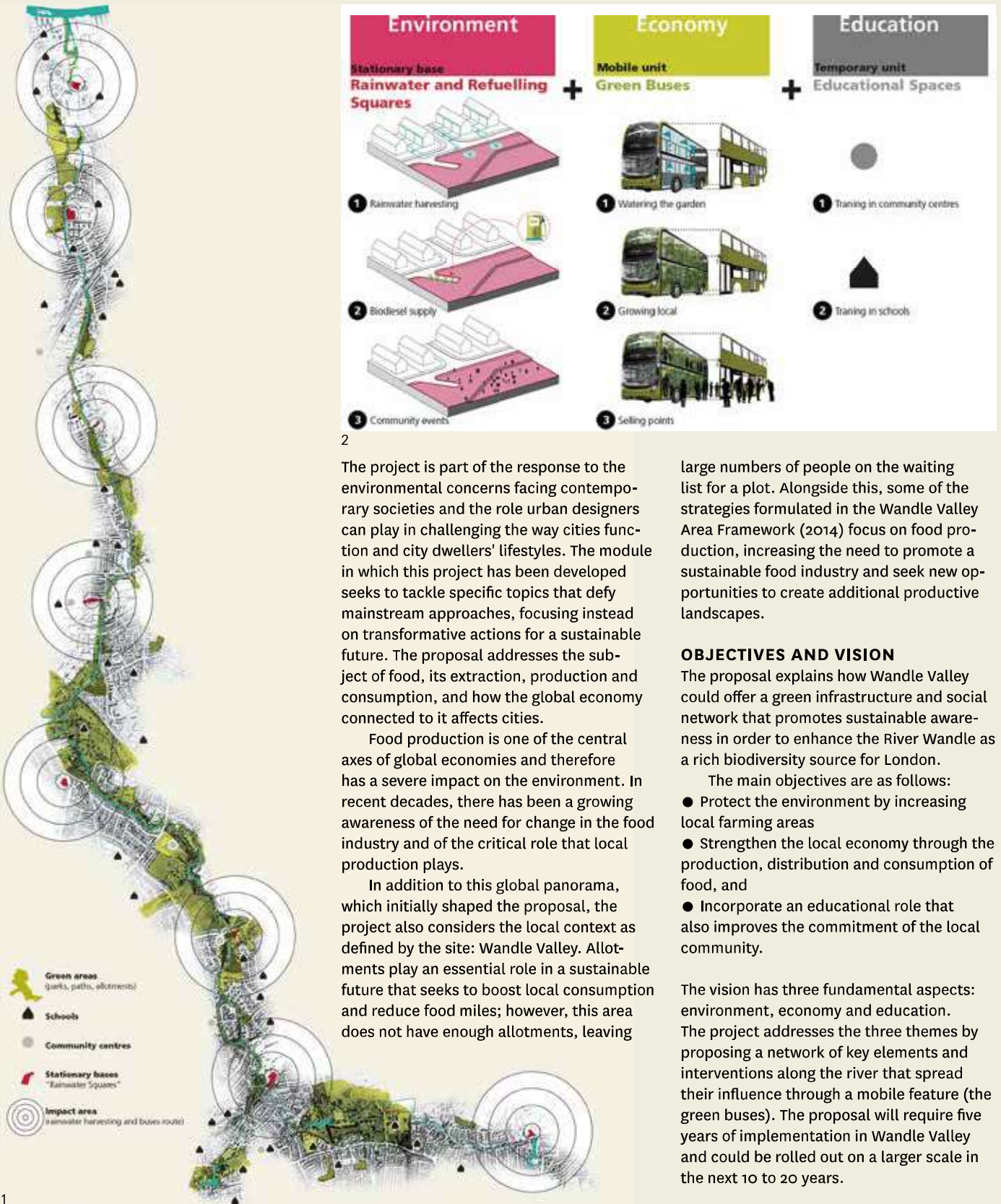


A Sustainable Vision for Wandle Valley

Consuelo Morales proposes a green bus system and growing local food



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The project is part of the response to the environmental concerns facing contemporary societies and the role urban designers can play in challenging the way cities function and city dwellers' lifestyles. The module in which this project has been developed seeks to tackle specific topics that defy mainstream approaches, focusing instead on transformative actions for a sustainable future. The proposal addresses the subject of food, its extraction, production and consumption, and how the global economy connected to it affects cities.

Food production is one of the central axes of global economies and therefore has a severe impact on the environment. In recent decades, there has been a growing awareness of the need for change in the food industry and of the critical role that local production plays.

In addition to this global panorama, which initially shaped the proposal, the project also considers the local context as defined by the site: Wandle Valley. Allotments play an essential role in a sustainable future that seeks to boost local consumption and reduce food miles; however, this area does not have enough allotments, leaving

large numbers of people on the waiting list for a plot. Alongside this, some of the strategies formulated in the Wandle Valley Area Framework (2014) focus on food production, increasing the need to promote a sustainable food industry and seek new opportunities to create additional productive landscapes.

OBJECTIVES AND VISION

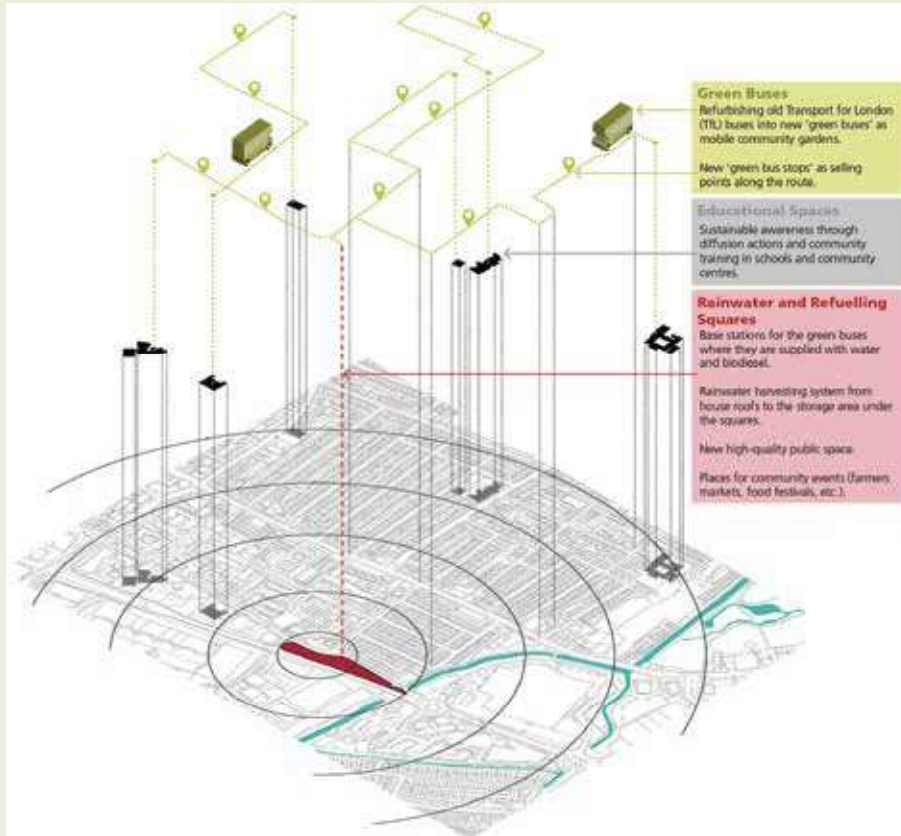
The proposal explains how Wandle Valley could offer a green infrastructure and social network that promotes sustainable awareness in order to enhance the River Wandle as a rich biodiversity source for London.

- The main objectives are as follows:
- Protect the environment by increasing local farming areas
 - Strengthen the local economy through the production, distribution and consumption of food, and
 - Incorporate an educational role that also improves the commitment of the local community.

The vision has three fundamental aspects: environment, economy and education. The project addresses the three themes by proposing a network of key elements and interventions along the river that spread their influence through a mobile feature (the green buses). The proposal will require five years of implementation in Wandle Valley and could be rolled out on a larger scale in the next 10 to 20 years.

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- 1 Macro scale of the proposal.
- 2 Three primary aspects of the project vision and their intervention components.
- 3 Components in the implementation area.
- 4 Proposal image for the future of London cityscape. Green buses as a new London symbol.



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DESIGN PROCESS

The design process began by addressing the need for new farming areas. In this context, it is important to consider new forms of space that take into account the shortage of land in cities. From this came the idea of a mobile garden that accommodates community gardening and the diffusion of local production, community training and selling points. Thus, the project appropriates a

common object – the red London bus – and proposes a new symbol for the city.

The next stage involves the development of a self-sustaining system for the mobile units, creating stationary bases that support the mobile units. For this, two types of supplies are considered: rainwater collected from surrounding houses, and biodiesel (recycled cooking oil from local shops). In addition to the stationary bases' functional

features, they are proposed as new strategic public spaces for community life, accommodating farmers markets, food festivals and more.

The three fundamental aspects of the project's vision are illustrated, and relate to the primary elements of each intervention. How the components work in the implementation area is also shown; and once the interventions are defined, the project is planned on a larger scale in order to have a more significant impact on Wandle Valley. The project consists of a sequence of interventions along the river that influence its immediate surroundings, constituting an extensive interconnected system.

FUTURE

The project will first be implemented in Wandle Valley, but it is intended as an agent of change that will spread to a wider context and to promote new ways of using spaces to grow food. The proposal understands sustainability as a process that requires education and evolution in order to create a shift in people's lifestyles.

LESSONS LEARNED

The academic exercise within which this project was developed called for a different approach to challenge common practice and produce transformative changes in a specific topic. It was while working with this approach that the main difficulties and key learning took place. The difficulties arose at the beginning of the exercise, when it proved hard to break the habit of devising interventions that addressed multiple key themes in a masterplan format. However, once the masterplan approach was superseded, the key lessons learned from the design exercise became clear: addressing a site based on a specific theme, and developing a strategic vision that can question and impact on people's lifestyles to a greater extent; these are the most fruitful and innovative lessons that can be replicated in other places, regions and cultures. As the world needs to revise how cities function, it is crucial to rethink key elements of their mechanisms, complementary to the development of masterplans that respond to traditional topics. ●