

CREATIVE PRODUCTION AND PRACTICES IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

What is the potential of creative production and practice in inspiring communities to engage in the co-creation of more sustainable urban futures?

Climate change and urban sustainability are often seen as technical problems requiring technical solutions. Targets are set and new pieces of technology developed to help in meeting them. But there is an emerging body of research and practice that points to the need for mass cultural and behavioural change if more sustainable cities are to be realised. People are struggling to make ends meet and sustainability is seen as a luxury or burden by many.

What did we find?

- Creative production, practice and exchange has the potential to inspire people to think and behave more sustainably despite everyday pressures
- Visual and creative methods generate insights into different perspectives on sustainability and fair, green and dense cities
- It is essential to recognise the importance of different modes of engagement – visual, sensory, kinaesthetic, ambulatory and textual – to share knowledge and embed learning for more sustainable urban futures
- There are different modes of learning and acquiring new skills and this has implications for how knowledge can be creatively exchanged
- Creative processes lend themselves well to co-producing knowledge, but require leadership and a careful balance between processes and the generation of high quality products

Next Steps

There is much talk of carrots and sticks in encouraging behavioural change for more sustainable futures. Creativity and innovation offer an alternative trajectory – inspiring people to make change happen. Cities, such as Greater Manchester, are beginning to recognise this. Creating a 'low carbon culture' is a key aspiration for Greater Manchester. Further research and practice is needed to consider what this means and how creative and cultural activities can inspire a broader cultural shift in the city-region.

ABOUT US

Mistra Urban Futures is a global centre with a vision to transform current unsustainable pathways in the global North and South to support the development of Fair, Green and Dense cities. It believes that working in partnership and drawing on the knowledge and skills of different stakeholders is the right way to do this.

Local interaction platforms have been set up in Gothenburg, Sweden; Shanghai, China; Cape Town, South Africa; Kisumu, Kenya and Greater Manchester, UK. The Greater Manchester platform is hosted by the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures, University of Salford.

A range of partners were involved in the pilot activities: the SURF Centre, University of Salford; Temple Primary school, North Manchester; Buddleia; okf productions; Manchester Environmental Education Network; Creative Connections; Creative Concern.

For more information contact Dr Beth Perry, Director of the Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform via b.perry@salford.ac.uk

EXPLORING FAIR, GREEN AND DENSE CITIES CREATIVELY

A multi-method approach was designed with the school-children from Temple Primary School, North Manchester, to explore their understandings of sustainability in their local area and generate multi-media content. This included a walkabout exploration of the local area in Cheetham Hill; a philosophy for children session around the themes of Fair, Green and Dense cities; a reflection and story-telling exercise; production of large-scale art work depicting utopian and dystopian visions of future Cheetham Hill; a short stop-start animation; and an eco-rap performed by the children.

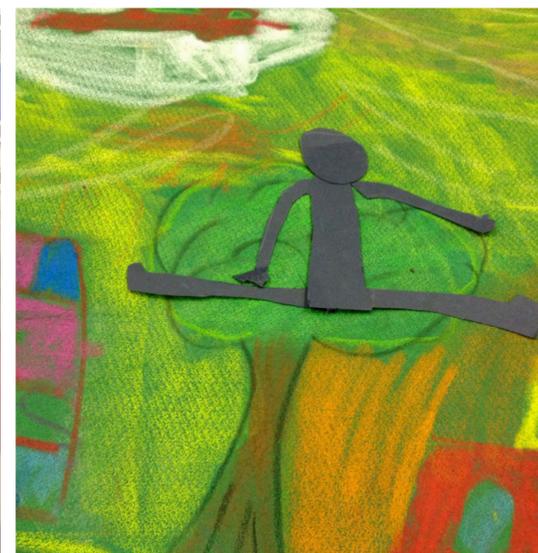
THE CHILDREN'S ECO-RAP

*Petrol being used
Dirty smelly poo
Why you using fuel
You are being cruel
We can save the world
Come on boys and girls
Need to be relaxed and calm; not to do the world more harm.
Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop
Think, think, think, think, think
Stop (repeat)
Think (repeat)*

*Equality is what we need
Spread the word and plant the seed
Is this how we want to live, or do we have some more to give?
Think about what you do
It's not all about YOU!
Stop wrapping things in foil
Stop making the whole world boil.
Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop.
Think, think, think, think, think.
Stop (repeat)
Think (repeat)
Stop!*



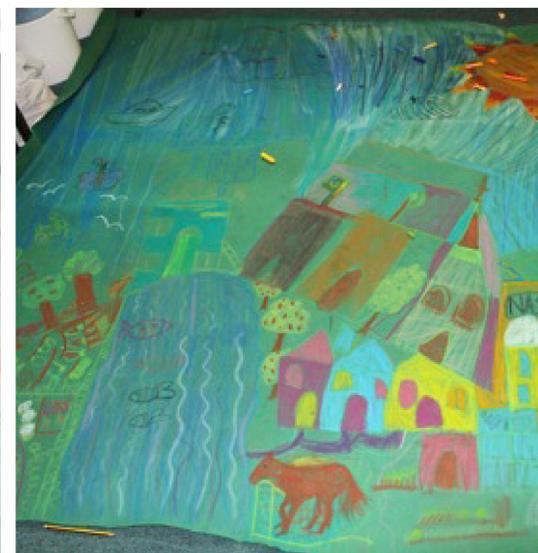
The children interviewed each other about Fair, Green and Dense cities, using microphones and video technology. (Image credit: Buddleia)



Utopian and dystopian visions of the future of Cheetham Hill. (Image credit: Buddleia).



The art-work produced was vibrant and bold as a backdrop for a short stop-start animation. (Image credit: Buddleia)



ENGAGING PUBLICS USING MULTIPLE METHODS

The Sustainable Stories exhibition took place 3-7 November 2012 as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Festival of Social Science. It was funded by Mistra Urban Futures, University of Salford and the ESRC. It was organised around the themes of Fair, Green and Dense cities.



Local cartoonist's illustration. Featured with permission at Sustainable Stories exhibition. (Image credit: Polyp).



Visual artists from Creative Connection illustrating a talk by Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council (Image credit: SURF)



(Image credit: SURF)

Visual artists illustrated the Speakers' Corner. The exhibition grew in real-time over the course of the week to represent a 'living research space'.

The Sustainable Stories exhibition organised around the themes of Fair, Green and Dense cities. (Image credit: SURF)