

Walking Tour of East London's unfamiliar green spaces:

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Introduction:

On Saturday 1st August, CPRE London supported by Drinking Ginger¹ held an exciting walking tour around some of East London's less known green spaces. Ten people, from a various ethnic backgrounds and ages undertook the tour exploring some of Hackney's hidden treasures. Three locations were visited including Cordwainers Grow in London Fields; Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, situated next to Kingsland High Street and King Henry's Walk Garden. At each location, a survey was conducted, recording people's experiences in the space and their thoughts on the *urban* tranquillity of the site.

1) Cordwainers Grow:

First stop on the walking tour was Cordwainers Grow - a garden hidden in a small enclosed space besides the London College of Fashion in Hackney. Many volunteers have helped to transform the previously derelict site into a vibrant, multifunctional space. Speaking with the guest speaker Natalie Mady, numerous workshops are held throughout the year, highlighting unconventional uses of the space. Hollyhock, madder and lavender are some of the garden's wild treasures; every now and then, herbal tea making sessions held, making use these herbs which grow abundantly in the space. Natalie also mentioned that Cordwainers' Grow also has close relationship with the London College of Fashion; textiles students regularly visit the garden, extracting natural dyes from an assortment of herbs to colour their self - made fashion garments.

Reflecting upon the results of the urban tranquillity survey, many of the walkers in the guided group liked the multi-functional aspect of the space. In addition to this, many liked the "*obscurity*" and seclusion of the garden from the surrounding city environment. One person felt that the dense, overgrown vegetation in pockets of the space creates this illusion. In the questionnaire, a few also noted that they felt "*content*" by simply seeing the presence of "*lush greenery*" in the space or by simply seeing bees and butterflies (Figure 1).

¹ Drinking Ginger is a Community Interest Company that promotes London's green spaces and England's National Parks

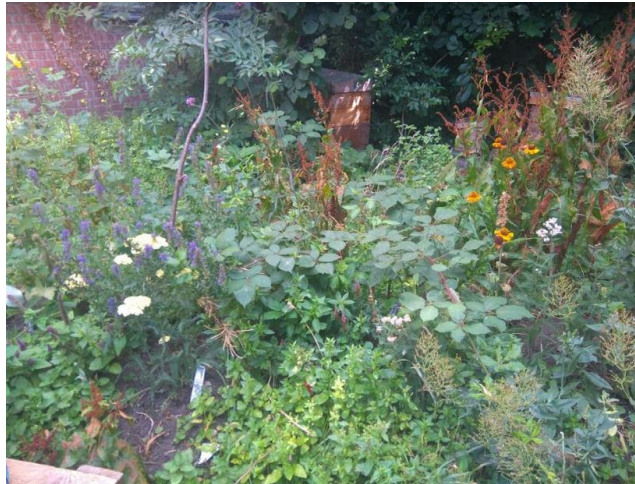


Figure 1: Wild vegetation growing untamed in spots of Cordwainers Grow, London Fields (CPRE London, 2015).

Looking away from elements of the space which received positive feedback, a few members of the guided group felt that the noise from ongoing traffic on Mare Street and music from a gym situated nearby impacted the tranquillity of the space. One person, however, contradicted this view stating that the ambient noise from the surroundings adds an “urban feel” to the green space. Reviewing all of the survey responses, the urban soundscape had a minor effect on people’s enjoyment of Cordwainer’s Grow. ***Eight*** of the ten people who attended the tour considered revisiting the garden and ***nine*** people stated that they would happily promote this space to others. These results are interesting considering that *no one* was aware of the green space, prior to the tour. More importantly, Cordwainers Grow was scored quite highly by the guided group, receiving 7 out of 10² on the urban tranquillity assessment.

2) Dalston Eastern Curve Garden:

The second location on the walking tour was Dalston Eastern Curve Garden. Previously an abandoned part of a railway track near Dalston Junction train station, this site over the past few years, has evolved into an idyllic, lively space for the community’s residents to relax in. Like Cordwainers Grow a plethora of activities, inclusive of the young and old, are arranged in the space. Shadow lantern making in the autumn, organic cooking classes in the summer and African Tango dance sessions are a few of the many. Reflecting upon the results of the urban tranquillity survey, most of the walkers praised the urban design and finer aesthetics of the space (Figure 2); some people felt that pavilion and seating areas peppered around different corners of the space helped to provide a relaxing environment. One respondent in particular felt that the layout enabled you to “comfortably linger” through the space.

² Tranquillity assessment scores : 1= Not tranquil 10= Very Tranquil



Figure 2: One of the pathways leading through Dalston Eastern Curve Garden (CPRE London, 2015).

Along with the creative layout, many liked the abundance of facilities that the garden has to offer: this includes an outdoor organic café, a children’s playground, outdoor toilets and free access to Wi-Fi. In the urban tranquillity survey, a few of the responses suggested that array of facilities offered by Dalston Eastern Curve added to the “pleasant” experience of the space. Speaking with the community organiser Marie Murray, a lot of people visit the space; although this is a positive, the excessive visitor numbers can lead to the site becoming overcrowded. Despite her mentioning this, the survey results revealed that most of guided tour group still felt the space is a “great place” for socialising and community integration (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Guest Speaker Marie Murray discussing the history and successes of Dalston Eastern Curve Garden (Drinking Ginger, 2015).

Similarly to Cordwainers Grow, Dalston Eastern Curve Garden also received a high score for its urban tranquillity (8 out of 10). Moreover, all **ten** respondents said that they would consider revisiting the location **and** recommend the space to others. Interestingly, the survey results also showed that *two* out of the ten people who attended the tour (and lived in the locality) were aware of the garden's existence. Perhaps, this indicates that there is lack of advertisement around newer, smaller scale urban green spaces.

3) King Henry's Walk Garden:

After Dalston Eastern Curve, the final location visited was King Henry's Walk Garden. Reflecting upon responses in the urban tranquillity questionnaire, many of the walkers loved the spaciousness of the site along with the "*formality*" of the layout. Complete with a dense woodland, a fruit forest and lots of miniature allotments, the space allows you to freely explore its paths. Analysing the questionnaire responses, one respondent stated that "*the lushness of the space creates a sense of wilderness*"; another person thought that the stillness of the site added to the tranquillity. On the other hand, the woodland and café area, were seen as less tranquil aspects of the space. Two people stated that the the "*dark*" and "*slightly confined*" nature of the woodland slightly affected their enjoyment of the space (Figure 4).

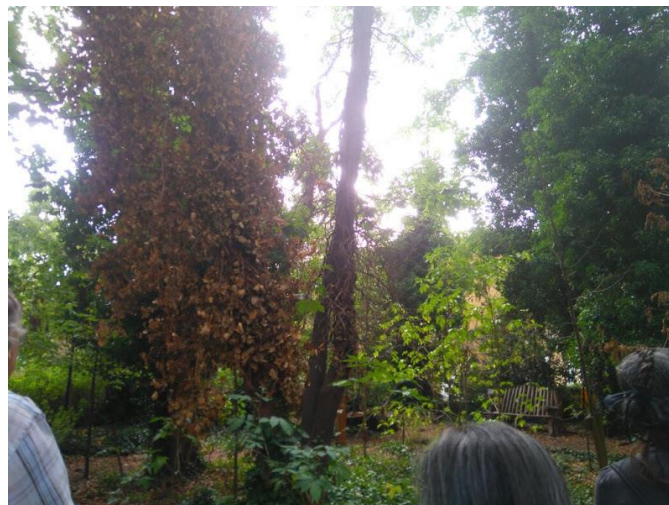


Figure 4: Mini woodland area in King Henry's Walk Garden, Islington (CPRE London, 2015).

Like the other gardens, many of the tour attendees were inspired by its multifunctional use of King Henry's Walk garden. Numerous activities including Mediterranean gardening, tandoori cooking classes and mono-printing (using flowers and plants peppered around the garden) are hosted throughout the year. Speaking to the community organiser, Nicola Freshwater, local schools come in the summer to use the garden as a theatrical stage for plays like a Midsummer Night's Dream. Along with the other two urban green spaces, King Henry's Walk Garden received a moderately high

tranquillity score (8 out of 10). **Seven** out of the ten respondents said they would consider visiting the location again, with **eight** people stating that they would recommend the garden to others. Once again, not many of respondents (only one person) were aware of this site. Like Dalston Eastern Curve, there may be a lack of promotion by the council of such spaces.

Conclusion:

Collating all questionnaire data, it is evident that there are different perceptions of urban tranquillity. Looking at the results for question one in Section one of the survey, most of the respondents felt that **“aesthetically pleasing design”** and **“rich biodiversity”** are the most important features which contributes to the tranquillity of an area. The word cloud in Figure 5 summaries elements of all three green spaces that people thought were tranquil. On the opposite side of spectrum, **“anti – social behaviour”**, **“an unclean environment from littering and/or dog fouling”** and **“traffic and / or other noise”** were noted as the main features preventing an urban area from being tranquil; this data was obtained from the third question in Section one of the questionnaire. The word cloud in Figure 6 summarises elements of all three green spaces that people thought were less tranquil.



Figure 5: Word cloud summarising aspects of the three green spaces which people thought were tranquil (data obtained from questions 2, 9 and 16 in section two of tranquillity survey³). The larger the font size, the greater the frequency of that particular word in the survey responses and vice versa (Word It out Cloud Generator, 2015).

³ See questionnaire template at the end of this report.



Figure 6: Word cloud summarising elements of the three green spaces which people thought were less tranquil (data obtained from questions 3, 10 and 17 in the second section of the tranquillity survey). The larger the font size, the greater the frequency of that particular word in the survey responses and vice versa (Word It out Cloud Generator, 2015).

More importantly, the results shows that a majority of people in the tour guided group were unaware of these three green spaces within Hackney, despite scoring the sites highly on the urban tranquillity scale. Perhaps, this implies that more money needs to be invested in the promotion of such spaces which are of fundamental value to the community.

Additional Information about spaces visited during the tour:

Cordwainers Grow:

Address: 182 Mare St, London E8, UK

Website Link: <http://www.cordwainersgrow.org.uk/>

Dalston Eastern Curve Garden:

Address: 13 Dalston Ln, London E8 3DF

Website Link: <http://dalstongarden.org/>

King Henry's Walk Garden:

Address: Mildmay Ward, London N1 4NX, UK

Website Link: <http://www.khwgarden.org.uk/>

Report References:

MacFarlane, R., Haggett, C., Fuller, D., Dunsford, H. and Carlisle, B. (2004). *Tranquillity Mapping: developing a robust methodology for planning support*, Report to the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Countryside Agency, North East Assembly, Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Northumberland National Park Authority and Durham County Council, Centre for Environmental & Spatial Analysis, Northumbria University, p 37, 38 & 39

(Question in the questionnaire were adapted from this source).

Worditout.com,. (2015). *Make a word cloud - WordItOut*. Retrieved 12 August 2015, from <http://worditout.com/word-cloud/make-a-new-one>

Questionnaire Template:

Urban Tranquillity Survey:



Name: _____

Gender: M/F (Please circle)

Age (Please circle): 15 -19 20 – 29 30 -39 40- 49 50-59 60+ Prefer not to state

Section one: Defining urban tranquillity

1) Looking at the list below, what feature(s) do you think make an urban area tranquil?

Please tick the option(s) that may apply

- Scenic views
- Aesthetically pleasing design
- Open and spacious environment
- Pleasant, natural smells
- Rich biodiversity
- Quiet
- Not too crowded
- Mixed activities in the area (social: eating/drinking , festivals /concerts recreational: cycling, swimming yoga, gardening)
- Other (Please State) _____

2) In relation to the question one, please state the **three most** important features which make an urban area tranquil?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

3) Looking at the list below, what feature(s) do you think **prevents** an urban area from being tranquil? *Please tick the option(s) that may apply*

- Vandalism/graffiti
- Traffic/ or other noise
- Overcrowded

- Unclean environment from littering and/or dog-fouling
- Unpleasant odours
- High rise development
- Anti-social behaviour
- Poor lighting at night time
- Too much CCTV surveillance
- Lack of facilities i.e. toilets, information centre
- Lack of social activities
- Poor maintenance of space and equipment
- Other (Please state) _____

4) In relation to question three, please state the **three most** important features resulting in an urban area **not** being tranquil.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

5) To what extent does tranquillity affect your enjoyment of a green space on a scale of 1 (does not affect my enjoyment) to 10 (strongly affects my enjoyment)?

Please circle a number from the scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1= Does not at all affect my enjoyment					10 = strongly affects my enjoyment				

21) Would you promote this green space to others?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Section 3: Evaluation

Please read the statements below and tick as appropriate.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The tour was well organised.					
The tour was appropriately timed.					
The activities were engaging and interactive.					
The guest speakers were informative.					

1) Would you participate in a tour similar to this again?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

2) How did you find out about this event?

- Social Networking site i.e Facebook, Twitter...
- Through friends/family
- Member of CPRE London
- Other (Please state) _____

3) Would you like CPRE London to contact you about other future events/campaigns?

- Yes
- No

If "yes" was ticked, please state your email address/mobile number below:

Email address: _____

Mobile number: _____

4) Any additional comments?

Thank you for completing this survey!