

# From alternative to permacultural institutions

Anna Colin, 28 November 2022

- ❖ Toynbee Hall (1884-present)
- ❖ Centerprise (1971-2012)
- ❖ Open School East (2013-present)

The revolutionary agenda of neoliberalism has accomplished a lot in the way of physical and institutional change these last twenty years (consider the dual impact of deindustrialization and the diminution of trade union powers in Britain and the United States, for example). So why, then, can we not envision equally dramatic changes (though pointing in a different direction) as we seek for alternatives?

(Harvey, 2000, p. 186)

- ❖ slow school (Holt, 2002)
- ❖ slow curating (Arney Johnston, 2009)
- ❖ slow fashion (Fletcher, 2010)
- ❖ slow institutions (Petrešin-Bachelez, 2017)
- ❖ slow science (Stengers, 2018)



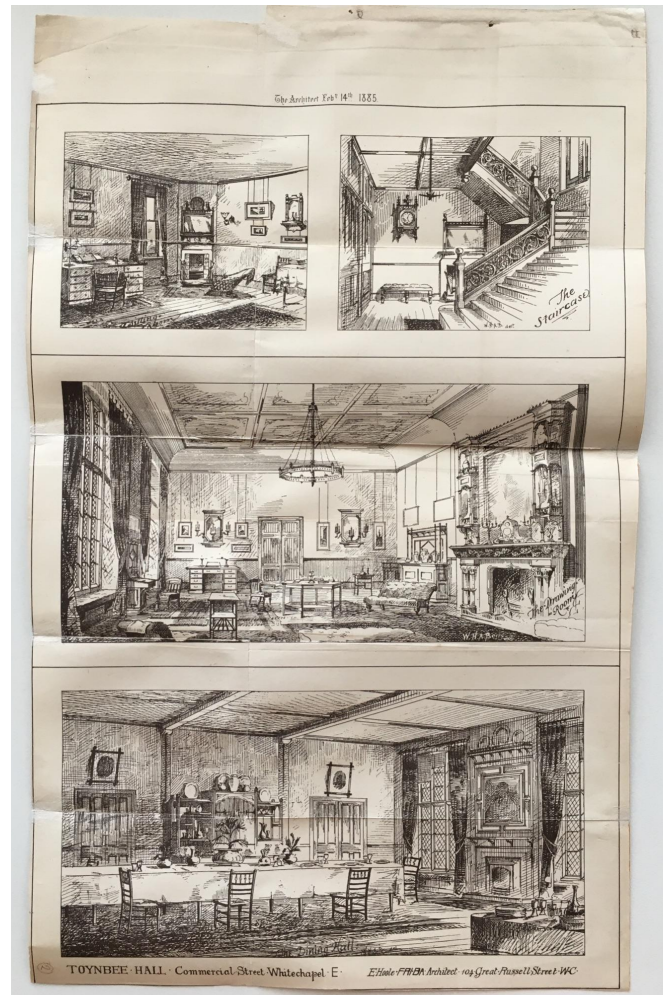
Permaculture farm of Bec Hellouin, France



Third landscape, Gilles Clément

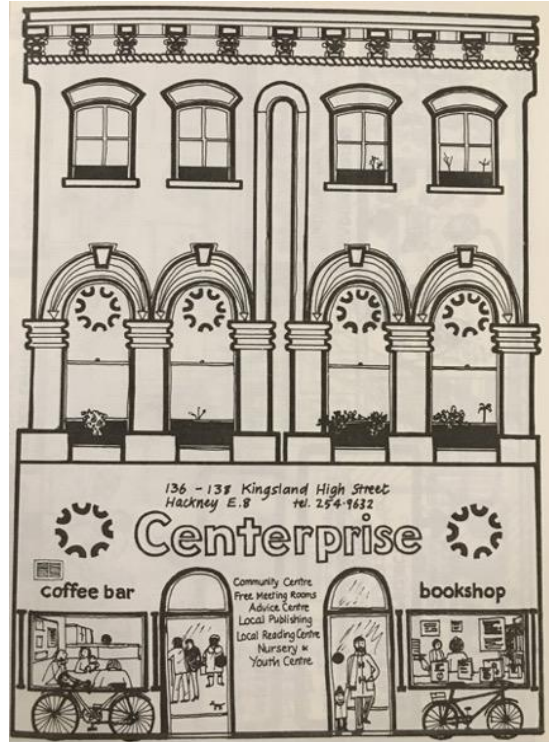


Toynbee Hall's buildings, 1885. Copyright:  
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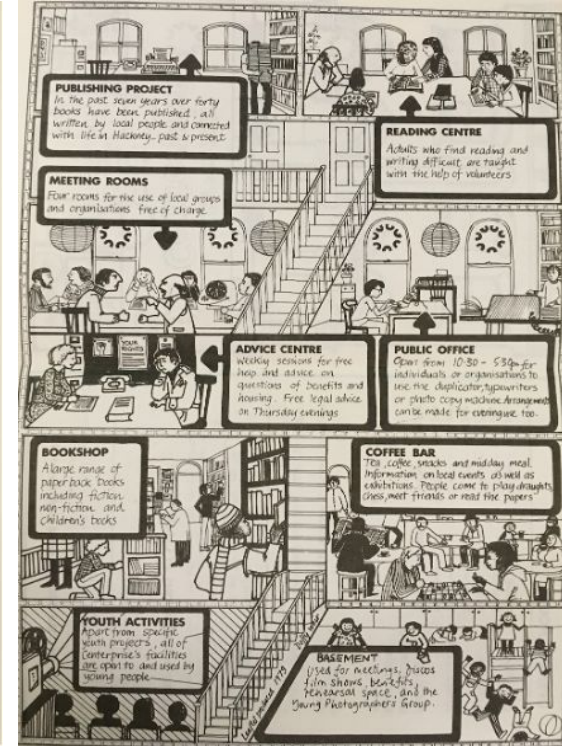




Facade of Centerprise  
1980s.  
Credit: Brian Longman



Advertising brochure, 1979. Front cover  
and page 1. Drawing: Duffy Weir.







Open School East's first home, 2013.  
Credit: Owen Watson



Open Day, October 2013.  
Credit: Eva Rowson

Newly born organizations suffer a “liability of newness” [...] in that they have to learn how to survive, and must create successful patterns of operations despite having limited resources [...] Slightly older organizations can suffer a “liability of adolescence” in that they can survive for a time on their initial store of resources, but then their failure rate tends to follow an inverted U-shaped pattern as they age [...]. Older organizations can suffer a “liability of obsolescence” if their operations are highly inertial and unchanging and become increasingly misaligned with their environment.

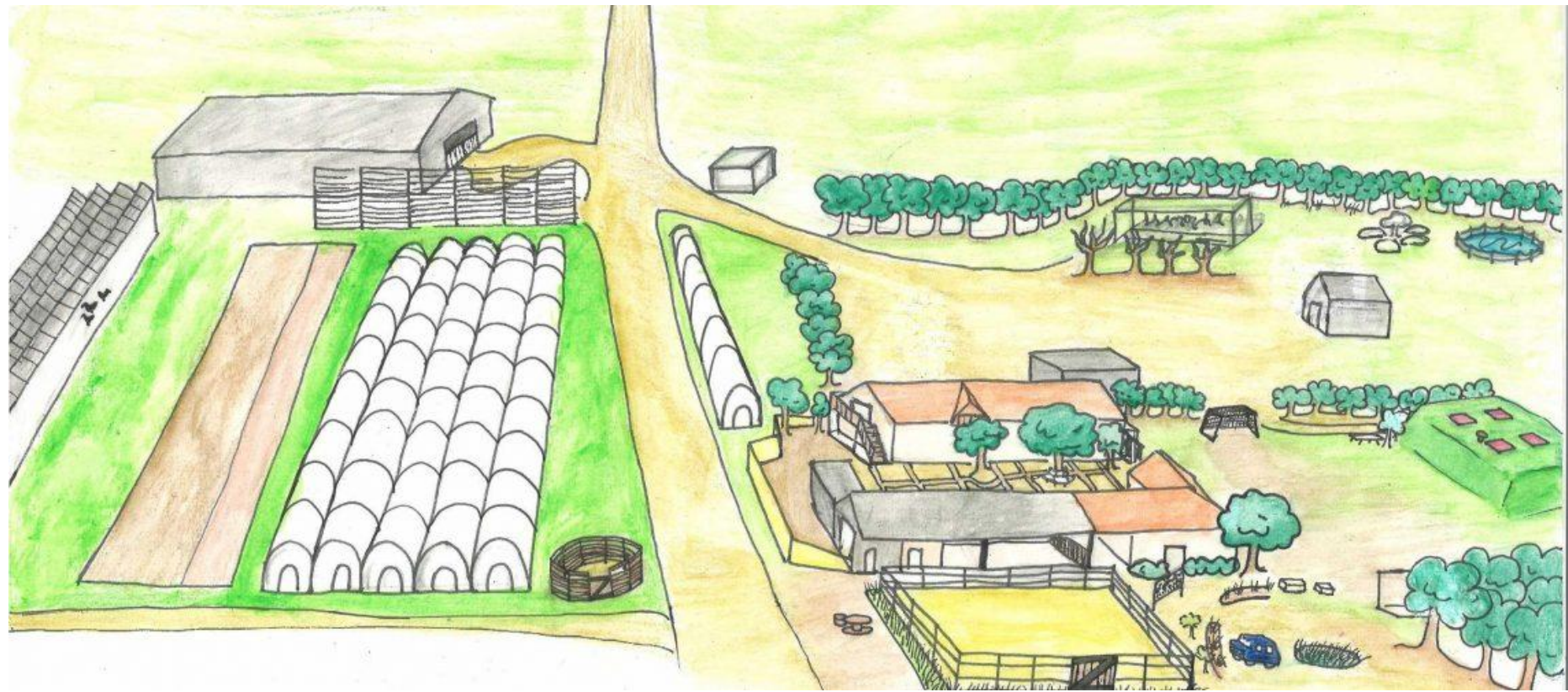
(Miles, 2012, p. 179)

What kinds of reward can failure offer us? Perhaps most obviously, failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods. Failure preserves some of the wondrous anarchy of childhood and disturbs the supposedly clean boundaries between adults and children, winners and losers. And while failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life.

(Halbertsam, 2011, p. 3)

Planned failure designates the intended demise of the original plan. It assumes that to maintain the structure of a movement's organization, which is made up of not only social arrangements, but also the constitution of its political subjects, is necessarily to reinforce the very problems one sought to escape: the distribution of property according to hierarchies of class, race, and gender.

(Hunt, 2020, p. 4)



École Domaine du Possible, illustration.

- ❖ Climate
- ❖ Landform
- ❖ Water supply
- ❖ Roads
- ❖ Trees
- ❖ Permanent buildings
- ❖ Subdivisional fences
- ❖ Soil



**PETIT TRAITÉ DE  
PERMACULTURE INSTITUTIONNELLE  
POUR UN SITE DE CRÉATION  
CONTEMPORAINE VIVANT ET PRODUCTIF**

**Guillaume Désanges**

Small Treatise of Institutional Permaculture for  
a Living and Productive Site for Contemporary  
Creation, 2022, yet to be published.

