



EcoTopia

September 2013

Dear friends!

Well, here we finally are with review of the EcoTopia workshop in Boisbuchet this July, a general update on the EcoTopia Project thus far and possible next steps. This newsletter is sent to Ricardo Calçado from Onda Solidaria and founder of the EcoVila we wish to contribute to, to the organizers, architect and participants of the Ecotopia Workshop in Boisbuchet, who want to be kept up to date and participate, and to our own project group in Holland and Rio de Janeiro. From now on all communication will be in English ☺!!

Steps thus far

To have everyone start off on the same level of information, a short update of goals and steps thus far.



The EcoTopia
Project Group

Ina, Lilian,
Hanneke,
Larissa, Irene,
Tjenga, Tjerk,
Harry, Gerard,
Wim,
Claudette.

Not on picture: Sebo, Petronne, Sara (Rio), Rafael (Rio).

EcoTopia was founded by Lilian Vieira and Ina Smittenberg at the end of 2012 and was joined by a very nice group of people from Holland and Rio de Janeiro, working mostly in the creative or consultancy industries. Our wish was – and is – to use our creative and cognitive skills and expertise, in contributing to the development of innovative initiatives both in Europe and Brazil. These initiatives should have development, sustainability and autonomy as cornerstones.

We wish to do this not so much through fundraising, but through the organisation of inspiring events like a cool party, a design workshop, a learning, prototyping, knowledge-and-skills-transfer visit to Brazil, yet another cool party. This way our network would be put to use, as well as our skills, and we would have reciprocity and fun in the process. We connected with two organisations in Brazil: Onda Solidaria and El Nagual, both working with un(der)privileged communities in Brazil, by education, development and the raising of autonomy. Ricardo Calçado (Onda) has been our contact from the beginning. In September 2012 he acquired a plot of land on which he is now building his EcoVila. A great opportunity for us to contribute something tangible! Together we decided on an Eco Hotel as a topic and goal for our EcoTopia group.

Onda Solidaria

Onda Solidaria (or Children's Aid) aims to develop and create an Eco Village focused on general development as a social and responsible human being, through education, creating opportunities, establishing social responsibility and conscience. Creating a model-society for other societies and groups in Brazil. www.ondasolidaria.org

BoomBoomBrazil



In March 2013 our ideas resulted in our first milestone, the BoomBoomBrazil party. We had upcycled decoration, biological snacks, great cocktails, a samba workshop by Juliana Braga, a percussion performance, DJ's Easy Aloha's and Elroy and of course a great show of Lilian Vieira and band. See www.boomboombrazil.org or the EcoTopia Facebook page for impression and pictures. Ricardo Calçado joined us for the party and met our team for the first time. The funds raised with this party are not yet very ample, so we will have to organize an even greater party to add a little to that! We're planning the next BoomBoomBrazil this fall or early winter.

The EcoTopia Workshop



Our next milestone was the EcoTopia Workshop. Sebo Boerma and Ina Smittenberg prepared the 'business case' for the workshop. Alexander von Vegesack, Mathias Schwartz Clauss and Olivier Lacrouts of Boisbuchet found famous eco-architect Anna Heringer willing to work with the case, and lead the workshop about the Eco Hotel for EcoVila. In our next paragraph you will find a report on this workshop.

Workshop Opening

On Monday the 15th of July a group of 22 enthusiastic architects and designers, students and professionals, started a journey of a week in which they would work with the idea of the Eco Hotel. Anna Heringer, the group and Sebo started a Skype meeting with Brazil in a sweaty room. After we lost Skype contact with Ricardo, the group chatted on; the report of that is to be found in the photo-album online. It was really helpful and important to have face to face and chat contact with each other.

After gathering important information about the area, the natural materials present, the people that used to live there, and the colours and forms they were used to, the group split up into three smaller groups. Two subgroups were going to work in an experimental way, one would work in a more traditional way of designing.

Tradition versus Experiment

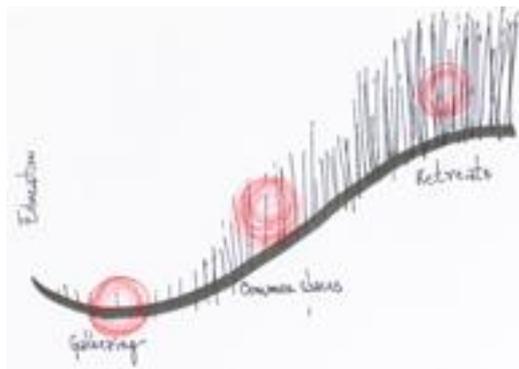
The traditional designing group started with gathering ideas, and brainstorming on possible forms. They came up with Brazilian inspiration like the shape of a football, the nesting of a specific bird, the growing forest, coloured mud, etc. It was designing behind the table, coming up with a concept first and then working toward a design and application in the reality of the environment. This group came up with a spectacular design of a forest/hotel in which the retreats would be like nests, growing with the trees.

The experimental groups started working with the material of the natural environment, in this case bamboo and mud (adobe). They learned the techniques of fixing the bamboo, making firm constructions and of treading the mud. After experimenting, the designing phase started in the bamboo group, the other group kept on doing the hands on work, to build a prototype mud house also used as oven.

All three groups worked with values like sustainability, environmental friendly and beauty.

Designing and constructing a nest

A football and a Brazilian bird who builds nests like small baskets served as inspiration and were the basis for the idea of the rooms for the Eco Hotel. The idea is to place polls of bamboo in the forest to be, hang huge baskets at different levels in these polls in horizontal positions and thus create rooms hanging in the forest like nests from a bird. The pentagons of a football make



for the basic forms with which the nest is to be build. The way to get to the nest is a small path hanging in the trees, criss-crossing the forest like a bird flying towards its nest. Because the nests are built from mud, they need to be covered by small hats in order to stay intact when it starts to rain.



Designing and constructing a mud house

Look for clay areas in the environment. Start digging up the ground. Mix the ground with water from the river nearby. Use the hole as the room, and the mud for the roof. Tread huge amounts of mud for days on end to further form the mud house. The group experimented with the right amount of water, the timing of the drying of the mud, the construction that could carry the mud roof, and if it would be possible to bake a bread inside. Indeed, the mud house built in Boisbuchet has been used as a stove to bake bread and a pizza.



Designing and constructing a bamboo retreat

What is essentially the idea behind a hotel? To have a roof above your head for the possible rain and a place to lay down to sleep. An Eco-retreat would also make it possible to enjoy being in the middle of the nature. The third group came up with the idea of an open air retreat after learning how to use bamboo, playing with it and freeing their minds.

At the slope of the hill, a terrace is constructed with bamboo, also furnished with two built-in hammocks. A roof was placed; this makes for a very basic and beautiful open air hotel room. Just like the previous ideas it is brilliant in its simplicity. And just like the previous designs it is beautifully done. It is now standing on the slope, looking out on the river passing in Boisbuchet.



Discussing the results

Everybody was very enthusiastic about the outcome of the workshop and the practical possibilities of the designs, certainly we (Sebo and Ina) of the EcoTopia Group. Most of the students would love to take their designs a step further, architect Anna Heringer is willing to discuss possibilities of implementing either the techniques, and transferring them in one way or another to Brazil, either as a sketchbook, or a manual, or maybe even prototyping the retreats, nest, houses on site in EcoVila. This of course would all require extra partnerships and funding to some extent.

As far as the EcoTopia group in Holland is concerned, the next step would be to check with Onda Solidaria and Ricardo Calçado. What are his ideas about usability and feasibility of one or more of the designs? In what way would he like to connect the designers to his EcoVila?

Depending on his comments, the EcoTopia group will seek further connection to Boisbuchet (and its network) or with other partners. Either way, we will organise a next Booming Event in the fall of this year.

Next Steps & Scenario's

- Check with Onda Solidaria: usability and feasibility of the designs, making scenario's and discussing requirements on both sides;
- BoomBoomBrazil Party: November 2013
- Trip to Brazil, visiting EcoVila, El Nagual with interested parties: at the *last* March 2014
- Workshop Business Plan EcoTopia Hotel in Boisbuchet (taking things a step further), with members of the project team: April/May 2014
- Transfer of insights and techniques with students, in Brazil: Summer 2014?
- Further development of prototypes on site; fall/winter 2014.

Useful Links and Contacts

- Further images and photos are to be found on:
https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/103549403407311817508/albums/5919483570734085505?authkey=CIa0_ubm3oLQygE
- Become a member of the EcoTopia Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ecotopia/159210847562594>
- Link to Onda Solidaria and Ricardo Calçado to see the developments in EcoVila:
<https://www.facebook.com/ondasolidaria.org?fref=ts>
- EcoVila El Nagual: <https://www.facebook.com/events/373698796091101/?fref=ts>
- Check the next BoomBoomBrazil party at: www.boomboombrazil.org