

SYMPP - (18580) - YOUTH EFFICACY AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT: EDUCATION, YOUTH VOICE AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Short Abstract

The increasing recognition that the world is facing a climate emergency (Dzimirska et al. 2021) has prompted a surge in environmental activism that has spread globally (Wahlström et al. 2019; Walker 2020). Responding to these protests, many national governments have been eager to engage with activists to then lay down targets to reduce carbon emissions (Henn, Sloam and Nunes 2021). Although such citizen/elite engagement is evident at national and international levels (Giugni and Grasso 2015; Pickard 2019), we know considerably less about local-level interactions between (non-activist) citizens and powerholders concerning the climate emergency. This paper addresses this issue and considers young people's engagement with local environmental issues. The research is based on a project conducted in the Nottingham which is an interesting case study as it has a publicly declared ambition to become the UK's first carbon neutral city by 2028 (<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/cn2028>). A series of 11 deliberative focus groups were held with 35 young people aged 15-27, each facilitated by young community-based co-researchers. The findings suggest young people were very concerned about environmental issues yet lacked internal efficacy, feeling relatively uninformed about such matters. They also lacked external efficacy, investing little trust in national governments and global institutions to tackle the climate crisis. Instead, they felt that local-level initiatives and individual actions offered a possible pathway to address climate change, although education was key to increasing their knowledge, understanding and confidence to engage in environmentally-sustainable and carbon-reducing behaviours.

References

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