



One voice

UK creative thinking informs an international programme to guide policy on climate change and rapid urbanisation.

“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline”

The former United Nations secretary-general, Mr Kofi Annan, to a world conference of youth ministers in Lisbon, Portugal in 1998

Place on Earth is a new global initiative which aims to give young men and women around the world a collective voice through the UN Habitat programmes on the issues of climate change, urban governance and rapid urbanisation. The project is being developed and delivered through a new collaboration between London based Haring Woods Associates and UN Habitat.

The challenge

This ‘century of the city’ will see 2.2 billion people populating the cities and over 95% of these people will be absorbed into major cities.

Young people aged 15 to 25 represent a potential worldwide force of three billion people. Rural-urban migration and the geographical

mobility of young people make working with youth a complex process.

The economic, cultural and social impacts of climate change and rapid urbanisation are to most people incomprehensibly complex. In this time of growing mistrust for the systems and individuals who guide and govern our nations and cities, young people in particular are struggling to see their way forward and plan a confident future. With the population of young people higher than ever before, it seems obvious that this massive power should be mobilised to influence and implement solutions to every major issue the world faces today.

Responding to this urgent need to provide young people with a collective and informed voice about the issues of climate change and rapid

urbanisation at key UN summits, the UN Habitat programme invited Haring Woods Associates to work in partnership to devise and implement a new youth led initiative.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. It is the only UN agency which is mandated to work directly with municipalities. UN Habitat is based in the United Nations office in Nairobi within the compound that houses over 15 regional offices including UN Environment Programme, UNESCO, UNICEF and many more.

A way forward

Place on Earth builds on the experience of two HWA methodologies, CONNECT and Perception AREA, which have been developed with and supported by UK regional, cultural and development agencies, local authorities, artists and arts organisations. In particular from funding and support from Arts Council England, London and East, the Green Heart Partnership initiative (now in its fifth year) and Perception Peterborough.

CONNECT works towards a true democratic partnership through interdisciplinary teams of creative



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visioning exercise in September 2008, which brought together over 50 key local representatives partners and international creative thinkers to develop innovative approaches to the challenges and opportunities facing Peterborough through its ambitious growth agenda.

The delivery

Fundamental to the Place on Earth process is the positioning of art as a delivery mechanism for change and empowerment. Why the arts? Because they are universal; because they deal with daily experience in a transforming way; because artists question the way we look at the world; and offer different explanations of that world.

Place on Earth will use arts and culture as the triggers to capture and communicate the voice of youth, to stimulate discussion, awareness and responsibility on the key issues of climate change and rapid urbanisation. As such the site specific culture in which each project develops will be a basis for local ownership, which is an integral element of the methodology's earlier success stories.

The project under the tutelage and instruction of the HWA team, will train young people in the selected cities, and give them an intellectual and practical tool with which they can establish similar programmes in their own community, wherever that community may be, large or small, irrespective of the nation.

As these methodologies have been replicated to work successfully in communities, towns and cities in the UK, they will now be applied to locations around the world. The aim is to produce a Place on Earth pilot programme through 2009, with a major launch at COP 15 in Copenhagen in December and the main programme facilitated through January 2012, in time to translate the outcomes for maximum impact at the proposed world summit in Brazil. We are currently considering working with four to six cities including London, Tirana, Albania; Kampala, Uganda; Arendal, Norway; and Damascus, Syria for the pilot, with a minimum 30 cities through 2012.

The virtual world through internet and mobile phones provides an unprecedented communications system for knowledge sharing, project showcases and social networking, all geared to achieving that critical mass

which will bring the needs of young people directly to the UN.

Levelling the playing field

Place on Earth is about creating a level playing field which we see as a prerequisite for just, equitable and sustainable urban development to take place. This level playing field does not exist today, a situation that is detrimental to global democracy, causing a growing insecurity, political volatility and increasing violence. There is a growing 'trust deficit' between civil society and official processes that discourages NGO's and in particular youth to participate actively in intergovernmental

processes. At the same time, policy and strategy development needs to be informed by a better understanding of how young people see these complex issues of adaptation and mitigation.

Place on Earth aims to create this crucial level playing field to give young people an active and participatory role anchored in their own reality, empowering them to promote their concerns, and more skillfully negotiate these concerns in intergovernmental forums.

For more information and to get involved visit www.haringwoods.com and follow the links to Place on Earth, or www.greenheartpartnership.org or www.unhabitat.org.



L to R. Subramonia Ananthakrishnan, chief, Partners and Youth section, UN Habitat; Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, HWA, environmental specialist; Michael Woods, HWA senior partner; Eileen Haring Woods, HWA senior partner



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practitioners and public sector professionals (local government officers; planning, design, environment, sustainability, diversity, gender, the arts, culture and heritage). Team projects range from advising on public sector policy, cultural initiatives visioning of cities and through to the design and use of parks and open spaces, community buildings, schools and libraries, museums, galleries and theatres.

Developed over five years, Perception AREA is a successful model of public engagement, which works with artists to devise non-confrontational social situations to capture the perceptions of target individuals and groups. The participatory process recognises each member of the community as a valuable stakeholder. It successfully motivates people to have an equal opportunity to inform the decision makers, which results in a sense of citizenship, cooperation, and trust for the common good. Teams share knowledge, educate, inspire and mentor, working to identify new links between public sector responsibilities of governance, private sector commercial imperatives and the quality of life for the citizen.

The Green Heart Partnership has benefited greatly from this methodology and extensive documentation is available through www.greenheartpartnership.org. Perception Peterborough was an 18 month initiative, culminating in a