



OVERVIEW

ARGUABLY, OUR SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE, ECONOMICS, INDUSTRY, AND WELFARE ARE SO POWERFULLY INTERTWINED THAT THEY TEND TO ASSIMILATE AND SUBVERT ANYTHING THAT THREATENS TO REDUCE ECONOMIC GROWTH. THIS RENDERS 'DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY' INEFFECTIVE BECAUSE IT OPERATES AT LEVELS THAT ARE TOO LOCAL, SPECIALISED, OR PARTIAL. WE THEREFORE WANTED TO CULTIVATE A LOCALLY INTERDEPENDENT 'LIVING STYLE' THAT WOULD INCLUDE ITS OWN ECONOMIC CURRENCY SYSTEM, AUTONOMOUS BUILDING METHODS, LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION, ETC. AS EXPERTISE REQUIRED FOR THE WHOLE PROJECT WOULD BE BEYOND EXISTING SPECIALIST DESIGN DISCIPLINES, WE ENVISAGED A NEW MODE OF 'METADESIGN' THAT COULD BE EVALUATED BY MONITORING ITS 'SYNERGIES' AT MANY LEVELS. FOR THIS REASON OUR DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH TEAM OF 14 INCLUDED A MICRO-ECONOMIST, BUILDING ENERGY SCIENTIST, MEDICAL PRACTITIONER, CIVIL ENGINEER, ARTIST, PSYCHOLOGIST, AND THEORETICAL PHYSICIST, IN ADDITION TO SEVERAL PIONEERS IN ECO-DESIGN, ECO-ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN THEORY, AND DESIGN MANAGEMENT.

Activities

Many highly promising ideas fail because they prove to be sub-optimal within the larger practical context. We therefore explored issues at the theoretical and practical levels by asking why BedZed (the well known Eco-design building) (<http://www.bedzed.org.uk/>) has inspired so few imitators elsewhere. We evaluated a diagnostic system ('Relonics' and 'Balascopy') pioneered by physician inventor Vadim Kvitash to see whether it might be applicable to a non-medical application such as ours. Dr. Kvitash assured us that this would be entirely feasible. In seeking a high level of 'synergy' as an emergent outcome of metadesign we realised that synergy would also be needed throughout the co-creative process leading up to it. We first identified 2 complementary levels: 1) synergies of 'doing' 2) conceptual synergies. We expanded this into a tetrahedral (four-fold) mapping system:

- New Knowing (from intuition, embodiment, & sharing)
- Envisioning (thinking / criticizing / mapping)
- Communicating (balancing internal & external conditions)
- Pushing/Doing (resourcing, creating, and producing)

Insights

By exploring new methods of mapping highly complex elements, we came to realise the need to cultivate a 'synergy of synergies' (Fuller, 1975). Although our methods (tools) have potential, they emerged partly as a response to communication issues that, for a short time, threatened goodwill and momentum. We explored some aspects of 'co-authorship'. We now have a far greater confidence and enthusiasm for focusing on subsequent (metadesign) research. OUTCOMES: In addition to the many web-based documents, at least eight Ds21-related (international) publications:

- Professor Phil Jones
- Richard Douthwaite
- Hannah Jones
- Otto van Nieuwenhuijze
- John Wood
- a joint paper by Nieuwenhuijze and Wood
- 2 chapters in Wood's book: "Designing for Micro-utopias" (Ashgate, 2006).