

People, Place and Purpose: Place-based Approaches to Ecological Citizenship

Abstract

Humanity faces serious challenges in the coming decades: climate change, biodiversity loss, growing inequality, and more. These systemic global crises cannot be tackled in isolation because they are all interconnected. But our systems are not fit enough to deliver a good balance of environmental and social goals.

We have a collection of rules and norms that reward some behaviours and punish others. In their current form, our systems seem to incentivise overconsumption, degrade communal bonds, and destroy natural wealth. But this is not inevitable or unavoidable; it is simply how our socio-economic structures have evolved to operate.

The researchers in this project believe that place-based approaches and community engaged arts practices around the theme of sustainability, can enable a growing network of ecological citizens. In this paper we will explore how through creative arts practices, sharing ideas, thoughts, and questions and learning from best practices at a local, national, and international level from a variety of partners can create sustenance for a community-based network. Ways of building a network of new and existing place-based arts research and knowledge exchange which has the potential to include children and young people in the decision-making process, will be considered. We will consider how examples with embedded creative practice, such as community growers/larders/kitchens, forest schools etc., support partnership working within place-based projects. We will also discuss a people-centred approach to helping stakeholders, children, and young people, to make transitional choices, mitigate against negative consequences and empower local agency, in different localities. We will aim to show how diverse groups of people can begin to make impactful change through for example, community-focused approaches and community-led practices, activism and collective learning, advocacy, and design thinking in projects.

We are defining ecological citizenship as accessible activities and skills which establish sustainable practice(s) and/or address ecological inequalities. This is also encompassed in our approach to the project, to our contextual surroundings, materials we use (and more) as an act of citizenship towards each other and the ecosystem.

329 words

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232 words