

Stories of Change Project

Joe Smith

Most of my time at the moment is taken up with three research projects, the first being Quiet Sustainability. We're trying to work out why it is that so many people in post-socialist countries, Poland and the Czech Republic in our case study, are growing so much of their own fruit and vegetables. We call this quiet sustainability because they're just getting on with it, without any great hoo-hah about it being an environmental commitment. Around 40% of people are growing about 40% of their own fruit and veg and we think that's pretty remarkable.

The second project is called Earth in Vision and we are looking at 50 years of the BBC's environment archive, trying to make sense of how we came to think this way about global environmental change issues and the role of broadcasting in that.

And then there's the Stories of Change project, where I'm working with a very large team of academics and others to try and loosen up the public conversation about energy. Our goal is to try to remind society of the fact that humanity's relationship with energy has always been changing, it's always been very dynamic, and so we're just trying to loosen up the public imagination about energy in the present, which has got rather static around the theme of fossil fuels.

And then of course I am keeping going some of my work with media and environment, helping broadcasters and others to think about how they might cope with global environmental change issues, particularly climate change. I don't think that work will ever end, but I have to say just in the last six months I've seen some of the best media projects I've seen in a very long time, which gives me cause for hope.

And finally of course just now and then we find a little bit more resource and top up the content on Creative Climate. One of the things we try and do with Creative Climate is to get people to reveal whether they're feeling more optimistic or less as they look out across the next five or ten years. Well, I suspect I'm going to make a rather similar conclusion to the last time I did a diary, and that's that the natural environmental science of global environmental change is pointing to an incredibly serious situation and it's difficult to find the right language, the right pace of urgency in which to respond. But at the same time I look at so many examples of innovation, imagination, determination, all the way across the planet, and for those reasons I see plenty of reasons why I think there's a good chance that this is a problem we may well be able to fix.

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