

Note to the reader.

In full, this document constitutes one of the main parts of my submission.

If read ignoring italicised text and images, it also constitutes the required 1,000 word narrative.

‘Here we are talking about a reconstruction of social and individual practices which I shall classify under three complementary headings, all of which come under the ethico-aesthetic aegis of an ecosophy: social ecology, mental ecology and environmental ecology’.

(Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 1989.)

Proposal for Speculative Architecture ©

New Allotments For the City of Glasgow.

‘If clean drinking water and public sanitation were the main obstacles to social progress in the 19th-century city, a healthy diet and access to fresh food for all promises to be one of the hottest issues for the 21st century’.

Food - its production and consumption, cuts across social, environmental, ecological and economic issues. By dealing with food as subject (rather than object) there is a real possibility of tackling some of the most important issues of the day. This proposal borrows a great deal from some the most successful aspects of an existing allotment model, created and changed little since the eighteenth century. Whilst acknowledging this valuable legacy, this new scheme attempts to update allotment design with present and future use in mind.

‘Across Chinese cities, 85 per cent of vegetables consumed by residents are produced within those cities, and Shanghai and Beijing are fully self-sufficient in vegetables’

Preamble

During a recent trip to Japan I was able to see first-hand a very different approach to food production. Despite its incredibly hi-tech status, Japan is in no way ashamed of its agricultural legacy which penetrates various cities on every spare patch of land. To see paddy fields, tea plantations and vegetable plots being tended within city boundaries, next to roads, gravestones, banks and supermarkets was an experience that caused me to reflect on the way we in the UK relate to food very differently.

Vegetables growing next to a graveyard in Kyoto, Japan.

Crops being tended by a roadside in Toyota City, Japan.

In Britain, space and other natural resources are not yet valued to the same extent as in Japan, but gradually we are being forced to ask some difficult questions about our response to impending ecological difficulties. What changes are we willing make?

‘A sharp and powerful dichotomy between what is considered urban and what is rural has served to hide, from urban residents and professionals, the many interconnected activities that make up a ‘food system’. The production of food is deemed ‘agricultural’; agriculture is deemed to happen in rural areas and hence becomes a matter of rural policy, distinct and treated independently from urban policy and from urban problems (such as housing, transportation, crime and so on)

In Europe, in those limited spaces within cities where food continues to be produced such as allotments, the image is of ‘old men in sheds’. However, a recent groundswell of popular interest from a new generation

of plot-holders shows that there is a new audience for allotments that requires new provision. This proposal attempts to put allotments rightfully at the centre of social space as an example of best practice in the expanded ecological terms Guattari describes in his book *The Three Ecologies*.

‘It is time for the architectural and urban design planning professionals to support and enhance the city’s multiple functions as dining room, market and farm. The Modernist tenets, which too often posited a segmented and sterile city where dining and shopping were hidden in interior spaces and where growing occurred in distant locations, need to be replaced by the encouragement, through planning and design, of a true mixing of land uses that incorporates places (and ways) for growing and selling local produce as well as for consuming it. Open space need not always be interpreted as space exclusively for leisure.

‘The 800 million people who are currently engaged in urban agriculture worldwide manage to flourish without help from architects’ and planners – what could they do with their help?.

HISTORY.

Following the enclosures acts in the early eighteenth Century allotments were originally conceived of and allocated in portions thought sufficient to feed a family of four throughout the year. The land area worked out at around 10 poles, 300 square yards or 250 square metres per plot. During WWII and with the implementation of rationing, allotments once again became a vital food source. But in peacetime with food becoming more widely available and cheaper, allotments soon lost their appeal. It is estimated that more than half of the allotments in Britain were lost during this period.

FUTURE.

In the past five or ten years there has been a huge renewal of interest in allotments from a new generation of people taking up the spade for leisure, and as a way of addressing some of the issues surrounding modern food production. Gardening in this context provides gentle exercise, escape, and valuable social space. Growers are able to re-connect to a large variety of fruits and vegetables that are seasonal and can be grown organically, close to home. This reduces or eradicates road and air miles that come with supermarket produce. Also, through composting and no packaging, less waste effectively goes to landfill. Finally, allotments themselves often support wildlife as the planting is not an industrial monoculture common elsewhere. In short, the whole allotment process has irrefutable environmental and ecological benefits.

‘Food can operate as a social, economic, nutritional, educational and entrepreneurial mechanism, and as a tool for increasing the health of individuals, communities, cities and even regions. Increasing availability and affordability of fresh food becomes both an end in itself and a means of reaching other goals’

Evidently, allotment use has changed hugely since its inception, yet the basic ‘layout’ and size has remained unchanged. Typically for a British city, Glasgow has waiting lists of up to five years for some of its plots, and yet allotments remain under constant pressure from developers. With this renewed interest in allotments and in the whole range of associated environmental sensitivity, it is time to promote such ideas by addressing the design of allotments to meet their present and future use. A new allotment garden in Bellahouston Park would send a clear message regarding its central importance in terms of its social and environmental value. It would also act as a timely monument to the valuable contribution already made by allotments to the ‘green city’.

RETHINKING SIZE

Arguably, the relatively large size of allotments puts off potential users who often become despondent with the work levels necessary when getting started. Consequently, turnover remains high on some plots despite the waiting lists, and this leads to plots falling into disuse. The large size of plots also affects older plottolders who sometimes find the workload too great. Similarly, the increasing profile of younger plottolders who

may have to juggle the demands of work and/or children, can find the demands too big. In response to these changing dynamics, the plot size would change from 250m² to 175m².

RETHINKING LAYOUT

Traditional plot layout supports the production of crops designed to fill stomachs. Replacing rectangular spaces with irregular Octagons would minimise space loss and promote crop rotation sympathetic to organic production methods. This distinctive shape gives the plots a clear apicultural identity. In addition to the space for vegetable beds, additional rectangular spaces would be provided for shed, greenhouse and composting. The number of plots would be reduced to 16 – a smaller number than in most allotments. This is intended to promote a greater sense of involvement and community. The layout as a whole would reference a beehive or maze, creating interesting spaces and excitement around each corner. The regimented structure would also off-set individual creativity.

COMMUNAL SPACE

Allotments are one of the few remaining ‘institutions’ which informally encourage a comprehensive mix of age, ethnicity and social background.

At the centre of the allotments would be an area designated for a community building where there would be provision for social events, communal eating and storing tools, and for sharing knowledge. (Despite the undoubted value of allotments in terms of being a living, learning environment, these opportunities are seldom transparent or open). Ecological composting toilets would be provided. Community orchards would be planted bearing blossom and fruit in season. These spaces would require little upkeep.

VISITORS (London’s city farm has 650,000 visitors annually).

In addition to the individual plots being leased on a yearly basis to groups and individuals, the allotment gardens would also be open to visitors during specific times as well as participants of special events and workshops for all ages ranging from art workshops, to gardening, composting and recycling events. For this reason a number of community plots would be available for groups such as schools, or community initiatives.

Of the plot-holders, some would be invited, others would be sourced through local consultation ranging from local residents, schools, business, and colleges. Plot-holders would be self-organised through a familiar committee structure.

‘The garden provides a different way to learn. Through it children connect with other things in life, learn to work cooperatively, learn to be sociable with each other and experience a chance to be stewards of the land’- Learning by doing and working and contributing on equal terms with adults.

‘Speculative Architecture’ on display and in use at Kennyhill Allotments, Riddrie, Glasgow.

Typical image of allotments as things stand; out of the way, hidden and inaccessible. This is Bellahouston Plot Holders Association, less than a mile from Bellahouston Park. Great things might be going on but everything is behind closed doors.

What I propose doing is simply to (re)design and fabricate the basic infrastructure for a new allotment garden within Bellahouston Park. This infrastructure would include:

1. Fencing & Hedges
2. Gateways & seating
3. Pathways
4. A central communal building
5. Communal orchards
6. Composting toilets.

The role of these structural foundations is to raise ambition for everything that goes on inside the gardens.

fn(*This would include storage for tools, space for meeting, eating, learning, & sharing. The building would be serviced by solar and wind power, and heated by a wood burning stove)

Plots would be marked out for use, but essentially these spaces would be given over for creative use by groups and individuals to cultivate fruit vegetables and flowers, and for the construction of huts and greenhouses. Plot-holders would determine their own function and forms, and these would continue to evolve over time.

This strategy embraces the notion of the work being ‘speculative’ – It declares the end product unknowable, even risky, but also exciting, meaningful and intrinsically relevant to its audience. Beyond this it encourages

and reinforces the feeling of community which lies at the heart of such facilities. This proposal supports the use and understanding of green space at a time of great environmental need.

Some of the city's existing allotments now have a five year waiting list, yet these spaces are still under constant threat from developers. Within Glasgow, with its high proportion of flats and tenements, there is perhaps an even greater need for garden space than other cities. Whilst Glasgows Parks do provide green space, this is a far cry from that unique opportunity to turn the soil, to watch things grow from seed, and to reap the economic and health benefits, yourself, off your own back, in a community.

'Within the fast pace of life, anonymity and large-scale spaces of the modern city, food venues give us a sense of intimacy, a place to pause at an eminently human scale. When the food we eat, grow or buy is local, we also experience a connection to the region, the seasons and the ground we inhabit. Our connection to organic life, within all the abstractions of the modern city, is strengthened'.

LOCATION.

Exact situation would depend on negotiation, soil samples and past mine workings. The allotment design is modular and would therefore adapt and grow within its designated area like a planted seed. (A series of suggested sites has been provided in drawing form).

Bellahouston Park has a fascinating history reflected in its many different uses today. However, not reflected in present layout is the fact that land within the park boundary was also once used for agriculture. The return of crops to the park would therefore be a fascinating one. The new allotments would be a valuable addition to the Parks portfolio of attractions. More than this it would be a living work, a space for learning and sharing and speculating creatively in partnership with the land.

CONCLUSION

As a public Art Work this concept would reverse a frequent problem encountered by such projects; that of non-ownership. Many public art works look fantastic on the opening day and then witness a steady decline physically, and in terms of attachment to local audience. This work begins at ground level and aims to grow over time in terms of stature and value. Initial investment would be only a small part of overall cost that would grow year on year with use. However this subsequent investment would come not from outside, but from within the allotment community through use; re-use, recycling and reducing. The repercussions of this investment would hopefully transcend the park boundary in social, mental and environmental terms. The 'Speculative Architecture' in question would not only be the buildings, crops and flowers emerging from the foundations laid in this proposal.

AIMS and OBJECTIVES

Σ Creating a living example of best practice in relation to Sustainability (Community ethic of re-use, recycle and reduce)

- Σ To facilitate a learning environment about bio-diversity, ecology and our impact on the planet.
- Σ The creation of an aesthetic and functional experience illuminating current issues about food and the environment.
- Σ Developing community co-operation through environmental action.

OUTCOMES

- Σ The creation of multifaceted living project, benefiting local environment and people.
- Σ Revised attitudes to urban agriculture through a showcase allotment in Bellahouston Park.
- Σ A healthy, food producing environment reducing road and air miles.
- Σ Support framework for more widespread social, mental and environmental ecology.

Examples of Reducing Waste.

Re-cycling: Water.

Re-use: Readymade cloches.
Budget.

Reclaimed material used wherever possible, therefore budget based on highest cost/new materials.

Item.	Cost.
Project manager (6 months)	10,000
Community liaison officer (3 months)	4,000
Educational workshops	2,500
Surveyors fee (cost mapping land)	1,600
Working man-hours	6,000
Tools and equipment	4,000
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	28,100

Fencing and Hedges	
Living berry fences	800
Wooden structure	4,300
Fixings	200
	<hr/>
	5,300

Gateways	
Main entrance	1,150
Back entrance	750
Side gates (x2)	350
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	2,250

Composting toilets and related planting.	
Building work	450
Toilet systems (x2)	2,600
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	3,050

Pathways and seating	
Gravel	3,500
Paving	6,000
Wooden boarding grooved.	2,500
Wood for seating	1,800
Trees for communal orchards	2,000
	<hr/>
	15,800

Communal building	
Architects fee (working to CDM Regulations)	3,405

Foundation work	2,985
Main timber	4,300
Internal structure	2,120
Internal and external wood finishes	860
Ardesia re-cycled slates	2,400
Planting	650
'wood' burning stove	1,540
Photovoltaic system for electricity	2,800
Solar hot water	2,799
(inc. installation excl possible grant aid up to 50%)	
Water harvesting units (x4)	380
Guttering & drainpipes	240
	24,479
 Total cost-	 78,979

Timeline.

Σ 2006-local consultation & publicity followed by workshops for design ideas for enhanced infrastructure.
(local schools, residents and businesses)

Σ 2007-work begins on plots*

Σ 2008-Allotment gardens opened (September)

(*full maturity 10yrs plus)

Phases of build:

Σ (April 2008) external fences, pathways and communal building.

Σ (June 2008) Additional pathways, plots and toilets

Σ (September 2008) Planting, plot development and opening celebration.