



What are the challenges facing society if we are to create sustainable urban environments? And how can we address them? In a unique approach to this debate, **ISSUES** asked five distinguished panellists to introduce a clip chosen from the ITN Source broadcast footage provider to spark off their discussion of the **Brave New City**. The panel then debated the issues raised before taking questions from the audience.

The challenges raised:

- How to ensure joined-up, multidisciplinary thinking and action is adopted in order to create a sustainable urban environment.
- The need for sustainable masterplans to have 'gaps' that allow for organic project growth, along with the contribution and consent of the people for whom they are intended.
- The adoption of Social Design in new building and regeneration so that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.
- The desire for researchers, practitioners and policy makers to find a new model for sharing and disseminating knowledge in an increasingly interconnected world.
- The reality that energy provision and use will be turned on its head in the cities and towns of the future.

The challenges and how the SUE programme works to address them.

Joined-up, multidisciplinary thinking and action is the only way to create a sustainable future, argued **Peter Heath of global engineering firm Atkins** at Brave New City London. Donning the costume of cowboy hat and waistcoat to introduce his clip about line dancing, Heath argued that a global 'carbon critical line dance' must take place in which the whole planet would have to learn new, complex skills and ways of working together to create a sustainable future.



Peter Heath, Atkins

Mr Heath suggested that the UK, and specifically London, would have to take the lead in building sustainable urban centres and by taking risks with innovative ideas for energy generation and provision, high density living and green building. He implored academics and industry thinkers to continue to generate 'brave new ideas' that would inspire brave political and policy decisions. For Heath the solution to building a sustainable future stemmed from people coming together across all skills, ages and abilities.

SUE Challenges:

- Multidisciplinary working
- Low carbon buildings, design and lifestyles
- Green buildings
- High density living

Search SUE:

Use the www.suegateway.org to find out how SUE consortia work to address these challenges.

- **Multidisciplinary working – search...** all consortia
SUE has advocated and implemented a multidisciplinary approach to tackling the issues of the Sustainable Urban Environment.
SUE is also proud to have created a new generation of 'multidisciplinary-native' researchers.
- **Low carbon buildings and lifestyles – search...**CITYFORM, Vivacity2020, IDCOP, SUEMOT, DISTILLATE, FUTURES, SOLUTIONS, SUBRIM, 4M, ReVISIONS, Urban Futures, URSULA, SURegen, ESR, SuScit, InSITU
- **Green buildings – search...**CITYFORM, IDCOP, PUrE, PUrE Intrawise
- **High density living – search...**Vivacity2020, SUEWASTE, WAND, Urban Futures

Joined up thinking was also highlighted by the government's first **Chief Construction Advisor, Paul Morrell** in his discussion of a sustainable future. Mr Morrell showed a film of the Easterhouse estate clearances in Glasgow. The immediate solution for the 'problem' of bad design on these estates was to completely sweep them away and move the communities they had housed to buildings that would themselves be demolished 20 years later. Morrell argued that this kind of catch-all masterplan could be harmful, despite their good intentions.

He said he was 'troubled by the visions of the sustainable city that arrive off drawing boards' and have the potential to repeat the mistakes of the past by moving people from unacceptable conditions, straight into others. Morrell instead proposed masterplanning that embraced incompleteness, was open to natural evolution and engaged its dwellers in creating sustainable communities.

Fellow panellist **Geoff Mulgan, founder of think tank Demos and now Director of the Young Foundation**, agreed in questioning what he termed a ‘total vision’ imposed on individuals by professionals. He insisted that the consent and involvement of the people who live in these environments were key to building sustainable places and communities.



Mr Mulgan also chose a notorious inner city estate for his own clip choice. Originally seen as a good example of high-density inner city housing, Broadwater Farm became a place of fear and danger as its design gave way to crime and nightmarish living conditions. Its residents made the ultimate expression of discontent with the planners and designers by setting it on fire in the 1980s.

However Mr Mulgan was also keen to draw attention to the positive aspects of Broadwater’s regeneration in the 90s. He argued that the focus on social design and a move to mixed use spaces once more made Broadwater a desirable place to live and that this inclusive design method was an important lesson to be learnt and not forgotten.

Returning to Paul Morrell’s idea of the incomplete masterplan, he argued that even the most attractive and well planned design must go with ‘the grain of human nature’ and allow a degree of organic growth. He said concluded that ‘neglecting social design was not only bad for the people that live there but bad for the investors too’.

SUE Challenges:

- Public engagement for building and regeneration decisions
- Inclusive design
- Toolkits for regeneration and development decisions
- Learning from and not repeating the mistakes of the past

Search SUE:

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- **Public engagement for building and regeneration decisions – search...** INSITU, ESR, SUSCIT, SURegen, AUNTSUE
- **Inclusive design – search...** AUNTSUE, Vivacity2020, DISTILLATE, ReVISIONS, Futures, URSULA, Urban Futures, SURegen, INSITU, ESR, SUSCIT
- **Toolkits for regeneration and development decisions – search...** Vivacity2020, CIYFORM, ReVISIONS, DISTILLATE, SOLUTIONS, SUEMOT, IDCOP, FUTURES, PuRE, SUEMOT, 4M, SURegen
- **Learning from and not repeating the mistakes of the past – search...**all consortia

Representing the SUE programme on the panel, Professor Peter Guthrie, who is co-principal investigator for ISSUES (Implementation Strategies for Sustainable Urban Environment Systems) was keen to highlight the importance of knowledge among researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the sustainability sector.



Stanley Unwin speaking 'Unwinese'

Using a clip of the comedian Stanley Unwin speaking 'Unwinese' to exemplify his point, Professor Guthrie explained that messages which seem obvious to the person giving that message can often be completely unfathomable to those receiving it. He argued that in order to secure a sustainable way of living in the future, all parties to the debate must ensure they are speaking a language that everyone can understand.

Professor Guthrie insisted that the current methods available for researchers and policy makers to share information needed critical attention to improve. He argued that the change could not be incremental and instead a brand new model for sharing and disseminating knowledge must be found to suit the needs of an increasingly interconnected world.

SUE Challenges:

- Knowledge Transfer and Knowledge Exchange

Search SUE:

- **ISSUES** - ISSUES (Implementation Strategies for Sustainable Urban Environment Systems) is the knowledge transfer arm of SUE. ISSUES works to ensure that the findings from research work carried out by the SUE consortia are understood and used by policy makers, practitioners and other end-users. www.urbansustainabilityexchange.org.uk.

Introducing a film about a house that had been built upside-down, **Martin Powell, Director of Projects at the London Development Agency**, insisted that in order to create a sustainable future, energy provision and use, like the house in the film, must be turned on its head, putting it back in the hands of the user. Powell said: 'People are going to have to think about energy like they never have before. Prices are going to rocket and it is up to engineers, designers and planners to address this reality'.

The LDA's projects director lamented a time when Britain was a nation where 'just enough, was enough' and argued that turning building stock and houses into mini power stations by harnessing solar energy would allow homeowners to generate and even sell-on their own energy.

Powell's fellow panellist Peter Guthrie responded by sharing his nervousness of the seduction of solar potential 'where we might end up in a situation where homeowners are exporting energy that no one wants.' He argued instead for larger scale renewable energy projects and maintaining focus on reducing energy demand and working towards a low carbon lifestyle.



Geoff Mulgan also highlighted the problems of ensuring energy users and homeowners 'bought in' to the new schemes and reiterated the need to ensure new projects and building schemes were supported by inclusive social investigation and design.

SUE Challenges:

- Energy provision and use
- Low carbon building, design and lifestyles
- Inclusive design

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- **Energy provision and use** – search...FUTURES, SUEMOT, CITYFORM, Vivacity2020, IDCOP, SUEWASTE, WaND, 4M, Urban Futures,
- **Low carbon buildings, design and lifestyles** – search...CITYFORM, Vivacity2020, IDCOP, SUEMOT, DISTILLATE, FUTURES, SOLUTIONS, SUBRIM, 4M, ReVISIONS, Urban Futures, URSULA, SURegen, ESR, SuScit, InSITU
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The discussion ended with questions posed by the audience of delegates from across the urban design, building, architecture, research, journalism and environment sectors.

If you have a specific question about an aspect of SUE that relates to the Brave New City event, either use the SUEGallery to find the relevant expert (www.suegallery.org) or contact Annabel (annabel.cooper@sistech.co.uk) for assistance.

Use the SUE Gateway (www.suegateway.org), the one-stop search tool for £38m of Sustainable Urban Environment research, to find the research, facts and tools relevant to you.