Do Stuff: Sustainability vs. Progress

North Tea Power Cafe - December 2010
Reviewed by Mark Iddon , panel member

Do Stuff is the initiative of Manchester architect, Ric Frankland, and aims to be a series of events on the subjects of design and sustainability with the intention to 'listen - discuss - debate - Do!' and will take place on a bi-monthly basis.

The first event took place in December 2010 at the North Tea Power café, Tib Street, in Manchester's Northern Quarter, with a debate on the subject '**Sustainability vs. Progress**'.

North Tea Power is a café that prides itself on its tea, but also offers a range of coffees like the really nice and well presented Mocha that I enjoyed. It is a recently opened café and with its modest decoration and friendly patrons, is an unpretentious venue conducive to open and forthright debate.

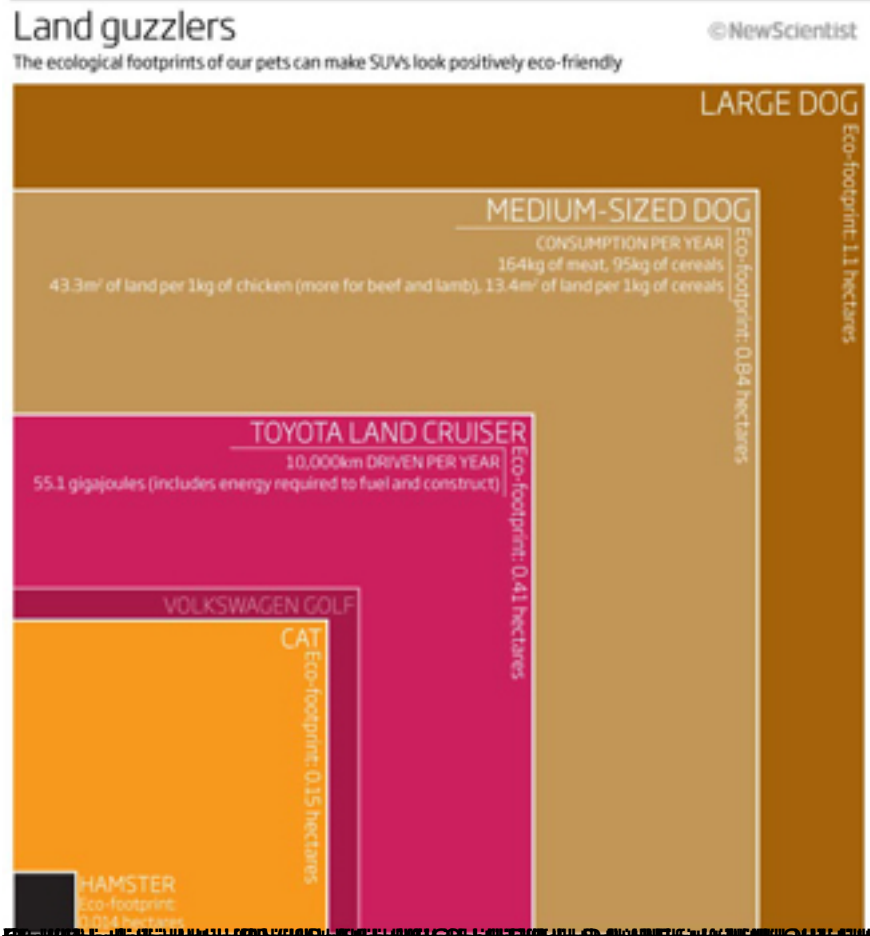
The host for the evening was Adnan Sarwar who introduced the debate with a short animation compiled by Ric Frankland called 'The story of Stuff' suggesting that the material economy may be in crisis due to the over-accumulation of 'stuff'. A diagram was also shown which illustrated the relationships between ecology, economy and social issues, such as recycling, energy production, and fair trade. This gave rise to questions as to the scale of solutions (individual vs.

global) required? Also, is it fashionable to be green or is human activity really killing the planet? What is the impact on progress, and do sustainable proposals inhibit progress?

The panel introduced themselves as;
Sara Darwin, an architect at ***Walker Simpson Architects***, and an enthusiastic proponent of sustainable architecture.
Mark Iddon, an architect and writer at ***Urbanization*** who is sceptical of the sustainability movement.
Paul Iddon, (no relation to Mark), a brand strategist at ***Kernal Global Ltd***, who is also an architect, and refuses to be categorised (pro or anti sustainability) but takes a common sense view.

Sara started the discussion with images illustrating some of the problems the world is facing at present, such as traffic congestion, increasing population of the world, pollution and waste disposal. Visuals of ‘BedZED’ housing, a zero carbon development for the Peabody trust, a glass house by the architect Greg Timberlake and a visitor centre by Walker Simpson Architects, were presented to show that sustainable architecture does not mean that buildings can’t be beautiful or elegant. The glass house incorporated discreet solar strips for energy production and the visitor centre incorporated straw bales to achieve a high standard of thermal insulation. Other slides indicated how wind turbines can be incorporated into the design of a building to compliment a contemporary form, rather than appearing like incompatible additions. Sara noted that although new houses achieve good standards of efficient energy distribution and thermal insulation performance, older houses were in need of upgrading to avoid haemorrhaging heat, which is wasted to the atmosphere.

[redacted]



[redacted]

[redacted] website [redacted] Facebook page [redacted]