



Creating an Urban Manifesto

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AIM OF ACTIVITY

In this activity, students apply their theoretical learning about rights to the city and their own experiences of living in a city (Brighton for most Sussex students at that point) to create a manifesto for how to make Brighton more equitable, plural and sustain-able. This activity encourages learning by doing - instead of students discussing in the abstract how cities could be transformed, they work through how this could happen in the specific case of Brighton.

I use this activity during a three hour workshop at the beginning of a final undergraduate module on Urban Futures. It can be used in any course where students learn about urban issues, such as geography, anthropology, international development, sociology and others.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

1. Becoming a reflective urban dweller (pre-activity)

I set this task the week before the urban manifesto workshop. For that week, I asked students to pay more attention to their daily routines, travels and interactions in Brighton and how they felt about certain places, what they like/dislike about the city etc. I also asked them to create an artefact that would reflect their lives in the city. This could be a found or built object, a photo or picture, a short creative piece of writing, a doodle, a map or anything else creative.

The second time I was teaching this module, it was remotely during the COVID-pandemic. I adjusted the exercise to allow students to reflect on the changes their lives had undergone and to reminisce or mourn, if they wanted to. I invited students to remember what their lives in Brighton were like before COVID, the routines, rituals and encounters that had shaped their daily rhythms.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

2. Explain: What is a manifesto?

At the beginning of the workshop, I briefly explained manifestos as statement of ideals and intentions, setting out beliefs, aims, policies and visions. The aim of manifestos is to make your readers feel something, such as hope, excitement and curiosity, and ideally wanting to join you in making your vision a reality. Manifestos are emotive artefacts, so thinking about how ideas are represented is also important. I also shared three (urban) manifesto examples with students to give them an idea of what manifestos can look like.

If time permits, a short group discussions of students' own encounters with manifestos could follow.

3. Introduce yourself as an urban dweller to your co-creators

I randomly selected students into groups of 3 or 4 for the manifesto activity and asked them to introduce themselves to their fellow group members by way of their artefacts.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

4. Create Your Manifesto

I gave students a template as a starting point for their manifesto and asked them to incorporate what they have learned in the readings and class discussions about what makes a good and equitable city. I also asked them to bring in their own experiences of living in Brighton and to draw on ideas from the policy document.

- **We believe** - what are some fundamental principles you believe are important for Brighton as a livable city?
- **We envision** - here articulate your vision for how life in Brighton could be made more equitable and inclusive
- **We are committed to** - what actions do you suggest to take and how will you motivate the readers of your manifesto to join you?

During in-class teaching, I gave each group a sheet of paper, in a color of their choice, on which they had to create their manifesto. This showed my expectation that they would produce a physical manifestation of their discussions.

5. Debrief and Gallery Walk

During in-person teaching, I finished the activity with a gallery walk where students placed their manifestos and artefacts on their tables. Student then took turns to visit each other's tables, explain their creations and answer questions. In on-line teaching, the manifestos were shared on a padlet.

READING SUGGESTIONS

These are the readings my students do for the classes connected to the activity:

- Amin, A. (2006). The good city. *Urban studies*, 43(5-6), 1009-1023.
- Purcell, M. (2014). Possible worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the right to the city. *Journal of urban affairs*, 36(1), 141-154.
- Schwittay, A. (2019). Designing urban women's safety: an empirical study of inclusive innovation through a gender transformation lens. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 1-19. (this also introduces students to some of my own research)
- World Charter for the Right to the City (World Social Forum 2005) (can link to this)

Here is an article on teaching with manifestos that might be helpful in preparing the activity.

- Fahs, B., 2019. Writing with Blood: The Transformative Pedagogy of Teaching Students to Write Manifestos. *Radical Teacher*, 115, pp.33-38.