREMISE: *This Background Document 2 is work-in-progress. This means that what is presented here is the first draft of a paper that will be progressively up-dated during the next few months.*

This 7th of January Version tentatively proposes the ideas that have emerged in our initial CCSL Project activities (reorganisation of previous experiences, desk research and the first discussions with local partners in Brazil, India and China). These ideas are not yet solid positions but intuitions to be verified in the next CCSL Project phase. In other words: they are presented here as possible stimuli for future discussions.

The Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles (CCSL) is an on-going project of research that deals with *creativity* and *sustainable lifestyles*⁸. More precisely, it discusses the potentialities of collaborative everyday life creativity (the *creative communities*) in generating and diffusing new and

⁸ The CCSL Project is part of the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, within the United Nations 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, usually called Marrakech Process. This 10 Year Framework is a programme led by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Its aim is to catalyze and guide the transition to a more sustainable global economy. Within the Marrakech Process, the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles is an initiative supported by the Swedish Ministry for Sustainable Development. Its specific goal is to develop and implement sustainable policies to change consumer behaviour and to promote more sustainable lifestyles.

In this framework, the Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles (CCSL) project has been established to build on the results of a recently concluded European research called *Emerging User Demands for Sustainable Solutions (EMUDE)*. This research had been funded by the European Commission 6th Framework Programme. Its main aim was to explore the potential of grass roots innovation and pinpoint emerging patterns of sustainable living.

The CCSL project is coordinated by DIS-Indaco Politecnico di Milano in Italy and by Strategic Design Scenarios (SDS), in Belgium, with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) as main partner. In a further stage of the project, local partners will be defined in Brazil, India and China.

more sustainable ways of living in the urban environments of emerging countries (with a focus on Brazil, India and China).

The main CCSL original working hypotheses are:

- Cases of collaborative everyday life creativity (the *creative communities*) are appearing world wide, from the mature industrial economies (as has been proved by the European research EMUDE) to the emerging ones (and in particular, for the CCSL project, in Brazil, India and China).
- These promising cases, when opportunely recognized, supported and communicated, can play a very positive role in the perspective of sustainability, becoming the building blocks for wider visions of possible, open but locally rooted, sustainable lifestyles.
- To empower these promising cases, to facilitate their spread to different contexts and to build shared visions of sustainable futures on them, new conceptual and practical tools are needed. Some of them are the new design capabilities in the area of scenario building and system co-design.

The first step of the CCSL Project is a twofold action: to consolidate and articulate the CCSL original definitions and to assess and consolidate its working hypotheses.

These actions, which are still in progress, profit from previous experiences of CCSL team members and initial discussions with several interlocutors (first of all those that are going to be the local partners). The following notes aim to facilitate this process, feeding these discussions with some *very initial* considerations.

Main original concepts

Creative communities: groups of people who, facing everyday life in the new urban environments, organise themselves to solve a problem or to open a new possibility. And, doing so, invent and practice sustainable ways of living

(to make this definition more concrete, see CATALOGUE IN PROGRESS. Selected cases of creative communities)

The notion of *creative communities* comes from the European experience and is to be considered as a conceptual tool to explore some emerging (positive) signals of change in urban societies⁹. And, moving from here, to build viable scenarios of sustainable ways of living.

Starting the discussion with non-European partners, in the framework of the first phase of the CCSL Project, we realised that to make this concept clearer we had to up-grade the original definition of *creative communities* as it appeared in the European context. A set of *characterizing key words* can help to better clarify the meaning of the expression creative communities:

- **Community**: it refers to new kinds of communities (the *intentional communities*) appearing in mature industrialised societies with the crisis of the traditional communities (i.e. with the

⁹ Two other definitions, linked to the one of creative communities, can be given:

Promising cases: cases of social innovation that appear to be positive steps towards sustainable ways of living. In particular, those generated by creative communities are new forms of social organization where groups of people work collaboratively to invent and set up sustainable solutions for everyday life problems.

Grass roots innovation for collaborative, sustainable ways of living: cases of social innovation where, in contrast to other uses of the expression grass roots innovation, the emphasis is on the adjective "collaborative" to describe the nature of its process; and where the expression "sustainable ways of living describes both the motivation of the actors and the results of the actions".

increasing process of individualization that started in western societies and is spreading world wide). The pragmatic side of these new communities and, at the same time, what generates them and keeps them alive, is a collaborative approach to the solution of commonly recognized problems.

- **Collaborative creativity:** this refers to the *diffuse creativity* that characterizes contemporary society when it is oriented towards *collaborative solutions*. This collaborative creativity is often considered to be the major trigger of a coming new wave of grass roots social innovation.
- **Urban environments:** it refers to both *traditional cities*, and the *new urban (or quasi-urban) environments* emerging world wide. The concept includes different kinds of places where different kinds of people live: from *upper and middle class* neighbourhoods to the slums and shanty towns of the *very poor*; to the diffuse dwellings of city sprawl and to urbanized countryside.
- **Daily life:** refers to the operative context where *everyday life problems* arise and *new opportunities* appear.
- **Sustainable lifestyles:** refers to the results of the ' collaborative actions of the communities (new lifestyle) and their main characteristics (to be promising steps toward socially and environmentally sustainable ways of living).

Creative communities and non-European countries

What has been written up to now, as we have just underlined, is mainly related to the experience of the EMUDE project In Europe. Now, considering non-European countries (and in particular the three selected ones: Brazil, India and China) in this initial phase of the CCSL Project, it appears that *the notion of creative communities can at the same time be both very problematic and (potentially) very useful*.

The blur between near but different concepts

In Brazil, India and China, the expression "creative communities", when explained as *grass roots social innovation*, is often considered as a part of other, existing and relatively consolidated arenas of discussion and fields of actions:

- *The development of under-developed communities.* In this case the common denominator with our concept of creative communities is the collaborative dimension. But the communities being considered here are mainly traditional ones, and the contexts where these actions take place are mainly rural (such as villages in India) or very poor (such as the Brazilian favelas). In China this interpretation does not appear to be so diffused and consolidated.
- *The promotion of new (profit and non profit) enterprises,* meaning the results of the creativity and entrepreneurial capability of individual people. In this case, the common denominator with our concept of creative communities is the high degree of entrepreneurship in solving the problem. But here the focus is on individual capabilities rather than on the capabilities of groups of people who collaborate to solve common problems as occurs in creative communities,.
- *The promotion of charity-oriented organisations,* meaning organisations where someone voluntarily does something for someone else. In this case, the common denominator with our concept of creative communities is the promotion of social value. But here the relationships mainly consist of someone helping somebody else who is in difficulty, without

demanding anything in return. Instead, in creative communities, relationships are based on some form of reciprocity where everyone involved is active in different ways.

Words with different meanings

In Brazil, India and China, the terms “community”, “creativity” and all the other key words we have indicated in the previous paragraph to distinguish creative communities have meanings that are different, some times very different, from the ones adopted in the definition of creative communities in Europe.

Community. This is the most critical term: in Brazil, India and China it has different meanings depending on the different social organisations (in their present forms and their historical evolutions). In India, the term community is mainly related to traditional village communities. In Brazil, it is mainly used to indicate local groups of socially disadvantaged people. In both cases we are very far from the notion of elective communities that we are referring to in Europe. In China, there are different historical interpretations. However, with the growing public interest in the issue of civil society, it is now starting to appear in public debates with an apparently similar meaning to that used for creative communities i.e. *intentional communities* that emerge in the crisis of traditional ones, against the general background of individualization that is spreading in China too.

Collaborative creativity Also the term “creativity” is used with different meanings in different countries in relation to different cultural backgrounds. However, in all 3 of the countries considered, the traditional meanings are now influenced, at least in public discussions, by the western meaning of the term, where creativity is seen as a positive resource from the point of view of promoting a knowledge economy). The discussion of the role of creativity in contemporary society (and in a knowledge economy) is today very diffuse world wide (and in Brazil, India and China too). However, it has to be said that the notion of creativity normally used in these discussions is quite far from the one we adopted when defining the concept of creative communities. As we have written in the previous paragraph, as far as creative communities are concerned, the creativity we are referring to is not the creativity of experts (i.e. workers in creative industry) but it is the *diffuse creativity* that characterizes contemporary societies when oriented towards inventing collaborative solutions to everyday life problems and opportunities¹⁰.

Urban environments. In Europe this term mainly refers to *traditional cities* and their evolving mix of inhabitants. In Brazil, India and China it mainly refers to the *new urban (or quasi-urban) environments* and their inhabitants, considering both the *emerging middle classes* and the *poor* living in different forms of slums and shanty towns. The question of how to define the urban environment is rather problematic (in Europe too). If we consider “urban environments” as places where urban behaviour takes places, we can observe that, in contemporary societies, this kind of behaviour spreads outside traditional cities and extends to anywhere that traditional village societies have collapsed (in some ways, we could say that, in the CCSL perspective, we are interested in what happens in *every non-traditional village environment and behaviour*)

Daily life: This one should be the least problematic term. Even though the *problems* and *opportunities* of *everyday* European middle class *life* are of course very different from the ones of the inhabitants of Indian or Brazilian slums and favelas.

Sustainable lifestyles. This expression will be problematic for several reasons. First of all, because the meaning of the adjective “sustainable” is not so clear everywhere (i.e., not only in Brazil, India and China, but in Europe too). Secondly, because what can be considered sustainable, may be different in different places (due to different physical and socio-cultural conditions). Thirdly, because different countries translate the term sustainability in different ways, according to their own way of

¹⁰ The Emude research has proven that the creativity of professional creatives, and that of creative communities are different. Nevertheless, it proved also that creative communities can generate a favourable context for the development of professional creativities.

thinking. That is to shift from something perceived as a mainly western concept, to something nearer to the local culture (in China, for instance, in public discourse, the expression “sustainable society” has been paralleled with the expression “harmonious society”).

A new expression to refer to a new phenomenon

We must now say why, the term “creative communities” can be considered useful in spite of the difficulties we have outlined in the previous paragraph. To do this we must first assume that **at least at the very early stages in Brazil, India and China there are, groups of people who organise themselves to solve everyday life problems or to open new possibilities in the new urban environments, and in so doing invent and practice sustainable ways of living.**

If this assumption is acceptable, at least as a working hypothesis, then we need an expression to name it by. That is, we need to name cases of grass roots innovation for collaborative, sustainable ways of living (where the emphasis is on the adjective “collaborative when referring to the process, i.e. the groups of people working in collaboration, and the expression “sustainable ways of living” indicates the motivations and the specific qualities of the results).

Given all this, we can assume that the expression *creative* can be used to distinguish them: “groups of innovative people who are inventing/managing original solutions in emerging urban contexts”, i.e. the new kind of initiatives we are searching for here¹¹.

Tentative discussion topics

At this point of the CCSL project preparatory phase, considering emerging countries as a whole, some specific discussion topics appear. Bearing in mind what we wrote in the premise to this paper (i.e. that what we propose here are *tentative ideas* the aim of which is to trigger discussion), an initial list of these *discussion topics* can be the following:

Anticipations of sustainable lifestyles. For many years in emerging countries, cases of grass roots innovation have been seen, *mainly* as a topic to be dealt with in association with rural village economies and/or of poverty alleviation.

On the contrary, in the CCSL perspective, we look at them in terms of *creative communities*, i.e. in terms of collaborative everyday life creativity that may anticipate possible sustainable lifestyles in urban environments.

Creative communities are local, but their service ideas can spread. Creative communities are all very deeply rooted in specific contexts. But the *service ideas*¹² on which they are based, can spread – and some of them are spreading - in different, even very different, contexts.

¹¹ These very general statements cannot be made in the same way for all the countries considered. In fact, for instance, in India and Brazil, the expression “creative community” gives a name to initiatives that would otherwise risk being hidden in the shadows of the existing, in some ways similar but in many ways different, ones related to poverty eradication programmes and the development of under-developed communities.

In China, vice versa the situation is different from the Brazilian and Indian ones, and the similar expressions (relating to grass roots innovation for local development and poverty eradication) have not yet been consolidated. In this context, the introduction of the expression “creative communities” enables us to leapfrog directly to a concept map where the new phenomenon of innovative groups of people is specifically considered (in parallel with other initiatives that are in some ways similar, but also very different).

¹² **Creative communities, services and services ideas.** To deal with the issue of creative community up-scaling, it is useful to introduce the supporting concepts of *community-based service* and of *service idea*.

We have seen that creative communities are cases of everyday life collaborative creativity that generate ways to solve problems or to open new opportunities. In other words: they are organizations that produce results for all the participants, i.e. -forms of service. For this reason we can call them: community-based services. In other words:

In practice, this means that, in different contexts, a service idea can be roughly the same, though its motivations and social meaning are very different from case to case.

The meaning of “community” changes deeply in the different contexts. In the European experiences the communities we refer to are “intentional communities”: new social organizations emerging from a long process of individualisation (and, largely, as forms of reaction to it).

Vice versa, in emerging countries, the communities we refer to in CCSL can be seen as a balance between continuity with still existing traditions (families, villages, neighbourhoods, etc.) and the innovation needed to face radically new conditions of life (and the challenges of sustainability). In each country, this balance can be different, but in each one of them it will result in the up-dating of traditions, i.e. the use of traditional social organisations as building blocks for new forms of social network (in the framework of which collaboration, mutual help, sharing and, more in general, community building can be up-dated and re-interpreted).

Cases of social leapfrogging. In emerging countries, collaborative behaviour patterns still exist in different traditional forms (inside families, villages, neighbourhoods, etc). At the same time, main stream thinking on modernization, following the patterns of existing mature societies, considers that these living traditions are condemned to disappear, swept away by an “inevitable” individualization process.

On the contrary, in the CCSL perspective, we assume a different idea of modernization, where new forms of cooperative behaviour, creative communities, appear as cases of *social leapfrogging*. That is, as cases of social innovation where groups of people move directly (or, in any case, very fast) from traditional forms of collaborative behaviour to new ones, responding to the needs of contemporary everyday life (avoiding the phase of extreme, unsustainable individualisation that characterizes existing mature industrial societies).

Visions of better ways of living. We have assumed that in emerging countries, creative communities can be seen as a non linear evolution towards modernization, i.e. cases of *leapfrogging in the social development process*. However, these “leaps” require some ideas on where to leap: a new idea of wellbeing that must be perceived as better than the one achieved through a more linear process. If this is true, the kind of wellbeing that creative communities generate has to be perceived as better than that proposed by the normal “modern” solutions¹³. This means that this community-based and context-related wellbeing must be attentively and effectively communicated. And wider visions of what life could be like, if it were widely accepted and diffused must be produced. In other words: effective communication and scenario building are crucial to give these promising cases the possibility to last over time and to spread. New design tools and new sensibilities must be developed to make it possible.

Community-based service: a service that, to exist and to be effective, requires some form of community.

Every creative community, considered in its complexity, is by necessity deeply rooted in a local social and physical context. The same is true for the corresponding community-based service. But for this service, as for every service, we can recognize and outline a kind of structure that is less context-specific and that is called the *service idea*. More precisely:

Service idea: the system architecture and the partner positions and motivation that characterize a service and enable it to exist and, perhaps, be effective.

The importance of the notion of service idea is given by the fact that it permits to separate what can be reproduced (because non context-specific), if the conditions are given, from what cannot be reproduced (as the creative communities and their related community-based services).

¹³ We must add here that, today, the perspective of creative communities must also be perceived as better than another (very dangerous) existing proposal: the one based on ultra-conservative ideas on identity and traditions.