



An Atlas of Commoning: Places of Collective Production

Facebook, Airbnb, and other companies, whose business models are based on the commercialization of social relationships, have transformed words like "community," "sharing," or "us" into empty concepts that no longer represent solidarity or a progressive social agenda, but rather form the basis for an emerging platform capitalism. This economic development is accompanied by a global political shift fueled by traditional community notions of identity and affiliation, exclusion and discrimination.

Against this background, *An Atlas of Commoning: Places of Collective Production*—an exhibition and publication project by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) in collaboration with ARCH+—aims to recapture and redefine the open and emancipatory space of "us" as a concept. The project focuses on urban commons—here commons are to be understood as a set of practices dealing with the production and management of (material and immaterial) collective resources and spaces in general, rather than with the resources themselves, hence "commoning," the verb, takes center stage.

Commoning is a process of negotiating differences and conflicts between the individual, the community, and society. It is a process that involves the spatial organization of the relationships between production and reproduction, ownership and access to resources. A process in which solidarity networks are created and individual and collective rights are redefined. This project questions prevailing social and political structures and searches for new forms of collective, yet pluralistic, governance.

An Atlas of Commoning unfolds a network of ideas for a concept of commoning that aims for solidarity and emancipation, one that doesn't bring individuals into line within the community but turns the unique, the different, and the special into decisive qualities of togetherness.

R-URBAN

Building neighborhood resilience by promoting local production and consumption cycles

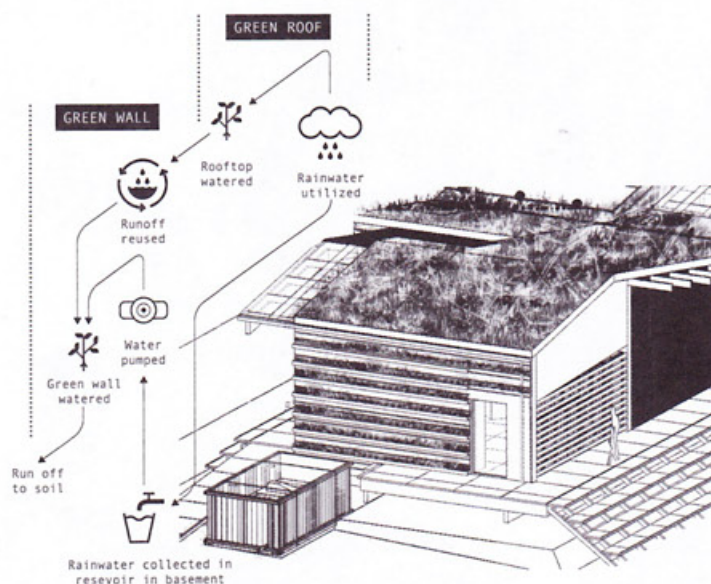
AgroCité in Colombes © Andreas Lang



R-URBAN

Planned by:

Atelier d'Architecture
Autogérée (AAA)
Colombes, France,
since 2008



The water cycle at AgroCité © AAA



RecycLab in Colombes © AAA



R-Urban is a network of resident-run facilities aiming at building resilience in cities. The concept refers to French philosopher André Gorz, who calls for producing what we consume, and consuming what we produce. An urban community farm, a recycling lab, and a unit for communal living all act as civic hubs in a circular neighborhood metabolism. The pilot project *AgroCité* in Gennevilliers, in France is a testing field for establishing principles of circular economy and empowering citizens to become active “prosumers”, i.e., producers and consumers at the same time. *R-Urban* takes a political stance on ecological matters: beyond mere material and energy flows, it recognizes the socio-cultural, cognitive, and affective dimensions of sustainability.

Since 2001, the Paris-based practice *Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée* (AAA – studio for self-managed architecture), together with neighborhood communities, has transformed several leftover sites into urban community gardens. Growing vegetables, however, is just one facet in their layered participatory practice, which aims to co-produce ecological, micro-social, and cultural resilience. If sustainability is concerned with preserving the status quo, resilience addresses how systems can adapt and thrive in changing circumstances. In the face of climate change, crumbling welfare, unemployment, and housing insecurity, *R-Urban* aims to enable citizens to tackle social inequity and the uneven access to resources by acting locally and collaboratively, and to change the city by changing their ways of living.¹ Through a series of civic hubs, *R-Urban* provides tools and a place for citizens to come together and engage in urban agriculture, recycling, ecological construction, and cooperative housing. *AgroCité* is a micro-experimental farm and community garden with educational and cultural spaces, in which food is grown, cooked, and distributed, bio waste composted, energy produced, and rainwater recycled.

RecycLab is a green facility for storing and reusing locally salvaged materials, re- and upcycling construction materials for self-building and retrofitting. *EcoHab* is a cooperative eco-housing project comprising a number of partially self-built and collectively managed dwellings, including shared facilities.

Conceived as a network, the diverse hubs aim to form locally closed ecological cycles. The compost, for instance, is used for urban agriculture, and as a local heating system. Residents are encouraged to buy, as well as to create, local products. “The balance between production and consumption through local sustainable sourcing cannot occur without changes in the living and working lifestyles of citizens who must be involved in these changes through collaborative practices supporting each other through local networks.”² The team explains as they strive to put the political ecological ideas of Gorz into practice.

The two first *R-Urban* prototypes—*AgroCité* and *RecycLab*—were realized in Colombes, in the northwestern suburbs of Paris. But in 2017, a new municipal government abruptly ended the thriving experiment, demonstratively replacing the lush

garden with a parking lot, putting *R-Urban's* resilience to the test. But after a year of uncertainty the *AgroCité* has now found a new home in the neighboring community of Gennevilliers. This and previous experiences reveal both the promise and precariousness of working with temporary transformation of urban interstices. *R-Urban* demonstrates how practices of commoning can emerge from organizing spatial, temporal, and human interstices. It exemplifies how architecture has the capacity to encourage collaborative spatial practices. More importantly, it also shows how, rather than the durability of architecture, it is the social relations and solidarity integral to the production of space that will ultimately make a community sustainable and resilient. SG

¹ David Harvey “The Right to the City,” *New Left Review* (2008), 23.

² *Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée*, www.r-urban.net/en/sample-page/ (Accessed May 20, 2018).

AN ATLAS OF COMMON

**PLACES
OF**

A touring exhibition
by ifa (Institut für
Auslandsbeziehungen)
in collaboration with ARCH+

**COLLECTIVE
PRODUCTION**

World premiere in
2019 in Pittsburgh

Further venues

**USA
SOUTH AMERICA
SOUTHEAST ASIA**

German premiere
in Berlin

**KUNSTRAUM
KREUZBERG/
BETHANIEN**