

Sustainable Cities Workshop, 27 June 2013 – Discussion Notes

Here's a sample of comments on some of the workshop themes. Apologies for omissions, errors and misinterpretations! All additions and corrections gratefully received (info@transitionsheffield.org.uk)

Food

There was a wide-ranging discussion about Sheffield's food footprint – there is little local food production and a need to reduce food waste in cities. See <http://www.wrap.org.uk/> for an initiative aiming to reduce all kinds of waste.

Given that we are only 9 meals away from empty shop shelves, if inequity and starvation risks rise, do we achieve change through community empowerment or through coercion (i.e. rationing or facism)?

Clearly, the empowerment would be better. Porter Valley [where there is a Transition Initiative] is a microcosm of how it could work – e.g. there is local meat in local shops. Grow Sheffield is another example of sharing the skills of growing food, but we can spread this and make it fun, e.g. by taking the Transition Streets model. There is potential to make much more use of aquaponics, e.g. has been set up by the UN in Gaza recently.

More specifically, one of the group is currently talking in schools and colleges about the impact of our diet on sustainability and climate change, and putting forward the case for a balanced plant-based diet.

Transport

We need to provide more attractive alternatives to car ownership.

Some examples have already been tried locally – e.g. making railway stations cleaner and therefore more attractive (as has been done at [Glossop](#)). Another example was that of the Nether Edge farmer's market which closes the road to cars to support an alternative, sociable, and more localised way of meeting needs.

A key proposal was to set up ways to use existing networks, especially motorways, much more efficiently. e.g. by setting up virtual bus stations with mini-buses. Internet systems could enable taxi sharing from hubs, e.g. as with the train taxis in Belfast and the Netherlands. These could make rides cheaper through the scheduling of return journeys / loads.

There are various still perceptual barriers (e.g. hills, safety, and security) to widespread use of cycling as transport but electric bikes might be a factor in achieving a tipping point in uptake.

Other ideas were to promote the concept of free public transport (free at the point of use) to encourage a switch away from private cars, and to reduce the defence budget to minimise transport-related oil use.

Technology

This discussion looked at how technology innovations could be used to support a shift to sustainability. Examples discussed were: smart apps to turn heating on when you're heading home; online systems to enable local sales of food from gardens, etc.

Money

Radical changes are needed in our approach towards wealth:

We need to move away from growth and consumerism and value the things that money cannot buy, so that people have aspirations towards other things than money.

It's critical that we changing the economic system so it creates wealth rather than debt – Positive Money is campaigning to achieve this.

People

Discussed a need for more heart both in connecting to each other and in connecting to nature. One particular aspect is in more respectful, egalitarian ways of decision making and communicating with each other.

And we can start now by bridging the gaps between vision and actuality – some people in the group promised to share stories about sustainability both by having conversations with neighbours and by creating an online blog.

Other / Resources?

We could learn from Portugal and Spain in terms of re-nationalising land, and setting up time banks.