



Rapid Regeneration in Record Time: A Conversation with Anne-Marie Daniel

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Anne-Marie Daniel

NatuR&D

The Resilient Urban Systems & Habitat [RUSH] Initiative



Think of all the choices you make in a given day. Do you know how the consequences of each decision contribute to the climate crisis? Would you want to know? For many of us, the honest answer is no. Calculating our carbon footprint or the pounds of waste we've produced can feel paralyzing, especially when these numbers don't come with a guidebook on how to change our habits enough to make a difference. However, if there was an easy way to map out what the biggest climate risks are to you and your neighborhood, and what the best ways to protect yourself are, that information could be inspiring instead.

This was the idea that biomimicry practitioner and social innovator Anne-Marie Daniel turned into a tangible tool when she conceived whatstherush.ca. RUSH, which stands for "Resilient Urban Systems and Habitat" is an initiative designed to help people understand their local vulnerabilities and opportunities when it comes to the climate crisis. The team behind this tool believes that we have the power to create more resilient communities and repair our relationship with nature. To do so we need observable, measurable, and replicable ways to see the difference we're making, both good and bad.

On whatstherush.ca, users can build a map of their neighborhood and tune into the ways in which their local environment might be helping or hurting their health, and how they may be helping or hurting the local environment. By inputting an address, people can see how vulnerable they are to climate related events (like heat domes and sea level rise) and find out what is needed to reverse the trends causing these events. It's intended to become a one-stop-shop for people looking to understand how to protect themselves locally and play their part globally. By plotting a pollinator garden, a rain garden, or a well-lit bus stop, people can gauge the environmental and social impacts of collective climate action. RUSH engages the next generation of changemakers by engaging students in community mapping and community-based participatory research to turn complex climate reports and GIS data into accessible and empowering online modules. Then, people can take action individually and with their neighbors to make meaningful changes in their routines that will allow nature to regenerative and communities to thrive.

As biomimicry practitioners in the social innovation space, Anne-Marie and the RUSH team recognize that personal health, community wellbeing, and ecosystem conditions are profoundly connected, especially in cities. In British Columbia, where RUSH is finding its feet, one of the biggest personal and community health issues is affordable housing. The whatstherush.ca platform allows the whole community to consider the long-term impacts of any new



construction projects. Will a new building make a heatwave worse? Can it be fire smart? Can it make space for human connectivity and be built in a location that won't disrupt critical habitats? And how can it be an asset 25 years from now, so that a sense of place is created for the building's inhabitants and nature can thrive all around it?

For now, the initiative's prototype is being tested on Southern Vancouver Island in BC, Canada. However, the whatstherush.ca software is open access so that it can be shared and scaled globally. While food and housing are common needs of all communities, the RUSH template can be customized with the questions that are relevant to the location. As you start to imagine a map of your neighborhood health and potential challenges and opportunities, RUSH encourages you to think of health holistically. Health is not just physical wellbeing, but also a sense of belonging. How can our developments bring us closer to nature and closer to each other?

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As human beings, we have reached a point where we have no choice but to create rapid regeneration in record time. And while time is limited, pathways to action are not. We just need to know where to start. We can begin to collectively cultivate solutions to the biggest challenge of our time when we meet ourselves where we are, with both compassion and a determination to do more. And we must remember that we are not in this alone. As we step up to do our part, others will be inspired to do the same.

What will your next step in the right direction be? Do you want to be a part of the ecosystem that helps whatstherush.ca blossom into its fullest potential? The tool needs testers, data-gatherers, financial backers, and advocates. To learn more, please email annemarie@naturnd.com. Imagine the momentum you and your community could build if you could measure and map your contributions to real climate solutions!