

Executive Summary of Thesis, *Cascading Public Engagement with the Landscapes of HS2*

This doctoral thesis proposes a methodology for *cascading public engagement* with landscape, based on my three-year action research project in the rural parish of Ashley, adjacent to Manchester Airport. I describe possible scenarios of effective cascading engagement, and review evidence from Ashley in order to suggest how such an exponential increase in public involvement might be triggered. These findings aim to inform the engagement strategies of government bodies and third sector organisations with responsibility for major landscape decisions.

The study is grounded in a view of landscape as a continually changing, emergent and complex entity, which requires suitably responsive engagement. This is particularly relevant to projects with long lifespans, such as HS2. It examines HS2 Ltd's engagement activities and the associated parliamentary procedures, in order to gain some insight in to the challenges for both the company and inhabitants of rural places.

Of particular concern has been the primacy of qualitative, lived and embodied landscape knowledge, as held by local people. I discuss how best to access this knowledge, and why it should be valued. Walking the landscape with inhabitants has been a significant method, proving valuable in moving from methodology to strategic recommendations for achieving non-linear engagement. I consider how small disturbances in landscape systems can have huge effects, and apply this thinking to how small disturbances might catalyse large-scale engagement with landscape.

I have experimented with a variety of engagement methods to gather local knowledge from inhabitants who are anticipating the construction of the railway in Ashley. This includes sustained involvement in Neighbourhood Planning, which I found to be poorly suited to an emergent context at the present time. It is unlikely to provide sufficient response to the challenges faced by large areas of countryside along the HS2 route.

Cascading public engagement could be harnessed to inform landscape decisions which are less influenced by the commercial and political vested interests that, in the wake of HS2, could potentially determine the future landscapes of rural Britain. This thesis is about how to change HS2 Ltd's perception of inhabitants and places, and from there to work out a way that the infrastructure project can coexist with people, as they take a leading role in minimising detriment and maximising benefit to their landscapes. The desired outcome for such flourishing engagement would be that it *makes* policy and *shapes* landscape, rather than simply being subject to legislation.