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Unlocking the potential of sustainability transitions to make cities more just and liveable

“Climate Urbanism: strategies for just transitions”, 11 November 2021

Marcin Dąbrowski

Outline

- 1 Why cities matter?
- 2 What goes wrong?
- 3 How sustainability to make our cities better (for all)
- 4 How do we unlock that potential?

A photograph of a city skyline at dusk or dawn. Several tall, modern apartment buildings with many lit windows are visible. In the foreground, there is a body of water reflecting the lights from the buildings. The sky is a warm, orange-brown color. A large white number '1' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

1

Why cities matter?

Cities as culprits

- Cities and global urban population set to grow
- ~75% of global greenhouse gas emissions produced in cities
- Main consumers of resources and materials (60–80%)

Extracted
resources

84.4 Gt

42.4 Gt

21.8 Gt

12.0 Gt

9.1 Gt

4.4 Gt

2.3 Gt

1.7 Gt

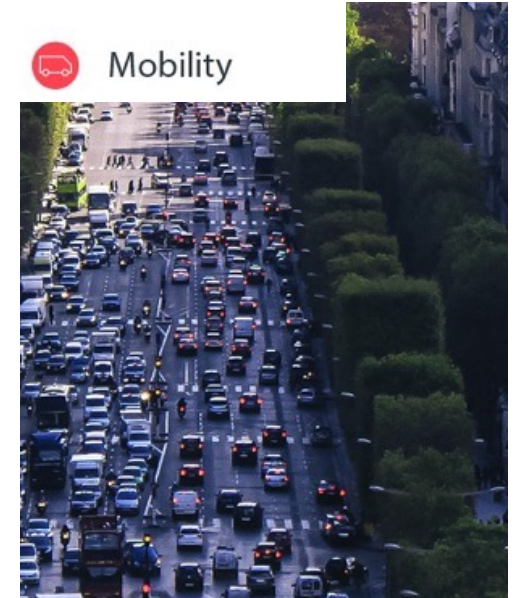
Housing and infrastructure



Nutrition



Mobility



Consumables

Services

Healthcare

Communication

Cities as victims

- Cities bear the brunt of climate change impacts
- Growing population and assets exposed
- Uneven vulnerability and adaptive capacity: North/South, formal/informal, poor/affluent

(e.g. Hallegatte et al. 2013; Long & Rice, 2019; Anguelovski et al. 2019; Castán Broto et al., 2020)

Cities as a solution

- Cities as experimentation ground
- More forward thinking and agile than national governments
- Tangible impacts of interventions – scope for meaningful engagement of stakeholders
- Messy governmentalities and informal social innovation

(e.g. Castan Broto & Bulkeley, 2013; Wolfram & Frantzeskaki, 2016; Frantzeskaki et al., 2017; Dabrowski et al., 2021)

2

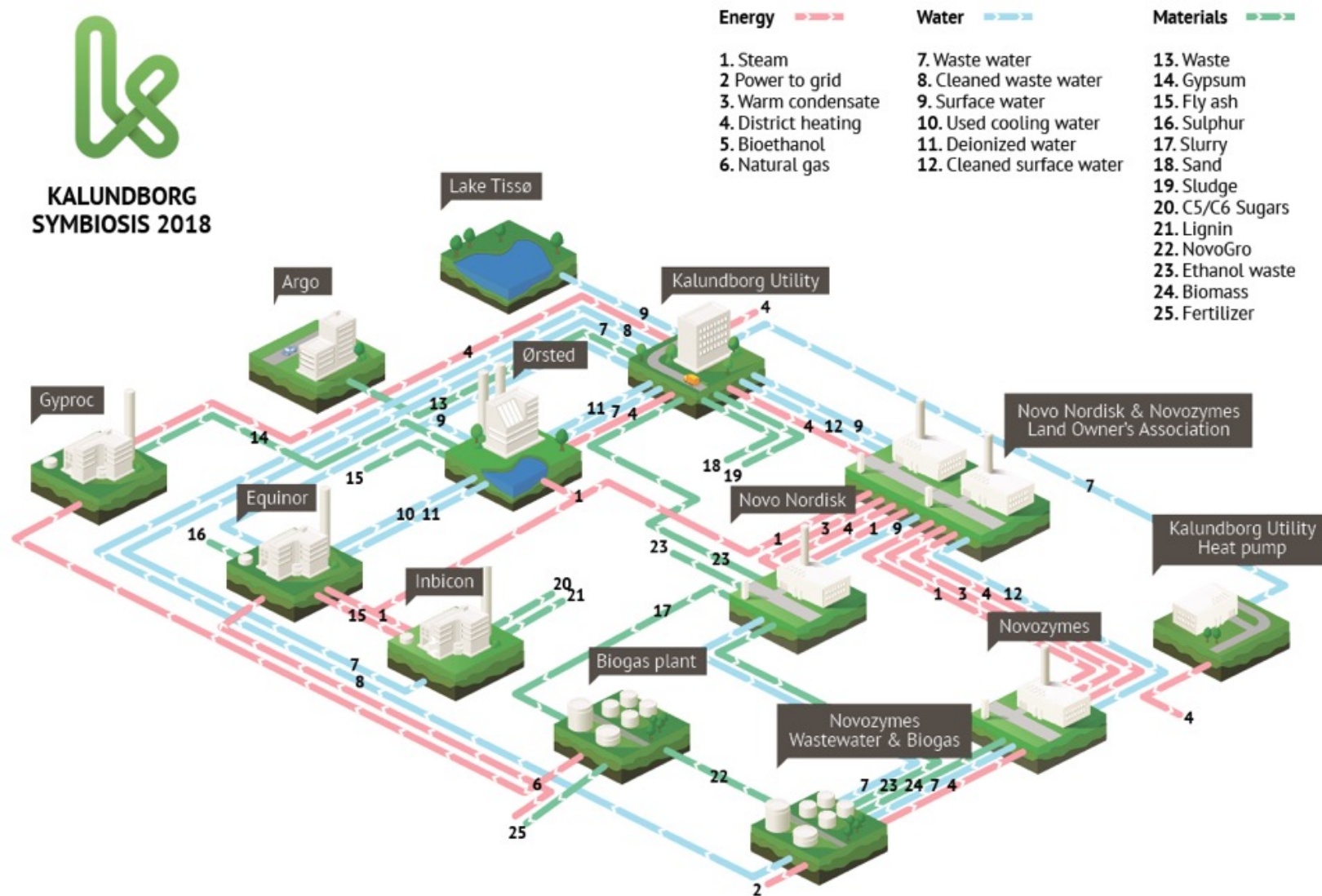
What goes wrong
with (urban)
sustainability
transitions?

Narrow focus

- Technofixes
- Focus on the economy and the environmental dimension
- Neglect of spatial impacts, footprint, and potentials



KALUNDBORG SYMBIOSIS 2018





Gemeente
Amsterdam

Amsterdam Circulair 2020-2025 Strategie



Source: Gemeente Amsterdam



Photo: AEB

CIRCULAR EMPLOYMENT IN THE AMSTERDAM METROPOLITAN AREA

Urban centres cluster circular employment

The map on this page presents the spatial distribution of all circular employment throughout the AMA, including core, enabling and indirect circular jobs. In line with national trends,¹⁴ the urban centres throughout the region also provide the largest number of circular jobs in the AMA, such as the city of Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Haarlemmermeer (Schiphol). This does not come as a surprise as urban centres agglomerate of economic activity.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it serves to affirm the important role of cities within a circular economy.

What is more, within these urban areas, clear differences can be seen in the distribution of circular jobs. Enabling circular activities often concentrate in city centers, while core circular activities are usually found on urban peripheries.

Amsterdam: a hotspot for circular design and technology

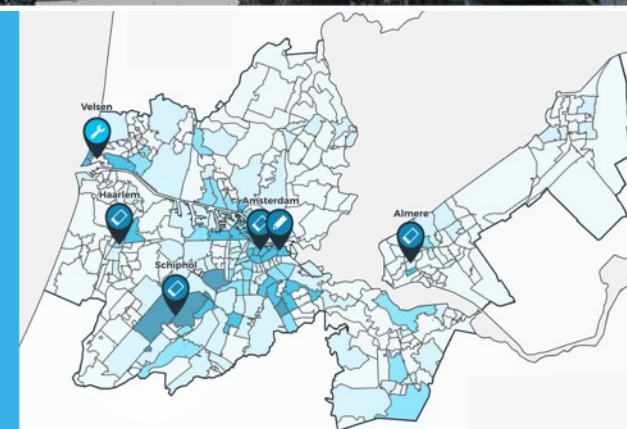
In a large number of municipalities throughout the AMA, circular employment within incorporate digital technology provides the largest share of jobs, with clear clustering in most urban centres. This is particularly prominent around the Schiphol area, and capitalises on the area's strong specialisation in the service- and knowledge-based industries.

Furthermore, jobs in Design for the future are concentrated in the larger city centers, especially Amsterdam. Ultimately, the clustering of enabling circular employment towards city centres reflects the demands of service- and knowledge- intensive industries, providing strong opportunities for knowledge transfer to drive innovation and employment within these enabling circular strategies.

Core circular jobs clustered around industrial areas

Employment within core circular strategies tend to be clustered in urban peripheries and throughout smaller municipalities, such as throughout the North and South East of the AMA.¹⁶ The location of this circular employment is a result of these core circular strategies relating particularly to industrial manufacturing and processing industries, such as waste sorting and recycling facilities which are more space intensive and require effective logistical connections.

In Velsen, activities in Preserve and extend what's already made provides the greatest number of jobs, particularly related to the maintenance and repair of transport and industrial equipment, due to the presence of the steel industry in that area.



AMA

Total circular employment



Circular strategies

- Preserve & extend what's already made
- Incorporate digital technology
- Design for the future

The map presents the spatial distribution of circular employment per district of the AMA (at the level of four-digit postal codes). All circular jobs are included: core, enabling and indirect. The number of circular jobs per neighborhood varies from 0 (often in sparsely populated rural areas) to more than 3,000 (in densely populated areas, industrial sites and business parks). The icons indicate hotspots of employment by key circular element.

Spatial injustice

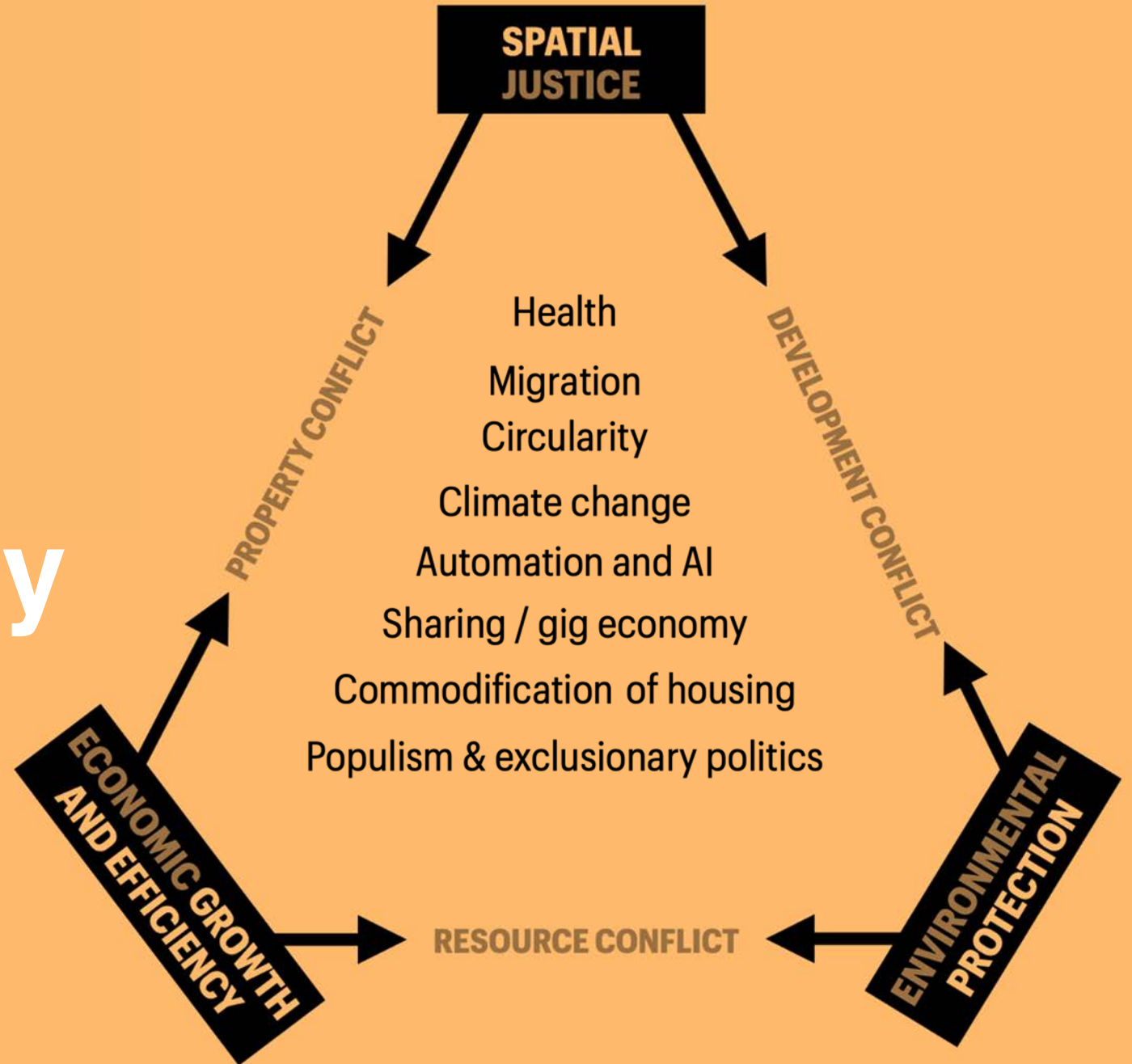
- Sustainable urban development, but for whom?
- Uneven distribution of benefits and burdens, but also uneven participation (spatial injustice)
- Hedonistic sustainability, sustainability for growth, exclusionary displacement and gentrification...





Photo: Dansnguyen
via Wikimedia Commons

Conflicts around urban sustainability set to intensify



Overlooking the social

- Neglecting the social needs, inequalities, and potentials for shift towards more inclusive climate urbanism
- Need for translation of complexity into tangible choices for the citizens
- Lack integrated strategy-making cutting across the three pillars of sustainability



**THE SOCIAL ECONOMY:
A MEANS FOR
INCLUSIVE &
DECENT WORK IN
THE CIRCULAR
ECONOMY?**

"The current environmental focus of the circular economy is a limitation. Achieving a just transition to the circular economy requires attention to all aspects of the triple bottom line."

(Circle Economy, 2021, p.4)



**How can we make urban
sustainability transitions
more inclusive & fair?**

3

Potential of sustainability transitions to make our cities better (for all) – some examples

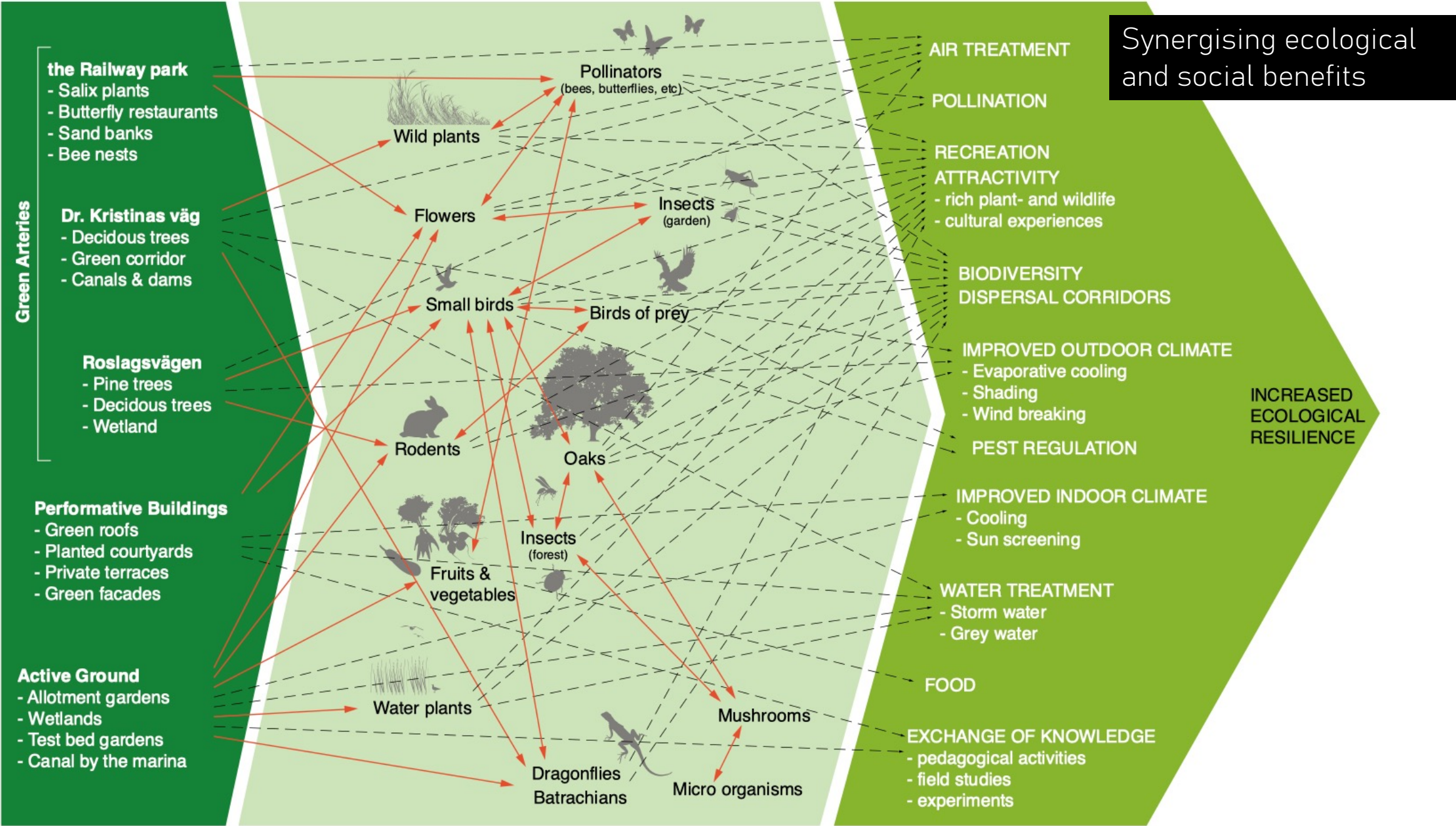
Social-Ecological Urbanism at Albano Camous, KTH, Stockholm

1

DESIGN COMPONENTS

ACTORS & PROCESSES

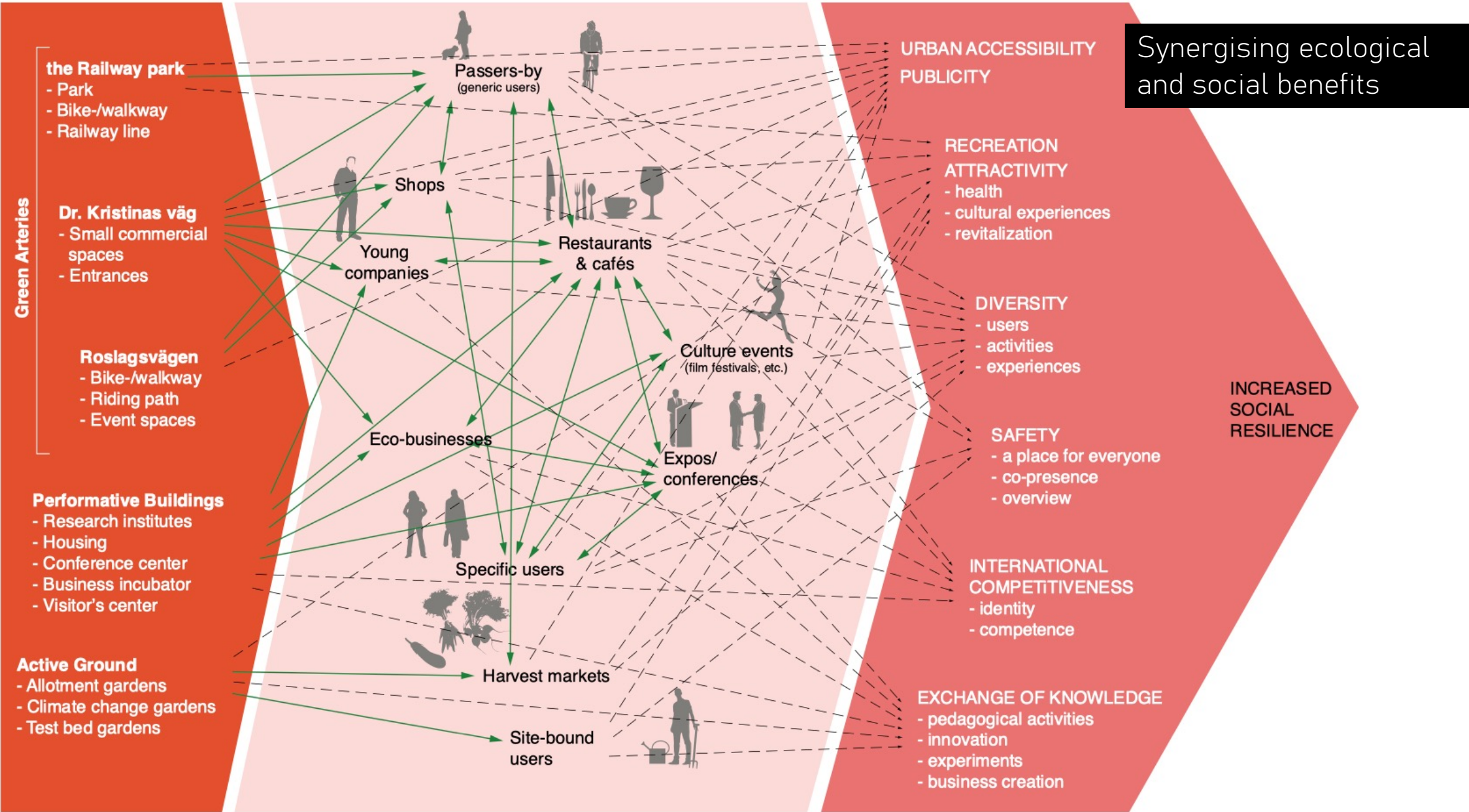
ECO SYSTEM SERVICES



DESIGN COMPONENTS

ACTORS & PROCESSES

ECO SYSTEM SERVICES

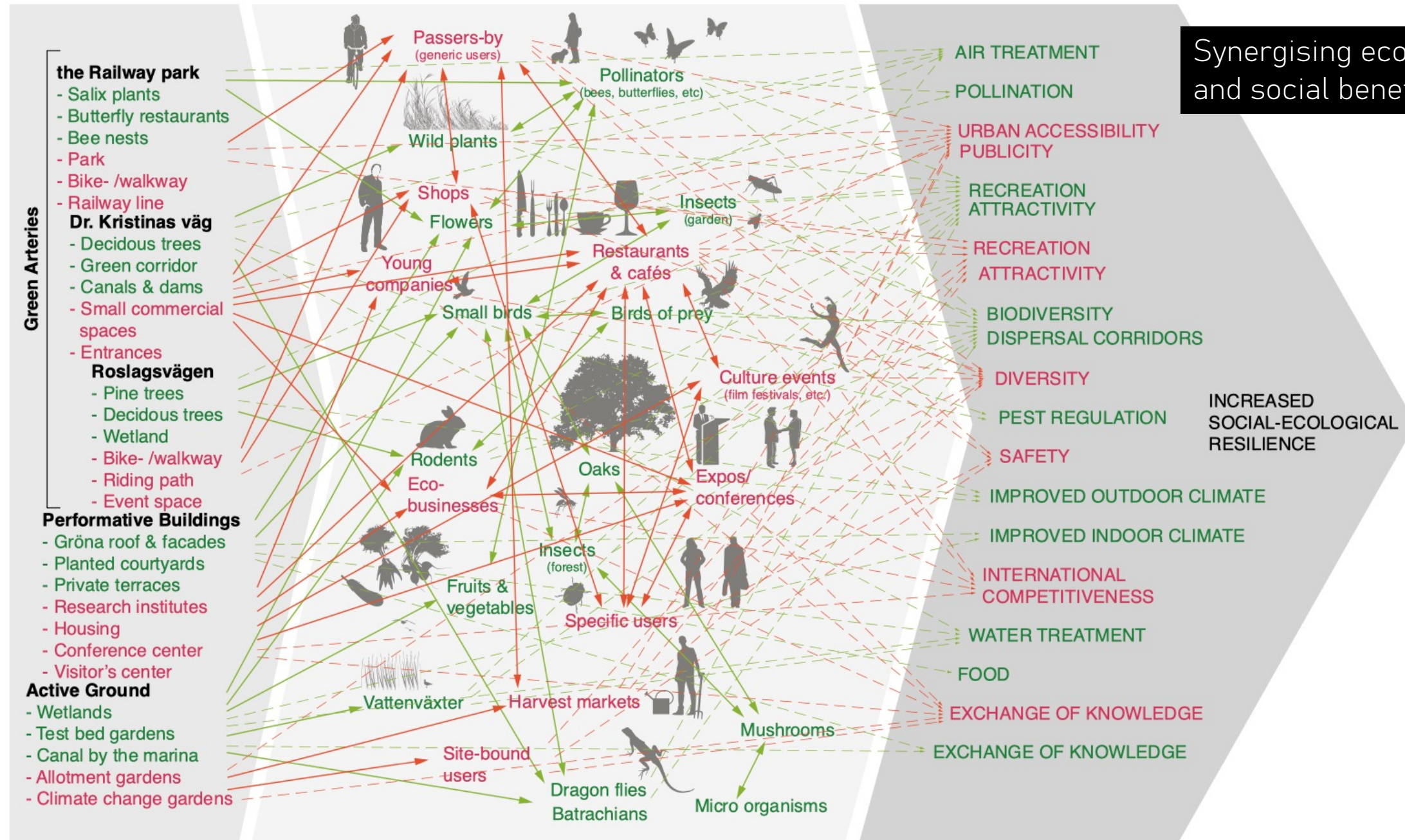


DESIGN COMPONENTS

ACTORS & PROCESSES

ECO SYSTEM SERVICES

Synergising ecological and social benefits



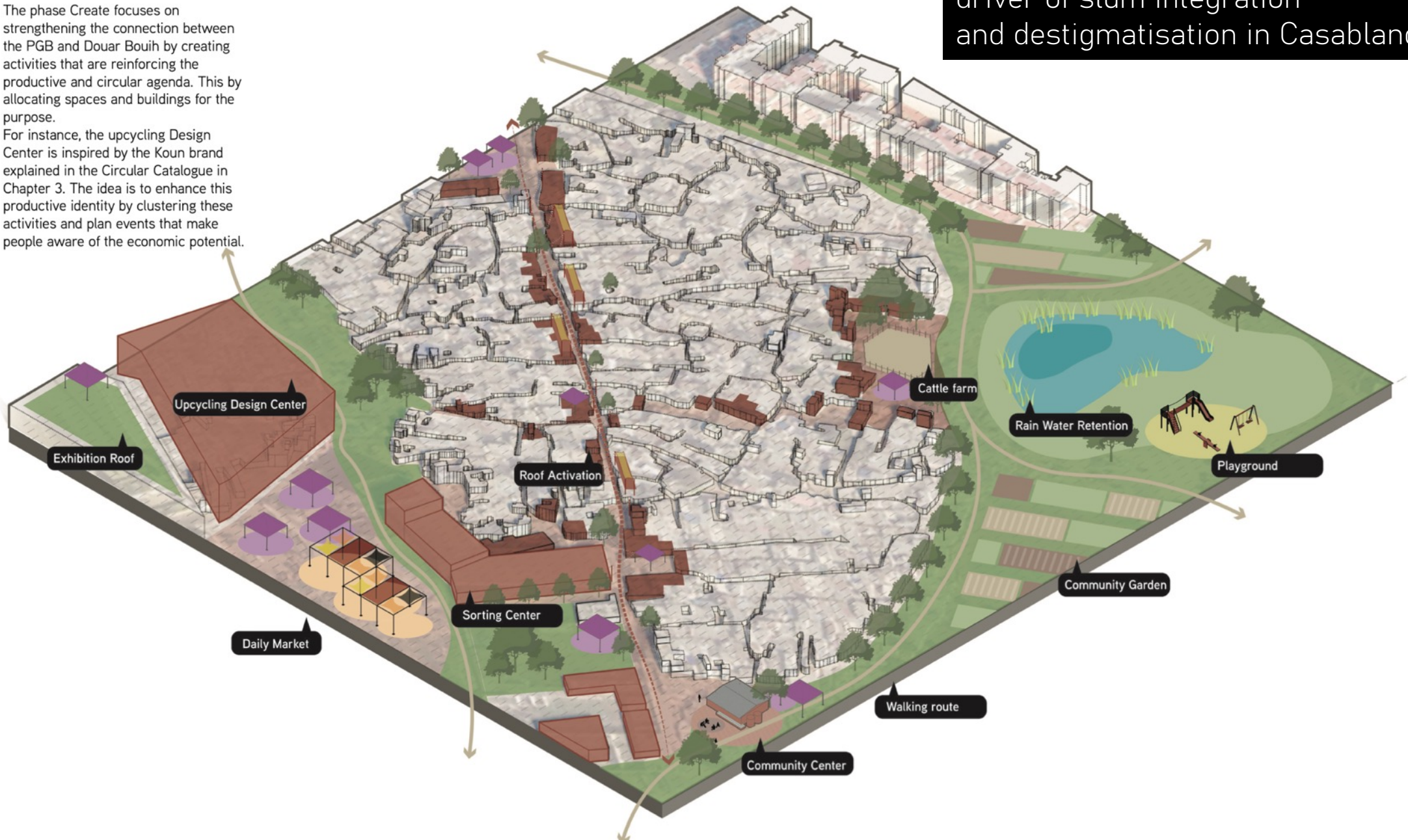


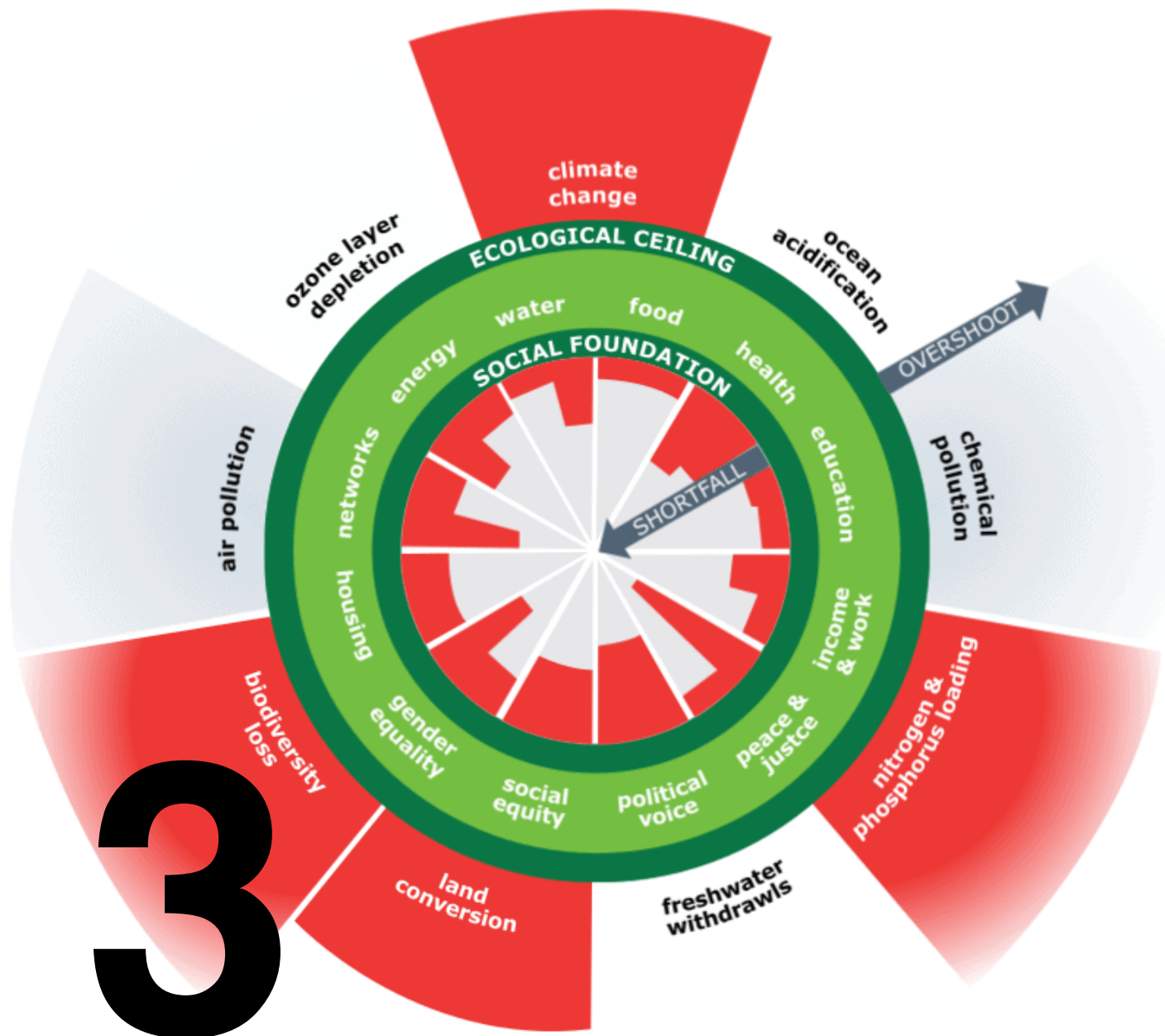
PILOT SITE 1: DOUAR BOUIH _ CREATE

The phase Create focuses on strengthening the connection between the PGB and Douar Bouih by creating activities that are reinforcing the productive and circular agenda. This by allocating spaces and buildings for the purpose.

For instance, the upcycling Design Center is inspired by the Koun brand explained in the Circular Catalogue in Chapter 3. The idea is to enhance this productive identity by clustering these activities and plan events that make people aware of the economic potential.

Circular Economy practices as driver of slum integration and destigmatisation in Casablanca

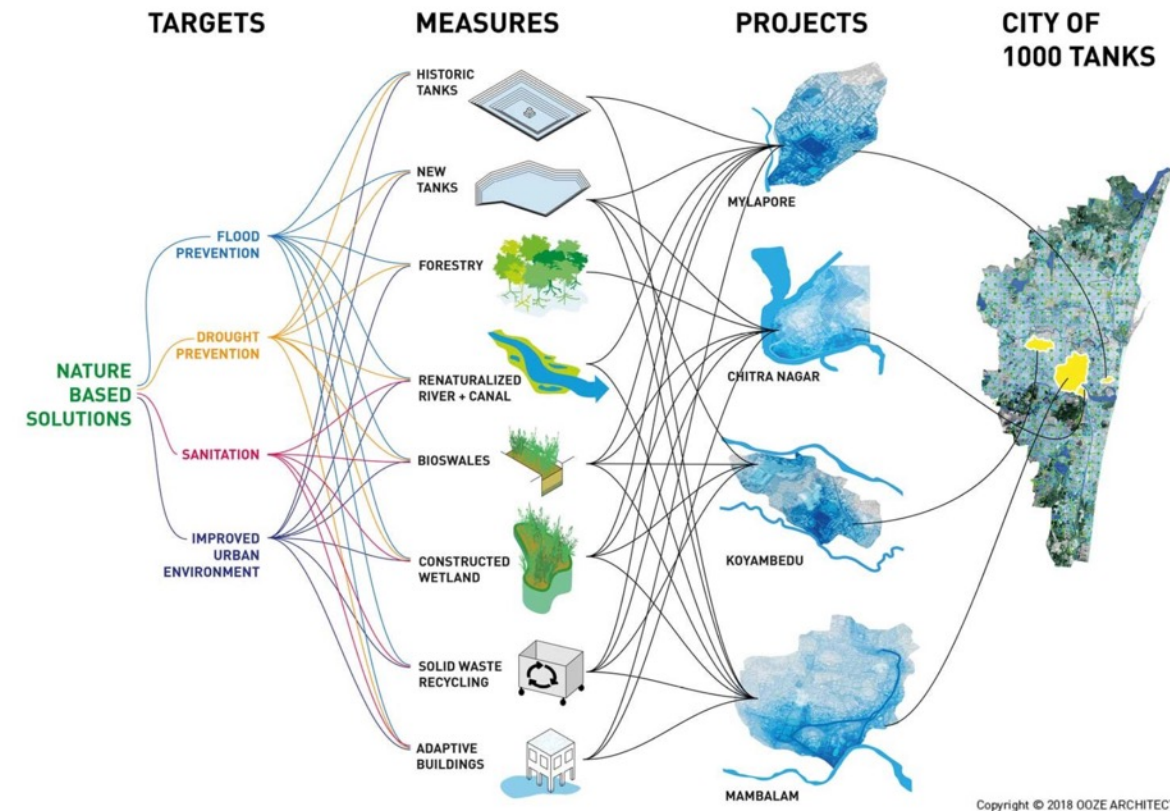
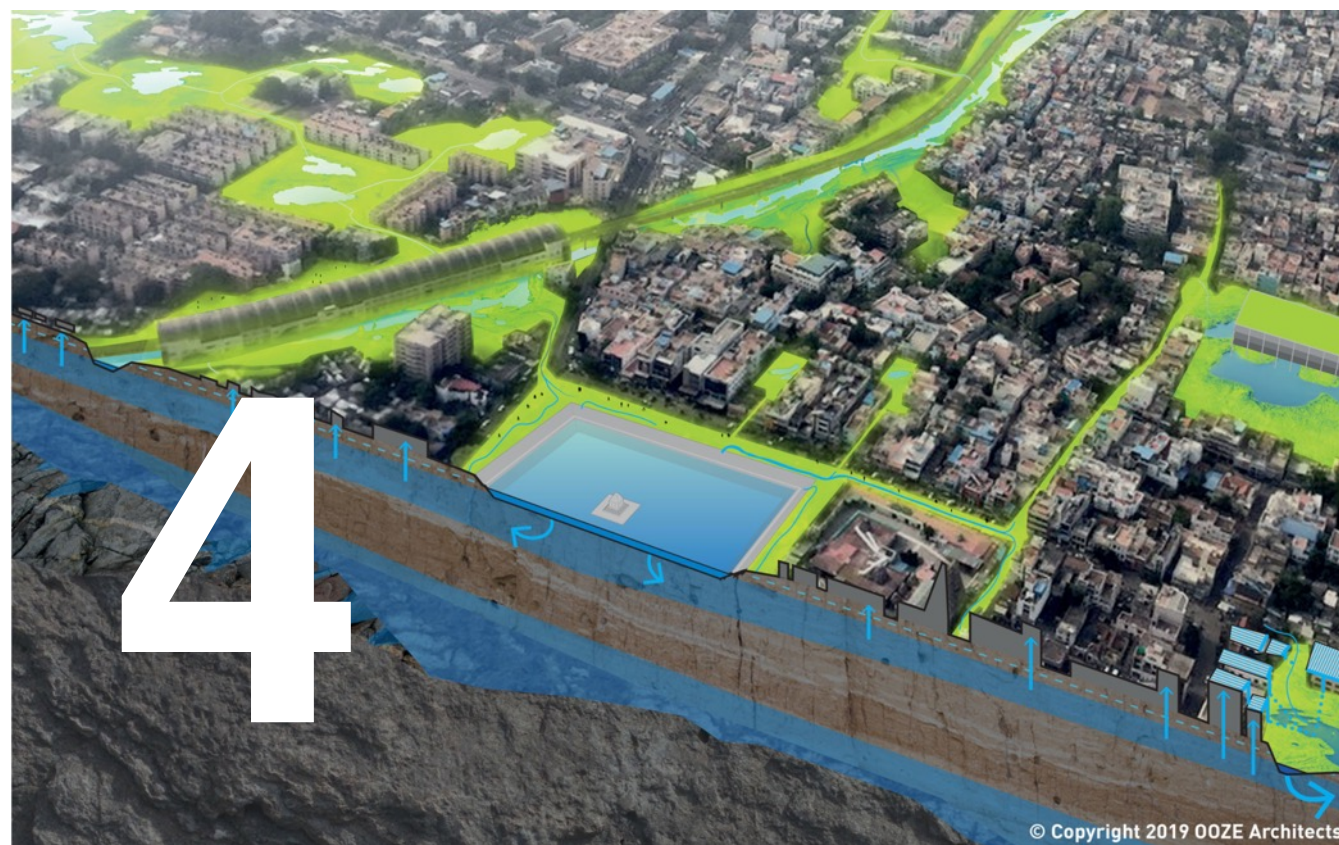




	SOCIAL	ECOLOGICAL
LOCAL	What would it mean for the people of Amsterdam to thrive?	What would it mean for Amsterdam to thrive within its natural habitat?
	1	2
GLOBAL	What would it mean for Amsterdam to respect the wellbeing of people worldwide?	What would it mean for Amsterdam to respect the health of the whole planet?
	4	3

Amsterdam's Doughnut Economy model and monitoring system

City of 1000 Tanks proposal for Chennai – linking spatial justice with water resilience, nature and traditional infrastructures and practices through co-creation





There's more:

Driver for urban governance shift...

**Strategic glue for planning,
integrator...**

A chance for democratic renewal...

4

Unlocking the potential of sustainability transitions to make cities more just and liveable

A red-tinted photograph showing several hands working on a LEGO city model. The hands are positioned around a central area where a tall structure is being built. The background shows more of the city model with various buildings and figures. The overall scene suggests a collaborative and creative process.

1. Integrated and spatial perspective on sustainability (incl. assessment)

2. Operationalising co-creation and boundary spanning to revamp urban governance

3. Rethinking communication (through stories, design)



4. Nurturing capacities

5. Stewardship and coalition-building

6. Exposing and preventing displacement and exclusionary politics

7. Recognise and harness the informal innovations and knowledge

Thanks.

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