This is the published version of a chapter published in *Agropoetics reader*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Berríos-Negrón, L. (2020)
Breathtaking greenhouse parastructures
In: Elena Agudio; Marleen Boschen (ed.), *Agropoetics reader* (pp. 181-199). Berlin: The Institute for Endotic Research

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-217252
Breathtaking
Greenhouse Parastructures

Luis Berríos-Negrón


Stengers, I. 2011. Comparison as a matter of concern. Common
LUIS BERRÍOS-NEGRÓN (Puerto Rico, 1971*) explores unforeseen forms and forces of global warming through ‘social pedestals’. Most recent exhibitions include ‘Impasse Finesse Neverness’ (Museum of Ethnography and Archeology of Bahia, 2017), ‘Collapsed Greenhouse’ at ‘Undisciplinary Learning’ (District, Berlin, 2016) and ‘Earthscore Specularium’ (Färgfabriken Konsthal, Stockholm, 2015). Previous exhibitions include the 3rd Biennial of Art of Bahia (2014), the 10th São Paulo Biennial for Architecture (2013), as core-collaborator with Paul Ryan at Documenta13 (2012), and “Future Archive” at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (2012). He is the founder of the Anxious Prop art collective and the Paramodular environmental design group. He is doctoral candidate and tutor at Konstfack and KTH Royal Institute of Technology, holds a Bachelor of Fine Art from Parsons New School, and a Master of Architecture from M.I.T. Berrios-Negrón lives and works between Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Berlin.

For this reader, Luis adapted a text of his current PhD research.

BRIEF FOR AGROPOETICS READER

This is an edited excerpt from one of the ‘convolutes’ that will appear on my PhD (Konstfack Collection, 2019-20). The book will accompany an online ‘ledger’ titled *Intransitive Journal* (that you can find on Medium.com), and a public installation titled *Neganthropic Anarchive / Anarquivo Negantrópico* (to open on 1st of Sept. 2019, please see Fig. 11). The work stems from testing the technology of ‘greenhouse’ as simultaneous specimen, display, and virtual reality. Briefly, what I mean is that I have been deposing, analysing, and testing ‘greenhouse’ as a triadic singularity: as self-referential object of study, as a support platform for scientific and cultural observation, and as original proto-technology that allowed humans to accelerate and decelerate time, to conserve, colonise, and project ‘nature.’ Over the years, the effort has been motivated by the intuition that there is something odd about ‘greenhouse.’ After a decade of ‘playing’ with this intuition, and as I finish my PhD titled *Breathtaking Greenhouse Parastructures*, I can now strongly sense that ‘greenhouse’ does play an uncontested role as chief *mnemotechnology* for the industrial, misogynist, ethnocentric conception of natural science and of natural history. ‘Greenhouse’ exemplifies the forced collapse of human spacetime. It is not just a physical and metaphorical blur. More so than the Platonic cave, it is the liminal space that first projects the illusion of interior and exterior, literally dividing us by the...
illusory transparency of our ‘mastering’ over and above ‘mother nature.’ ‘Greenhouse,’ is the misnomer that is both sustaining the colonially extinct biological subject-matter as an ‘interior’ past, all the while it is being set to sustain the speculative, planetary agro-sustenance of a genetically mastered ‘exterior’ future. I test and inhabit ‘greenhouse’ as future spectre of human memory (see Fig. 5) driving us to believe that we are fleeced by the ripe and bountiful future of an endless ‘superstructure’ devoid from the Earth. In short, it is the ‘crystallisation’ of the paranormal logic of advanced, free-market, consumerist capitalism. But, as I would like to unleash myself from that binary impasse—that ‘double-bind’ of interiority and exteriority that ‘greenhouse’ represents—I must first reticulate-away from the spiral of messianic promise and mythical violence that ‘colonial memory’ perpetuates. That reticulated emancipation, or rather, that associative detachment from the trauma of colonial violence, is motivated by the realisation that, buried in my technical predisposition, in the very act of externalising my knowledge, there lies, embedded, the ‘colonial drive.’ To uproot and question that facile, assumed, daily violence of externalisation does present optional paths away from the insidious logic of ‘greenhouse.’ It is the only form of relating to the ultimate object of the colonial-industrial form of capitalism that the messianic destining of Global Warming divides to contain, as an oppositional and dissociative form of trauma.

The following ‘convolute’ excerpt offers just a glimpse of how I begin to depose the polemical role of ‘greenhouse.’ Through this particular sample, I briefly begin to describe my research perspective as Puerto Rican & Caribbean artist, and, hopefully, will leave you with a curious desire to look forward to the broader PhD work.

(C)2 COLONIAL MEMORY: Greenhouse as the anarchive for the technical memory of the exotic

“Exoticism is not an adaptation to something; it is not the perfect comprehension of something outside one’s self that one has managed to embrace fully, but the keen and immediate perception of an eternal incomprehensibility. Let us proceed from this admission of impenetrability. Let us not flatter ourselves for assimilating the customs, races, nations, and others who differ from us. On the contrary, let us rejoice in our inability ever to do so, for we thus retain the eternal pleasure of sensing Diversity.”

“The human races on the lowest grade of evolution live merely for the day. The tomorrow and the yesterday have no interest for them, except in so far as their special daily cares are directly touched.”

“Memory is entwined with place (it is localised, framed and made sense of through place) and the spaces (both physical and imagined) and times in which it occurs ... Memory is furthermore inscribed on and within the body of the person who remembers and helps form the ways in which they move, act and react.”

There is something rotten in technics...  

...because the conception of ‘nature’ continues to be bound to colonialism. Because such putrescent binding, or, say, predisposed mediation, is what contradictorily worsens the fundamental rupture that

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2 citation by Svante Arrhenius, Swedish physicist that confirmed the ‘greenhouse effect’ from the work of French polymath Joseph Fourier. See Arrhenius, Svante (1909) The Life of the Universe, Cosmogonies of the Primitive Races, pg.1
4 Walter Benjamin once wrote - “There is something rotten in the law,” see “Critique of Violence”, in Selected Writings, pg.242
breaks the human away from nature. The contradiction lies primarily manifested in the aura of ‘technoscience’ as the collective delusion that makes believe the infantile, illusory, and misogynist mastering control over nature. All the while, we continue to dissociate ourselves further away from living.

Destined by that aura of technoscience, and its ensuing messianic promise of Global Warming, I take ‘greenhouse’ – with its physical, technical, and conceptual definitions – to be a potent display, most often an insidious one, of that contradictory, toxic binding that is buried-deep within human evolution: the colonial drive. I intuit that our collective delusion in the form of that technological aura is conjured by a powerful ghost that enforces three simultaneous traumas: (1) it absorbs and suppresses-away the violent history of colonialism; (2) it physically and conceptually rips-apart, amputates, and remains-between, thus interrupting the critical interrelations that are fundamental to living; and (3) it does so while ‘promising’ to be the messianic technology saving ‘humanity’ from the very effects of the suppression and amputation it itself creates. It is that ghostly, toxic, modern aura of ‘greenhouse’ that signifies those delusional forces, strongly contributing to the systemic deformation we now know as accelerated climate change.

MOTHER. NATURE.
Zoë Sofia begins her text Container Technologies with:

“Since the birth of early modern science, Nature has been imagined in the west as a Big Mother full of treasures (material, land, knowledge) to be plundered and re-sourced. Through world-spanning technological and industrial enterprise, another “Super Mother” has been created in the matrix of mobile resources. We greedy metropoles (and many others besides) want a facilitating environment that smoothly provides year-round access to seasonal foods; we want 24-hour access to

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5 technoscience (n.) – “This term, which is hardly more than thirty years old, seeks to signify the non-separation of science and technology (which must remain distinguished). In a word, it means that the medium of science (in the double sense of environment and medium) is technical. But, technoscience also means that science is increasingly required by the economy. Contemporary science is no longer modern science in that it intrinsically deals with industry. [...] We must stop opposing science and technology, but we must continue to distinguish them. Science is not reduced to technique, science has a fundamental relation to ideality. A scientific ideality does not coincide with the real but exceeds it; it is the real that becomes possible.” See Stiegler, Bernard - http://aresindustrialis.org/vocabulaire-technoscience

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and beliefs that imply embodied, ‘corporeal’ diverging diversities of including careful readings of what could be thought of as multi-lateral of geopolitical and environmental forced migrations), but also about worlds (which represents its own challenges, particularly with issues of resourcelessness looms ever larger on the horizon as we reach the limits of a planet that had once been imagined as an infinite container of resources, now revealed as a finite resource itself.”

Luckily, but not surprisingly, we see ensuing revisions of how “we metropoles” conceptualise ‘Mother Nature’ as this endlessly fertile, giving, caring subject to dominate, extract from and master. Marisol de la Cadena also helps us clarify such misogynist conceptualisation by expanding the ways in which other societies, not unlike those indigenous to the Caribbean, have conceived of ‘nature’ in manners that do not play into this kind of submissive summations. For instance, de la Cadena elucidates upon terms such as Pachamama (Mother of Earth), Yakumama (Mother of All Water Beings), Sachamama (Mother of Forest), created by indigenous peoples of the Central and South American forests whom never intended to objectify nature as female (or as an object at all for that matter), but as androgynous ‘persons’ that facilitate meaningful, transformational discourses with forest ecosystems. These persons are more convincingly referred to as “Sources of Life.” Likewise, Donna Haraway further contextualizes these persons as names that signify complex nature-culture systems of temporal and spatial dimensions that are ‘entities-in-assemblage’ which include more-than-human, other-than-human, and inhuman worlds. This puts forth and positions a philosophy that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro refers to as a ‘perspectival other-than-human, and inhuman worlds. This puts forth and positions a philosophy that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro refers to as a ‘perspectival

Looking from the Caribbean

“I have chosen the word transculturation to express the highly-varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life.”

My commitment to exploring the forces of Global Warming, as core

7 See ‘Why Bears, Yukumama, and Other Transformational Beings are (Still) Good to Think’ by Joni Adamson and Juan Carlos Galeano, in Eccentricism and Indigenous Studies. ed. Salma Monani, et al, Routledge 2016

8 “If repetition is thus inscribed at the heart of the future to come, one must also import here, in the same stroke, the death drive, the violence of forgetting, superrepression (suppression and repression), the anarchive, in short, the possibility of putting to death the very thing, whatever its name, which carries the law in its tradition: the archon of the archive, the table, what carries the table and who carries the table, the subjectile, the substrate, and the subject of the law.” - Derrida, J. (1995) “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression”, in Diacritics, Vol. 25, #2 (Summer, 1995), Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 9–63
subject-matter of my work, stems from my life in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. In that lifetime, I have had the dubious privilege of witnessing beaches disappear, the most beautifully diverse coral reefs of the most intense colour variations go grey and bleach-white, and hear what once were vibrant and loud rainforests go silent. I say dubious because I sometimes wish not to have witnessed any of it. I seldom wish that I was someone born on the global North... of never having lived at ‘home’, at that other ‘half’ that is the global South, that disproportionate ‘half’ that is infrastructural to planetary life. Because of that ‘ailment,’ I thus find myself deep in this state of reminiscence that is overlaid by a need to cut that cancerous organ; to forget.

* I remember the trauma in order to forget; “I want to learn to live finally.”

It is not nostalgia but a deep melancholia. But, I try to resist the cynical, terminal part of the impulse. I instead dedicate myself to try and produce affirmative work that may uproot and display the forces that drives me and so many to involuntarily usher such disproportionate decay; the one that drives the specifically degenerative entropy that is called Global Warming. I aim to deliver work that may articulate and make-visible the forces and interrelations (or lack thereof) that operate remotely yet interdependently, generating specific moments of sensuous sensation towards supporting biodiverse dynamics for living. I am therefore driven to depose Global Warming, for it is ultimately the most insidious and violent form of colonialism. It is the ultimate toxic, contradictory, literally breathtaking type of entropy that, in the short-term privileges the very perpetrators of the industrial project, while slowly destroying it all... including those—human and non-human—who continue to be oppressed and enslaved in order to create, and further tautologically protract that industrial Enframing of toxicity.

I start by building a point of departure to define what I mean by colonial memory and set the tone for transforming what it generates and suppresses-within the envelop of the technological aura. I am compelled to offer that point of departure as a personal narrative that hopefully leads you to situate and intersect ‘greenhouse’—through its technological effect, surface, and

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11 “The (re)experience of aura... that exceeds the egocentric grasp of a humanistic self-consciousness and indeed points to a humanity beyond self-production and control.” See Comay, Rebecca. “Framing Redemption: Aura, Origin, Technology In Benjamin and Heidegger.” P.148
TWO WEEKS. TWO HURRICANES.

My insistent and deepening investigation about the role of ‘greenhouse’ in the culture, industry, and technoscience of Global Warming has kept me motivated through many intensifying environmental crises. But, the most potent realisation about its role came on October of 2017, when, as part of my doctoral study, I returned to Puerto Rico, the island in the Caribbean where I was born, grew-up, and still have my entire family at.

Two Category 5 hurricanes, named Irma and María, had just hit the island a few weeks earlier, on the 6th and 20th of September, respectively. Category 5 is the strongest level of intensity for a hurricane in the Saffir-Simpson Scale, meaning that the island endured sustained winds of over 252 km/h, with gusts above 300 Km/h. The strength of Irma had no precedent in its intensity. It hit and caused death and destruction never before seen in many of the Lesser Antilles – Barbuda and St. Marteen were flattened, among many others – as well as causing more death and significant destruction in Haiti and Cuba. In Puerto Rico, about a third of our municipalities in the north east are hit very hard. Irma ripped through the island-municipality of Culebra, one of our priceless environmental and touristic patrimonies. Irma causes major critical damages, particularly to the electricity grid of our main island. Already, the government was over-extended to address these damages. Then, not a week passed after Irma and another storm is identified, now leaving the hurricane formation area of the Cape Verde Islands in the eastern Atlantic, off the west coast of Africa. As it is tradition, the World Meteorological Organisation gives names to storms. They called the hurricane ‘María’.

Was that an omen? A harbinger? Well, not unlike many of the islands of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico’s pre-Columbian history is rooted in its Taino, and to a significant extent, the much broader ‘Carib’ civilisations. In fact, for instance, the word ‘hurricane’ is drawn from the god of chaos and disorder Juracán, for which the Atlantic hemisphere’s meteorological phenomenon is named after. Along with the legacy of the Taino—which was violently, and deliberately almost-erased from the outset within a few decades of the beginning of the Spanish-Catholic colonisation—Puerto Rico came to ‘inherit’ an intersected culture along with African beliefs that come as a result of the island being used as a key port of entry to the horror of the slave-trade, for over three-hundred years thereafter. That unspeakable practice spread fast and seamlessly.
in the mid-late 1500’s as a viral trend of ‘commerce’ adopted and mercilessly expanded by Portugal, England, France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, among several other states, as an enterprise that built the core of European wealth, while laying the most unimaginable misery through the Americas and Africa, haunting Asia and Oceania thereafter.  

That so-called ‘discovery’ left the island, and the region, not just with a trauma that is still being processed, but with a complex biological and spiritual make-up that is composed of an overlay of Roman Catholic and Christian evangelical beliefs set upon and above, almost literally, indigenous and African traditions. In no small measure, the unspeakable violence of erasure and of slavery rooted in the agro-colonisation of the ‘new world’ forced, among other cultural dimensions, the creation of syncretic Afro-Caribbean religions and practices. These syncretic practices, largely based on natural-medicinal divinities and rituals, evolved as a way to conceal the real spiritual practices of those who had been abducted. They had to be hidden behind Catholic iconography and rituals in order to deceive the missionaries and slave-masters into believing that they were accepting, and thus being transubstantiated into Catholic coverts, all to avoid the heinous torture and even death that would otherwise ensue. Most presciently, considering those values, the iconographic prominence of the figure of the ‘Virgin Mary’—associated in no small measure to the various syncretic entities, divinities, and life-forces of nature—plays a potent role along the subduced but revered matrilineal traces that operate at all levels of Caribbean society. Therefore, after many tropical storms and hurricanes through the centuries, always coming in intervals of years, if not decades apart from each other, and named with banal and inconsequential western names assigned in random order by a predetermined list, to have two devastating hurricanes back to back, the latter with the name ‘Maria,’ immediately causes concern and premonition.

The premonition was warranted. In the early hours of September 20, María was just south of the southeast coast moving terribly slowly north. Unlike Irma, which made landfall as a Category 5 as well, María’s eye was not set to skim past the north-east coast. Instead, it was set to cross diagonally northeast right through the very middle of the island, from coast to coast, slowly. For over twelve hours Puerto Rico sustained winds of 275km/hr, with gusts that were far stronger. The damage was truly infrastructural, some would say of ‘biblical’ scale. Most thankfully, my mother, father, sister and brother-in-law, whom live in San Juan on the mid-north coast, and my extended family whom live in Ponce on the southwest, were spared bodily harm, but endured damages to our homes from both hurricanes. They expressed that it was the longest, loudest, most nerve-wracking 12 hours of their lives. They described it to be like having an overheated, about-to-explode, jet engine in your living room, roaring for far too long. And they had it easy. Both hurricanes left hundreds of thousands deeply affected, especially those in the less privileged sectors of the island. An estimated 2975 persons were killed, suicide rates in the ensuing year went up over 30%, a massive exodus of people followed, the flora and fauna were decimated beyond the time-scale of evolutionary adaptation, and the islands electrical grid was totally destroyed, leaving the capital of San Juan without electricity for three months, and up to 70% of island without power for over six months. The damage, just in Puerto Rico, was estimated to be of 75 billion Euros. Thousands were let go of their jobs. The long-term damage to the natural ecosystems and to the economy are still being assessed. There is one more detail. Two years before these two unprecedented storms, in 2015, Puerto Rico was attempting to declare a national bankruptcy due to a national debt that had reached 60 billion Euros. I say ‘trying’ because, unlike Iceland or Greece or Argentina, Puerto Rico, as a colony of the United States since 1898, is thus without geopolitical or democratic sovereignty. If you are doubting my use of the word ‘colony’ to describe Puerto Rico, let me just say that, instead of creating a fair process for economic restructuration of debt, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, unilaterally enforced an ‘oversight committee’, literally a Junta, of five un-elected ‘officials’ (headed by a Russian bankruptcy expert who had just managed the Ukrainian financial crisis) to have full power and oversight over the people of Puerto Rico, including over our elected governor and parliament. To add insult to injury, the current President of the USA (whose name I will not even dignify) is holding up aid for ransom, until the island commits to austerity measures that suit his politics; basically, of passing the costs of the economic downturn created by the speculative market ideology down to the middle and lower classes.

The situation is of course completely disproportionate. Global Warming is no longer a theoretical metaphor, but an embodied one... it is a total crisis of scale. In other words, Puerto Rico, a small island of about the size of metropolitan London with a decreasing population of about three million, now carries an inconceivable debt of about 135

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billion Euros. This crashing confluence of Puerto Rico becoming the latest target of global finance speculation, along with the unprecedented cataclysm of two Category 5 hurricanes within two weeks, prompted me to title a research report -

慢动作核爆炸：超级解压的殖民记忆在波多黎各，以及更远的地方（上传至medium.com在2017年11月17日）。

As part of my PhD research, the report was a preface to proposing that the twin hurricanes Irma and Maria were obvious manifestations of the full complex of economic and environmental toxicity that we charitably refer to as Global Warming. I argue that the hurricanes are an index that point to a coming large-scale ‘super-decompression’ of our superrepressed colonial memory, one that has been violently suppressing the colonial violence of western consumer culture, in this case, upon the Puerto Rican psyche as well as that of the Caribbean. The ‘nuclear explosion’ that I describe is not just about the visual destruction and haptic sensation of radiation that the two hurricanes left behind. I am also referring to the slow and viral explosion that so many around the world are facing in lieu of Global Warming... about that radiation of contradiction that the so-called ‘free market’ is distributing as its chief instrument, as a ‘radicalization of climate change’ to push-forth Global Warming as the most insidious instrument for the bizarre and incongruent form of global economic ‘growth.’

Allow me to say that again. It is clear that a very small, but powerful group of industrials are foreseeing global warming as a generator of profit. Ask yourself - Why does the USA want to buy Greenland? It is the schizophrenic double-bind in full force.

We can only assume that in that bind, at best, living in the future will either require secure, gated ‘greenhouse’ colonies for the wealthy (as already being planned by the best and brightest architects and developers)\(^\text{14}\), or as a planned evacuations for billionaires to settle in ‘greenhouses’ in a colonised Mars (as already planned by Elon Musk)\(^\text{15}\), all as the projected framework for ‘living’ in the new business model for future ‘growth’ (see Fig.9).


(Fig. 9) Montage, architectural renderings of future greenhoused colonies in Netherlands and Mars.

But, I also refer to the metaphor of ‘nuclear explosion’ as associative signifier for the far-reaching impact this is having upon disparate geographic locations around the planet. ‘Nuclear’ in that the fragmented, remote distribution of these events, even in the age of the internet, are incongruently being projected as isolated and unrelated. There are very recent efforts to begin to publicly address the ‘chain reaction’, or “potential tipping cascades”\(^\text{16}\) that this destabilising explosion may represent. Ironically, but not surprisingly, its terminology is now going from the more ambiguous “good and bad” ‘greenhouse effect,’ to a state of emergency of the ‘hothouse,’ where within the next 12 years, the greenhouse effect becomes its earlier namesake, the

hothouse, or more specifically ceasing to be ‘Spaceship Earth,’ (see Fig.4) only to become “Hothouse Earth” (see Fig.9).\footnote{See Oct. 6, 2018 IPCC report “GLOBAL WARMING OF 1.5 °C: special report on the impacts of Global Warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty,” by Myles Allen (UK), Mustafa Babiker (Sudan), Yang Chen (China), et al.}

Notwithstanding these ironic but necessary efforts, the disjunction and isolation—say, the need to dissociate ‘reality’ from the network of real events—is still aggressively and incongruently pursued by those minoritarian powerful interests, proving to be devastatingly effective fragmenting of the otherwise obvious and steadfast causation behind Global Warming; i.e. the violent trauma that propagates the dissociative colonial impulse that still drives the market economy... even at the peril of any worthwhile quality of life, for anyone. Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean, among others (i.e. see Mozambique’s recent hurricanes) seem to be already a scale-model, if spectres from the future coming to the present to speak of that toxic, oppressive, colonial contradiction now being called Hothouse Earth.

The act of forgetting—as selective, oppressive, suppressive amnesia—is where I suspect we find the core operational directive that colonial (and neo-colonial) enterprise relies upon. It is that human sense of self-preservation, to protect oneself from the pain of trauma, that is entwined to memory. Finding manners in which to formally contend-with and depart-from that type of unprocessed, selective amnesia will hereon become one of the core threads of the PhD here before you. But to do so, I feel it is what requires me to then hold and revise the metaphors of ‘greenhouse’ as facilitators to that type of dissociation and depersonalisation, and its direct complicity as chief mnemotechnology to Global Warming.

(Fig.10) Stability landscape showing the pathway of the Earth System out of the Holocene and thus, out of the glacial–interglacial limit cycle to its present position in the hotter Anthropocene. The fork in the road in Fig. 10 is shown here as the two divergent pathways of the Earth System in the future (broken arrows). Currently, the Earth System is on a Hothouse Earth pathway driven by human emissions of greenhouse gases and biosphere degradation toward a planetary threshold at ∼2 °C (horizontal broken line at 2 °C), beyond which the system follows an essentially irreversible pathway driven by intrinsic biogeophysical feedbacks. The other pathway leads to Stabilized Earth, a pathway of Earth System stewardship guided by human-created feedbacks to a quasistable, human-maintained basin of attraction. “Stability” (vertical axis) is defined here as the inverse of the potential energy of the system. Systems in a highly stable state (deep valley) have low potential energy, and considerable energy is required to move them out of this stable state. Systems in an unstable state (top of a hill) have high potential energy, and they require only a little additional energy to push them off the hill and down toward a valley of lower potential energy.

(Fig.11) west profile of installation process of Anarquivo Negantrópico / Neganthropic Anarchive, August 2019. The ‘Anarchive’ is primarily a temperate medicinal garden with a water filtering system and a solar-regulated, paramodular greenhouse. Together they are an organological public space, say a smaple of micro-geoengineering.