

Placemaking, Prosperity & the Local Green Economy

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Living Space Project is a think tank and projects hub for inclusive and collaborative urban placemaking, with a focus on green spaces, local enterprise and diverse community engagement. July 2014

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Summary

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Living Space Project set up the *Academy for Greener Jobs and Skills*, supported by the *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation*, to see how greener jobs could be fair and accessible to people living in London, one of the most diverse cities in the world. Our findings are centred around placemaking and its potential to use community-level processes to facilitate a greener local economy. The Academy has found that:

- There is potential for green jobs to extend well beyond the traditional low carbon and energy efficient careers – they can, and should, include all parts of a local economy.
- Building a local green economy needs to attend to community wellbeing and participation, and to social equity, especially at neighbourhood level.
- People understand that green jobs are a central part of making a neighbourhood a place where someone wants to live, work and play – this broadens the idea of a

successful economy to one that embraces ‘prosperity of place’.

- Placemaking should go beyond design and focus on collaborative processes that create prosperity through greener local economies.

Future work by Living Space Project will focus on examining how prosperity and a greener economy can happen at a local level through collaborative placemaking.

1 SETTING THE SCENE: PLACEMAKING, PROSPERITY AND GREEN JOBS

Living Space Project began this story with an investigation into the greener economy and skills in London. What we found was an agenda that centred around placemaking and its potential to act as a hub for a green economy at local level. The work is underpinned by three themes: placemaking, prosperity and green jobs. We describe each of these briefly in this section.

Placemaking helps to shape and define local urban environments to create urban places and green spaces for people to live, work, play and thrive in.. Good placemaking involves much more than design skills: it requires an in-depth understanding of the local economy, environment and society to help create vibrant and prosperous communities and neighbourhoods.

Prosperity is generally understood as a way of describing affluence and monetary wealth. However, it is not only about material security gained by goods and services, or a description

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Skin Award winners - **Max Centini** (The Maximiliano Centini salon) and **Tony Jade Blunden** (London College of Beauty Therapy student)

Jo Fairley - Skin's patron, co-founder of Green & Blacks and author of the Green Beauty Bible

The Academy for Greener Jobs and Skills project advisory group - **Chris Church, Syed Amed, Graham Peterson, Emily Kirsch**

The London Greener Jobs Hub founding members - **Hannah Thomas** (Otesha), **James Alexander**

(formerly Global Action Group), **Graham Green** (Union College University/Greener Jobs Alliance), **Abdi Gas** (Deaf Unity)

Project Dirt, Lewisham College, and the London College of Beauty Therapy **Patrick Feehily, Richard Blakely, Clare Lawton**

of how much money is in a bank account. Prosperity has a broader meaning that is connected to community equality and wellbeing. This includes:

- The ability to participate in society
- Meaningful and fair-waged employment
- A healthy environment
- Inclusive and just communities.

Accessible green jobs are a crucial part of creating prosperity in a city such as London that is committed to a low carbon economy and equality.

Green jobs and skills

There is no single definition for what is meant by green jobs and skills (which are sometimes also called 'low carbon jobs' or 'resource efficiency jobs'). We've used the term in this report to generally mean jobs and skills that are focused on using less carbon and that have a direct or indirect impact on protecting the environment.

These jobs and skills are essential for remodeling the economy, enterprise and work towards a fair and just transition to a low carbon economy.

2 THE ACADEMY FOR GREENER JOBS AND SKILLS

The Academy for Greener Jobs and Skills was set up by Living Space Project in 2011, and supported by The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Our mission was to do two things:

- Support 'non green' sector transition into a green and fair economy
- Provide a green jobs hub across Greater London.

The aim was to run this new project to create green economy opportunities that support a just transition into a low-carbon green economy for everyone.

Our role has been to pool information and resources, develop policy and mobilise collective action on green jobs in the capital, and to support a call for a more strategic approach by a cross-London alliance.

The Academy started by setting up the first pan-London greener jobs hub run by, among others, the Otesha Project, Global Action Plan, The Greener Jobs Alliance and University and College Union (UCU). With the London College of Beauty Therapy and the support of the

London Green Jobs & Skills Partnership we set up Skin, the first London-based greener skills project for the hair and beauty sector.

The London Greener Jobs Hub (Green Works Hub)

The London Greener Jobs Hub operated forum for knowledge sharing on initiatives and research for fairer, greener jobs and training opportunities for a diverse multicultural work force. The Hub is now called the Green Works Hub provides the first pan London social media platform for all greener jobs and skills.

Skin

The Skin project's aim is to investigate with change makers from the hair and beauty industry: local colleges, trainees and salon owners, to test just how you green skills and jobs in a 'non green' sector. Hairdressers are in every neighbourhood and we wanted to see what green jobs meant for local businesses. Skin also acts as a 'case study' for how greening jobs can 'lift all boats'

When we set up the Academy we did not realise its potential scale or its ability to create a new way of thinking about the green economy and the connections to prosperity and local placemaking. It has become a hub for pilot projects, questions and ideas around these connections at the community level across London.

3 LESSONS

The Academy's work provides valuable insights for understanding the role of green jobs in a wider context of placemaking and prosperity at a local level.

Four ground rules for achieving prosperity through a local greener economy

1. Value placemaking as a core element of a fair transition to a greener local economy

Through the Academy's various projects we have learned that what non-traditional green economy jobs have in common is their connection to turning around and improving places and the things people value such as parks, local businesses, streets and neighbourhoods.

Places and spaces are an asset. They are a key foundation of London's economy. At a local level the cities, neighbourhoods, streets, parks and spaces between buildings develop social, economic and environmental capital. They are part and parcel of what makes resilient and prosperous communities.

The process of transforming places and making them better is not just about creating a smart

city but about building a humane city. Successful placemaking is as concerned with design as it is with access, enterprise and equity as measurable economic and social benefits.

2. Recognise greener skills as a crucial component of placemaking and local economies that create community prosperity and local resilience

Policy conversations around green jobs or a low carbon economy are often focused on how to create jobs in the sectors that could achieve substantial reductions in carbon emissions, such as renewable energy and low carbon efficiency. Of course, the skills required to do these kinds of jobs are crucial for a transitioning economy. But at a local level the Academy observed that the interest in, and conversations about, greener skills was in the context of developing better enterprise and skills to:

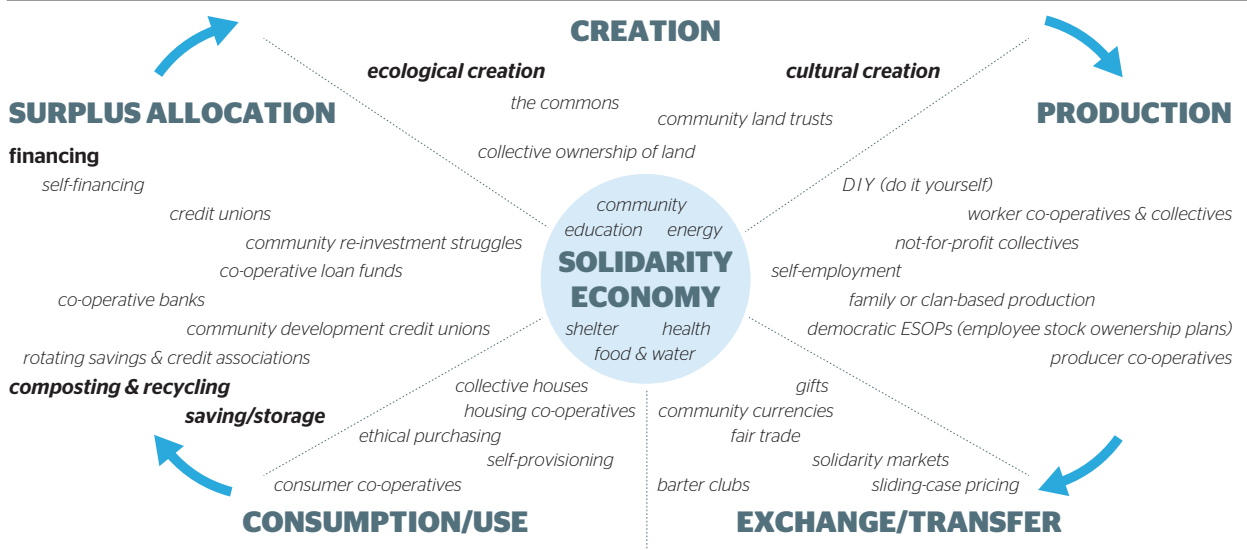
- Provide a neighbourhood with resources to support successful businesses
- Create and improve homes
- Develop education to equip people for a transition to a greener economy and towards a resilient, inclusive and fair community.

Prosperity at community level was about creating better places that encouraged an economy with services, businesses or learning for anyone in the locality. This might lead to a range of new enterprises such as urban farms, small scale food growing, bike repair cafes, green gym providers or the next Vidal Sassoon hairdresser.

3. Think beyond solar panels and urban design

A clear message from Living Space Project's Academy programme is that there is enthusiasm to embed our ambition to create thriving localities through placemaking that includes opportunities for training, business and enterprise.

But there are also concerns around equality and people's capacity to influence decision making about places in London. People want a thriving local economy that also encompasses local democracy and accessible decision making. Which Solidarity NYC has referred to this as the 'solidarity economy'. Economists Tim Jackson and Peter A Victor have suggested that this kind of economy provides the foundations for a green economy at a community level.*



We also saw elements of solidarity in The Academy Skin pilot project.

Skin worked with local hairdressers, the London College of Beauty Therapy, salon owners and trainees. This is a sector that predominantly employs women, often on low wages, and is hardly mentioned in conversations around the green economy.

What we found through the Greener Skills Hub conversations with local enterprises and skills providers was that people wanted to have conversations about efficiency and higher

profits. But they also had concerns around the need to green products and to lower their carbon footprint. These discussions were often happening in neighbourhoods with high deprivation. People often voiced a frustration that there was a lack of training or information on how to green their skills either as trainees or as qualified professionals. They felt unfairly locked out of the greener skills agenda.

Hair and beauty is not the only sector outside of the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) that wants to apply the principles and values of a green

*Solidarity NYC
(http://solidaritynyc.org/#/resources/the-basics/economyegg_web-3/)

economy to how it operates both as a service provider and as a consumer.

There are also the burgeoning independent micro- to small-scale enterprises that focus on food and growing, bike repairs, urban design, land management, and craft and design, and are selling anywhere from street markets to local high streets.

People increasingly recognise that prosperity at a local level means a green economy that has equal regard to greening skills in any job, profession or business that is part of the local economic landscape.

4. Adopt a collaborative approach

London has a number of plans to boost green growth and low carbon skills and training. Many of these plans focus on collaboration and leadership around STEM industries and skills.

But to foster a truly green economy then there needs to be opportunities across the range of sectors and skills. Leaders should adopt a bottom-up approach, utilising a community development framework, to ensure that the importance of community level skills are recognised in placemaking processes.

The diverse population of London is more likely to trust and invest in inclusive collaborative processes. Building this trust is crucial for fostering strong local economic networks. We found from conversations with trade unions, colleges, local authorities and community groups that collaboration on green jobs increased people's interests in local economies and take-up of further training. It also facilitated the co-production of placemaking projects on housing, the hair and beauty industry, energy efficiency, food growing and further education.

London Skills Partnership

The partnership was set up by Union Learn to engage unions, community groups and businesses to create a collaborative action plan to improve skills and jobs. Initially based in Lewisham, south London, the collaboration started with small meetings in local cafes that were open to the public. Over a short period the partnership had set up apprenticeships with a major construction company, run workshops on making solar panels, established gardening schemes and worked with Living Space Project's Academy Skin project to help green the popular local college hair and beauty training options.

The partnership is now a London-wide success and has leveraged in funding and investment opportunities for developing numerous training and advice initiatives informed by community transitions to a greener economy.

4 NEXT STEPS

We know placemaking and green jobs are not an end in themselves, but at a local community level are about a greener economy and developing a wider understanding of prosperity. So Living Space Project's next step is to continue collaborative understanding of some of the learning in this short report. We're also acting as a London-based knowledge hub for case studies and data on the following question.

How does prosperity and a greener economy happen at a local level through collaborative placemaking?

We would really welcome your help. If your organisation, company, project or community are keen to unlock local prosperity let us know at hello@livingspaceproject.com

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