What if the North became one city?
Where will the urban age take us? What would it be like if the cities and towns on the M62 corridor all melted into one? It's a question that has been answered by Supercity, architect Will Alsop's exhibition at Urbis.

Supercity

Start Date: 20/01/2005
End Date: 15/05/2005
Prices: adult £5
         child Free
         concession £3.50
Genres: Art, Museums and Exhibitions
Venue Name: Urbis
Address: Cathedral Gardens
          Manchester
Disability Facilities:
Other Facilities:

Will Alsop
- With his avant-garde and striking buildings, Will Alsop has always been considered a maverick in the British architectural scene
- He is best known in the North West for his controversial Cloud design for Liverpool's 'Fourth Grace'
- His most famous British building is the Peckham Library, which won the Stirling Prize in 2000
- His current designs include one for New Islington, a new development in East Manchester

"Imagine a future in which the vast M62 corridor is a singular entity, 80 miles long and 15 miles wide," conjectures the exhibition, "its inhabitants live in Liverpool, shop in Leeds and go clubbing in Manchester. Using the latest forms of advanced transportation, SuperCity residents could wake up by the Mersey and commute to an office overlooking the Humber."

It's an intriguing vision but would it work? Will Alsop thinks so and he spoke to us about his vision for the future of the North's urban areas.

Where did the idea for Supercity come from?

"I started to go to places along the M62 very frequently and I was beginning to see and understand how people live along there, which is not the same that they live in Greater London, in so far as people tend to get into their cars and go to different places to get different reward; Doncaster market, Bradford for an Indian meal, Manchester for a bit of a thrash about, Leeds for shopping. Even though it's not a
single city, people are using it as a single city and that’s why you can’t drive along the M62, because it’s full of people trying to use their city."

**How would Supercity work?**

"What you don’t want is more housing space. What I’m trying to do is think of it as another model of urbanism, what you might call post-suburbia. I want to put new settlements spread along the M62 within a landscape and trying not to destroy the landscape that is there. That’s the whole point of the exercise, to avoid sprawl and to make the places that you build have identity and uniqueness."

**What are the major features of Supercity?**

"In physical terms, there’d be new settlements of between 2000 and 5000 people, and each of those places would have local shopping, a church, a pub, and it would be ecologically sound, trying to get everyone to live in almost one building. They’d be liberally spread along the path of the M62. Another thing would be to put a string of good service stations along the M62, the kind of service station that none of us can imagine because it’s one that you’d actually want to go to. If there was a place that you could go to with a good park and ride, where you could meet a friend, have a haircut perhaps, do a variety of different things, then you would get on a bus which would go up and down the M62. I would ban private cars on there so that would leave space for the marvellous bus service to link all the different centres together."

**How would it affect the sense of identity along the corridor?**

"All the places would try and be very different. What you really want is to work with the people who live there. Certainly working with the people of Barnsley and Bradford, I’ve noticed that they are desperately seeking for the place that live in to be unique. So the people in this northern corridor would identify with the whole and also with the particular centre in which they live."

**Supercity is an imaginary project, but how close to reality is it?**

"There’s one thing I’d say to that and that is that it is going to happen anyway, but the form in which it is going to happen is going to be more and more housing estates spreading over green fields. But that model has gone too far because if you look at new housing estates on the edge of existing settlements, these people are disenfranchised. They don’t go into the centre of their own town, they don’t feel part of the town in which they live. Therefore we need to check the physical dimensions of the existing centres that we have and put in new centres where you can ideally open your front door and walk to where you want to go."

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