



The Urban Ecology NEWSLETTER

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Urban Ecology Australia Inc
105 Sturt St Adelaide
Phone (08) 8212 6760

E: urbanec@urbanecology.org.au

W: www.urbanecology.org.au

Recently Urban Ecology Australia sent a survey to UEA members to seek their comments about the current content and format of the UEA newsletter. We received responses from just over 20% of the membership, most of whom said they read it or some of it.

The November/December newsletter will be the fourth one this year and it will then be an opportunity to assess the format and content for the next year in view of responses. If you haven't already responded your comments are welcome. Past copies of the newsletter are on the website.

Convenor's Report November 2012

For the final newsletter of the year I thought it might be interesting to have a look at a summarised version of a draft document that was presented to the Board early in the year for 2012 and beyond.

Urban Ecology Inc (UEA) Draft 2012 and forward January 2012

UEA is essentially a volunteer based small organisation. While this can be seen as limiting it also adds a degree of credibility both in the lived experience of Christie Walk and in the fact that it is passion rather than profit that drives both board and other members. There is no conflict of interest and no commercial investment within our objectives, only a desire to play a role in the development of sustainable cities. It may be necessary to develop an adjunct to the board in the form of an advisory body to increase our skills/ knowledge base, and capacity but also to establish formal partnerships with relevant institutions.

Our goals segue nicely into some of the guiding principles from the state government and council's aims and objectives. For 2012 and beyond UEA intends to pursue the realisation of

our vision through a range of growth and development strategies outlined below.

Essential keys to this include;

- Maintenance and extension of the Christie Walk tours. This is evidence based practice. Tour guides should include greater attention on the elements of sustainable practice that are easily translatable to mainstream construction and retro-fitting of existing households.
- Developing a higher profile. This is essential to support future development.
- Robust Structures and Systems. UEA will need to identify and move to a structure that best positions us to meet our aims, optimise growth opportunities and comply with regulatory requirements. To achieve this, governance structures and operational systems will need to be finely tuned.
- Resources. UEA needs to look closely at the potential for self-sustaining financial resources including developing a schedule of fee for service. Traditionally our income has been philanthropic or grant based. There are many avenues to explore in relation to both of these sources of income but we need to explore other income generating activities.
- Flexibility and Vibrancy. Otherwise known as "change management" techniques are vital to ensure the success of our vision. Providing new ideas are within our constitution and our broad objectives they should be embraced.
- Corporate and Community Partnerships. Collaboration with bodies such as Councils, Universities, Community Activist groups, governmental organisations and agencies will be vital to enable us to respond dynamically to the changing needs of communities and to ensure we can diversify appropriately.

The board has been working hard this year towards these guiding principles, specifically in the area of developing community and corporate partnerships, the results of some of these efforts should be evident next year.

It is gratifying to see an increase in the number of professional / corporate bodies booking tours. This reflects both local effort and the gradual take up and acceptance of best practice and the need for transformational change in response to **global issues such as changing climates, economic problems, habitat loss and urban sprawl.**

Finally, a vote of thanks to the UEA board for their ongoing commitment.

Thanks also for the contributions from members and volunteers. Huge thanks to the residents of Christie Walk for their gracious acceptance of the many tours that take place through houses, yards and open spaces.

And now a very special thank you to Margaret Rohde for commitment over and above what could be expected, as both Treasurer and Office Manager and to Joan Carlin for the production of the newsletter.

Season's greetings everyone and looking forward to 2013.

Sue Gilbey Convenor

How do you know a thriving community when you meet one?

ThrivingCommunities.org is a collaboration of the Whidbey Institute, New Stories, and a growing network of communities committed to thriving. The following article is taken from the website.

- “ A thriving community is highly connected, collaborative, caring and compassionate, and responsive to the needs of its members.
Information and resources flow smoothly through the community from where assets and gifts exist to where they can be best applied. The people within a thriving community feel cared for, acknowledged, and yearn to give back to their community as a whole as well as to the people within it. There is a sense that “we all belong” and that the community is greater than the sum of the parts. Certainly, basic needs are met with respect and dignity.
- A thriving community is creative, artistic, and playful: it dances, sings, tells stories, and also knows the generative power of silence.
- A thriving community is healthy, and becomes healthier with time, and so it is sustainable and resilient to shifting outside forces.
- A thriving community does not become passive, but instead holds a balance of tensions that uplifts the community as a whole. A thriving community is therefore dynamic and evolving.”

Save the Date! Thriving Communities 2013

The next Thriving Communities gathering will take place March 21-23, 2013 at the Whidbey Institute on Whidbey Island, WA, near Seattle. The theme of next year's conference is *thriving local economy*. This is a long way from Australia but could be of interest if you can get there!!



This graphic is a visual synthesis from Anne Jess developed after the Thriving Communities Conference 2012.

TED Talk on the Great Transition to Thriving Communities in Action

Pam Warhurst tells the story of the transformation of Todmorden, England through food. Quote: "Through an organic process, through an increasing recognition of the power of small actions, we're starting to believe in ourselves again; and to believe in our capacity - each and every one of us - to build a different and a kinder future."

[Ed] This TED talk is worth watching! Inspiring and exciting.

For more illumination on this wholesome way of being together see <http://www.thrivingcommunities.org/> and also Thriving Resilient Communities <http://thrivingresilience.org/>

One of the responders to the photo of the storm over Lady Liberty suggested that we human beings will need to learn to cope with change.

My sense is that is that we will actually have to engage in what Gandhi is often quoted as saying, viz, 'We must be the change.'

Which may be considered to be in accord with Paul Gilding's comment that 'To survive we must change everything. It's that simple.'

[sent by Alan Stewart]

Compact City Policies: A Comparative Assessment

www.oecd.org/regional/regionaldevelopment/compactcitypoliciesacomparativeassessment.htm

Sue Gilbey: This is an excellent article from the smarter cities conference in June 2012, it is now a book which can be purchased; of note is an extract from chapter 6:

This report offers a comprehensive understanding of the compact city concept, its role in today's urban contexts, and the potential outcomes of compact city policies. It examines compact city policies across the OECD in relation to green growth objectives and the role of indicators in tracking policy performance. It proposes compact city strategies and ideas for achieving better outcomes and highlights governance challenges for implementing practical compact city strategies. Importantly, it highlights how urban spatial policies can help foster economic growth and development while preventing environmental degradation and climate change. The report thus addresses a central concern of the OECD Green Growth Strategy, and provides an important contribution to it.

Key facts

There is a global trend toward urbanisation that has environmental and economic impacts. By 2050, 70% of the world's population - and 86% in OECD countries - will live in urban areas.

The continuing growth of urban populations calls for a policy response that optimises land resources. Land consumption for built-up areas will increase more rapidly than the population in 30 out of 34 OECD countries.

Demographics have changed. For example, the elderly population has doubled over the past 60 years in OECD countries and tripled worldwide. Urban policies will need to be tailored to the specific needs of the population.

The impacts of global warming and increasing energy prices require new responses. The recent economic crisis has exacerbated the problem by reducing governments' abilities to invest in solutions such as new infrastructure.

Key policy issues

What are compact cities and how do they contribute to urban sustainability?

How can we evaluate compact city policy outcomes?

How can we tailor the policy response to different local circumstances?

What are the metropolitan governance challenges in developing and implementing compact city policies?

Recommendations

Compact cities have dense and proximate development patterns, are linked by public transport systems, and maintain accessibility to local services and jobs. As such, they play a significant role in responding to the needs of urban areas.

Compact cities lessen the impact on the environment, with shorter intra-urban distances and less automobile dependency. They play a part in the economy by increasing the efficiency of infrastructure investment and by giving residents easier access to services, jobs, and social networking.

Two types of indicators are used to measure compact city policy outcomes: those that represent "compactness" (density, proximity, public transport systems and accessibility to local services and jobs), and those that measure a compact city's performance in relation to other cities.

This report examines differences in policy practice in five case study areas, and underscores the need for tailoring policies to specific needs. For example, fast-growing regions where there is pressure for development, regulatory tools are important to prevent uncontrolled urban expansion.

Recommendations for compact city policy strategies: set explicit compact city goals; encourage dense and contiguous development at urban fringes; retrofit existing built-up areas; enhance diversity and quality of life in urban centres; minimise adverse negative effects



Paul Downton with John de Graaf, author of *Affluenza* and *What's The Economy For, Anyway?* on a site visit to Christie Walk, 4 September 2012.

Looking at Christie Walk from the inside...

"Janice and I stayed at Christie walk in September, thanks to the generosity of Joan Carlin. Joan was on holiday for the week and very kindly invited us to stay in her apartment.

We had seen Christie Walk videos and thought we knew what to expect, but the reality was so much better and more appealing. We fell in love with the look and feel of Christie Walk especially the presence of birds, the lovely vertical garden areas and the delight of finding new features from day to day. We were able to speak with many of the residents and thoroughly enjoyed a meal out one evening shared with such friendly and open people.

The proximity of Christie Walk to the market and other shops is just fantastic and we would love for Urban Coup to be so centrally located in Melbourne but the cost of land rules that out.

We marveled at the foresight of those involved in setting up Christie Walk and how ahead of their time they were. It is sad that despite lots of interest and visitors to Christie Walk, we are still waiting to see CW2. We think the level of thought put into the design is great and based on feedback to us, has played a very big part in the success of the Christie Walk ecovillage.

We loved the way in which everyone we meet was so willing to share their learnings and experiences and help with the Urban Coup learning curve. The time we spent with Paul and Cherie was particularly valuable and we are hopeful that Urban Coup will be able to work with Paul in some way as our plans emerge and develop. Jo was very generous in helping with copies of documents which we will reference as we develop our detailed guidelines and rules.

One of our biggest learnings was the noticeable benefit of a toxic-free development and how much better we felt living in that environment. It has heightened our resolve to try and replicate at Urban Coup. We were also impressed with the recycling efforts and the results are a great example to the whole community.

Christie Walk is a credit to all those involved in setting it up and continuing the strong emphasis on a warm caring sustainable community. The generosity to openly share so much with us was really appreciated."

Brenda Appleton



"Working on the Urban Coup banner Oct 2012"



URBAN COUP

...but more than this, home is where our community is,
Our family, friends and the networks that support and nourish us.

The Urban Coup (the 'Coup') is an initiative of a group of Melbournians, who share a vision of creating not just housing, but community. Urban Coup is a cohousing project to be built in urban Melbourne and is a response to a culture that puts tremendous strain on natural resources, promotes urban sprawl and erodes community spirit.

Our aim is to establish a cohousing community featuring:

- 30 households with a mixture of 1,2 and 3 bedroom apartments
- 6 of these households would be owned by a community housing association and rented as affordable housing
- a centrally located 'common house' where the community can meet for meals, meetings, socializing and for other activities and special events. The envisioned space includes large dining and kitchen area, music room, children's play space, workshop, art and craft room, common laundry and guest rooms.
- a shared community open space – including veggie patch – that encourages community interaction and the occasional BBQ.
- A chicken coop and rooftop garden
- Eco-sensitive homes designed to maximize energy efficiency, including passive solar design, double-glazing, onsite water collection and reuse and building design to promote natural ventilation
- A small ecological footprint achieved by sustainable building design, higher density living and the efficient use of resources
- Reduced car park spaces, share cars and bike parking area

Key aspects of the ideal site include:

- Within 10 km of the CBD
- Within a 30 minute commute by public transport to the CBD
- Within a 10 minute walk to local amenities such as shops
- A recent survey of members suggests a location in the Darebin, Moreland or Yarra Council areas

Importantly, we are looking to create a model for the broader community of a sustainable and socially responsible form of urban design.

News of other Ecovillages in Australia

1. Tasman Ecovillage in SE Tasmania <http://tasmanecovillage.org.au/>

Alan and Carmen Stewart visited this recently and report:

A look around the website is likely to amaze and enchant you. For it is about a remarkably imaginative enterprise being developed on what was earlier a motel on the outskirts of the town of Nubeena in the Tasman Peninsula.

This is the brainchild of a true visionary. Ilan Abron has used existing facilities of a restaurant, accommodation and sheds to complement diverse new housing options on 23 acres of rolling hills overlooking the nearby ocean. Which means the evolution of potential for community living with associated rituals and gatherings filled with wholesome fun and play, local food production for local people, freehold ownership, affordable housing, managed investment. "Ingredients that contribute to a 'rich life' and a promising future."

As Ilan notes, "It started with a thought, a dream and an intention to build a better way of living." Our sense is that he and his colleagues are well down this track.

2. Narara Ecovillage in NSW <http://www.scev.org/latest-on-the-project>

Listen and see transcript: The Spirit of Things <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/spiritofthings/eremos-and-findhorn/4350358>

More about Findhorn & plans for an ecovillage in NSW

FINDHORN was founded 50 years ago as an experimental spiritual community in Scotland, and today it continues to thrive as one of the largest alternative communities in Britain. Starting life with a few people in a caravan park, 'the emerging "community" was an accidental offshoot of their committed dedication to God.' John Talbott, its former director now lives in Australia, planning to seed a Findhorn ecovillage Downunder.

The Future is Community

The recent Transitions International Film Festival covered a range of films and discussion sessions with a focus on positive actions and solutions, which would be no surprise to followers of the [Transition Movement](#), which focuses on people in communities making inspiring and innovative decisions about transitioning to a sustainable society.

[Simon Jones](#) (from the Adelaide Hills Council) spoke of how local government is the only level of government that can effectively think global and act local. He encouraged community groups to develop close relationships with their local Council where issues can potentially be considered and implemented in a relatively short time frame. As an example the Adelaide Hills Council has established four community gardens in two years, following community initiatives.

[Sharon Ede](#) (from Zero Waste SA) asked us to consider the implications of the growing interest in a collaborative economy, where we use fewer resources, share more and produce less waste.

The present consumer culture is one in which we are exhorted to continuously buy more stuff. How much stuff do we have in our houses that we rarely, if ever, use? Will we ever have enough stuff? In the past week I have had junk mail advertising the most extraordinary collection of goods (movies I have never heard of, pieces of technology I have no idea what they do, toys I can't imagine any intelligent child ever wanting, furniture that looks decidedly uncomfortable and complex kitchen gadgets that need electricity or batteries and which replace perfectly useful simple hand powered ones – **who buys this stuff?**)

[Collaborative consumption](#) is not new, it is the rediscovery of old market behaviours of renting, lending, swapping, bartering and passing on to a new home stuff that we have no further use for. Now it is made even easier through internet transaction services.

[Paul Downton](#) (Ecopolis Architects) reinforced the importance of communities – **"when everything else falls apart we have to rely on community to survive"**.

For most of human history we lived in communities whether it be a tribe or a village or a neighbourhood. Even when we live in a city we feel our closest relationship to the suburb or street. Many people are rediscovering the value of their local community.

In recent years there has been a much stronger sense of community in the face of external business or government decisions that are seen to negatively impact on the local community, whether it is the threat of demolition of a local iconic building (such as the Chelsea Cinema) or inappropriate development (Mt Barker, Cheltenham). People are demanding real consultation and empowerment in decisions about their local communities.

Paul talked of urban fractals (the smallest element that contains the essence of a larger system – eg a neighbourhood is a fractal of a city). Our cities can be transformed fractal by fractal.

[Empowered communities working with their local councils, developing collaborative sharing cultures demonstrate the great hope for transitioning our society into something more sustainable. In fact given the intransigence of governments it may be the only hope.](#)

Andrew Tidswell

“The rising tides of climate change - the challenge to prepare”

Just Sustainability Australia Inc in conjunction with the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre presented a very



important forum entitled “The rising tides of climate change - the challenge to prepare” with Dr Alice Aruhe’eta Pollard as the key note speaker. Solomon Islands is a nation of many small villages and 900 islands, many of them low lying.

Dr Pollard is founder of West ‘Are ‘Are Rokotanikeni Association(WARA) a rural based organisation that is about empowering women to live sustainable lives in challenging environments in the Solomon Islands.

I grew up with nature, behind our house was thick mangroves with crabs and we could fish under our house, we would feed the fish with food scraps, and there were forests full of food.

The subsistence lifestyle still continues for rural people in the Solomon’s but it is much harder now, the population has increased and climate change has meant that sea levels have risen dramatically since I was a child and the salinity levels are so high that growing some of our traditional foods like the giant swamp taro and coconut are impossible in some of the low lying areas.

Climate Change is an issue now, it is here and visible, it is very serious in the Pacific and will be one of the biggest challenges globally.

Rising tides are not only threatening human survival they are also posing a great threat to wild life and marine life, for example in Tetepare, a conservation island in the Western Province, the nesting sites of the leather back turtles are covered by water, washing the eggs away.

Sustainability is not just about climate change adaptations and food security.

Three times a year, Alice Pollard takes an 8-hour overnight boat trip from Honiara to neighbouring Malaita Island. She boards a motorised canoe, dubbed the ‘Bank on Boat’, and for the next four days travels to 12 rural centres accessible only by sea. There Alice collects cash deposits and provides withdrawals to the 700 women members of the West ‘Are ‘Are Rokotanikeni Association, or WARA. She takes time in each village to talk through any questions or concerns the women may have.

At night she sleeps with the moneybags beside her, and at the end of the week a 4-hour truck ride and another boat trip take her back to Honiara and the bank where WARAs savings are deposited.

For many women, this savings group and the income generating activities which go with it represent a new relationship with money. As one woman told Alice:

“I thought handling money was for men only, or for people earning fortnightly wages. Now I can touch it, feel it and deal it.”

Started in 2006, the fund now has over \$400,000 in Solomon Island dollars in accumulated savings, and more than \$66,000 has been withdrawn for family education, solar panels and health expenses.

Financial literacy is just one aspect of a program which brings women a stronger voice in the public arena, something traditional Solomon Islands culture does not often encourage. It can’t happen fast—as Alice says:

“There is no shortcut or quick fix in changing culture—like a school of fish in the sea, we have to swim together, talk together and work together, only then can we make the positive changes that we want to see.”

Sue Gilbey



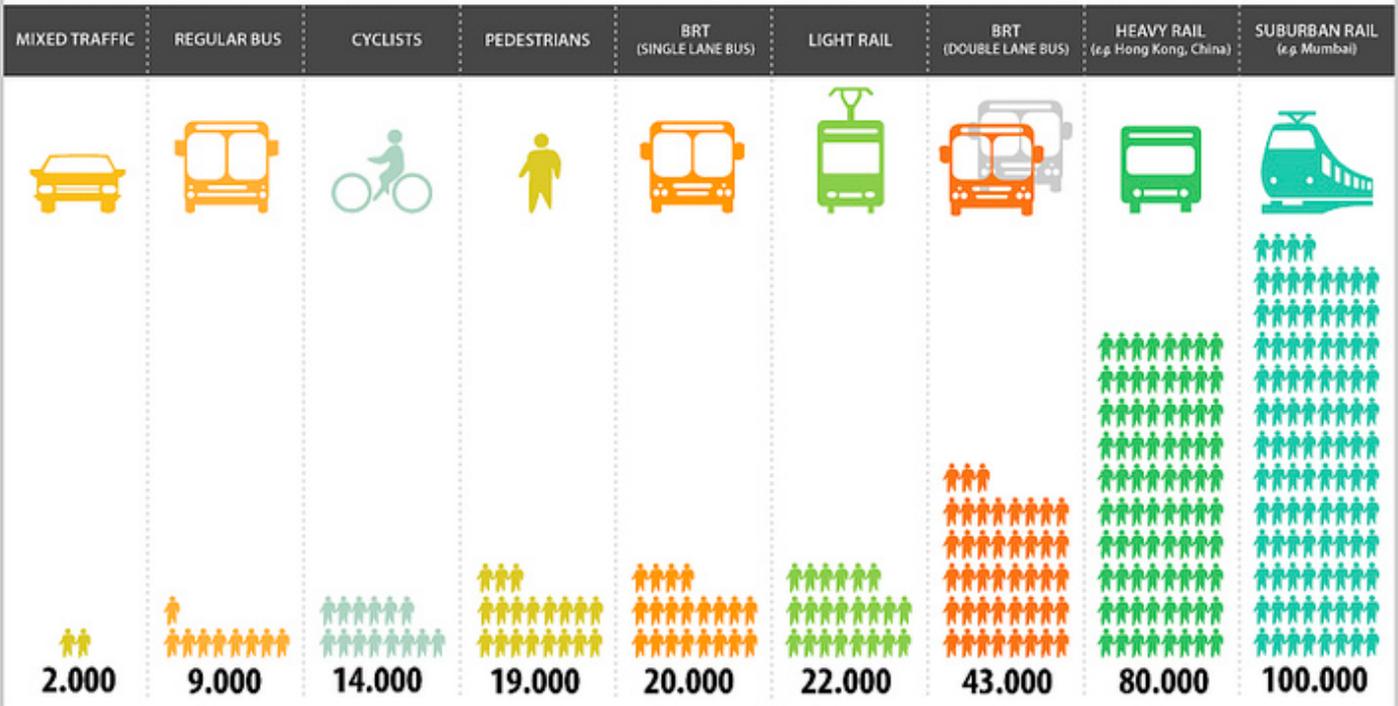
Cohousing is a participatory model of housing development, which includes private dwellings, communal spaces and shared resources. The aim is to recreate a village-like atmosphere in a modern-day housing developments with sustainable design and a comfortable environment for socialising. We want to create a living environment for children and adults, that is safe and secure, that balances privacy and community, and creates a home that is a rich hub of creativity.

SOLUTIONS FOR URBAN TRANSPORT

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF SCARCE ROAD SPACE

people per hour on 3.5-meter wide lane in the city

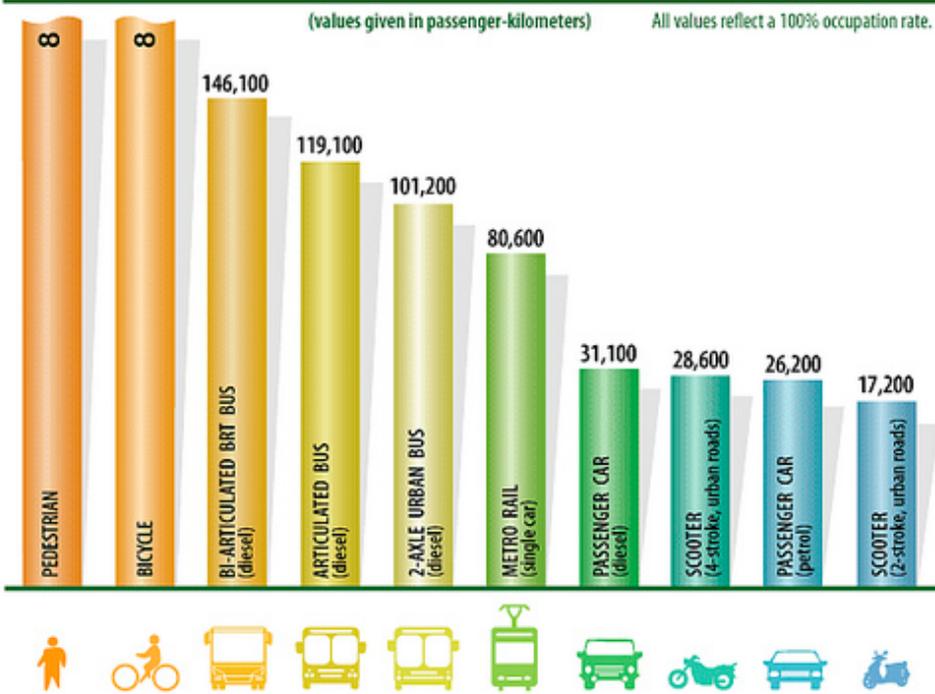
Depending on vehicle size, occupancy or loading, and speed, the use of space can vary greatly for different modes of travel - potential passenger volumes vary greatly by mode along a corridor. The car is the most spatially inefficient mode. Dense urban centers cannot effectively be served by cars, since not enough people can be delivered to the center.



MORE MOBILITY FOR LESS CARBON

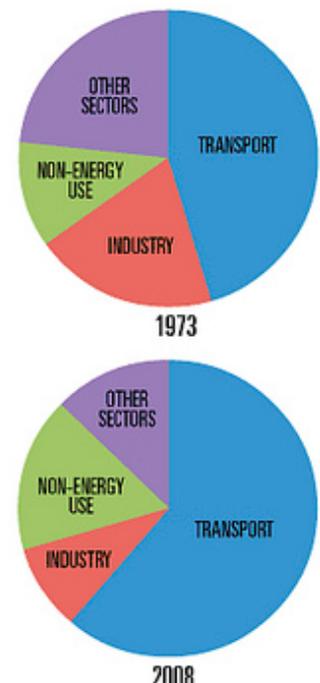
How Far Can I Travel on 1 Ton of CO₂?

Modes of travel have varying effects on emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases that cause climate change. Passenger cars and scooters are the least efficient means of travel when considering CO₂ emissions. Walking and bicycling put negligible CO₂ into the atmosphere, meaning one could travel immeasurably long distances on 1 ton of CO₂.



ENERGY CONSUMPTION

The transport sector is using a much greater share of finite oil resources over time, accounting for up to 62% of total oil consumption by 2008. This represents an increase of 111% from 1973.



Source: Asian Development Bank, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit. (2011). *Changing Course in Urban Transport: An Illustrated Guide.*

ADB Asian Development Bank
FIGHTING POVERTY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
FACEBOOK.COM/ASIANDEVBANK

You may need to go to the original website to see this more clearly.
This was forwarded by Richard RISEBERG <rickrise@earthlink.net>

An Experience of Schumacher College



In March this year Owen (my husband) and I attended a twelve day live-in course: ***Cultivating an Ecoliterate World View, person place and practice*** at Schumacher College in Devon, England.

The College is situated on the Dartington Estate which has been a centre of innovation and creativity for many decades. Schumacher has an international reputation for holistic, ecological education with the added inspiration of 'walking the talk'.

The daily routines included a reflective reading and participating in group jobs such as cooking, gardening, and cleaning which provided opportunities for all Schumacher participants (students, lecturers and volunteers) to interact together as a learning

community. The rest of the day was spent in lectures (both indoor and outdoors), enjoying the delicious vegetarian meals, stimulating conversations and the unusually lovely weather.

Our internationally renowned lecturers included Satish Kumar, Stephan Harding, David Orr and Rob Hopkins. All participants, with a sense of common purpose for being there, were accepted openly and treated as friends.

The College is near the Transition Town of Totnes which also provides powerful learning experiences in the art and craft of more sustainable living. It was truly inspiring to be a part of an institution that is a lighthouse for all of us in learning to live more sustainably. It was so inspiring, that in order to remind myself daily of the commitment to sustainability, I have continued the vegetarian lifestyle.

Sue Coad

If you want to find out more:

Schumacher College - <http://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/>

Totnes as a Transition Town - <http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org/>

Satish Kumar - <http://www.resurgence.org/satish-kumar/>

Stephan Harding - <http://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/staff/stephan-harding>

David Orr - <http://www.postcarbon.org/person/36209-david-orr>

Rob Hopkins - <http://transitionculture.org/about/>



The participants in our short-course - Owen is second from left in second row and I am second from left on bottom row.

The countries represented here are the United Kingdom, Spain, Switzerland, Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, USA, India, Australia, Belgium, Slovakia and Sweden.

The great challenge of our time is to build and nurture sustainable communities ...The first step in this endeavor is to understand the principles of organisation that ecosystems have developed to sustain the web of life. This understanding is what we call ecological literacy. Teaching this ecological knowledge will be the most important role of education in this century. Fritjof Capra
