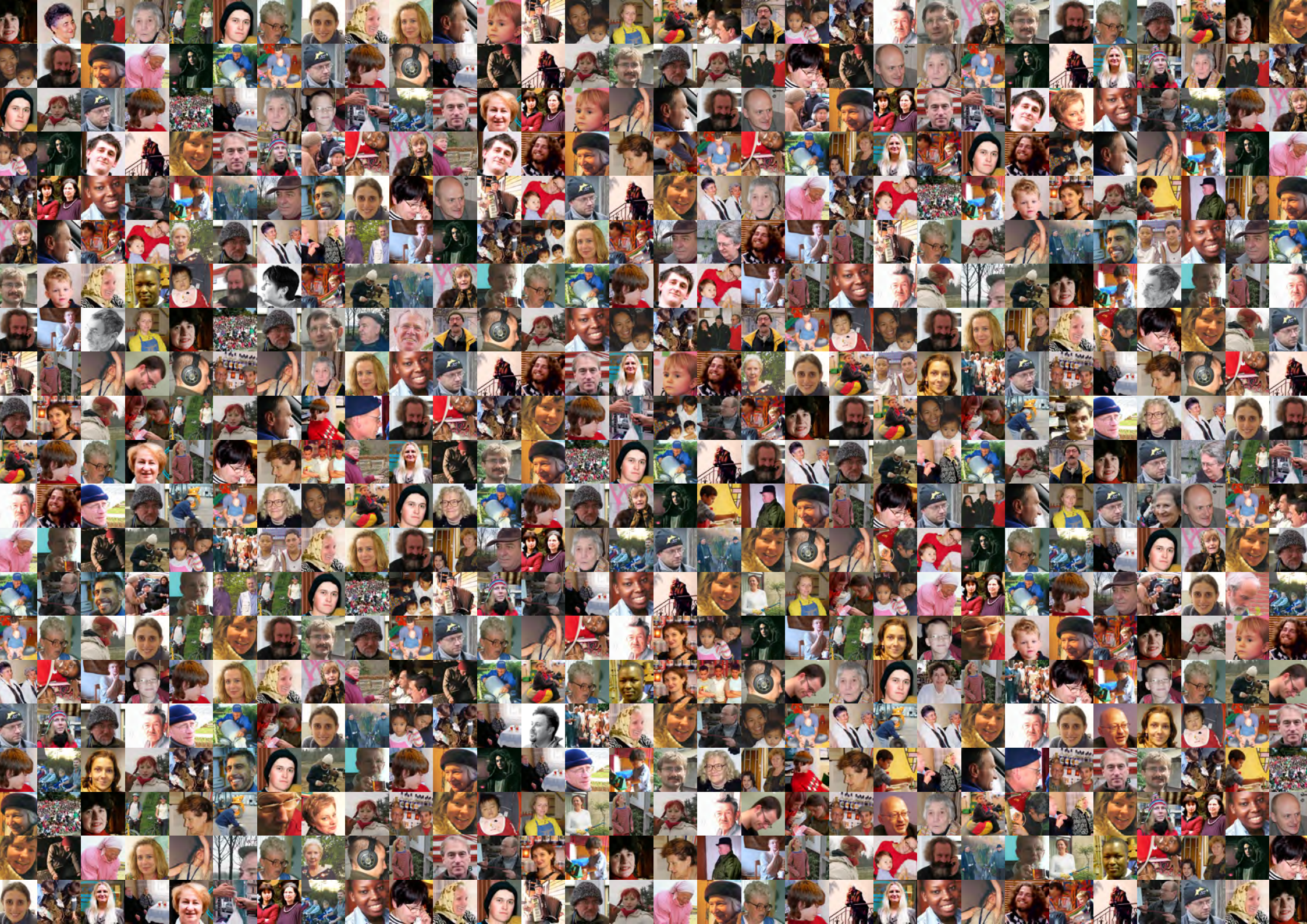




| **Creative communities** | People inventing sustainable ways of living | **Edited by**

**Anna Meroni** | with essays by: Priya Bala | Paolo Ciuccarelli | Luisa Collina | Bas de Leeuw | François Jégou |

Helma Luiten | Ezio Manzini | Isabella Marras | Anna Meroni | Eivind Stø | Pål Strandbakken | Edina Vadovics |



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Tel. +39.02.2399.7206 Fax +39.02.2399.5970

edizioni.polidesign@polimi.it

www.polidesign.net

Editorial Staff

Coordinator: Michela Pelizzari

Art direction: Cristina Silva

Graphic Designer: Cristina Silva

Manuscript editor: Rachel Coad

Translations: Rachel Coad



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*Anna Meroni*

*Eivind Stø*

*Pål Strandbakken*

*Edina Vadovics*

with contributes from

*Liz Davis*

*Ian Grout*

*Simone Maase*

*Cindy Koblata*

*Ruben Mnatsakanian*

cases studies editor

*Doors of Perception*



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“Creative Communities. People inventing sustainable ways of living” is the first of two books resulting from the programme of activities EMUDE (Emerging User Demands for Sustainable Solutions), funded by the European Commission, the aim of which was to explore the potential of social innovation as a driver for technological and production innovation, in view of sustainability.

To this end it seeks to shed more light on cases where individuals and communities use existing resources in an original way to bring about system innovation. It then pinpoints the demand for products, services and solutions that such cases and communities express, and drafts lines that could lead to improved efficiency, accessibility and diffusion.

This first book focuses on the presentation of some of these cases and their providers: the creative communities.

The second book focuses on the possibility of these communities, supported by different enabling systems, becoming the drivers of new welfare and a new model of local development.



Emude was promoted and developed by a Consortium of European universities and research centres. In order to identify promising cases, it set up a network of observers, known as Antennas, encompassing teams of researchers and students from 8 European design schools: who acted as researchers and disseminators of Emude findings both inside and outside their own institutions.

### Consortium

Politecnico di Milano, INDACO Department – co-ordinator  
 National Institute for Consumer Research, SIFO  
 Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, TNO  
 Strategic Design Scenarios, SDS  
 Doors of Perception  
 Philips Design  
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 United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP DTIE

### Antennas

Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland  
 ENSCI Les Ateliers, Paris, France  
 Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonia  
 Politecnico di Milano, Italy  
 School of Design, The Glasgow School of Art, Scotland  
 School of Design, University of Applied Sciences, Cologne, Germany.  
 Eindhoven University of Technology, Department of Industrial Design, The Netherlands  
 University of Art and Design Helsinki, Finland

## The Power of Individuals Working Together



Scientific data, common sense and intuition have told us for long that more needs to be done in order to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns. Governments, business, researchers and civil society are taking action. While they are making their plans, running their projects and discussing the results achieved, they all know that they need to do better. The call of the street and the call of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, are being heard in the board and meeting rooms. Sustainable solutions are slowly making their way up to enter mainstream decision making processes of business, governments and individuals.

Everybody has the power to act. Kofi Annan once said “Sustainable consumption is about the power of individuals”. The choices of everyone determine consumption patterns, production patterns, the degradation of natural resources, pollution and social progress. The sum total of trillions of individual choices in millions of life cycles of products and services is what we are talking about when reflecting on sustainable development.

People are surely doing their bit. Many want to make a difference, be it only by buying organic apples or fair trade coffee in the supermarket. People join waste recycling and energy saving schemes. Others take to the street or organize mass gatherings in an effort to wake up society.

Some individuals are starting to explore new systems to work and live together. They organize their own lives differently. They act. They show by doing that there are other ways to live a good life without at the same time threatening nature, other people or their own inner peace.

These people have been the object of investigation of the EMUDE project. Their projects have been collected in this book in the form of easily accessible and highly inspiring “case studies”. It gives us - global policy makers on sustainable consumption and production - an opportunity to learn from their common success factors and to be alerted to cross-cutting obstacles they encountered. It will help us to develop, initiate and test new policies, aimed at enabling and empowering individuals or “creative communities” to do better and to do more.

The EMUDE project has revealed the existence of an important driver for sustainable innovation: groups of individual citizens thinking out of the box. Setting the conditions for replication of their projects might indeed be a challenging task ahead for governments worldwide. And those engaged in exploring new structures of civil society should also carefully read the rich contents of this book. The market itself is normally quite alert and powerful in picking up new ideas, products and services, for which a need exists. We will see many creative communities transforming themselves into sustainable entrepreneurs, helping the business community to create globalisation with a human face.

For UNEP and individual governments who are working together in the Marrakech Process, which aims at developing a ten-year framework of initiatives on sustainable consumption and production, the lessons of EMUDE will need to be translated into recommendations. Where can regulations, financial instruments and voluntary initiatives help to inspire more creativity? And where can they help remove practical obstacles that hinder progress?

The EMUDE project has focused on Europe and can only hint at the existence of creative communities in developing countries. The existence of creative communities in both the upper- and middle class segments of developing countries, and of those among the poor both in cities and in rural areas, is undoubtedly an area that deserves further research. Unlocking this largely untapped potential is vital for a truly worldwide mobilization of creativity, which is so desperately needed for achieving sustainable development.

Earlier work of UNEP has revealed that the Global Consumer Class (including the Global South) increasingly shares the same consumption patterns around the world. “All I wanna do is have some fun. I got a feeling I’m not the only one” (Sheryl Crow) can be heard in MP3-players in Tokyo, Sao Paulo, Sydney, Paris, Cape Town and New York. The consumer society is here to stay. But these consumers also have similar ideals. They want to get rid of pollution and stop violence and they really hold that everyone is equal and deserves the same chances. Creative communities exist everywhere, and may not differ greatly, hence offering plenty of scope for learning from each other.

The vast majority of the world’s population has to struggle to survive on a daily basis. Klaus Toepfer said: “We should not be afraid to wish that everyone in the world became a consumer. The poor need more than food and shelter. They ultimately need to be able to make choices for their material and immaterial well being.” Connecting the poor to the world’s grid of creative communities is certainly part of that enormous task. They should become consumers and they should become producers.

This book shows cases, tells stories, and formulates visions and the beginning of theories. It is about individuals, it is about working together, and it will lead to new markets and tools. Let it be a rich source of inspiration for those readers who are willing to open their heart, to be curious and to think differently.

Paris, March 2006



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# Introduction

Creativity is the disposition of thought and behaviour that enables us to imagine and put into practice such solutions as: time banks, home nursery playgroups, car-sharing, ethical purchasing groups, producer markets, self-help groups for the elderly, shared gardens, eco-sustainable villages, vegetable gardens in parks, weblogs, co-housing, neighbourhood self management, home restaurants, local micro-logistics, community supported agriculture, tool exchange, elective communities, small producer networks...

## Creativity on the field

This book does not set out to give yet another theoretical definition of creativity. Instead it seeks to define creativity through a series of innovative responses to the various problems that emerge in everyday life, or rather, through the results of these on the field. So the creativity we are talking about is on-the-field creativity (and therefore innovation) triggered by the real context of needs, resources, principles and capabilities.

These responses are presented in the book in the form of case studies that are not only interesting because they are innovative, but they are also aesthetically “beautiful”: there is something in the way they appear that invokes positive emotions and recalls the straightforward aesthetics of the useful. They are beautiful because they are colourful and they are authentically and surprisingly creative. They express vitality and spirit of initiative: they are the unthinkable made possible, the alternative getting itself into working order. And these cases are also “good”: whether intentionally or by coincidence (cf. essay by Strandbakken, Stø) they propose solutions in which individual interests converge with those of society and the environment, creating conditions for a more satisfying use of resources (human, environmental and economic), which restores, or bestows, meaning and value to everyday activities and therefore seems promising as a transition towards sustainability (cf. essay by Manzini).

All in all, these solutions just appeal to our fancy: those who put them forward are sometimes enthusiastic dreamers, and sometimes simply individuals motivated by practical urgency, but they are always satisfied with their own initiative and moved to untiring, incessant activity. From outside, such industriousness appears incredibly demanding, and often it is so. However, it was interesting to discover that precisely in what, to us, looks like fatigue, lies a good part of the deeper quality that our creative communities attribute to their activities. So it is not fatigue, but quality of experience, pleasure in relationship, pleasure in doing, recovery of a sense of togetherness and a source of real satisfaction. This aspect of quality of experience would go unnoticed if the systems in question were not observed close hand, or better still from “inside”. Now that we have completed our research we can say that, whether by intuition or experience, the approach we chose for our case study proved to be the right one precisely because these aspects were brought to light.

Briefly, we chose on-the-field research using a quasi ethnographical method. A sizeable group of young “creatives by profession”: designers (students from 8 design schools in different European countries) armed with notebook and camera, descended on the places, met people, interviewed promoters and users, often tried out services, collected information... This was a demanding activity, but far more satisfying than desk research.

## Ordinary people?

It’s surprising to see how many (apparently) “ordinary people” are able to make the extraordinary possible, if given the opportunity. During the course of our research we have often called these people “heroes” of everyday life. If you hear them talk, these people give no hint of the difficulty of their actions, rather they seem to do the most unusual things quite normally. Probably their true heroism lies here. What we have understood about them is that community spirit is the secret that moves them and fuels their actions; community both in terms of the group that supports, shares and recognises the value of what they are doing, and in terms of the sense of togetherness they aspire to. So, it is in the community or in community as a goal that the creative character of our heroes becomes fully apparent.

And so we come to another key point in our argument: this book seeks to debunk some of the clichés about creativity, and particularly that it is the domain of professionals. Our heroes are not “professional” creatives, neither are they members of a social elite invested with institutional roles, they are forward-looking people, capable of sharing their vision with others. If anything, they are “professionals of the everyday”, run-of-the-mill people with run-of-the-mill problems (ranging from care of the elderly to childcare, from the upkeep of the home to the purchase of food and household goods), but at the same time they are different because they are able to see and face these problems in a “slightly crazy”, authentically “creative” way, going beyond the obviousness of dominant ideas about how such problems are “normally” resolved. In short, they challenge what is taken for granted and think provocatively, adopting in doing so one of the “techniques” put forward by the guru of creative thinking: “ Lateral thinking”, says Edward de Bono, “seems close to madness to the extent by which it distances itself from the rules of logic...”.

In what exactly does the creativity of these communities, and the innovations they generate,

10 consist? To be creative we must turn upside down current ways of thinking and preconceived ideas about services and our own public and private role in everyday life. Above all, we must be able to look at problems from different perspectives, and change our point of view. This ability depends on personal aptitude, the origins of which we do not wish to investigate. Observing creative communities, we can see certain common attitudinal characteristics: a non-rhetorical view of reality, a positive even cheerful attitude, and an intrinsically entrepreneurial spirit (and courage).

We cannot know exactly where the ideas behind these solutions came from, but from interviews with their organisers we understand that, more often than not, there is no more than a problematical context behind them to which people have responded naturally, in their own way. Of course, principles, ideology, beliefs, and specific experience have often contributed to a considerable extent, but for everybody, at the base of everything, was the will to not just accept the way things had always been seen and done, but to look beyond the traditional organisation of everyday life, interpreting limits as opportunities, limitations as stimuli and people, without exception, as resources.

Psychology teaches us that to activate creativity, it is not enough that there is a problem to resolve. It is essential that the individual perceives a discordance between his own way of acting and interpreting reality and that of the social system he is part of (Inghilleri 2003). In other words, he must have a vision of how things could go, be sufficiently motivated to follow it, and feel able to do so alone or with the support of others. In short, it is essential to be imaginative, determined and self-confident to change the rules and roles in society.

In this case too, we are seeing some of the techniques of creative thinking being put into practice: the terms of a problem, i.e. their relationship (cause and effect, priority, limitations.....), are being spontaneously or deliberately turned upside down in order to reformulate it, and the chance elements or circumstances (the context) are being used as opportunities to think up a different solution, instead of being seen as obstacles.

The heroes in our communities have gone beyond themselves, creating a combustion between intuition and experience and finding that the impossible can be possible, if we start thinking it is. The courage lay in acting, overcoming the inertia of living in conditions that are not really satisfactory but that are apparently easier and undoubtedly less demanding. The discovery was that the quality of life does not only lie in the results obtained, but in the way of doing things: it is possible to act in a situation driven only by the desire to be, or the enjoyment of being, there and for the pleasure of doing something we are able to do. The variegated and multiform collection of cases presented in this book, each characterised by a lesser or greater invention, tells us of a different way of interpreting quality of life, associated with proactive behaviour, with decision making, with a diffuse tendency to innovative action, bringing to the forefront what is an innate potential in every human being: creativity.

## Happy to do

Social psychology upholds that in rich countries, in spite of materialist pressure, subjective well-being is related to a belief in interpersonal relationships: the capacity to bring people together around an idea, to get people moving, to get together to resolve a problem, all of which are characteristics that are clearly expressed by creative communities. They are therefore

a way of building community values and also of instilling a sense of personal well-being. Here, we wish to underline that an attitude of this kind is within the reach of everybody, it does not concern only large enterprise but also daily activities, and it occurs when we stop seeing ourselves as “consumers” and discover that we are able to determine our own lives. Self-determination, our free choice to do something and really feel that we are changing our situation, brings genuine satisfaction and self-fulfilment, but to bring these solutions about and keep them going requires a heavy investment of energy by the community. So, if people are to keep investing time, attention and enthusiasm such solutions must give rise to good, positive subjective experiences. What experiences are we talking about?

Once again, this book seeks to make qualities evident that are not at all obvious in the meaning and subjective value of relationships with people and artefacts. Of course, not even in this case is it possible to generalise, but we can say on the basis of our findings that for a growing number of individuals the quality of the experience lies in the fatigue we were talking about, the effort of achieving a result (not only in the result itself), and the richness lies in the unfolding of convivial social relationships.

Latouche (2004) notes that to bring about this kind of experience, some social groups implement “relational strategies” that contrast with current development logic and contemplate the most far-fetched economic activities, not (or to a lesser extent) professional, but based on the “art of making do”. An art that finds expression in the formation of innovative social, economic and work networks that correspond to what we call diffuse creativity in everyday life. These networking relational strategies presuppose an active way of interpreting the services, where the roles of client and producer, of user and provider merge in the co-creation of value and benefit. In this way we have solutions that are not only innovative in terms of their idea of who will and how to take charge of resolving problems, but are also innovative because based on the principle of collaborative networking between several individuals, in an economy of reciprocity. Such solutions that can be defined as co-products or open products in technical design language (Cottam, Leadbetter 2004), meaning that they can only be completed by the contribution and participation of all involved. Creative communities tell us that the value of co-creation lies not only in the economic advantage that they sometimes enable us to achieve, but also and above all in the fact that contributing to the achievement of a result leads to emotional involvement and a profound, long-lasting sharing of aims and means. Analogously, statistics tell us that people who feel they play an active part in a social network are usually healthier than people who are isolated.

So, we can conclude that in spite of the greater energy investment required by the people involved, networking relational strategies have the dual advantage of being able to produce positive, meaningful experiences both for the community and for the individual.

## Beautiful and possible

Although we have several times talked of “heroes” when referring to the organisers of the solutions presented in this book, we wish to conclude that it is not necessary to be such to live better, consuming less and generating sociality. Efficiency, saving resources, respecting the environment and creating bonds of solidarity prove to be advantageous in every sense, not only in terms of value options but also in terms of general convenience dictated by common sense and necessity (cf. essays by Strandbakken, Stø and by Luiten). Just as for quality of individual experience, the effort to implement virtuous practices to save resources can give

rise both to immediate, quantifiable, material benefits (savings in time and money) and at the same time to long term environmental benefits, once again a dual advantage.

How is it possible to support the heroes of creative communities?

Supporting their actions with activities and instrumental platforms, means helping them act more fluently and efficiently, eliminating disturbing factors and maximising satisfactory ones. Effective support would enable even those who are not heroes to overcome inertia and decide to take part in activities similar to those reported in this book. The first step towards supporting creative communities is undoubtedly their recognition: identifying and communicating their reality is a useful initial gesture in sanctioning their existence and bringing them inside our collective imagination. The choices made by these people may be imitated or they may provoke opposition but either way they are not unimportant. Obviously these solutions are precise localised responses to equally precise problems, but they can be generalised both in their ideas for services and in the “entrepreneurial model” they put forward. They present a picture of spontaneous and diffuse entrepreneurship that does not respond to a global logic based on values, principles and rules generated elsewhere, but is motivated by and matched to local systems and is consequently potentially self-regenerating (Latouche 2004; Cianciullo, Realacci 2005).

Finally, they propose a variety of “life styles” that share the same sense of responsibility towards the quality of their own lives and that of the context they live in, lived in a positive and propositive way. All together it is a pleasure to see such an optimistic panorama of Europe.

How are these solutions seen by those who do not live in the European countries where they were found? What is the reaction of those who come from the countries of Central Eastern Europe or the Global South? In these countries where, for various reasons, the social fabric has not (yet) fragmented as it has in Western Europe, but where there is marked social and economic inequality and needs are often of a primary nature, the motivations that underpin the solutions presented in this book may appear at times implausible and at others entirely normal, according to the extent to which perspectives differ when looking at the problems (cf. essays by Marras, Bala and by Vadovics).

## Diffuse design

This is a design book. Certainly it is not the kind of design book that first springs to mind, just as the creativity we are talking about is not what is traditionally recognised in people and artefacts. From the contributions that follow, a way of interpreting design emerges that is moving away from products towards services and strategies; when we ask ourselves how it is possible to support our creative communities, we are asking a design question, where design is seen as an activity that aims to make innovation (whether social, technological, production or relational) practicable and desirable. Design can help creative communities not to withdraw into isolation, but build up an overall framework that we can all directly or indirectly refer to, and can work towards reaching a balance between demands arising from different living contexts and people’s ability to deal with them. In this way they can encourage action and confidence in achieving results (Manzini, Jegou, 2003).

Design can contribute to creating the hard and soft infrastructure that establishes the conditions for a creative context: “hard” conditions like places, cultural concessions, facilities,

technology and equipment; and “soft” conditions like network systems and people to people contacts. (Landry, 2000). So, we are talking about contributing to the quality of interaction required between the many individuals involved in the solutions. This means shifting the focus of design from results to the processes that bring them about, and so to what is materially and organisationally required to achieve them. Not as a justification but to strengthen the point, we observe that both marketing and economics are reorienting themselves from result to process, in answer to the growing attention paid by certain consumer groups not only to the quality of the product but also to the quality of the process that produced it. In other words, to its true story, to work ethics and to context identity.

This is a design book also because it talks about design: how else would we want to define the activity of planning geared to creative communities? It is a diffuse design just as its characterising creativity is diffuse: social behaviour from which professional designers have much to learn, rich in stimuli for anyone looking at reality with curiosity.

Finally, this is a design book because it came out of designer sensitivity and it aspires to increase such sensitivity even in those who do not professionally deal with design, stimulating debate on these new forms of creativity and social innovation.

In the pages that follow we present 56 case studies, mainly described through photographs and notes taken on the field by the youngest researchers who took part in this collection: technical imperfections do not mar their beauty which, rather, lies precisely in their frank, documentary nature. A series of detailed reflections then bring us to a better understanding of these cases with the help of experts from various sectors. Finally, experts explain what lies behind the scenes regarding the research activities, the protagonists and the tools used to complete our task.



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## A laboratory of ideas. Diffuse creativity and new ways of doing

To foster the transition towards sustainability we must look beyond mainstream positions, behaviour and opinions and know how to recognise, in the complexity of signals that society sends us, those that are most promising. In other words, those emitted by certain minorities who have been able to set up on a local scale radical innovations in ways of being and doing things. Once identified we must foster them and facilitate their diffusion.

### Sustainability as discontinuity

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 until now engendered and propagated 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 laid 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 makes it possible for us to get a first-hand glimpse of the new systems that, at a given moment, could stem from these changes.

### A blocked system?

In view of the ever-increasing evidence of the problems generated by our current way of life and production, contemporary society emerges as a blocked system: corporations and politicians claim that they can do nothing about it given that "people" do not want to change while, on the other hand, people and communities, when considering the possibility of transformation, state that they cannot change because "corporations" and "politicians" do not present them with alternative solutions. Designers, too, find themselves trapped in this paralysing gridlock, caught within a mechanism that seems to leave nothing to the imagination barring the creation of new and useless gadgets or, in the best of cases, the introduction of gradual improvements into a system which, as we now know, is intrinsically unsustainable. In brief, given the current state of things, the world seems to be heading in a direction that is as disastrous as it is non-modifiable.

To break free of this deadlock it is necessary, first and foremost, to embrace a different representation of reality; we must no longer consider "people", "corporations" and "politicians" as "standard" entities but see them for what they really are, i.e. communities and groups of individuals with different and often contradictory points of view.

Once this vital step is taken, the world will continue seeming a very worrisome place, but its profile will be that of a much more diverse, more dynamic and less blocked reality than the one engendered by standard values. If we go beyond these, we will see that, although there are much more perturbing phenomena than the "average", there are also occurrences of a different kind that point to the concrete and definite viability of other ways of being and doing things. These anomalous behaviours, these unconventional ways of thinking are, or could be, the seeds that could engender, context permitting, the plants capable of generating the new ideas of wellbeing, production and economy needed so badly today.

### A laboratory of ideas

If our way of looking at things changes, what will emerge is a society that is (also) a great laboratory of ideas and innovations for everyday life: ways of being and ways of doing that

## 14 express a capacity to formulate new questions and find new answers.

Some of the examples we find around us today include: types of housing where, to improve the quality of life, spaces and common services are shared (as in co-housing); the development of productive activities based on local resources and skills which are also part of wider global networks (as is the case of certain products typical of a specific local area); a variety of initiatives aimed at promoting a healthy and natural diet (from the international slow-food movement to the spread, in many cities, of a new generation of farmers markets); self-managed services for the care of the very young (such as microcrèches, small kindergartens or nursery schools promoted and managed by parents) and the elderly (such as the living-together initiatives: where young people and senior citizens share housing). New forms of social interchange and favour exchange (such as the local exchange trading systems – LETS - and time banks); systems of mobility that present alternatives to the use of individual cars (from car sharing and car pooling to the rediscovery of bicycles); fair and direct trade networks between producers and consumers (such as the direct trade initiatives that have already been established around the globe); and the list could go on, as can be seen in other chapters of this book.

### **Creative communities**

It must be pointed out here that all the cases making up this motley panorama of social innovation have one crucial thing in common: they are all 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 provided with absolute passivity on the part of users, etc.

Moreover, all of these promising cases share another distinguishing feature: they are the outcome of initiative taken by individuals endowed with special project 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. On the other hand, if, as the French mathematician Henri Poincaré stated, “creativity means joining pre-existing elements in new useful combinations,” then we can definitely call these active minorities ‘creative communities’.

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).

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.

It is interesting to note that cases and communities of this kind can be found in all “urban” areas: each obviously with its own particular characteristics but also sharing many characteristics in common. Despite the fact that these initiatives are still a minority, as we have already pointed out, they are spreading and acquiring the profile of a large cosmopolitan workshop: a dynamic and motley group of individuals and communities that are putting a lot of effort into constructing specific hypotheses of potential futures.

### **The role of design**

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.

Having reached this point, it is time to make a detailed analysis of the role that could be played by design - and with this term we mean to encompass the entire design community, i.e. the group of professional, economic and cultural entities that make up this community, with special reference to the schools of 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 and give visibility to promising cases, highlighting their most interesting aspects, drawing up a map of the existing state-of-things and building scenarios of potential futures; interpreting the questions which arise 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, we 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.

We must learn to see designers as social actors in a society in which, as contemporary sociology points out, “everybody designs” and in which, as we can see clearly in this book, a host of active minorities are inventing new ways of being and doing things. Given that they occupy a place in this society and that they are exposed to all of its characteristics, designers

should accept the fact that they can no longer aspire to a monopoly on design, since we are living in an era in which everybody designs. They should accept that today design is not only executed in design studios, but everywhere. And yet, designers can continue playing their specific role. It is precisely because contemporary society is the way that it is that the role of “design professionals” acquires even greater importance. Designers can come to the fore in the great “diffuse” design arena, becoming “solution providers”, contributing their specificities, such as their capacity to produce visions of what is possible (i.e. the ability to imagine something that does not exist but could potentially exist) and set in motion strategies to help them materialise (i.e. concrete steps to transform potential visions into real solutions).

### Designers with new skills

These peculiar traits, in unison with the characteristics that distinguish contemporary society and the social innovation subjects we have discussed here, require a series of relatively new skills, even for designers: generating collaborations among diverse social actors (local communities and companies, institutions and research centres); participating in the construction of shared visions and scenarios; co-designing articulated systems of products, services and information.

If, as is frequently said, the transition towards sustainability must be seen as a social learning process and ground for diffuse design ability, the designer increasingly takes the role of facilitator in the learning process, and of support for diffuse design skills. In other words, his field of action moves further and further away from the figure of a traditional designer towards that of an actor operating to make orientated events happen and make sure interested subjects participate, and do so creatively. He becomes a process facilitator who acts with design tools i.e. by generating ideas on possible solutions, visualising them, arguing them through, placing them in wide, many faceted scenarios presented in concise, visual and potentially participatory forms.

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 one's 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 are 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.

When things are put in this way, the professional profile of a designer tends to appear rather differently from the historically consolidated form we are used to. The classic idea of a designer is of an operator who, case by case, refers his activities to a final user, working for

or with a firm. In the new scenario, the designer tends to become an operator who acts within a more complex network of actors (that may certainly include firms but not exclusively) where his main interlocutor, his actual client, may be an institution, a local authority or, as in this case, creative communities.

### Agents of sustainability

So, the programme of activities that led us to focus on the creative communities presented in this book lies in this context. Envisaging that designers can and must play the role we are talking about, and that design schools are the places where this new way of doing things must emerge and take shape, it was natural to take design schools as interlocutors, and particularly as “antennas” to identify, amplify and transmit promising cases. Leaving a more precise description of the purpose-built network of schools to another part of this book (cf. the Annex), we think it useful here to underline the extent to which this choice has in fact proved correct. In fact, the young designers who took part in the programme not only proved highly enthusiastic about these issues, but were also particularly sensitive towards a form of innovation that is, at the same time, both behavioural, organisational and technological. In other words, the experience of this programme of activities has demonstrated that designers can be particularly sensitive in detecting (and capable in describing) promising cases of social innovation. In fact: they are trained to consider at the same time: new user demands, innovation in the supply of products, services and systems, and the complex phenomena that link them together.

If we then consider young designers in particular, as was done in this case, we can add that they have the mental elasticity to look in new and initially unforeseeable directions. That is: in the way we must do in order to see examples of radical social innovation.

In conclusion, we must say that design schools are places where this kind of exercise not only can be done but it must be done. And for several reasons. To train a new generation of designers able to recognise such solutions and develop their implications for design projects. To develop new tools suitable for this purpose, but also, and maybe most importantly, to give the schools themselves the role of agents for sustainability that they should have. The role of promoters and facilitators of a huge social learning process, which is so much needed today.

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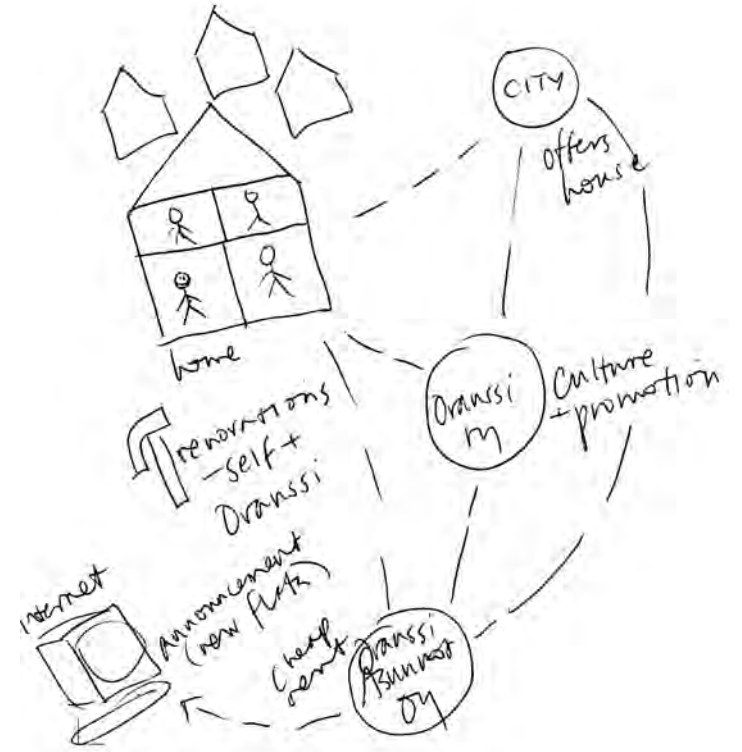
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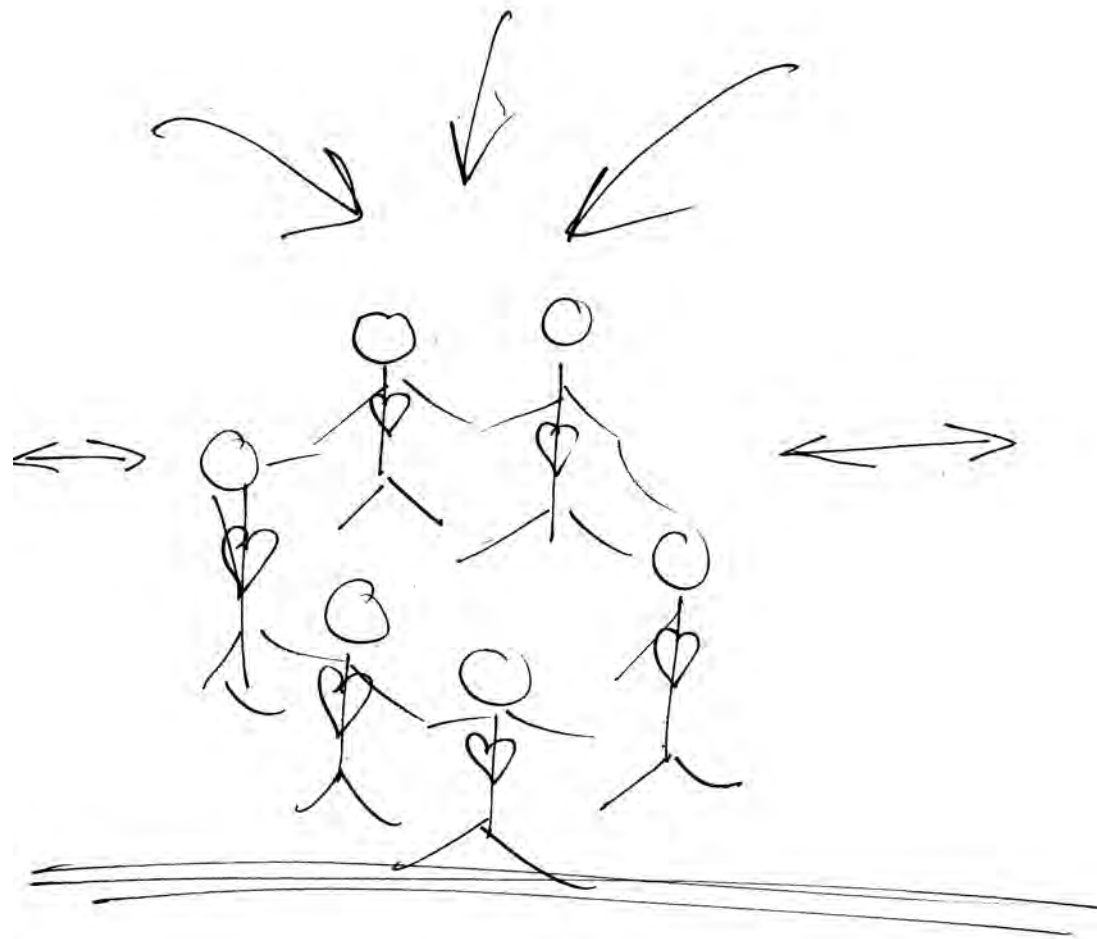
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gives what he intends to receive  
 This is what Joseph does  
 when accepting the values  
 of the community.

# housing



Educated people  
usually. from all  
and from all walks

- ① People aware of it  
looking to follow a  
path. Caring for g
- ② Listening / understand  
honesty and trust.
- ③ Peaceful / Spiritual  
Meditation spaces

# People over 55 live in a resource-sharing community suited to their diverse needs and lifestyles.

The Netherlands, Eindhoven

## Aquarius – Social elderly community of age 55+

By Aquarius Association

### The solution

Aquarius is a community where elderly people spend their days in a socially active environment. About 45 older people live there and each couple has their own private home and garden, but also uses a communal space and large communal garden. The inhabitants help each other out as much as possible. A committee organises the community: one of its tasks is to select new inhabitants. People can apply if they are aged between 55 and 65, to make sure there is always a mix of younger and older residents.

### Context

In 1984 a group of elderly people who did not feel comfortable living alone, but even less comfortable living in a home for the elderly, took the initiative to establish a community for the elderly in Eindhoven. These people wanted a housing environment that was better adjusted to the needs and wishes of their age. Some of these people lived on their own and felt lonely. Other people felt insecure in their own houses and wanted to get a fell safer feel.

### Current situation

The founders of the community initially spent a lot of time investigating positive features of other senior communities to implement in their own. Since it started in 1990, not much has changed, except for the arrival of a few newcomers and small practical improvements to the community. The inhabitants rent their houses from an Eindhoven housing society, which owns the buildings. They also share the rent of the communal area. Committee work is voluntary. The main garden is maintained by a gardener who they also pay for collectively.

### The benefits

**Society.** Living in Aquarius encourages active social contact and helps keep inhabitants' lives as meaningful as possible, in a safe, friendly environment. Members probably remain active and independent for longer and the need for nursing of senior citizens is reduced for society in general. Aquarius encourages the distribution of giving and receiving aid over the retirement years.

**Environment.** As most of the activities take place within Aquarius, transport intensity is minimised.

**Economy.** The economics of Aquarius are comparable to normal life. Inhabitants rent a house and the activities are organised voluntarily by fellow inhabitants. Mutual co-operation saves money for the people and social activities are affordable.

#### The experience

A peaceful, well-run common garden acts as a transition zone and place to meet others. A communal area for activities is a perfect combination of public and private space. Helping neighbours and living close together engenders a feeling of safety and being cared for.

#### Design challenges

Creating communal spaces in the buildings would allow inhabitants to organise more kinds of activities together. Creating the opportunity to share equipment and services with easy and voluntary access.



“Aquarius is like a student house for elderly people. People there seem to be socially connected but also able easily to maintain their privacy. Many people told us the arrangement is the perfect compromise between living on your own and living in a nursing home.”

# A community creates the conditions for environmentally friendly living.

The Netherlands, Eindhoven

## De Kersentuin – Sustainable Housing and Living

By De Kersentuin residents association  
www.kersentuin.nl

### Solution

De Kersentuin is an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable community in a recently built suburb of Utrecht. The residents drew up plan for this sustainable neighbourhood themselves, bargained with the city, and contacted architects to help them. In a matter of years, a neighbourhood of 94 buildings was created; it benefits from shared facilities, solar power systems, special thermal isolation, a balanced ventilation system, the possibility to extend houses as families get bigger, lots of green in the neighbourhood, a shared garden, neighbourhood-help and car-sharing. Its residents are very self-sufficient, and arrange lots of initiatives – such as hand crafts, a shared carrier cycle, carshare, etc - from which both inhabitants and the rest of the neighbourhood now benefit.

### Context

A group of people felt the need for an environmentally friendly living space, a kind of development not provided by the state. The only way to get a socially and environmentally sustainable place to live was to plan it themselves. Seven people started planning the neighbourhood. After a year and a half, the city of Utrecht agreed to co-operate. By this time, the number of people planning the project - its future inhabitants - had grown.

A location was found – Leidsche Rijn, a new neighbourhood in a suburb of Utrecht.

### Current situation

De Kersentuin came to life in December 2004. Now it is an active community in a mature stage of development. The community now opens up and informs other people and organisations interested in the initiatives. There are no plans to expand De Kersentuin, but the inhabitants hope that the number of similar initiatives will keep growing, and new schemes will be started by people like themselves.

### The benefits

**Society.** Fewer cars in the neighbourhood leading to a more child-friendly place; a diverse group of inhabitants; lots of activities to bring and keep people together; social contact within the neighbourhood; innovative initiatives; a feeling of being part of a whole.

**Environment.** Resources are used efficiently and sparingly. There are, among others: a car-sharing project; many green areas maintained by both inhabitants and hired workers; shared facilities, including environmentally friendly washing machines; and optimum use of natural resources such as solar cells for energy and rain water for domestic use.

**Economy.** The inhabitants pay a contribution and a fee for their parking place to the association; pay rent to 'Portaal', the housing association; pay maintenance costs for the owned houses to the owners' association; and pay for use of all the services (handcart, shared cars). By organising certain services themselves and by sharing facilities they save money. In future, it might even be possible for the community to be paid by the power company for any extra energy they produce from the roof-top solar cells.

#### The experience

The pleasure of taking care of, and feeling responsible for, their own and the common environment.  
Pride in making and maintaining a real sustainable neighbourhood.

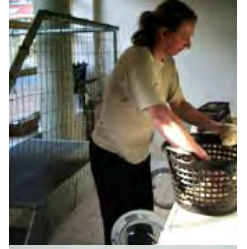
#### Design challenges

Creating a platform for sharing ideas and opinions.



Benefits for the community:

- Car sharing - 16 people/families share two cars thus decreasing car use
- Community centre - residents organise parties, meetings etc.
- Common garden - improves the quality of the outer space and contact with neighbours
- Launderette - a cheap way of washing clothes
- Carrier cycle - a way of shopping without a car
- Handcarts - for easy transport of goods
- Climatic comfort - all houses have individual ventilation systems which can be adjusted according to the number of inhabitants, thermal isolation and use solar energy.





# People learn to build their own homes and live in eco-efficient, natural buildings.

## United Kingdom, Kinghorn Loch Fife Earthship, Fife

By Michael Reynolds, Sustainable Communities Initiatives  
[www.sci-scotland.org.uk/earthship.html](http://www.sci-scotland.org.uk/earthship.html)

### Solution

Earthship houses offer people the opportunity to build their own homes and make a conscious decision to live lightly on the earth. Each home is a passive solar building, made from natural and recycled materials, is powered by renewable energy, such as wind, water and solar power, catches its own water supply from rainwater, and treats and contains its own sewage in planter beds. It is a concept and can be adapted for any climate worldwide. The purpose of Earthship is to inform people of the simple ways in which they can reduce their impact on the environment. The construction of Earthship houses (reclaimed tyres filled with compacted earth, with a glazed south-facing wall) allows thermal mass, maximum heat-retention and insulation. This is particularly appropriate for the Scottish climate, the wettest climate in which an Earthship has been built. The project is being monitored to assess the feasibility of using reclaimed tyres as a building material in the construction of mainstream housing.

### Context

The Earthship is located on the edge of Kinghorn Loch, beside Craigenalt Ecology Centre. Kinghorn itself is a small town with little commerce. The construction programme started with an intensive eight-day building programme with American Earthship builders, including Earthship pioneer Michael Reynolds, and 11 trainees from across the UK. Since then, more than 200 volunteers have helped complete the Earthship over weekends and work experience days from the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which provides experience opportunities to learn building skills required in Earthship building. Volunteers can be involved for a day, or for as long as they wish, however the majority of users are visitors who want to learn how to make their own lives more eco-friendly.

### Current situation

Construction of Scotland's, and the UK's, first Earthship, began in July 2002 and opened to the public in August 2004. The project is very flexible, and is constantly being improved. Although construction is complete, the surrounding land (including greenhouses and a vegetable patch) is still evolving, and the volunteers are learning more as the seasons change. The project relies on donations of money, labour and materials, although it also applies for funding from appropriate environmental bodies, a list of which can be found on their website. Only one other Earthship project exists in the UK, and as yet they are relatively low-profile.

### The benefits

**Society.** Because the project gives people the opportunity to build their own homes and the necessary experience, through the workshops, it disseminates technical competence in eco-building.

**Environment.** The buildings themselves have little impact on their environment and are powered through renewable energy.

**Economy.** People can decide to start building or restoring their house according to the eco-design principles without having to refer to professional consultants.

#### The experience

Pleasure in taking care of the environment and feeling responsible for it.  
Pride in being able to build one's own house.

#### Design challenges

Making the eco-system available and affordable for domestic use.  
Creating a platform for sharing tools and skills for people who want to contribute/build their own house.



# A sustainable community, harmlessly integrated into the natural environment.

United Kingdom, Findhorn, Scotland

## Findhorn Ecovillage

By Findhorn Foundation  
www.ecovillagefindhorn.com

### Solution

Findhorn Eco Village combines local organic food production, ecological building, energy systems, and cooperative, social economies to create a fully sustainable community: it is an ecologically respectful built environment, providing a good example to local rural communities. It provides a sustainable way of life for residents, demonstrates co-creation with nature, and supplies a place to educate in living sustainability. The Findhorn Community is known internationally for its experiments with new models of holistic and sustainable living. Cooperation and co-creation with nature have always been tenets of the community's work, ever since it became famous in the late 1960s for its remarkable and beautiful gardens grown in adverse conditions on the sand dunes of the Findhorn peninsula.

### Context

There is an increasingly urgent need for positive models that demonstrate a viable, sustainable future for humans and the planet. The Findhorn Foundation, established by the community in 1972, is a major centre of holistic education, conducting programmes for more than 4,500 residential visitors a year from more than 50 countries. Today it is the heart of what has become one of the largest holistic communities in the world and is the centre of this rapidly developing eco village. Since 1981 the foundation has been involved in the development of the Ecovillage Project as a natural continuation of the community's work with nature. A number of other organisations within the community work in partnership with the foundation to help create and develop the Findhorn Ecovillage Project.

### Current situation

Eco Village began in 1982: the next major development phase for the Findhorn Community will be expanding the village with hundreds of new, non-toxic eco homes. The community has grown and expanded since 1962, and is now deeply rooted and stable. The foundation has received great recognition from the local enterprise board, which now appreciates that it generates £5 million worth of household income in the area and supports over 400 jobs. It also acknowledges the social, educational, cultural and environmental benefit to the area. The foundation is a not for profit charitable organisation. Some figures from annual report 2004:

- 75% of the foundation's revenue (£1,091,484) comes from educational income
- net assets in 2004 were £2,242,000, and after costs the surplus was £82,000.
- the main expenditure was staffing (£355,000) followed by rent, fuel and maintenance costs (£201,000).

### The benefits

**Society.** Holistic living means establishing a direct, harmonic relation between nature and man and promotes tolerance and respect in the society.

**Environment.** Findhorn integrates local organic food production, ecological building, and energy systems in a fully sustainable community.

**Economy.** New tools for low-energy living have emerged, as have new business models that enable technical innovations to be disseminated.

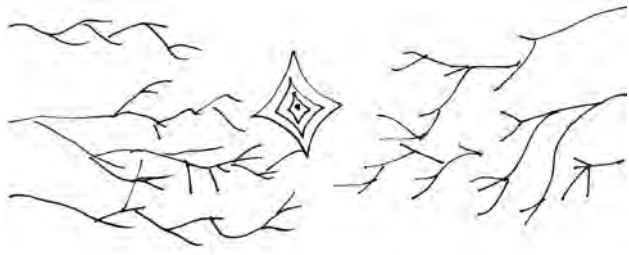
#### The experience

Pleasure from being part of a pilot project of sustainable living.

#### Design challenges

Making an eco-system available and affordable for domestic use.

Authors  
School of Design, The Glasgow School of Art, Scotland.  
Arianna Madiotto, Sophia Westwick



# Residents transform an abandoned plot into a shared neighbourhood garden.

France, Paris

## Jardin Nomade - Nomadic Garden

By Association Quartier Saint Bernard AQS  
www.qsb11.org

### 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.

### Context

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, 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 situation

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

### The 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 (AQS) 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 the 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.** AQS 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.

#### 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.

#### Design challenges

Using used growing boxes designed by students in other projects.  
Developing decorations by designers with local children.



Everyone, including passers-by, gains from greening the city, increased environmental awareness in children and teenagers, and the emergence of inter-generational and intercultural exchange.

Healthy, outdoor nature activities for all have evolved.

The dilemma is that JN has become a victim of its success - there are now too many users for too few growing plots!



# Public green makes a neighbourhood more beautiful and welcoming.

The Netherlands, Utrecht

## Loan Gardens

By Nieuw Utrecht Association

### Solution

Loan Gardens is about the maintenance of public green by the neighbourhood's residents. There are a lot of public green spaces in Overvecht: residents wanted to use these particular areas to give the neighbourhood more identity. Residents who want to garden, first ask permission from the community centre, which provides the information they need. When permission is granted residents receive a management contract, and some funding, which makes the inhabitant fully responsible for the maintenance of a piece of public space. Now she/he can start gardening. An association provides advice, gardening courses and plants for the inhabitants, and the district office and students of nearby Wellant College help with the planting.

### Context

Overvecht is a suburb built in the 1960ties in Utrecht. It consists mainly of appartement buildings rented by people with low incomes and from different cultures; the area tended to be drab and grey, and lacked a positive identity. Another problem was that residents tended not to know each other, even in their own appartement block, and felt no responsibility for their neighbours.

### Current situation

Loan Gardens came to life in the 1980s. The general idea is not new, but was a new concept for this neighbourhood, giving it an identity and solving the problem of lack of social contact in the neighbourhood. From the Loan Gardens initiative, initially taken by an artist of the neighbourhood, new services have been developed. The Loan Garden service itself has improved, and housing corporation Portaal has created a new division, focusing on social circumstances, which aims to improve the neighbourhood. Inhabitants mostly buy the plants and tools themselves, with the district office or the housing corporation providing funding when necessary. The district office has a district budget which is also available for the gardens.

### The benefits

**Society.** Since the residents started doing things together, communication barriers have diminished sharply. Gardening provides an opportunity for a Dutch woman to talk with a Moroccan man, etc. People have started feeling more accepted in society, improving their daily lives. The fear of the unknown has disappeared – for example, residents now know that one of the hang around youngsters, who previously they perceived as threatening, is in fact the son of Mr Chamli, their neighbour.

**Environment.** The environment gets an identity, because every gardener or residents' committee adds a garden design. It also means a cleaner environment, with both gardeners and non-gardeners looking out for litter.

**Economy.** The local authority can save on public space maintenance, now the green spaces are better managed.

#### The experience

Pleasure in taking care of both individual and common environment, and feeling responsible for it.  
Pride in creating, and maintaining, a better neighbourhood.  
Expressing oneself in creating original garden designs.

#### Design challenges

Creating services and infrastructure to manage problems collectively.  
Generating platforms for sharing instruments and skills.





# How valuable used construction materials and components are re-used.

Estonia, Tallinn

## Materjalid.net – Used construction material recycling

By Materjalid.net  
<http://materjalid.net>

### Solution

This project teaches people about old and used materials so that they can be re-used, enriching the new environment. It collects, removes, stocks and transports valuable used building and construction elements, ranging from door handles and postbox labels to bricks, stairways and roof details. Materjalid finds out about potential reclaimable materials from construction or real estate companies, who are demolishing old buildings to develop new projects, or members of the public interested in a sustainable lifestyle. Project manager Valdur Lillemets organises the transportation and stocking of materials and posts information about new findings on the website. The organisation both sells the elements, via the website or from the stock area, and runs workshops about renovation. People are taught to lengthen the lifespan of objects that have served us well rather than throw them away.

### Context

Tallinn and other Estonian cities are rich in original, preserved wooden housing. But the intensive period of construction and renovation that started following independence in 1991, and following the shift from public to private property, has had a strong influence on people's taste and preferences. Now, everything that is new and imported is attractive, and the old and homemade is not worth considering. This attitude has resulted in several culturally and historically important buildings being destroyed, and the waste of valuable materials.

Environmental thinking has developed in the opposite way to Western Europe, only gaining attention in the last few years. Fortunately, there are organisations that promote sustainable thinking and resource-saving. One of these is the Information Centre for Sustainable Renovation (SRIK), whose main project is materjalid.net.

### Current situation

Materjalid.net was started in the beginning of 2002 by SRIK and Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department, driven by Tarmo Elvisto, who is a passionate promoter of sustainable thinking and renovation. The concept of recycling used materials and elements was created with support from renovators and other specialists, who form a strong and supportive community. Although this kind of project can be found in other European countries, especially in the Nordic region, recycling is still rare in old Soviet countries. The project initiated in Tallinn can be considered as a pilot, and members of materjalid.net will open facilities for stocking and preserving materials in other Estonian cities in the near future.

### The benefits

**Society.** New groups interested in sustainable renovation and recycling of used materials are emerging thanks to workshops regularly organised by Materjalid.net coordinators. Participation in these workshops encourages personal involvement in the renovation of homes, and encourages participants to look after their own environment. Nevertheless, more active promotion via mass communication would increase awareness of using old materials in renovation. Only a very small percentage of people are aware of sustainable renovation, and the option of living in the city's original wooden housing areas.

**Environment.** Recycling used materials is directly connected to sustainable thinking and resource conservation. Using old materials eliminates the need for any extra energy or production resources, and they are generally produced using traditional techniques, which aren't harmful to the environment.

**Economy.** New components cost more than used components. In fact, saving money is very often the main reason why young families buy used materials.

#### The experience

Pleasure of adapting valuable building components from the past to enrich one's own house.  
 Learning to restore valuable parts of old buildings.

#### Design challenges

Similar centres should be set up all over Estonia to cover a larger area, and awareness of recycling historical building components encouraged systematically and vigorously via mass communication.  
 The project encourages people to think sustainably and to make maximum use of existing resources.



For people interested in renovating their own homes, Materjalid.net is perfect. Once they have attended the lecture on sustainable renovation techniques or bought a used component, they will probably be involved with sustainable thinking for the rest of their lives.

Typical users of the project are young families, renovating their apartments themselves in a district of old wooden houses, and want to do it cheaply, stylishly and with originality.

# Amateur gardeners learn to reduce the use of herbicides while keeping their garden healthy.

The Netherlands, various locations

## Milieuvriendelijk Tuinieren – Environmental friendly gardening

By DLV Groen&Ruimte  
www.milieuvriendelijktuinieren.nl

### Solution

Environmentally friendly gardening maintains the garden the way nature would do, by, for example, using decomposing plants as nutrition, and battle diseases by using insects. The website [www.milieuvriendelijktuinieren.nl](http://www.milieuvriendelijktuinieren.nl) and the association VELT (Vereniging voor Ecologisch Leef- en Teeltwijze) encourage environmentally friendly gardening, by providing information, publishing newsletters and brochures, and maintaining a knowledge bank. VELT is a membership organisation, organises meetings, and has an example garden which the members maintain collectively. Amateur gardeners also visit each other now and then to see their gardens and exchange knowledge.

### The background context

Most gardens are less environmentally friendly than they might appear. People often use machines and chemicals, such as herbicides and fertilisers, to keep the plants healthy and growing well. It is possible to achieve a healthy garden without using chemicals, but this knowledge of ecological gardening is not widely shared.

### Current situation

The Milieuvriendelijktuinieren project – financed by the government and executed by DLVGroen&Ruimte – started in 1995 and was finished in January 2005. The VELT association has been running for several years, has 13,000 members, and is still growing. The web site still exists, but unfortunately is not updated anymore.

### The benefits

**Society.** Most people have been raised to be accustomed to intensive agriculture, with its heavy use of fertiliser and lack of respect for nature. Environmentally friendly gardening enables people to understand the natural lifecycle better.

**Environment.** This method is good for the environment, as no fertilisers or toxic chemicals are being used. The plants are healthier, because they are exposed to bacteria and fungus, and thereby have their own resistance against them, recreating natural selection and ‘survival of the fittest’.

**Economy.** Gardening could become a more popular hobby, providing an opportunity for a new range of products and services. For small gardening the costs of adopting environmentally friendly methods are pretty low, by using, for example, compost made from waste from the same garden.

#### The experience

The taste of ecological and healthy food grown by yourself.  
The satisfaction of giving a personal contribution to sustainable development and making the world a healthier place.

#### Design challenges

Creating platforms of services and tools to support non-professional farmers and gardeners.  
Developing amateur networks to share experiences and skills.

Lettuce and leeks are seasonal winter vegetables, which people can eat instead of artificially cultivated vegetables.



In environmentally friendly gardening crop rotation is essential. One cycle lasts six years, with six types of plants cultivated in a specific order.

Ine has just started this method of maintaining the garden, and her first impressions are positive. She used to throw all the leaves and waste away; now she has reserved a place in the garden where the waste can become compost.

Poland, Zawoja Przyslop

## Model Eco-Friendly Hamlet

By Association for Sustainable Development 'Przyslop'  
www.przyslop.zawoja.pl

### Solution

Pupils, parents and teachers of the Number 4 Elementary School in Przyslop decided to expand it into a tourist information and environmental education centre to prevent its closure. It now includes an environmental education centre whose activities include organising courses and ecological education events. The project makes available a variety of existing but previously separate resources: products by local craftspeople, natural riches, cultural monuments, the Amber Trail route and the monastery wind power-station. Now, products are easily accessible, as they are sold in a special shop, the Sklepik pod Magurka. Tourists walking the Amber Trail can also visit newly marked-out paths (the Educational Trail and the Trail of Local Chapels), stay the night in one of the agro-tourist hostels, and buy souvenirs from one of the ecological shops. The Association for Sustainable Development, which has its headquarters in the school, comprises people who most actively want to solve the problems in their area, and work to improve quality of life while respecting the local cultural and natural heritage.

### Context

Zawoja Przyslop is a village at the foot of Babia Gora mountain. Residents were inspired to develop environmental projects by an ecological windmill erected by Father Wilk from a nearby monastery. The 'Model Eco-Friendly Hamlet' project, carried out by the Association for Sustainable Development in co-operation with the Barefoot Carmelite Monastery, aims to create a modern hamlet using renewable energy, in which the residents save water and energy, separate and recycle all their garbage, and create a clean environment, while bearing in mind their traditions and their roots. Based on pre-existing ecological investments (wind power stations, school-time garbage clean-ups, solar panels and hot air pumps), a plan was developed to introduce this sort of innovation to individual households. The first task is to identify the most forward-thinking 'good householders' and encourage them to change the heating systems in their homes. Once they see the economic advantages of the changes, the idea is that the pioneering house-owners inspire others to do the same.

### Current situation

The building of a wind power-station in 1993 changed the hamlet's destiny. The residents created the Association for Sustainable Development in the year 2000. The idea of an ecological hamlet was already known in Poland and around the world, and the development and transfer of these ideas to other locations is quite possible. Zawoja Przyslop's leader wants to spread such activities

around the whole region and even create an organisation called 'The Small Hamlets of Great Europe.' Association members find sponsors for the project development. The residents cover the costs of guests who arrive for consultation purposes of a given project. People largely work as volunteers, but the creators of the project and census takers are paid. It is worth emphasising that with the school saved, the teachers could keep working and earning.

### The benefits

**Society.** People get socially engaged, local residents have activities, the school is maintained, teachers keep their jobs, and children can learn in a friendly, intimate atmosphere close to home. The greatest drawback is that it clearly divides the residents into two groups: active and passive, which can divide rather than unite the society.

**Environment** The scheme promotes environmental defence and saves water and energy, by introducing sustainable energy systems.

**Economy.** The cost of the ecological installations is recouped over time, the children don't have to pay for transport to school, and the school earns lots of money at the festivals. Some of the active residents sometimes get one-off payments, if, for example, they come up with a project.

#### The experience

Involvement in activities which result in the positive development of the village.  
Being part of a pilot project which can spread to the whole region.

#### Design challenges

Improving access to and implementation of the ecological system to produce energy and manage resources.  
Developing marketing.



Estonia, Tallinn

## Mööblikom - Furniture re-designing studio

By Mööblikom  
www.mooblikom.com

### Solution

Mööblikom is a shop where people bring their old furniture to be given a new look and find a new owner. The shop sells both bespoke and ready-made furniture, all made from pieces that would otherwise have been thrown away, and also repairs furniture. The pieces are mostly from the 1960s or before. The main motivation for the founders is environmentalism, but they also make a small profit.

### Context

When people move into a new home, they often cannot use their old furniture but it may be perfectly suitable for other people. The aims of the project are to wake people's consciences, and make them think more deeply about how they live. Basically it costs the same to restore an old chair as to buy a new one, but by saving one chair you also save the materials for the new, now un-needed, chair.

### Current situation

Mööblikom started in December 2002, and believes it is unique. It would like to expand, and take advantage of the increase in environmentally friendly thinking, as well as consumers who want something a bit different. Any profit comes from the sale price, minus time, service and materials. Mööblikom has 50 to 100 clients in a month, with more in the summer and fewer in the winter.

### The benefits

**Society.** This service promote the creative re-use of goods, meanwhile developing, and maintaining, craftsmanship skills.

**Environment.** Recycling old furniture reduces consumption of new furniture and increases a product's life cycle.

**Economy.** The cost of restoring old furniture or buying a restored one is similar to buying a new one.

The experience	Design challenges
Pleasure of finding a unique, even personalised, piece of furniture.	Developing the skills to re-manufacture furniture. Spreading the culture of creative re-use. Designing furniture that can be restored and re-configured to the people's taste.



Juta is a 25-year-old lawyer, who found out about this service by chance. She needed a new bed with unusual dimensions, in a particular colour and for a good price. Mööblikom was able to make her just the right bed! She finds Mööblikom a brilliant solution because she got something 100% right for her and unquestionably unique.





# Inhabitants improve living conditions in their neighbourhood.

## The Netherlands, The Hague Neighbourhood Shares

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

### Solution

Residents have taken over responsibility from local authorities for certain maintenance tasks in their neighbourhood. A residents' association decides, together with the local authority, what work needs doing, formulates projects and organises them among local residents. The local authority pays the association or group that takes on a project work. The local authority and environmental organisations give residents practical advice while doing a project.

### Context

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

### Current situation

In the first half of 2004 the planning of Neighbourhood Shares started and, in autumn, the first activities were organised. It was initiated by the International Institute for the Urban Environment, NV Woningbeheer (a company organising communal maintenance projects for 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 of such an initiative being taken on a local level.

### The benefits

**Society.** Residents are stimulated to take care of their own neighbourhood, to start initiatives themselves and to actively create a nice and positive environment to live in.

**Environment.** By tending gardens and tidying streets, the project has made this part of The Hague a more pleasant place to live. In addition environmental awareness is created.

**Economy.** The system saves money for the community. As well as the responsibility for neighbourhood maintenance, the local authority also transferred the municipal budget reserved for these tasks to residents' associations. 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 in maintaining the beauty and cleanliness of the neighbourhood.

#### Design challenges

Creating a technological platform for sharing tasks and managing activities.



# Villagers improve their living circumstances and the health of local social networks.

The Netherlands, Hoogeveen

## Nieuwlande – Villagers active involvement

By Local Interest group, 'Plaatselijk Belang', and Municipality of Hoogeveen  
<http://members.lycos.nl/vandersleen/index.html>

### Solution

The aim of the project was to improve living conditions in the village. As a result of consultation among the villagers, and the formation of a committee, the village became a nicer and better-organised place to live. Eighty per cent of the residents participated in a survey, conducted by the inhabitants themselves, to describe assets and suggest improvements. A consultation group was started, and workgroups that discuss various problems came up with solutions. A 'village development plan' was subsequently established as the basis of ongoing collaborative projects. In principle, all inhabitants (ca. 1300) are now involved in planning and maintenance work.

### Context

Nieuwlande is a small village in the east of the Netherlands. Its residents did not have much contact with each other. After the area's administrative boundaries were re-shaped, Nieuwlande became part of the municipality of Hoogeveen; this gave residents hope for some improvement in their village. But after four years nothing had changed; then the Local Interest group 'Plaatselijk Belang' took the initiative to send an angry letter to the municipality of Hoogeveen.

### Current situation

The development plan was established in 2002/2003, and is working well because of a high level of resident participation in Nieuwlande. The results of the plan are visible, and validated by the winning of an international award. Each solution that comes out of the workgroups of the village development plan has to be approved by the municipality of Hoogeveen, which then provides the funding if necessary.

### The benefits

**Society.** Residents gain both as individuals, by feeling more involved in what goes on in their town, and by feeling they can make a difference collectively to the future of their town. Because so many people are involved, communication in the village has improved, creating a better village to live in.

**Environment.** All the inhabitants are now aware of any community problems, and the sense of responsibility towards the environment has strengthened.

**Economy.** Because the inhabitants, not the local authority, explore and articulate solutions for actual problems, what gets done is always both necessary and approved by the entire village. This makes the decision process a lot more efficient, saves money, and reduces the number of wrong decisions, thanks to the extensive research undertaken by work groups.

#### The experience

Pride in improving living circumstances in their village, maintaining it and being involved in deciding about the development of the village.

#### Design challenges

Creating a platform for sharing ideas and expressing opinions, also involving the young people living in Nieuwlande.



people



village



shops



facilities

# Intergenerational house sharing helps students find cheap, family-style accommodation.

Italy, Milan

## Prendi a casa uno studente – Lodge a student at home

By Associazione Megliomilano and Provincia di Milano  
www.meglio.milano.it

### 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 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 and organises monthly meetings with all users of the service.

### Context

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 a private company. As the service is still at the pilot stage, there are not yet any financial figures to study.

### The 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 a little assistance for elderly people living alone. At the same time it reduces the generation gap, and provides new ideas for 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. 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 reduces the need for heating per person, and produces 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 and 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 experience

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

#### Design challenges

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.



Elderly people use the service because they are tired of living alone. They often need the company more than the money and enjoy having young people around: that makes them feel younger. Young students, keen on social issues, love the idea, especially considering the high cost of accommodation in Milan. There are two main aspects to keep in mind: the elderly people need to remain independent (and can't depend on the students, who are only meant to be giving a little every-day help) and male and female users should both have equal access the service (female students and hosts seem to be the main participants).

# How young people live independently, yet communally.

Finland, Helsinki

## Oranssi – Housing company

By Oranssi  
www.oranssi.net

### Solution

Oranssi renovates houses for young people looking for a more communal way of living. Inhabitants participate in the renovation from the beginning, and maintain the houses afterwards. Neighbours know each other and are active in taking care of communal maintenance. Oranssi flats are as cheap as the cheapest council flats (for which there are long queues), and residents are allowed to renovate their flat as they wish and to participate in their house community, with its socialising as well as repair and maintenance work.

Members, who must be under 24, need to take responsibility for the work involved and to be prepared for a more communal way of living. The original members have become valued experts in traditional wooden house repair techniques, which they pass on to new residents. Unemployed young people can also get temporary work placements and young carpenters can do their practical training there.

### Context

There is a shortage of houses for the young people of Finland. This has come at a time when people are starting to look for more communal ways of living, for company and security.

Oranssi emerged in Helsinki during a deep recession about ten years ago. Rents (and deposits) in the city were, as now, very high, with very little ‘cheap’ housing available. Youth employment was, and still is, a problem. In 1990, a group of people, all under 20, began squatting in protest at this situation, taking over abandoned industrial residential buildings, only to be evicted a few days later by the authorities. Eventually, the city offered them two empty wooden houses that had been squatted and needed renovating. In exchange for cheap rents, the group took over the renovation. A system evolved whereby the city offered the group empty residences, and young residents moved in and renovated them. Oranssi became well-known, so numbers grew quickly from 20 to 600.

### Current situation

Oranssi was registered in 1990. At the moment it maintains about 80 apartments, with about 110 residents, in Helsinki. The Oranssi Youth house at Herttoniemi has evolved into an open-minded culture centre and a lively meeting point. The group does not want to grow too large or take on any new houses at the moment. There is, however, a new phase planned whereby Oranssi will design and build a new set of houses from the ground up.

The Oranssi association is run by one paid staff member and volunteers, and is financed by RAY (a gaming association raising funds for social organisations). Oranssi Housing Ltd is a private

registered firm that owns all the residential buildings and handles the rent contracts. Residents pay for their own renovations while Oranssi Housing pays for the larger collective renovations and maintenance.

### The benefits

**Society.** Young people can afford Oranssi housing and are not therefore threatened with homelessness or cold, isolated council living. Unemployed young people can get work placement experience on a renovation site and learn valuable skills. Helsinki residents are inspired by the members’ active participation to create their own opportunities.

**Environment.** Residents, neighbours, and others learn the value of older buildings, especially wooden houses, and members learn important skills, such as construction techniques, alternative energy choices, etc. The material waste is reduced. One problem is that Oranssi is perceived as too marginal and ‘hippie’ by more conservative, older members of society.

**Economy.** The residents learn the direct relationship between cost and value: ‘The more you do yourself the cheaper your rent becomes’. Cheaper rents and employment opportunities mean fewer social security payments. The return on investment is very high, as the buildings gain in value when renovated and maintained to a high standard. The city authorities benefit as they do not have to cover the cost of renovation or demolition. Challenges in the future may be retaining the renovation skills needed, and attracting and retaining those with a good head for business.

#### The experience

Participants learn how to live independently from the family but surrounded by people willing to create a community. People also learn how to restore and mend their own home.

#### Design challenges

To develop services to encourage more people to build or restore houses themselves.



The Oranssi philosophy:  
'If it isn't broken it shouldn't be fixed, but if it is broken it's most likely possible to repair it'. The success and failure of Oranssi will depend largely on the key people involved in the organisation.





"Ganetlaid juurviljad".  
 Varem oli tärjas, mülline kaup, mis  
 talust pärit, kuid enam sola pole.  
 Mõnikord liiga sallis,  
 See ei ole uõ. pop. ma teeksin sola nii  
 või uaa.  
 Voodis olla teadlikumalt võlpe praaditud.  
 Iga aadala alguses saadavad isikud meeli  
 oma praadida kaubaga.  
 Mõnikord sai namutatud, kuid need enam ei  
 sobinud. Põhikülles, peni algenduse lidans.  
 Head on muivatatud porgandi loastud.  
 Süsteem toimib nuidu päris hästi.  
 Drobis võdas ehk olla austuskaas, kuidas  
 ise aord üle eadress  
 Kaha saab maata rohe aalle või arvega

IL PM  
 MS MC  
 PVDN  
 OBL

# eating

questo è attira in sbrivanti  
 nel del anni '70  
 no è nato u perfetto  
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EVERYTHING IS CAREFULLY AND  
 ECOLOGICALLY PACKED INTO  
 HANDY BOX

# People living in a town access high-quality organic food directly from producers.

Italy, Milan

## Biomercatino – The Little Organic Market

By VAS Verdi Ambiente e Società  
<http://vaslombardia.org>

### Solution

Biomercatino is a street market that gathers together small local organic producers from the Lombardia and nearby regions. Around 45 stands of producers and retailers sell certified organic products like vegetables, fruits, cheese, sausage, honey and olive oil. Crafts, non-treated cotton clothes, herbal products and books about culinary and natural medicine are also sold. The stands, of all shapes and sizes, are assembled by the retailers who must also clean the area afterwards. VAS, an environmental protection association supporting a healthy and environmentally responsible lifestyle, promotes the market by co-ordinating the work of producers, retailers, artists, craftsmen and volunteers. It also obtains the necessary permits from the public administration, supervises the market and communicates the initiative to the public by sending press releases to newspapers and radio stations.

### Context

Biomercatino came from an initiative by VAS Lombardia in reaction to the increasing threats to food safety, like the introduction of genetically modified seeds, the use of pesticides and the monopolisation of food production. Its aim was also to put producers and consumers in direct contact to encourage trust and shorten the food chain.

### Current situation

The monthly Biomercatino started in April 2003. Today it is in a phase of optimisation, and is increasing the direct involvement of local institutions; it is also increasing its range of products and services, adding value to the existing goods and helping spread the values of the initiative. It is searching for partners in order to become a larger operation, selling the complete range of food requirements. VAS doesn't have the resources to put forward new ideas and identify improvements all that effectively. In general, Biomercatino is trying to refine its management system through the implementation of a database, more efficient communication and the possibility of using paid labour to organise the market, despite the current model of volunteer work.

### The benefits

**Society.** Biomercatino promotes an urban healthy lifestyle by enabling city inhabitants to be better informed and to buy organic and safe food directly from farmers. It also contributes to the survival of local producers, promotes a conviviality not found in city supermarkets and re-connects city and countryside.

**Environment.** The production of organic food, avoiding the use of genetically modified seeds and pesticides and following organic and seasonal cultivation techniques, reduces pollution, preserves the landscape and safeguards biodiversity. As all the food in the scheme is grown locally, the reduction of food transportation radically reduces the environmental impact of the food chain.

**Economy.** The market, which gets only minimum support from public institutions, provides a new and alternative retail channel for small organic producers and retailers. Farmers can earn more for their work and consumers can find organic food at competitive prices compared with other specialist shops or supermarkets.

#### The experience

Knowing and trusting the producers met in the farmers market.  
 Improving personal knowledge about food products and using it to make the best choices.

#### Design challenges

Creating places and circumstances to enable farmers to sell their own products.  
 Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other.  
 Designing dedicated packaging and logistics to be used in the network by small producers.



'How is it possible to be sure about the seriousness of organic production? By visiting the actual places of production, which is possible if you get to know them in the Biomercatino'



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

Poland, Strug Valley and various towns

## Chmielnik Zdroj Ltd – Alfred food and drinks delivery

By The Agro-Industrial Association of Strug Valley

### Solution

Chmielnik Zdroj company helps the people of the Strug Valley, giving work to the local people and providing city customers with healthy, cheap, natural products. It buys local products and arranges local people to deliver the goods in a delivery network. 10% of the proceeds go to local charities. It began by distributing mineral water, and in time expanded its product line to include vegetables, fruit, honey, bread, poppy seeds, soups and pasta. The line is expanding to include additional products before holiday periods. Customers place their orders by telephone or online, and the goods are delivered to your home either weekly or fortnightly. The company has two bases and 160 vehicles, with which their products are taken to four provinces (Krakow, Rzeszów, Tarnów and Lublin) and 70,000 customers.

### Context

The Strug Valley, around 20 km from Rzeszów, has many small farms using traditional farming methods. There are also mineral water deposits. The region has a high unemployment rate as a result of urban factory lay-offs. The first independent telephone and internet co-operative in Poland came into being here, as a result of co-operation between local self-government and an American foundation. This successful undertaking encouraged further initiatives to be taken up. Chmielnik Zdroj was started to support the development of activity and to combat high unemployment and alcoholism. The Agro-Industrial Association of Strug Valley helped to improve the idea, which provides jobs and promotes the traditional farming lifestyle.

### Current situation

What is unique about the Chmielnik Zdroj company service is the distribution of vegetables and other food products all from the same organic source. After expanding its line from mineral water to drinks, juices, fruits and vegetables, semi-finished products like poppy-seeds, and prepared products, like bread, the company is starting to produce some of the products. For example, there is now a bakery next to the company, and the zurek soup, which used to be made outside the region, is now made within it. The goods are paid for on receipt. The distributors receive a steady wage, increased by a commission, paid by Chmielnik Zdroj, depending on the quantity of the quota reached. In periods where the demand is lower, the number of people employed stays the same, doing work, for example, in water production.

### The benefits

**Society.** Guaranteed employment for people living on farmland, support for traditional and healthy methods of making food, and promotion of its advantages. The dialog with clients through the shippers bringing the goods improves the services by knowing customer needs, and the system stimulates entrepreneurship and helps the development of other forms of village efforts, such as agro-tourism, eco-tourism and handicrafts.

**Environment.** It supports traditional country lifestyles, as well as traditional produce growing and animal breeding with no chemical agents, and on a small scale. It also promotes natural products made in a traditional way, such as honey, which also encourages the delicate eco-system to flourish, as the bees pollinate the flowers. The consumption of fresh seasonal food reduces the need of energy for cooling and freezing.

**Economy.** The service is often used by families for its easy and quick access to essential products. The prices are competitive with the shops, as the number of middle men is reduced. Even if the prices are similar to those in the shops, Chmielnik products have the advantage that customers know where they come from and that the quality is good. The company receives many orders for mineral water. Their work and consumers can find organic food at competitive prices compared with other specialist shops or supermarkets.

### The experience

The luxury of receiving food to your home, and feeling confident about its provenance.  
Being in touch with the surrounding region and getting the best from it.  
Pleasure of eating 'out of the box', and selecting food according to quality and seasons.  
Behaving ethically.

### Design challenges

Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other.  
Designing dedicated packaging and logistics to be used in the network by small producers.



# People experience the value of biodiversity in food chain.

United Kingdom, Dumfries and Galloway, South Scotland

## Cream o'Galloway dairy farm

By Cream o' Galloway  
www.creamogalloway.co.uk

### Solution

Cream o' Galloway Dairy Farm is an organic dairy farm launched to increase biodiversity and enhance visitors' experience. It produces a small quantity of high-quality organic product: it makes ice cream from the milk and opened the farm to the public to educate people on sustainable farming and quality. It also produces some of its own electricity via a community windmill which generates 15kWh, recycles all farm and tourist waste, composts food scraps for use as fertiliser. It has a strong believe in reusing by repairing, and goes out of its way to source recycled materials. The farm gives visitors information about the business. There is also an excellent adventure playground (inside and out) for children, built by the farm workers.

### Context

In 1992 the owners of this family dairy and stock farm met and decided that in order to secure the future of the farm and the four families living there, moves needed to be made to diversify and add value to farm produce. They realised that intensive agriculture was continuing in a way that could not sustain itself. At the time farming was heavily subsidised by the government. Now farmers face charges for over-production.

### Current situation

The visitor centre and the sustainable model is one that could easily and effectively be implemented elsewhere. The visitor centre shows how sustainable and organic farming and can be beneficial, how it works and how to provide excellent customer service. Plans for the future include diversifying into organic lamb and pork and joining with other farmers in the area to run a cooperative abattoir.

### The benefits

**Society.** The Cream o' Galloway dairy farm educates people about the importance of biodiversity, organic faming and quality of food. It's done in a fun way, providing the visitors with a pleasant experience around the farm, the countryside and the method of food processing.

**Environment.** The farm produces milk according to the organic scheme and it has created woodland areas without the use of pesticides. It also produces part of the energy needed and has recycling/waste treatments.

**Economy.** The courage of such quality rural entrepreneurship brings indirect support to such small, local based, activities, encourages the public towards more conscios and quality consumption. The local economy of the area benefits from the visitors coming to the farm.

#### The experience

For the farmers, the pride of carrying on traditional work, and rediscovering its importance.  
Discovering traditional products and food from their original environment, while making an ethical choice.

#### Design challenges

Designing services, events and places where the local traditional products are presented.  
Develop marketing.



'It is a very stressful business to run as they are constantly trying to improve what they do in a society obsessed with cost and profit...'



1992, husband + her met + decided to diversify farm. His family farm. 4 families relied on farm for living. Husband saw that farming was changing. Post WWII was heavily subsidised as gov. wanted Britain to be able to feed itself incase of another war. Intensive farming more + more but couldn't sustain itself. Eventually decided on making ice-cream from milk + opening farm to public. Decided to go for quality not quantity by going organic.





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

Italy, Milan

## GAS Gruppo d'Acquisto Solidale – Group purchasing organisation

By GAS Lambrate  
www.retegas.org

### 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 of knowing where the products come 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.

### 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 situation

GAS was initiated in 1994 and is still developing. The Milan groups are slowly increasing, but are still limited in number 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 a specific set of rules, but with responsibility and with respect for others. Also 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.

### The 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 seasonal) 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 in buying food. It also helps small local producers to survive, giving them an alternative distribution channel to the supermarkets.

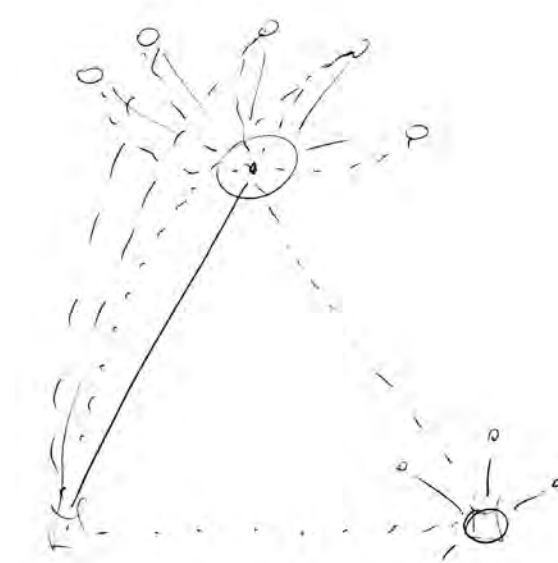
#### The experience

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

#### Design challenges

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.

GAS members tend to be well educated and politically active. These intellectually engaged people have decided to go against the current mass-market trends and face consumption problems in an alternative way. They try to act on their principles to reduce exploitation, pollution and global consumption by meeting with friends and neighbours once a month to work out where to buy basic goods and how to distribute them to reduce environmental impact. The message they want to spread to society is to pay attention to what we buy.



# Fresh, organically grown, reasonably priced vegetables are delivered to the door, together with recipes, and opportunities to visit the farm.

## Germany, Cologne, Bonn & surroundings Gemüsebox - Vegetable Box

By Apfelbacher Gemüseabo  
web site: <http://www.bioland-apfelbacher.de>

### Solution

The Apfelbacher Gemüsebox delivers a box of local vegetables and fruits weekly, giving several options: a basic assortment with only vegetables, one with additional fruit, a single box and a family box. It is also possible to order special vegetables and fruits, bread, cheese and tinned meat. The basic vegetable box costs about 12 euros. The products are fresh and seasonal, and grown locally. Customers are often surprised to find unknown vegetables or fruit in their box: products that they would have never bought otherwise, because they don't know how to prepare them. For this reason, a list of recipes is included in the vegetable box.

### Context

It is quite difficult to buy fresh, organic vegetables and fruit for a reasonable price in big cities. Moreover, the existing markets do not offer vegetables and fruits that don't assure the shop a certain profit, or that are not easy to grow or handle. This reduces awareness about food varieties and leads to the loss of knowledge about traditional 'grandmothers' vegetables'. The Gemüsebox service was conceived to address these issues.

### Current situation

The project was started in 1995 by the Apfelbacher family, a couple of farmers adopting ecological methods of production because of a deep belief in sustainable growth. Today the enterprise employs, in addition to the owner, between two and five for farming and managing the service, and has around 400 clients. In the Cologne area there are two organisations offering similar services, but the Apfelbacher Gemüsebox is the most experienced and most organised. Without any marketing or advertising, Apfelbacher Gemüsebox is still growing, showing that customers do want organic quality food.

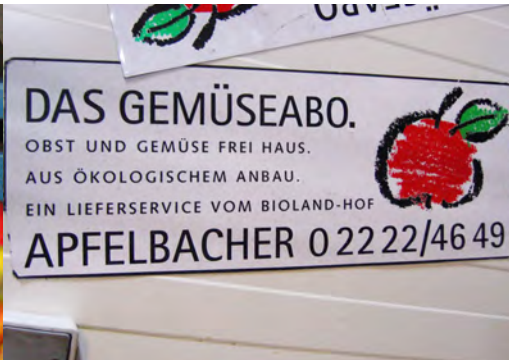
### The benefits

**Society.** The service fosters awareness of tradition, taste and the natural seasonal availability, and has made people realise that organic food can be affordable. The Apfelbacher family also helps to spread knowledge of organic farming and its importance for sustainable development by inviting primary school classes for visits to the farm.

**Environment.** The production of organic food, avoiding the use of genetically modified seeds and pesticides and following organic and seasonal cultivation techniques, reduces pollution, preserves the landscape and safeguards biodiversity. As all the food in the scheme is grown locally, the reduction of food transportation radically reduces the environmental impact of the food chain and reduces the need of energy for cooling and freezing (food is fresh and seasonable).

**Economy.** The case study demonstrates that ecological production can be economically sustainable: 20 years ago, when the Apfelbacher family started farming organically, there were about 30 other small farmers surrounding of the village. Today only the Apfelbacher family (and one extensive farmer) survives, thanks to the high quality of the products and the creation of a direct, innovative link to the consumers.

The experience	Design challenges
<p>The luxury of receiving food to your home, and feeling confident about its provenance. Being in touch with the surrounding region, getting the best from it.</p>	<p>Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other, and to network producers. Create a platform of technical services to support local small farmers and food producers. Design dedicated packaging and logistical solutions for small producers in the network.</p>



Camilla orders on the farm website, and the farmers prepare a box with the vegetables and fruits that she asks for.



Weekly, one of the farmers travels with a little truck around the city to deliver the boxes for the clients.

If she is not home, the box is left in front of her apartment.



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

The Netherlands, Oosterhout NB

## Huiskamerrestaurant Schuif 's Aan – Living Room Restaurant

By Maaïke Hengel, Wouter Hengel  
<http://home.planet.nl/~huiskamerrestaurant>

### Solution

The 'Living Room Restaurant' provides people the opportunity to go out, have a good but affordable meal and meet other people in a home setting. After reserving a place via email or phone, people can 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 cleaning the table between each dish. The hosts sit at 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.

### Context

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 situation

Maaïke and Wouter started the initiative in February 2005, and other similar "restaurants" have also started recently.

The couple will keep going with the project as long as they like it, they are quite happy with the current set up and are not looking for any changes or expansion.

### The benefits

**Society.** The Living Room Restaurant's benefits are mainly to individuals, rather than groups, as it enables people to make new friends. The evenings are arranged in a way that 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 a small-scale initiative.

### The experience

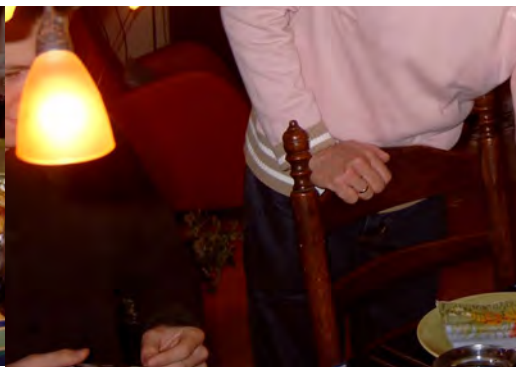
Demonstrating one's own skills and capabilities.  
 Meeting new people with an open attitude in a cheerful environment.  
 Being pleasantly surprised by the culinary ability of neighbours, and discovering their home.

### Design challenges

Creating access to people's experiences in a living room restaurant, so that others can start their own living room restaurant.

#### Authors

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



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

France, Paris

## Les Jardins de Cérès – Cérès's garden

By Les Jardins de Cérès, Association  
www.jardins.ceres91.net

### Solution

Les Jardins de Cérès is a 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 Cérès 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 help 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 develop a close relationship.

### Context

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 and her friends met Emmanuel Vandame, a farmer willing to try such a venture

### Current situation

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 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 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 enables him to 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 the 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 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.

#### Design challenges

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



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.'





# Local food from small local producers is delivered to the home thanks to a shared van.

## United Kingdom, Skye, Scotland Local Food Link Van Group

By Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Van Group  
www.foodlinkvan.co.uk

### Solution

Local Food Van Link, in association with other groups, helps increase local food production by distributing produce around the 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 could they 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.

### Context

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 situation

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.

### The 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 seasonal 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 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.

#### Design challenges

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.



The main benefits of the van, for customer and consumer, are the convenience of delivery, and the strong feeling of confidence among the network participants, trusting the high quality of freshly harvested seasonal goods.



# People living in the city get in touch with a farm and provide themselves with high-quality natural food.

Estonia

## Natural Food-system near the roads

By Various Estonian farmers

### Solution

These farmers sell their products – mostly fresh milk, cheese, honey, vegetables and berries – to passers by on the road. While the drivers started first to ask for some milk or some eggs, now the farms have found their favourite clients (mainly from the city) and in time the drivers have found their favourite farms and products too. As the word spread, buying food at the farms became more popular, and in time the favourite clients have become family friends, who are welcome to see the animals and develop a feeling for farm life. Every customer has to have their own transport and packaging, or they can bring back packaging the farm gave them before. For farmers this selling channel is a needed income.

### Context

Half of Estonians live in towns, and often own a summer home or have relatives in the countryside. Commuting to the countryside is done by car as public transport infrastructure is not very well-developed. Tallinn-Haapsalu road is one of the main roads for this kind of journey, and has a lot of farms along it. Farmers in Estonia often have problems with selling their production through wholesalers, because the prices are too low. With this, and EU bureaucracy, smaller farms have stopped producing goods. At the same time a lot of city people are losing their connection with natural lifestyles, and their knowledge about country life and how natural food is produced.

### Current situation

This kind of relationship between passing city people and farmers is well established, and a common tradition all over Estonia. But as it started in the Soviet era, the practice was secret and unofficial, and no research has been done into it. Sometimes the farmer and consumers communicate by phone or online, which makes the process easier and enables the farmer to prepare the necessary products.

### The benefits

**Society.** The natural food system brings city and country people into contact with each other. It entertains people of all ages, and gives city dwellers a chance to participate in farm life. It creates a new circle of communication lasting many generations where participants support each other, morally and materially.

**Environment.** Farms close to big roads can continue farming and make a living. Organic farming by small farmers keeps nature in balance much better than big enterprise activities, and cares for the forests, fields and animals. The products are more natural, less processed and use less chemical treatments, which is very important for nutrition in general.

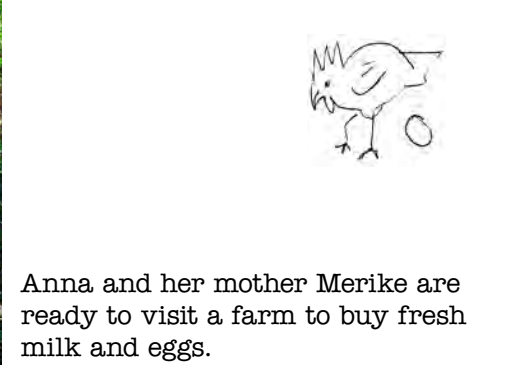
**Economy.** Economic benefits are evident for both producers and consumers. As it is a shorter chain, with the customer paying the farmer directly, prices are much lower than at the market, but better, for the farmer, than wholesalers. There are also savings on transport, packaging, time, selling points and storage.

#### The experience

The adventure of visiting the farms, and discovering people and products. The fun of searching for a farmer to buy from. Behaving ethically.

#### Design challenges

Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other. Develop infrastructure and services to support farmers direct selling in the farm. Design a proper communication system along the roads.



Anna and her mother Merike are ready to visit a farm to buy fresh milk and eggs. Anna has a jar for the milk. They are greeted by a family dog. They are taken to where the cows and goats are kept. Anna takes milk from the milk-barrel, where it is put after milking. As well as buying foods, she can feed the animals and get to know the new-born goats. Merike gives in cash for the foods.



# People are helped to adopt an ecologically pure and healthy lifestyle, balancing man and nature.

Estonia, Tallinn, Tartu

## Ökosahver - Eco-pantry

By Ökosahver  
www.sahver.ee

### Solution

Ökosahver sells certified organic food via different services and channels. The food box, one of the most popular products, contains 10 different types of food (mainly vegetables, but also honey, bread and herbs) from local organic farms, is enough for the basic weekly needs of a family of four, and can be ordered by phone or online. Subscribers receive e-mails on the content of the food box and, depending on their area, receive the box to their doorstep on Wednesday or Thursday. Ökosahver's mission is to inform the consumer about how eco-food is produced and its advantages. Customers can also buy the organic food at its shop.

The number of clients varies according to season, consumption goes up in the spring, but is around 600 on average.

### Context

There are two concepts behind the idea: that many people want to eat natural, locally produced food, even in urban areas; and that small farmers can not compete with huge industrial-scale producers, so it is vital for them to find alternative retail channels. These same producers are often involved in the organic farming movement that started with the establishment of the 'Estonian Bio-dynamic Association' in 1989 (in the Soviet era). Its rapid rise began in 1999, thanks to the growing public interest in organic farming.

### Current situation

Ökosahver started in 2003, and runs in two cities – Tallinn and Tartu. It is the first company in Estonia to retail and wholesale certified organic products. The organic food box service is quite a new idea in Estonia, and at the moment is the only example of this kind of initiative in all the Baltic states.

It has connections with seven or eight organic farms, and employs three people. Until the company can afford to employ more people, it will not be able to get more customers. To get more customers, 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.

### The benefits

**Society.** As organic agriculture takes more physical work and can only partly be mechanised, it provides work for people who otherwise would be unemployed, keeps small farms alive and sustains country life. Ökosahver also, informs people about the benefits of ecological food and lifestyle.

**Environment.** The production of organic food, avoiding genetically modified seeds and pesticides and following organic and seasonal cultivation techniques, reduces pollution. It also preserves native species and the original landscape, safeguarding biodiversity. The reduction of food transportation from other regions radically reduces the environmental impact of the food chain.

**Economy.** The solution provides a new and alternative retail channel from small organic producers directly to consumers, which cuts the costs for both. In addition, growing organic food is economically responsible in Estonia, because of the characteristics of the existing farms and countryside.

#### The experience

Pleasure of eating 'out of the box', and selecting food according to quality and seasons.  
Being in touch with the surrounding region and getting the best from it.  
Behaving ethically.

#### Design challenges

Creating multi-channel and multi-media communication platforms to connect producers and consumers directly to each other.  
Developing concepts for food-shops as multiservice food points.  
Designing dedicated packaging and logistics to be used in the network by small producers.