Caring for Cultural Freedom

An ecological approach to supporting young people's cultural learning

Contents

Executive Summary

This report examines young people's cultural learning within the London Borough of Harrow. It makes a significant contribution to recent debates concerning the value of understanding the cultural sector ecologically.[1] It provides new ways to interpret how cultural opportunities operate for young people within *cultural ecosystems*: complex networks operating within and across a range of scales, including home, school, the borough, the region, and the nation. It thereby raises fundamental questions for policy and practice regarding how young people's cultural learning can best be supported on an ongoing basis.

Drawing on extensive empirical findings — analysed in relationship to recent conceptual innovations regarding both the ecology of culture and the politics of care — the report's overarching proposal is the need to develop 'caring' approaches to supporting cultural learning ecologically. Following Joan Tronto's account of the four characteristics of care,[2] this means developing practices of managing cultural ecosystems that are not only ecologically *competent* (effective in cultivating and sustaining vibrant interconnections), but which are — through the approaches they develop to partnership working and creative citizenship — *attentive* and *responsive* to the views and needs of young people, and *responsible* for the health of the ecosystem as a whole.

This research builds on the work of another recent report, *Towards Cultural Democracy: Promoting Cultural Capabilities for Everyone* (Wilson *et al.* 2017), written by this report's authors. Both pieces of research examine how cultural opportunity operates. In doing so, they draw on the Capabilities Approach (Sen, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011): a conceptual framework that provides tools with which to investigate a wide range of social and political issues. What the Capabilities Approach offers is a way of examining social progress in terms of substantive freedom: people's ability to choose to be and do what they have reason to value. With the assistance of the Capabilities Approach, these two reports indicate ways for cultural policymakers and practitioners to move beyond the supply side 'deficit model' of cultural provision and participation, offering a new overall ambition for cultural policy: cultural democracy, characterised by cultural capability for all. In particular, this report's focus on 'caring for cultural freedom' provides an important next step in understanding *how* we might go about promoting cultural capabilities for everyone.

Caring for Cultural Freedom builds on Holden's distinction (2016) between cultural education (through school curricula) and cultural learning (the much broader range of ways in which young people engage with and make culture). We employ the language of cultural learning, but also make central use of the phrase 'cultural opportunity'. In turn, we characterise cultural opportunity as cultural capability, *the substantive freedom to (co)create culture, giving form and value to experiences of self, and self-in relation*.[3]

Giving form and value to experiences of self and self-in relation connects closely to one of the key findings of our fieldwork in Harrow: that young people particularly enjoy and value conditions in which they feel 'free' and 'creative'. This can be in a classroom setting, in an after-school club, or at home. The experiences of freedom described are not reducible to the *absence* of structures. Rather, they are supported by particular kinds of structures that enable freedom. In some cases these are 'safe spaces', in which young people feel more secure, giving them the opportunity to relax, and make themselves

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1   Holden, 2015; Crossick & Kaszynksa, 2016; Wilson *et al.* 2017.
2   In *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality and Justice*, (2013), Tronto argues for the need to give practices of care a central place within contemporary understandings of democracy and citizenship, and identifies attentiveness, responsiveness, competence and responsibility as the four 'moral' aspects of care.
3   This definition builds on the account of cultural capability presented in *Towards Cultural Democracy*, but develops it considerably further, in the light of our subsequent research.

vulnerable in creative ways. Similarly, these can be 'holding environments', reliable conditions in which new and unexpected things can happen. In some cases, we also found these to be what we call 'listening spaces'. Conditions in which young people have the opportunity to speak and be heard, in ways that are valuable for their sense of self, and self-in-relation; and/or through which their views are heard and inform decision-making processes in meaningful ways. Drawing these findings together, a central theme of this report is the importance of *supported autonomy*, and how — through specific practices of *care* — conditions can be developed in which supported autonomy can be cultivated and sustained. These insights raise key questions regarding how the active management of cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems can most effectively achieve supported autonomy for young people.

It is clear from this research that in order to effectively understand how cultural learning happens and how it is supported (or not) within and across cultural ecosystems, multiple perspectives must be taken. This means a variety of ways of generating knowledge, and a broad range of people contributing. There is a need to set aside expectations of a single 'birds eye view', and develop understanding of the cultural ecology from multiple perspectives, inclusively, and on an ongoing basis — responsive to the emergence, growth and evolution that is inherent to ecosystems. Developing co-produced, ongoing knowledge is both an epistemological and a political necessity.

Through our research in Harrow we observed the richness of everyday cultural life for young people in this borough. From drawing, to taking photos, cooking and singing — young people are involved in an array of everyday creative activities outside of any formalised educational or organisational setting. These findings strongly connect with our previous research in which we showed the plethora of everyday creativity that takes place 'under the radar' of cultural policy and planning. With young people, the extent of 'invisible' cultural life may be particularly extensive.

The extent of this everyday creativity, however, should not encourage the conclusion that everything is rosy. Opportunities are very uneven, with limitations of many kinds on young people's freedoms to make culture, giving form and value to their experiences. These limitations include the pressures of the school curriculum, lack of information about available opportunities, and restrictions on geographical mobility due to factors ranging from parental busyness, to lack of money, to aspects of psycho-geography such as lack of confidence to travel beyond areas that feel like 'home'.

Another of our findings concerns what we call 'the organisation of interest': the ways in which young people's cultural interests do not simply come into being and operate within a vacuum. They are subject to ongoing processes of enablement, constraint, encouragement, and discouragement; and often the need to make choices and to prioritise. Young people's interests are cultivated, managed and organised through this range of influences. By studying their cultural learning within cultural ecosystems (within and across a range of scales including, for example, home, school, the London Borough of Harrow, and London as a whole) we see that young people's interests do not simply emerge, 'naturally', as it were. However natural an ecology may appear, kinds of *ecosystem management* are happening. The question is, what form does this management take?

Consideration needs to be given to how the organisation of interest happens. Whilst there may be a plethora of everyday creativity, there are many ways in which young people's cultural opportunities are constrained — and in which these opportunities are not enjoyed equally. Some young people have many more cultural pathways visible to them than others. Having access to information is key — a necessary condition of cultural freedom (or what we call, following the *Towards Cultural Democracy* report, 'cultural capability') — but it is not sufficient. Information is just one important factor; others include mobility

and confidence. Through this research, we identified a range of approaches that schools and other organisations working with young people are currently taking to enable the sharing of information, the support of confidence and mobility. At the same time, we go further than documenting these examples of current practices of care for young people's cultural freedom, and indicate new approaches that could be taken — including the development of mentoring programmes or a 'cultural careers service' that would support the cultural autonomy of young people.

This may, in part, involve enabling young people to operate as creative citizens (Hargreaves and Hartley, 2016; Wilson *et al.* 2017), or positive deviants (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin. 2010): making connections, and enabling cultural opportunities for themselves and others. Young people have a range of potentials — including skills, knowledge and networks — that they could be further supported in mobilising. Examples from two very different organisations in Harrow illustrate the possibility for this: Harrow Youth Parliament, and the Ignite Trust, which works with young people at risk. In both of these cases, we saw the potential for young people to be supported to act as creative citizens in new ways.

This further builds not only on recent discussions of creative citizenship, but also on the Asset Based Community Development tradition, which lays emphasis on the untapped potential of communities to develop a project, or respond to a local problem, by recognising and mobilising its assets — particularly intangible assets such as knowledge, skills and relationships. We built on this tradition as part of the overall methodological mix for this research. One of the strengths and attractions of the ABCD approach is that it combines knowledge production and action. In looking towards the future, this report indicates a number of ways in which better understanding and better co-management of cultural learning ecologies can (and must) go hand-in-hand.

One of the implicit but central questions this research asks is whether thinking ecologically about culture, cultural learning, cultural opportunity and cultural freedom is a promising route forward for policy and practice. The answer from this research is a strong yes. Indeed, we argue that the 'cultural ecology' is not simply a useful metaphor, but an ontological imperative. Culture, cultural learning, cultural opportunity and cultural freedom are 'relational goods' with emergent properties and powers (Donati and Archer, 2015), dependent upon the myriad of interpersonal relations that make up the social life of each and every person. Thinking ecologically is both empirically powerful — producing deeper, more accurate understanding — and has considerable practical and political potential. There are a range of reasons why ecological approaches may be 'in the air'. These include the pressures of funding cuts, and the need to develop new and effective kinds of partnership. They also include the need to democratise many aspects of life in the UK, and the need to find new and better ways of doing this (Wilson *et al.*, 2017). Our research indicates that ecological approaches to understanding and enabling cultural learning and cultural freedom (cultural capability) more broadly have the potential to make a significant contribution in responding to these circumstances.

At the same time, the research highlights a number of challenges that such approaches will face. Foremost of which is the inherent complexity of ecosystems. Interdependency, constant change and complexity are their central characteristics. One of the strengths of ecological language and thought — in its application to the analysis of the cultural sector — is precisely that it provides tools with which to investigate these complexities. At the same time, by opening up cultural interdependences and processes of emergence, growth and evolution, new questions arise in terms of knowledge-production and understanding. This report offers a series of insights regarding the challenges and opportunities here, both methodologically and politically.

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In order to meet the challenge of complexity, this research employed a wide variety of methods:

- » Interviews with adults (teachers, head teachers, youth workers, council staff and the owner of a creative business).
- » Interviews with 19 — 25 year olds.
- » Interviews with secondary school students.
- » Focus groups with secondary school students.
- » Questionnaires completed by secondary school students.
- » Questionnaires completed by the parents of primary school students.
- » Activity diaries completed by Year 5 pupils.
- » Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) workshop.

The challenge of ecological complexity was also made an explicit part of our research brief, with methodological considerations included as the fifth and final of the overarching questions this report addresses:

1. Which cultural activities and interests are valuable to young people in Harrow and why?
2. What kinds of creative citizenship are young people involved in — making and contesting 'versions of culture', and creating cultural opportunities for themselves and others?
3. Is it possible to identify key aspects of cultural learning within the cultural ecosystems of Harrow?
4. What kinds of intervention, if any, would support healthier, more democratic cultural learning within the cultural ecosystems of Harrow?
5. How should cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems, operating at different scales (e.g. within and across home, school, local authority, region, and nation) be investigated — which methods are most useful?

Across this report, we provide answers to all five of these questions. Our answers are framed by two over-arching insights from the research. First, whist it is important to understand the cultural ecology as a complex adaptive system which has self-organising patterns, cultural learning is nonetheless something that people do actively seek to organise, manage and support. We therefore speak of 'managed cultural ecosystems' (see Chapter 2). The education system, cultural policy, and — indeed — this report itself are all in their own ways motivated by a desire to do this as best as we can. The distinctive point here, therefore, in responding to recent discussions of cultural ecology, is the need to address how young people's cultural learning is actively supported (within the interdependent contexts of cultural ecosystems). Second, and following on from this point, we argue that such support must necessarily be characterised by elements associated more broadly with practices of care. Our empirical findings lead to this conclusion in a variety of ways, detailed throughout the report, in which practices of *ecological care* — characterised by attentiveness, responsiveness, competence and responsibility in the co-management of the ecosystems in which young people's cultural learning takes place — are key. One important implication of this is that any form of intentional intervention has to recognise that the interests of young people are best served by partnerships and governance structures that are themselves responsive and adaptive.

We refer to 'caring for cultural freedom', then, as the distinctive means by which cultural learning of young people is already supported (in some quarters), but can be further, such that the necessary freedoms and diversity that characterise vibrant cultural ecosystems are cultivated and sustained. Practices of care across a variety of scales — from individual workshops and clubs, to caring for a cultural system across a local authority area, or beyond — requires taking collective *responsibility* for the health of that ecosystem, and doing so in ways that are *attentive* and *responsive* to the views and need of young people, and promotes their cultural freedom (their cultural capability).

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This requires an ongoing process of co-producing knowledge of that ecosystem, and of the views and needs of the young people within it.

We outline 10 key findings that can be summarised as follows:

1. **Supported autonomy — a central goal.** Young people place great value on freedom, and on the spaces and activities that enable them to experience freedom and creativity. Giving support to young people's cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems needs to place supported (cultural) autonomy front and centre of its ambitions.

2. **Co-produced knowledge is essential.** Cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems cannot be understood from a single bird's eye view. In order to understand and co-manage them effectively, there must be in place a sustainable process of co-producing knowledge about that ecosystem, with many voices heard, on an ongoing basis.

3. **The psycho-geography of cultural opportunity should be considered,** and factored into how we give support to young people's cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems. By psycho-geography we mean the ways in which people experience the spaces and places in which they live as complex environments — shaped by a range of historical and contemporary factors including class, race, gender and (collective) memory — in which "psychology and geography collide".[4]

4. **Safe spaces & holding environments are vital.** Reliable conditions that allow for absorption, vulnerability and creativity play a crucial role in enabling young people's cultural capability. Based on research of the kind presented in this report, the contexts and conditions in which young people's cultural growth occurs can — to some extent — be anticipated. But the forms and consequences of this growth cannot be predicted. One of the roles organisations such as schools, youth clubs and arts centres can play is to actively cultivate the conditions of care — the safe spaces and holding environments — that enable unexpected flowerings to occur: expecting the unexpected.

5. **Spaces of listening are key.** They enable young people to develop their sense of self, and self-in relation. Characterised by attentiveness to the views and needs of young people for the young person, they can play a very promising role in generating inclusive, co-produced knowledge of young people's cultural interests, with the potential to inform decision-making. More of these — and connections between them — should be developed.

6. **Mentoring can help cut through inequalities.** Sharing information within relationships makes opportunities much more real for young people. This is one of the ways in which mentoring is a particularly important possibility.

7. **Tipping points & opportunity costs can be mitigated.** The emergence and growth of young people's cultural interests does not happen in a vacuum. It is guided and shaped by the 'organisation of interest' that takes place through environmental conditions, particularly those of school. Further thought needs to be given to how to keep cultural options open for young people, minimising the foreclosing effects of tipping / decision points, and the opportunity costs of choosing one option rather than another. Mentoring and ongoing cultural 'careers' advice are promising possibilities.

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4   Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*. Pocket Essentials, 2010: 10.

8. **Creative citizenship / positive deviance has great potential** to expand cultural capability, and democratise cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems. Much more could be done to support both adults and young people to operate in these ways, which are themselves characterised by practices of care, including *attentiveness* and *responsiveness* to the interests of others, and taking *responsibility* — *competently* — for the conditions in which those interests can be met.

9. **Partnership working needs both adaptability and clarity of purpose.** Democratic co-management of cultural ecosystems requires effective partnership working. Whilst actively caring for young people's cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems requires adaptability, there is at the same time — and particularly when schools, third sector organisations and local authorities are so overstretched — a need for clarity of purpose.

10. **Ensuring democratic governance is a long-term challenge.** In the medium and longer term, issues of governance — and the relationship between different scales of decision making in caring for cultural ecosystems — will be important to consider.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Cultural Opportunity

In recent years, there has been a great deal of criticism of the prevailing supply side approach to cultural policy in the UK, in which primary emphasis is placed on increasing participation in the publicly funded arts. Critics call this the 'deficit model',[5] because it implies that those who don't currently engage with organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding, in some sense, *should* do.

In our recent report, *Towards Cultural Democracy: Promoting Cultural Capabilities for Everyone* (Wilson *et al*. 2017), we showed the need to move beyond this supply side approach.[6] There is an urgent need to develop new understandings of what cultural opportunity consists of. Cultural opportunity, or 'cultural capability' as we call it (see section 1.5, below), exists not only through access to publicly funded arts organisations. It is enabled by a wide range of factors — not least, the interdependencies of publicly funded arts organisations with the profit-making creative industries and the plethora of everyday creativity that exists often below the radar of public policy.

Understanding cultural opportunity in this expanded way, and recognising the range of factors that can enable and constrain it, has a whole range of implications for how cultural opportunity can be enabled more broadly — and more *democratically* — in the future. Having access to the work of publicly funded arts organisations is part of what cultural opportunity consists of. But it is only a part.

1.2 Cultural Education & Cultural Learning

When it comes to children and young people (referred to in this report simply as young people), greater attention needs to be given to the relationship between cultural education, which takes place in schools, and cultural learning — constituted by a much broader range of opportunities to engage with, learn about and make culture (Holden, 2016). As the Cultural Learning Alliance has recently put it, "Cultural Learning spans both formal and informal learning, and happens in homes, communities and arts spaces as well as schools and other education settings." (Cultural Learning Alliance: 2017: 22) To which we might add parks, playgrounds and online spaces. These settings are many and varied.[7]

Yet, whilst cultural learning can take place in all these locations, there is considerable uncertainty about the equity of cultural opportunities that young people have, across variables of geographic and socio-economic position. The situation within the schools system is itself varied. As Sorrell, Roberts and Henley put it. "There remains a great deal of patchiness in the provision of cultural education across England. In some places, it is truly excellent with a well-honed partnership of schools, nationally funded organisations, enlightened local authority investment, charities and voluntary organisations coming together to give children great opportunities. In other areas, there is still a real dearth of provision." (Sorrell, Roberts & Henley, 2014: 131) The variability of cultural opportunities within schools has been compounded by changes in the policy and funding landscape, which raise further questions about equity of opportunity. Recent years have seen both a forming and fracturing of a consensus that young people should have access to high quality cultural education. On the one hand, the trajectory of policy in the UK has been towards broad agreement that the arts, culture and creativity should be

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5   See Miles and Sullivan, 2012; Jancovich and Bianchini, 2013; Belfiore, 2012; Stevenson, 2013 & 2016.
6   Holden (2016: 2) also argues for the need to go beyond supply side approaches.
7   We discuss this in detail in Chapter 4: Space, Place & Mobility.

part of every young person's life.[8] On the other hand, since 2010 the position of these opportunities within schools has been threatened by funding cuts and curriculum changes (Doeser, 2015).[9] This makes paying attention to links between schools and other sites of cultural opportunity all the more important.

If the position of schools as the 'provider' of cultural opportunities is increasingly uncertain — and, indeed, if the critiques of the deficit model apply to young people as much as to adults — there is a pressing need to better understand how cultural opportunity operates not only through school, but outside of school, too. Moreover, changes within the wider public policy context, including cuts to youth services, raise urgent questions about the conditions that enable and constrain young people's cultural opportunities within everyday life.[10]

1.3 The Cultural Ecology

Beyond the deficit model, then, and beyond the supply side of cultural education within school curricula, how can we understand the ways in which cultural opportunity operates for young people? To what extent is it helpful to examine young people's cultural opportunities through the interdependencies of different kinds of organisation and location?

Ecological language is increasingly evident in cultural policy and practice. In his 2015 report, *The Ecology of Culture*, John Holden conducted a literature review of research in this area and interviewed 38 cultural practitioners around the UK. He explains that the term 'cultural ecology' has been used within the discipline of anthropology since the 1950s. It means, "the study of human adaptations to social and physical environments."

> But the use of the word ecology in relation to the cultural sector is a more recent phenomenon. Two reports from 2004, published almost simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, but written without any contact between the authors, employ 'ecology' as a metaphor (Holden (2004), Rand (2005)). These may not be the first linking of ecology with the cultural sector, but after this date the idea that the cultural sector can be thought about in ecological terms became more widespread. (Holden, 2015: 5)

Thinking about the cultural sector ecologically emphasises interdependency, co-development, complexity[11] and constant change. Conducting his report under the umbrella of the AHRC's Cultural Value project (Crossick and Kaszinska, 2016), Holden also highlights the ways in which ecological thinking enables a wider view of the *values* in operation within cultural practice. "Culture is often discussed as an economy, but it is better to see it as an ecology, because this viewpoint offers a richer and more complete understanding of the subject. Seeing culture as an ecology is congruent with cultural value approaches that

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8   "[...] An increasing emphasis on fostering creativity through arts education reached its apogee in the development of Creative Partnerships in the early 2000s. By the time the Arts Council published its landmark strategy *Achieving great art for everyone* in 2010 a substantial infrastructure for children's arts engagement had developed and government policy was increasingly directed towards coordination of resources within a complex arts and education sector." (Doeser, 2015: 4)

9   The Cultural Learning Alliance summarise the situation as follows: recent public funding changes and policy reforms "have had a significant impact on the health of the arts in schools in England, where there has been a decline in the number of children taking arts subjects; a reduction in arts teaching hours; and fewer arts teachers employed in schools. Beyond school, informal programmes for young people have suffered due to cuts in local authority funds and services; tuition fees for universities are rising; and concern for children's early years has seemingly dropped off the policy agenda. Children and teachers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have had a different experience, with both policy and funding in these nations reflecting recognition of the importance of creativity and the arts, but practice and commitment sometimes remaining patchy." (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017: 3)

10   "'Working class" kids have been stripped of the traditional places where they once developed cultural capital: the youth club, town hall, local library, or children's centre. In the US, the richest families now spend seven times more on out of school enrichment than the poorest families, a much bigger gap than 40 years ago. All the data points to a similar gap in the UK. [...]'" Dr Lee Elliot Major, Chief Executive, Sutton Trust (Quoted in Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017: 6)

11   "The ideas of the web and the network are prominent in descriptions of ecologies and environmental systems." (Holden, 2015: 20)

take into account a wide range of non-monetary values." (Holden, 2015: 2)

Holden details the proliferation of ecological language within UK cultural policy since the mid-2000s. John Knells' *The Art of Living* (2007) uses the terms 'funding ecology', and the 'arts and cultural ecology'; the DCMS report *Our Creative Talent* refers to the 'arts ecology' (2008); in 2011 Ed Vaizey, the then Culture Minister, gave a speech entitled The Creative Ecology;[12] and in *This England: How Arts Council England uses its investment to shape a national cultural ecology* (2014), Arts Council England employed 'cultural ecology' as a central term.[13]

This is not only a UK phenomenon. To give just one international example, at the time of writing, in summer 2017, the first ever cultural strategy for the city of New York was published, *Create NYC: A Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers,*[14] drawing on consultation with 200,000 residents of the city. Ecological language runs throughout the document. The plan "is intended to serve as a roadmap to a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient cultural ecosystem, in which all residents have a stake. [...] designed as a living document that can respond to these desires in a continually evolving city." (NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, 2017: 11) The use of the language of cultural ecology continues to expand. Yet, Holden cautions that whilst these ideas circulate increasingly widely, there is insufficient shared understanding of what exactly they signify, and what the value of thinking in these terms might be.

> In view of the lack of agreement about what 'the ecology of culture' means, it comes as no surprise that Arts Council England's Russell [interviewed by Holden] believes that the 'whole field of cultural ecology is poorly understood. There is assertion, there are expectations, but little actual evidence.' He added that few lessons have been learnt so far that can affect policy and investment decisions: 'even the question "what would be helpful?" is at an early stage'. (Holden, 2015: 5)

The question of how taking an ecological approach might impact on *action* is key. It raises, in the sharpest terms, what the value of ecological understandings might be. Holden's own account of cultural ecology, and why it is a promising conceptual framework, builds on the work of Ann Markusen. She writes:

> An arts and cultural ecology encompasses the many networks of arts and cultural creators, producers, presenters, sponsors, participants, and supporting casts embedded in diverse communities. Forty years ago, scientists and policymakers realized that treating plants, animals, minerals, climate, and the universe as endlessly classifiable, separate phenomena did not help people understand or respond to environmental problems. So they created the integrated field of environmental ecology. In similar fashion, arts producers, advocates, and policymakers are now beginning to strengthen the arts and cultural sphere by cultivating a view of its wholeness and interconnectedness. We define the arts and cultural ecology as the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings. (Quoted in Holden, 2015: 6)

There are several features of Markusen's definition to draw out, helping to clarify

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12   In this speech, Vaizey defined the creative ecology as "'an alliance between the subsidised and commercial arts; the professional and the voluntary arts; and the arts and the creative industries'. He went on: 'The great strength of the arts is its ecology — subsidised arts feeding the commercial arts, the voluntary arts and the amateur arts ensuring the creative spirit is present in every corner of the nation.'" (Holden, 2015: 5)

13   "In the introduction, ACE's [then] chief executive, Alan Davey, defined the cultural ecology as 'the living, evolving network of artists, cultural organisations and venues cooperating in many fruitful partnerships — artistic, structural and financial'. He added: 'The metaphor of an ecology, of a living, balanced environment, expresses how nothing happens within this system without its impact being felt widely.' (Holden: 2015: 5)

14   (NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, 2017)

the potential value of ecological approaches to culture. Most centrally, the emphasis on *interconnections*. The rise in prominence of ecological metaphors in application to the cultural sector is undoubtedly because of the metaphorical resources it offers for describing and analysing the interdependencies of different types and locations of cultural practice. There are a range of potential explanations as to why it has become important to highlight and understand these interconnections. We suggest just three.

Firstly, there have been major shifts in perception of cultural value in the second half of the twentieth century, blurring the lines between high and low culture, and more recently between professional and amateur (Holden, 2015; Crossick and Kaszinska, 2016; Wilson *et al.*, 2017). Cultural practices increasingly appear intermingled in complex ways, with old separations and hierarchies falling away. Secondly, funding pressures — and the need to develop new kinds of partnerships[15] and alliances[16] — may have fuelled this rising interest in the ecological functioning of culture. Thirdly, we might consider the extent to which the increasing prominence of ecological thinking more broadly — in the context of the ever more urgent climate crisis (Klein, 2015) — has encouraged the cultural sector to not only address its carbon footprint, but also to consider how it too constitutes an ecological system, and to think more broadly about notions of cultural sustainability.

In considering the reasons why ideas of cultural ecology may be of increasing prominence, we should pay attention to one further feature of Markusen's account. She mentions that scientists and policymakers were led to think ecologically because "treating plants, animals, minerals, climate, and the universe as endlessly classifiable, separate phenomena did not help people understand or respond to environmental problems." As we examine the value and implications of developing ecological approaches to culture, and to young people's cultural learning in particular, we need to keep alert to the *problems* that have led the cultural sector and cultural policy makers to seek better answers, and better solutions. We need to ask: how can thinking ecologically about culture — and about cultural learning, in particular — *help*?

> **We need to ask: how can thinking ecologically about culture — and about cultural learning, in particular — help?**

1.4 Beyond 'Supply Side' Policy

Examining the archives of Arts Council England, as part of an investigation into the history of arts policy in relation to young people, James Doeser found "there was a notable lack of focus on the role of parents and families in encouraging arts participation, or on the encouragement of participation amongst very young children of pre-school age." (Doeser, 2015: 7) "Building arts into the school curriculum — the default policy lever since the mid-1960s — disregards the key influence of family and social factors in shaping later behaviour and attitudes towards the arts. It is curious that the school curriculum is the preferred vehicle to provide encounters with a subject that seems to many to offer an antidote to formal and institutional learning." (Doeser, 2015: 5) On the basis of these findings, one of Doeser's recommendations is for "Policymakers to do more to support arts activity outside the schools system, recognising that the family and social life of young people plays a crucial part in their identity and later life." (Doeser, 2015: 5)

Our research in this report, *Caring for Cultural Freedom*, makes a substantive response to Doeser's criticism and recommendation,[17] and helps lay the foundations for new approaches to understanding and supporting cultural opportunities for young people in ways that cut across the boundaries of home, school, arts organisations and the many 'in-between' spaces of everyday life. One of the things this report does is to explore the possibilities for an

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15   King's College London. *The Art of Partnering*. 2015

16   The What Next? movement, which came together in 2011 in response, in the first instance, to the UK coalition government's programme of public funding cuts, operates under the slogan, 'Unlikely Alliances'. http://www.whatnextculture.co.uk/

17   And the strong echoes this criticism and recommendation finds in Holden's essay, *Organism Not Mechanism: An Ecological Approach to Cultural Learning* (Holden: 2016).

approach to cultural policy and 'provision' for young people that goes beyond supply side thinking. The question is: what forms might cultural policy and practice take, beyond supply side approaches, informed by ecological thinking?

1.5 Cultural Capability

The conceptual approach this report takes builds on the new account of cultural opportunity given in *Towards Cultural Democracy* (Wilson *et al.*, 2017). There we introduced the idea of 'cultural capability': the substantive freedom to co-create versions of culture. Through our subsequent work on this — including through our research for this report — we have developed this definition further, and present cultural capability as the substantive freedom to (co)create culture, giving form and value to experiences of self, and self-in relation. Or, more pithily, *the substantive freedom to give form and value to experience* — an idea that will be elaborated and illustrated in subsequent chapters.

In presenting this new understanding of cultural opportunity, we are not only widening the focus beyond accessing arts organisations to a consideration of opportunities located across the boundaries of publicly supported, commercial and everyday culture. We are also drawing on a specific intellectual framework — the Capabilities Approach (Sen, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011) — which offers powerful analytical tools with which to investigate a wide range of social and political questions. The Capabilities Approach developed, in part, out of a critique of the paradigm of international development that employs Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the key indicator that a country and the lives of its people are improving. The Capabilities Approach proposes that, instead, the primary consideration should be the range of *substantive freedoms* people have to be and do what they have reason to value. As Schafer and Otto put it,

> The Capabilities Approach (CA) is a normative and justice-based framework for conceptualizing and evaluating people's well-being or, in other words, for supporting the development of public policies that provide people with plural options to be and do what they have reason to value. [...] the CA serves as the fertile base for producing new approaches towards the analysis and facilitation of the 'good life' of persons. (Schafer and Otto, 2014: 7)

In introducing the idea of *cultural capability*,[18] then, we are making an intervention in the (often implicit) normative framing of cultural opportunity, which, typically, is spoken of as 'access' to the arts or 'cultural education' — rather than in terms of cultural opportunity (and cultural learning) more broadly conceived.

This, of course, raises fundamental questions of value. Why is cultural education — and cultural learning — valuable? What are schools, arts organisations, youth services, policy makers and others looking to achieve through their work in this area? This report explores questions of value through fieldwork conducted with young people and adults in one London borough, Harrow, through which a number of findings are presented with regards to what the value of cultural opportunities can be, as well as what factors enable and constrain such opportunities.[19] One of the reasons why working with the Capabilities Approach is important, here, is because it provides a framework within which to study value without either seeking an all-encompassing 'birds eye view' assessment, nor reducing value purely to what many individual people or groups say is valuable. As Crossick and Kaszynska put it, the CA "conceives of wellbeing in

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18   See Wilson and Gross (2017) 'The Case for Cultural Capability'.
19   There is not space here to provide a detailed discussion of the range of accounts that have been given of the value of cultural education and cultural learning. The proposed value has ranged from the benefits that accrue to the wider economy and "UK PLC" (Sorrell, Roberts and Henley, 2014: 97); the benefits of cultural education for young people's capacities for learning in general and "wellbeing, attainment, culture change, leadership, creativity and cultural engagement" (Parker, 2013: 17); and the Cultural Learning Alliance recently summarised the "four values of Cultural Learning" as 'social', 'educational', 'economic' and 'personal'. (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017: 5)

terms of freedom to choose a range of opportunities to be and to act. [...] The capabilities approach operationalises the question of social progress in a way that neither reduces it to objective economic measures nor makes the quality of life a wholly subjective matter." (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2017: 37)

The CA helps us to address the value of cultural learning in ways that are shaped by the views of young people themselves. Whilst an "ever-growing body of evidence demonstrates the positive impacts the arts have on children's emotional, educational and creative development" (Doeser, 2014: 4), in this report we show that (cultural) wellbeing needs to be understood broadly — incorporating not only 'passive' conditions of feeling good, but active conditions of agency — and that cultural wellbeing is imminently social and political. This point is exemplified across our fieldwork data, as we found that many of the opportunities for cultural learning that young people identify as valuable to them involve being listened to, and having their voices heard.[20]

This operates at different levels. It includes the 'spaces of listening' that organisations such as schools and youth clubs can provide, sometimes one-to-one. But it also involves the possibilities for young people to influence the decisions that affect the management of their cultural opportunities, through effective and ongoing processes of consultation and shared decision-making. In these ways, discussed in detail across subsequent chapters, our research shows that for young people in Harrow the value they place on their opportunities for cultural learning is inextricably linked to the importance they give to creativity and freedom — experiences of *supported autonomy* — and the practices of care (including effective listening and the creation of safe spaces: characterised by attentiveness, responsiveness, competence and responsibility) that promote this.

Beyond the usefulness of the Capabilities Approach to better *understanding* cultural opportunity and its value, this conceptual framework also directs attention towards action. As Schafer and Otto explain: "the strong orientation towards agency inherent in the CA opens up a view of the agents' resources rather than their deficits — the latter being found more commonly in the research field of social inequalities in the social sciences. [...] Furthermore, the CA is oriented towards changing existing societal conditions to achieve more social justice." (Schafer and Otto, 2014: 8) The methodological approach we have taken in *Caring for Cultural Freedom* is aligned with the normative framework of the CA, as Schafer and Otto characterise it here, in a number of important respects. This includes working with aspects of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) tradition,[21] which seeks to enable communities to mobilise their existing potential to address a project or problem of concern to them. Moreover, we specifically develop and employ our research instruments — such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups — so as to invite our participants to identify value in ways not prescribed by the research design. The methodology seeks to listen carefully to what cultural opportunity feels like for our research participants, why it matters, and how, if at all, cultural opportunities could be expanded.

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20 The Capabilities Approach provides vital conceptual tools with which to understand these findings — that (cultural) wellbeing is inseparable from questions of freedom and agency, which we discuss in detail in subsequent chapters. Holden does not make use of the Capabilities Approach, but his position on 'cultural wellbeing' is closely connected to the account of cultural capability we offer in this report and in our writings on this topic elsewhere. He says, Cultural wellbeing' is a 'core planning principle' within England's National Planning Policy Framework. In other words, Local Authorities have to take account of 'cultural wellbeing' when they take planning decisions. Despite that, 'cultural wellbeing' is not defined by government, and there is some confusion about how the term should be understood. In some circumstances, it refers to the ways in which culture promotes health, general wellbeing and satisfaction (for example in the National Health Service: http://www.nhs.uk/news/2011/05May/Pages/cultural-activities-wellbeing.aspx). This is not what 'cultural wellbeing' means in this paper. Rather, the term refers specifically to cultural capacities and capabilities as ends in themselves rather as means to other social, economic or health outcomes. 'Cultural wellbeing', [...] is a positive condition implying knowledge, confidence, mastery, and creativity. (Holden 2016: 1)

21 See, for example, the discussions of the ABCD approach in Hargreaves, I.& J. Hartley (eds). 2016.

1.6 Cultural Democracy

Observable in the range of recent initiatives seeking to promote 'everyday creativity' — Get Creative, Fun Palaces, 64 Million Artists[22] — is a desire for new approaches to cultural policy and practice that lay greater emphasis on the creative potentials that everyone has, and how these might be enabled. Whilst each having their own distinct ambitions and values, these initiatives form a cluster of related commitments, which *Towards Cultural Democracy* sought to understand and draw together on the basis of research with the Get Creative campaign (Wilson *et al.*, 2017). In that report, we introduced the idea of *cultural democracy* as one way of framing a new approach to cultural policy and practice that goes beyond the supply side, meets the challenges laid down by critiques of the deficit model, and responds to the new experiments in practice offered by initiatives such as these — Get Creative, Fun Palaces, and 64 Million Artists.

Discussions of cultural democracy are traceable to at least the 1950s (Adams and Goldfarb, 1995). The time is ripe for engaging with these ideas anew; and on the basis of a new conceptualisation of cultural opportunity — beyond the deficit model — we offer a distinctive account of cultural democracy characterised, specifically, by cultural capability for all.[23] These are fundamental issues of social justice. Cultural opportunity is not an add-on, a nice to have once the basics have been taken care of. It is part of the foundations of our democracy. Unless people are in a position to use their voice (and their other creative powers) — and for their voice to be heard — democracy is not being full realised. This is an urgent issue. (Wilson *et al.*, 2017)

1.7 Managing Cultural Learning Ecologically

When investigating the possibilities for ecological approaches to cultural learning, and considering the extent to which this approach is valuable both in terms of understanding and in terms of action, a key question is the extent to which cultural learning can be managed in such a way as to take due account of the complex interdependent nature of the cultural ecology. This calls into question the freedoms of individuals, the divergent values held across cultural ecosystems, and the extent to which any management intervention is democratic.

As we discuss in Chapter 2, there is a need to move beyond a *descriptive* account of culture as a highly interdependent, complex and adaptive system with self-organising patterns, and account for the nature of our active interventions, which seeks to manage and support certain features of this cultural ecology — such as young people's cultural learning. We should be well-aware by now, in the context of the urgent challenge of climate change, that ecologies are not 'simply' natural, in any sense that implies being beyond human influence. Humans may not be able to control nature, but we are unquestionably able to affect changes upon our environments, even if many of these take place beyond deliberate intention. How, then, might we manage conditions of cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems operating at different scales (e.g. home, school, borough, etc.), and how might this help to enable, rather than constrain, a healthy and flourishing cultural ecology?

Holden offers some reflections on these questions, indicating that a healthy ecology is characterised by the "number and strength" of its interconnections, as well as "the benignity of the environment within which it functions".

> The ecology of culture is an intricate web of connections, both internally — with movement of ideas, people, products and money around the whole system — and externally into a wide

...a key question is the extent to which cultural learning can be managed in such a way as to take due account of the complex interdependent nature of the cultural ecology.

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22   For the report on 'Everyday Creativity' 64 Million Artists wrote for Arts Council England, see Micklem, D.& J. Hunter. 2016. Everyday Creativity. 64 Million Artists for Arts Council England. https://www.docdroid. net/9HEVtmk/everyday-creativity.pdf.html

23   See Gross and Wilson. (In preparation). 'Cultural Democracy: A Capabilities Approach.'

range of other fields. The effectiveness and efficiency of the ecology depends on the number and strength of the internal and external connections. Both economic and cultural value are created through a high degree of interaction and the quality of those relationships. The cultural ecology also depends on the benignity of the environment within which it functions. Just as with a natural ecosystem, the cultural ecology will be more fecund and productive when it has a great number of species interacting with each other: in the opposite case the result will be a cultural desert. (Holden, 2015: 32)

Drawing on our fieldwork in Harrow, in Chapter 8 we consider directly the possibilities for supporting cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems in the future. Here is where questions of *value* — and the necessity for clarity with regards to the normative framework within which plans and policies are being developed — become most urgent. There are a number of ways in which these future-directed questions could be posed, in terms of the overarching normative framework to which they relate. For example, they could be framed in terms of social justice, or equality of opportunity. Building on our recent work, and the overall methodological approach adopted in this study, here we employ and develop the language of *cultural democracy* — characterised by cultural capability for everyone.

Holden's *The Ecology of Culture* report touches on the question of democracy in passing, without digging deep. "Natural ecologies are fecund, messy, highly competitive places, and so is the contemporary cultural world. Jon Dovey [interviewed by Holden] noted that: 'the cultural ecosystem is not democratic'. Some cultural producers and products thrive because they happen to alight upon the right conditions to flourish; others simply wilt." (Holden, 2015: 18) On the other hand, in his essay, *Organism Not Mechanism: An Ecological Approach to Cultural Learning*, Holden indicates that an ecological approach has the potential to open up more democratic perspectives. One characteristic of an ecological approach is that:

> it treats all forms of life within an ecosystem as equally important. An elephant is bigger than a flea, but in ecological terms, both are necessary to the functioning of their ecosystem. Within the cultural ecosystem, policy concentrates on the elephants — the big buildings and major companies — and neglects other parts. But an analysis of the cultural ecology can start anywhere, and looking at the system from the point of view of a particular child in a particular place will produce a different set of understandings to those that are gained from concentrating on organizations, agencies, schools and local government. (Holden, 2016: 2)

As Holden indicates, developing an ecological perspective may constitute a more democratic approach to generating knowledge of how culture operates. Building on this broadly democratic direction of travel in *understanding*, however, we need to go beyond this (albeit crucial) expansion of analytical attention. In addition to the systematic recognition of the fleas as well as the elephants, the key question requiring sustained and explicit investigation is: *in what ways are cultural ecosystems democratic (or not)? And how could they be more so?*

1.8 The Approach of this Report

Holden's important 2015 AHRC report provides a hugely useful survey of the growing use of ecological language in relation to the cultural sector. His 2016 paper for A New Direction, *Organism Not Mechanism*, paid particular attention to young people, and clarified the key distinction between cultural education and cultural learning. There is so much more work to be done in this field. This includes *conceptual developments* — furthering the conceptual tools with which to investigate and understand the interdependencies through which culture and

cultural opportunities operate; *empirical insights* — studying particular cultural ecosystems; and *policy-enquiry* — examining the implications of conceptual and empirical insights for developing plans and actions directed towards change.

This report, *Caring for Cultural Freedom*, makes contributions in all three of these respects. It does so through the presentation and analysis of fieldwork with young people and adults in one London borough, through which five over-arching research questions were addressed:

1. Which cultural activities and interests are valuable to young people in Harrow and why?

2. What kinds of creative citizenship are young people involved in — making and contesting 'versions of culture', and creating cultural opportunities for themselves and others?

3. Is it possible to identify key aspects of cultural learning within the cultural ecosystems of Harrow?

4. What kinds of intervention, if any, would support healthier, more democratic cultural learning within the cultural ecosystems of Harrow?

5. How should cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems, operating at different scales (e.g. within and across home, school, local authority, region, and nation) be investigated — which methods are most useful?

The research was commissioned by A New Direction (AND) as part of their work to support cultural and creative opportunities for young people across London. As AND themselves explain:

> "Our previous research has highlighted how a diverse range of factors including the city's varying levels of cultural infrastructure and vast differences in wealth mean that opportunities for cultural engagement are not equally accessible to all young Londoners. We know that addressing issues of equity, access and quality are a central concern if we are to ensure that all children and young people are able to enjoy a creative childhood. But, in order to address these issues, we need to understand:
>
> » how we decide which interventions, practical solutions and partnerships will have the most impact;
>
> » how we identify, and subsequently support, promote and exploit the elements which need to be in place for every child and young person to have the opportunity to learn about, engage with & create cultural experiences;
>
> » how we plan for culture in a place, who are the stakeholders in this discussion and how do their roles interact, correspond, or conflict.
>
> With this exploration into the cultural learning ecology, we are interested in whether thinking about children and young people's engagement with arts, culture and creativity as taking place in a joined-up ecosystem consisting of complex interactions, networks and connections may offer useful insight into answering these questions."

The research was conducted in Harrow, an 'Outer London' borough in which there are fewer organisations funded by Arts Council, but in which many kinds of cultural learning may nonetheless be taking place. We conducted our fieldwork through a varied combination of methods. A particular feature of this

fieldwork was to ensure that we heard from young people themselves, as much as possible:[24]

- » Interviews with adults (teachers, head teachers, youth workers, council staff and the owner of a creative business). n = 12
- » Interviews with 19 — 25 year olds. n = 2
- » Interviews with secondary school students. (Six interviews, two young people in each). n = 12
- » Focus groups with secondary school students. (Three focus groups). n = 24
- » Questionnaires completed by secondary school students. n = 88
- » Questionnaires completed by the parents of primary school students. n = 89
- » Activity diaries completed by Year 5 pupils. n = 146
- » Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) workshop.

There are several reasons why this combination of a broad range of research methods was used, and we discuss this in detail in Chapter 7. A key consideration in the development of this methodology was the complexity of the object of study — cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems operating at different scales — and the need to test a range of methods in addressing our fifth research question, 'How should cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems be investigated — which methods are most useful?'. As we discuss in Chapters 7 and 8, taking an ecological approach to culture and cultural learning raises important questions of knowledge, which are far from being 'simply' academic. These issues of knowledge have many implications for action and policy. Through this research — testing these methods and asking how cultural learning ecosystems can be studied and understood — we go beyond more familiar approaches to 'mapping' cultural assets. Instead, we develop an ecologically-informed approach to knowing, one characterised by co-produced knowledge, and pointing towards the need for understanding of cultural ecosystems to be developed and shared on an ongoing basis, with no single, all-encompassing view from which change would be mechanistically 'leveraged'.

As Holden points out, "maps are always incomplete, always out of date; and 'the map is not the territory'." When we begin to think ecologically about culture, we see that:

> The connections, symbiosis, feedback loops, and flows of people, product, ideas and money are so dynamic and intense as to defy complete description. But a deeper understanding of culture can be achieved by applying the multiple perspectives that an ecological approach demands. (Holden, 2015: 3]

We need to think creatively about how knowledge of cultural ecosystems can be generated in ways that are both empirically effective (providing accurate understanding) and practically useful (enabling positive change). The findings of this report, *Caring for Cultural Freedom*, indicate that as more research is conducted into the cultural ecology, we are likely find that not only does effective understanding require democratically produced knowledge, but that when this happens, it has the potential to help cultural democracy to flourish. This report seeks to make a contribution to developing knowledge of this kind.

We need to think creatively about how knowledge of cultural ecosystems can be generated in ways that are both empirically effective... and practically useful...

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24   Priscilla Alderson (2013) points to the "absence of children and childhood from almost any report, book or film on politics, economics, trade, armed conflict, housing, transport, climate change or any other major topic of public concern. Yet children and their interests are actually central to all these 'adult' matters." (pp.3—4). 'Culture' is clearly a matter of public concern, but it is also too often treated as purely an 'adult' matter.

Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into the Ecology Metaphor

2.1 Introduction

The reasons for exploring cultural learning from an ecological perspective are compelling. As John Holden's essay, *Organism, Not Mechanism: An Ecological Approach to Cultural Learning* argues, "Established ways of thinking and talking about culture tend to take an overly mechanical approach to the problem of how best to stimulate cultural learning among young people." (Holden, 2016: 2) He is right in drawing attention to the ways in which "[p]olicies concentrate on the supply side of the equation, looking at what publicly funded organizations and schools provide to young people, rather than considering the conditions in which young people actually enjoy culture, and what they themselves might bring to the process." (Ibid.) The approach we have taken in this research is, then, very much aligned with Holden's ecological perspective. We too are interested in shifting from a position that foregrounds 'provision' and the 'cultural offer' as evidenced through the curriculum, to one where "the lived experience of children and young people" (Ibid.) is the priority.

For Holden, a key benefit of taking an ecological perspective is the emphasis it places on interdependency. This is not just about gaining a better understanding of the relationship between *supply* and *demand*-sides of cultural learning (i.e., cultural providers, and young people) but, as we highlight in *Towards Cultural Democracy:* (Wilson *et al.*, 2017) the interconnections that take place between the arts, the creative industries and everyday creativity.[25] This is about the "linkages and flows of ideas, product and people" (Holden, 2015: 18). In addition, for Holden, the ecological metaphor is particularly rich in re-framing enquiry in terms of *emergence*, *growth*, *evolution* and *resilience*. Essential questions such as — how are children's lives formed and shaped?; what does it mean to talk of 'cultural growth'?; is there such a thing as cultural evolution?; and how is individual and systemic confidence promoted? — are ones that flow from the perspective of a cultural ecology.

As Holden himself acknowledges, "Putting the child at the centre of the cultural ecology begs the question of what cultural learning is trying to achieve" (Holden, 2016: 4). He goes on to suggest that "[i]f we ask what the ends of a cultural education[26] should be, it will help answer the question of what kind of cultural ecosystem will serve young people well." (Ibid.) Asking what kind of cultural ecosystem do we want, and how might we achieve it, is the raison d'être for Holden's intervention — as much as it is for our research here. But, of course, this is where a problematic (but easily overlooked) tension arises, casting doubt over the reason for appealing to a cultural ecology in the first place. For there is a very big difference in applying the metaphor of an ecology to highlight the interdependent self-organising nature of the cultural sphere, (and in the process re-positioning discussion such that we put young people at its centre), on the one hand, and asking the question of how we actually go about organising, managing and supporting cultural activities within this ecology, on the other.

As human beings, we do *not* have ultimate authority to exert control over the natural world (despite many disastrous policies and actions which imply the contrary). It is increasingly evident that the balance which in many ways defines our natural ecology as a complex and adaptive system is all-too-easily tipped out of kilter by human action. In this sense, what we focus on in this report is

> ...how are children's lives formed and shaped?; what does it mean to talk of 'cultural growth'?

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25 For his part, Holden refers to the three parts of the cultural system in terms of the publicly funded, the commercial, and the homemade.

26 Helpfully, Holden clarifies that "*Cultural education* is used to describe how culture is taught within the formal education system, whereas '*Cultural learning* encompasses how young people learn about culture from all sources, including through their own enquiries, their families, and their peer groups." (Holden, 2016: 1)

not so much the overall cultural ecology *per se*, nor how we might manage this — given it would require a 'God's-eye' view of the world, but rather how we actively manage and support cultural learning within and across the cultural ecosystems we encounter in our lives (i.e. within and across the levels of home, school, borough, region, nation, etc.), particularly in the light of their ecological (i.e., interdependent, complex and changing) nature.

2.2 Supporting Cultural Learning

The challenge of understanding how to manage human practices within an ecological context is far from unique to the domain of culture, of course. Delving yet deeper into the ecological metaphor, a really helpful place to draw insight is from the characteristically human practice of *farming*. Etymologically, farming is the 'business of *cultivating* land'. Here, in a neat turning of the conceptual tables, we find a direct link between this sense of 'cultivation' and the word 'culture'. As Raymond Williams observes "Culture in all its early uses was a noun of process: the *tending* of something, basically crops or animals." (1976: 87) By extension, what we are concerned with here is how we collectively 'tend' the cultural learning of children and young people, in the process ensuring that we enable everyone's cultural capability — giving form and value to their experiences through, in part, learning about culture from all sources.

We have been farming for thousands of years, of course. Our methods for doing so have varied, but it is instructive in the context of this research's enquiry to contrast two over-arching farming approaches — agriculture and organic.

Agriculture

The term agriculture is derived from the Latin words *ager* — the field, and *cultura* — to cultivate. We 'cultivate the field' to sustain life. More formally, to practice agriculture means to use natural resources to "produce commodities which maintain life, including food, fiber, forest products, horticultural crops, and their related services."[27] 'Intensive' agriculture is a modern method of farming undertaken on an expanded level, so as to reach a wide range of consumers, in which the commodities produced can be sold for profit. Typically, this involves selective breeding, increased yields, but so too, the danger of related ecological damage. Amongst the 'external costs' for society are the use of pesticides, nutrient runoff, excessive water usage, and loss of natural environment.[28]

Of course, there is always the danger of stretching a useful metaphor too far. Nonetheless, there are generative parallels here which provoke challenging questions: notably, in what sense does our current cultural ecology 'selectively breed' a particular kind of cultural learning (for example, those children that will go on to have careers in the arts and/or creative industries)? And what kinds of 'external costs' (if any) might result in the cultural sphere?

Organic

Responding to some of the perceived problems and downsides of intensive agriculture, there has been a huge growth in an alternative farming method in recent years, which goes by the label of 'organic'. In contrast to the model just discussed, organic farming might be seen as working *with* nature rather than against it. Instead of killing off 'unwanted' life with pesticides it encourages a more balanced environment, where the natural resistance and fertility of the soil is a central concern.

> Organic production is a holistic system designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agro-ecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The principal goal of organic production is to develop enterprises

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27   State of Maine 'definition of agriculture', 2013.
28   A 2000 assessment of agriculture in the UK determined total external costs for 1996 of £2,343 million, or £208 per hectare (Pretty *et al.*, 2000).

that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.[29]

Organic farming is a system that sustains the health of soils, people and ecosystems. It promotes biodiversity, builds in redundancy (rather than focusing exclusively on one breed) and 'combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved...'[30] As Wendell Berry writes of an organic farm, it is "a farm whose structure is formed in imitation of the structure of a natural system that has the integrity, the independence and the benign dependence of an organism".[31] In keeping with ecological design principles, organic farming is generally practiced in a way that uses nature as a model for design, preserves biological and cultural diversity (how might this relate to 'everyday creativity'?), and undertakes full cost accounting[32] (what might be the externalities of failing to promote everyone's cultural capability?). It is particularly interesting to reflect further on the metaphorical equivalents within the context of cultural learning of the soil, the crops, biodiversity, and so on. How might cultural policy be framed in terms of some of these ideas? Our research presented over the forthcoming chapters will respond to some of these questions with evidence from 'the field'.

Having dug a little deeper into the ecology metaphor, it becomes very evident that what is centrally at stake is not just the nature of particular practices undertaken (intensive agriculture vs. organic), but rather the distinctive ways in which these practices are motivated and implemented. References to a 'holistic system'; the 'optimization of productivity *and* (fitness of) diverse communities'; enterprises that are 'sustainable' and 'harmonious' with the environment; as well as the concept of 'benign dependence' all point to a particular mode of intervention that must have a commitment to 'caring' at their centre.

2.3 Practices of Care: A Distinctive Approach to Active Management of Ecosystems

There has been a proliferation of interest in the nature and practices of care in recent years.[33] Some of this work is overtly political, developing out of feminist critiques of how value is attributed across economies, typically excluding much of the invisible labour of care that is often undertaken by women in addition to paid employment. More broadly, there is growing interest in the central role that care could have within urgent processes of re-conceptualising key ethical and political categories, such as democracy and citizenship. Joan C. Tronto's work, here, is particularly helpful, as she shows how the notion of care has been excluded from much modern political and ethical thought, and why it is so urgent that practices of care be given a new and central position within understandings of democracy and citizenship.[34]

Tronto proposes that "thinking about caring in its broadest and most public form, as a way in which society allocates responsibilities offers a substantive opportunity to reopen the closed, game-like political system [focused on the narrow management of 'the economy' and electioneering] to the genuine concerns of citizens." (2013: ix) On the one hand, Tronto is in this way making a specific argument about the need to recognise — and reinstate — the importance of caring within contemporary political life, reclaiming democracy and citizenship. On the other hand, Tronto explains that care is a very broad category of practices:

> On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as

29   Canadian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/09-077.htm.

30   International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

31   Berry, 1981, Chapter 9, p.6.

32   i.e. including information about the possible environmental, social and economic costs and benefits or advantages — the 'triple bottom line' for each proposed alternative.

33   See, for example, Joan C. Tronto (1994) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care*; Virginia Held (2007) *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*; Judith Phillips (2007) Care.

34   Joan C.Tronto. 2013. *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice.*

a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (Tronto, 2013: 19)

As this quotation suggests, practices of care have the potential to provide a set of concepts through which to describe the management of ecosystems. Here, Tronto's further analysis of the nature of care is very useful, as she explains that care operates across a variety of scales:

> rather than being a set of principles from which one deduces proper action, a feminist democratic ethic of care [of the kind Tronto is developing] begins by envisioning a series of caring practices, nested within one another. The broadest of these nested practices are those that pertain to society as a whole [...]. The goal of such practices is to ensure that all the members of the society can live as well as possible by making the society as democratic as possible. (Tronto, 2013: 30)

Thinking ecologically — and addressing the challenge of how to actively manage ecosystems — requires ways of conceptualising practices across scale.

Thinking ecologically — and addressing the challenge of how to *actively manage* ecosystems — requires ways of conceptualising practices across scale. It also requires ways of understanding how to manage the interdependencies of multiple parts of complex, adaptive systems that may or may not have precisely aligned interests. Again, Tronto's analysis of the nature of care is extremely helpful here. As well as operating across different scales, practices of care involve four steps or phases:

1. *Caring about*. At this first phase of care, someone or some group notices unmet caring needs.

2. *Caring for*. Once needs are identified, someone or some group has to take responsibility to make certain that these needs are met.

3. *Care-giving*. The third phase of caring requires that the actual care-giving work be done.

4. *Care-receiving*. Once care work is done, there will be a response from the person, thing, group, animal, plant, or environment that has been cared for. Observing that response and making judgments about it (for example, was the care given sufficient? successful? complete?) is the fourth phase of care.[35]

She adds that in order to think about democratic care, which is not on this level of generalisation but a more particular kind of care, there is a fifth phase of care.

5. *Caring with*. This final phase of care requires that caring needs and the ways in which they are met need to be consistent with democratic commitments to justice, equality, and freedom for all.

Tronto is very clear that what it means to be a citizen in a democracy is to care for citizens and to care for democracy itself. Her central point is that we all have care needs, and there is in an equality in the fact that we are all care-receiving beings. The political implications of this are that citizenship — like caring — is both an expression of support and a burden (or duty). She describes the goal of caring practices as they pertain to society as a whole, as ensuring "that all the members of society can live as well as possible by making the society as

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35   Note that while the care receiver may be the one that responds, it need not be so. Sometimes the care receiver cannot respond. Others in any particular care setting will also be in a position, potentially, to assess the effectiveness of the caring act(s). And, in having met previous caring needs, new needs will undoubtedly arise.

democratic as possible". This, she says, is the essence of "caring with". (Ibid)

Tronto goes on to frame these five phases of care — as a set of nested practices across a range of scales, from individual relationships to the political culture of a democratic society — in terms of the 'moral qualities' of care. These are:

> a) attentiveness (being aware of the need for care)
> b) responsibility (taking on the burden of meeting these needs)
> c) competence (the care given has to be fit for purpose)
> d) responsiveness (being responsive to the response from the care receiver).

These characteristics echo the ideas of Eric Fromm, writing in the 1950s, for whom care was a key component of love. Fromm's concern was to challenge the idea of love as a passive experience, and instead to show that it is a highly active process, involving a range of ethical practices. Fromm argued that "the active character of love becomes evident in the fact that it always implies certain basic elements, common to all forms of love. These are *care*, *responsibility*, *respect* and *knowledge*." (Fromm, 1956: 21) "Love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love. Where this active concern is lacking, there is no love." (Ibid., 21) Responsibility denotes a response undertaken of one's own accord:

Today responsibility is often meant to denote duty, something imposed upon one from the outside. But responsibility, in its true sense, is an entirely voluntary act; it is my response to the needs, expressed or unexpressed, of another human being. To be 'responsible' means to be able and ready to 'respond'.' (Ibid., 22)

Fromm explains that responsibility, without a key third component of love — *respect* — could easily deteriorate into domination and possessiveness:[36]

> Respect is not fear and awe: it denotes, in accordance with the root of the word (*respicere*, to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is. Respect, thus, implies the absence of exploitation.' (Ibid.)

Finally, the fourth element that is highlighted is that of *knowledge*, which we suggest is closely linked closely to Tronto's notion of attentiveness. As Fromm observes, it is not possible to respect someone without knowing them: "care and responsibility would be blind if they were not guided by knowledge. Knowledge would be empty if it were not motivated by concern." (Ibid., 22–23).

Fromm's account of love identifies a series of components of what we could call *practices of relationality*: active modes of knowing and caring for other people, respecting their otherness — the autonomy of their views and interests, even in their interdependence with our own — and actively choosing to respond to their needs. We suggest this is closely connected to Tronto's four moral qualities of care as attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. Tronto's qualities of care — which we can understand even more deeply through an appreciation of the notions of responsibility and respect offered by Fromm — provide a powerful set of concepts with which to understand *practices of relationality*: ways of cultivating relationships within complex conditions of interdependence.

In analysing our fieldwork data, we found that the value that young people in Harrow place on many of their opportunities for cultural learning focus on conditions in which they are enabled in supported autonomy — feeling creative and free within safe spaces and spaces of listening. The characteristics

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36   Tronto also discusses 'respect' (alongside plurality, communication, trust, and solidarity), in relation to 'caring with' (2013: 35).

of practices of care — *attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness* — name, very effectively, many of the features of our findings. They provide an incisive language with which to describe key aspects of active intervention in young people's cultural learning that our research indicates are particularly important given the interdependent, complex and ever-changing nature of the cultural ecology. Throughout the chapters that follow we present multiple ways in which practices of relationality characterised by the moral qualities of care just introduced, play a central role in the cultural learning of young people in Harrow. Before that, in the remaining section of this chapter we briefly discuss three related implications arising from the ideas raised here.

2.4 Implications for Management, Democracy, and Cultural Policy

In Chapter 1 we introduced the idea of cultural democracy, premised on the promotion of everyone's cultural capability — the freedom to give form and value to our experiences of self and self-in-relation. In drawing attention to the 'managed' nature of cultural learning within the cultural ecology there is at least a little danger of letting in a potentially undemocratic and hierarchical model 'through the backdoor'. However, in introducing the conceptual innovation of adopting a 'caring' approach to the co-management of cultural ecosystems — with practices of care understood, critically, as practices of relationality characterised by attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness — we highlight the opportunity, here, for reclaiming 'management': showing the potential for management not as an undemocratic bureaucratic imposition, but as an ecologically adaptive mode of human organisation. Our capacity 'to manage' many facets of our lives without resorting to a form of 'managerialism' (see Parker, 2002) is after all a natural organising aspect of what it is to be human. We clearly need fit-for-purpose management and design principles if we are to transition from the status quo to a cultural landscape characterised by cultural capability. Our research, detailed across the chapters of this report, shows that a management approach characterised by practices of care constitutes a distinctive and promising direction of travel. What this may look like in practice is elaborated, of course, in subsequent chapters of this report — including, in particular, in Chapter 8: Caring for Cultural Freedom: Supporting Cultural Learning.

What then of the implications for cultural democracy *per se*? Interestingly, 'ecological democracy' is generally rather narrowly discussed in the literature in terms of 'an alternative democratic model that 1) strives to incorporate interested citizens into environmental decision-making, and 2) lacks structural features that systematically concentrate environmental amenities into the hands of particular social groups, while imposing environmental and ecological degradation on others.' (Mitchell, 2006: 1) In other words, rather than using ecological principles to help us design a better democratic system, there is an onus on using the democratic system to help deal with environmental and 'ecological' issues. There is clearly scope here to develop a new model of democracy that is framed in terms of an ecological perspective, including, for example, in relation to the role of ecological 'feedback loops' which might provide checks and balances, without undue constraint or regulation. In Chapter 7 we discuss the need for the understanding of cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems to be inclusively co-produced, on an on-going basis, and for this co-produced knowledge to directly shape the co-management of the ecology.

Finally, there are also significant implications for cultural policy. Arts Council England's mission of delivering 'great art for everyone' has long been the explicit driver for cultural policy across the country. There is, of course, much to applaud about this objective. There is good reason to ensure that, regardless of background, everyone has the opportunity to access and enjoy 'great art'. But what if this misdirects attention away from another, even more important goal of cultural policy — namely, to support the autonomy of everyone to give form

In drawing attention to the 'managed' nature of cultural learning within the cultural ecology there is at least a little danger of letting in a potentially undemocratic and hierarchical model 'through the backdoor'.

and value to their experiences in whatever way this manifests itself? What if providing cultural opportunities and enabling cultural wellbeing were put front and centre of cultural policy?

In the preceding discussion we noted that the organic approach to farming, in contrast to intensive agriculture, sustains the health of soils, people and ecosystems. Prior to presenting the empirical data and analysis from our fieldwork — responding in detail to the questions raised in the Introduction and in this conceptually-focused chapter introducing the notion of 'caring for cultural freedom' — we put forward a provocation. What if *great art for everyone* represents a 'healthy soil' (a key aspect of the habitat): in other words, part of the nurturing conditions for cultural vitality, rather than the end result? The end-goal of a managed national cultural ecosystem would then be conceived somewhat differently — enabling cultural opportunities for everyone, cultural wellbeing, and human flourishing. In the process, we would need to gain a far better understanding of the enabling conditions (over and above the 'healthy soil' of *great art for everyone*) that nourish a sustainable and diverse cultural ecology. This is the task which we undertake and report on over the following pages.

Chapter 3 —Activities & Interests

3.1 Introduction

In this research, one of the things we wanted to know more about was simply: what cultural activities are young people in Harrow engaged in? As discussed in *Towards Cultural Democracy*, (Wilson *et al.*, 2017), there is a plethora of 'everyday creativity' that goes on beneath the radar. Taking an ecological approach to young people's cultural learning requires us to pay greater attention to the range of activities and interests that young people have, but which may ordinarily be invisible.

The first part of this chapter provides an initial set of findings with respect to this, drawing primarily on the quantitative data from questionnaires and activity diaries. The second part of the chapter discusses some of these findings (alongside examples from our interview data) in relation to four key ecological terms — emergence, growth, evolution and resilience — and considers ways in which these terms may be valuable for describing and analysing young people's cultural learning.

3.2 The Activities and Interests of Young People in Harrow

The issue of just what constitutes 'cultural' activity is not easy to pin-down.[37] In this research, we took a very inclusive approach. We purposefully avoided any overly-prescribed view of what activities 'count' as cultural, and in some cases avoided using the words culture or cultural at all; instead asking what young people 'did at the weekend', or 'would like to do after school'. We asked 146 Year 5 students to record in diaries their responses to a range of questions, reporting on what they actually did at the weekend, and what they might do in the future.

What was the most enjoyable thing you did this weekend?
The most frequently cited activity that these children had enjoyed in the previous weekend (see Figure 3.1) was spending time with their family, including cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. This was followed by sport, playing games on computers and phones, playing with friends and in parks. Specific 'art & cultural' activities appeared to feature less during the weekend.

Figure 3.1
**Most enjoyable thing this weekend (Yr.5)**

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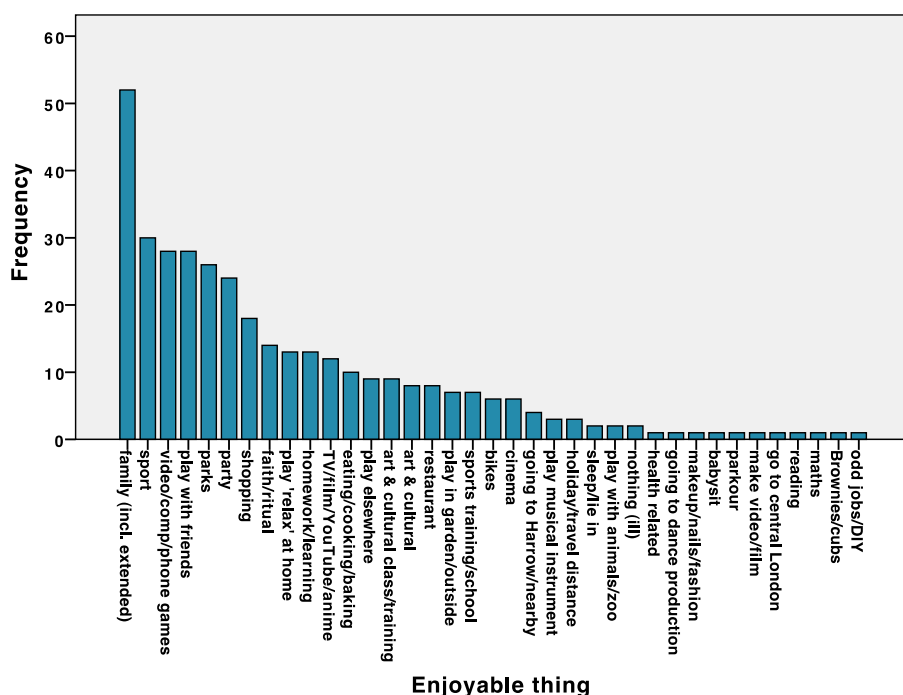
37   For a full discussion of this issue, see *Towards Cultural Democracy* (Wilson *et al.*, 2017), Chapter 1.

What did you like about it?
We wanted to know what it was about these activities that our respondents enjoyed (see Figure 3.2). They often gave answers that pointed to the intrinsic worth of activities simply for what they are (22.9%). So, for example, 'play' was enjoyed because it was play, 'running' because it involved running. Thereafter, frequently given reasons included that the activity was fun or funny (10.9%), that it allowed the young person to spend time with key people — family, friends, etc. (10.6%), that the activity provided a sense of achievement (6.6%), that the young person could do what they wanted to do (5.1%), that the activity afforded emergent experiences (i.e. unexpected or unplanned) (4.9%), or that the activity involved doing something 'different' (4.0%).

Figure 3.2
What did you like about it?
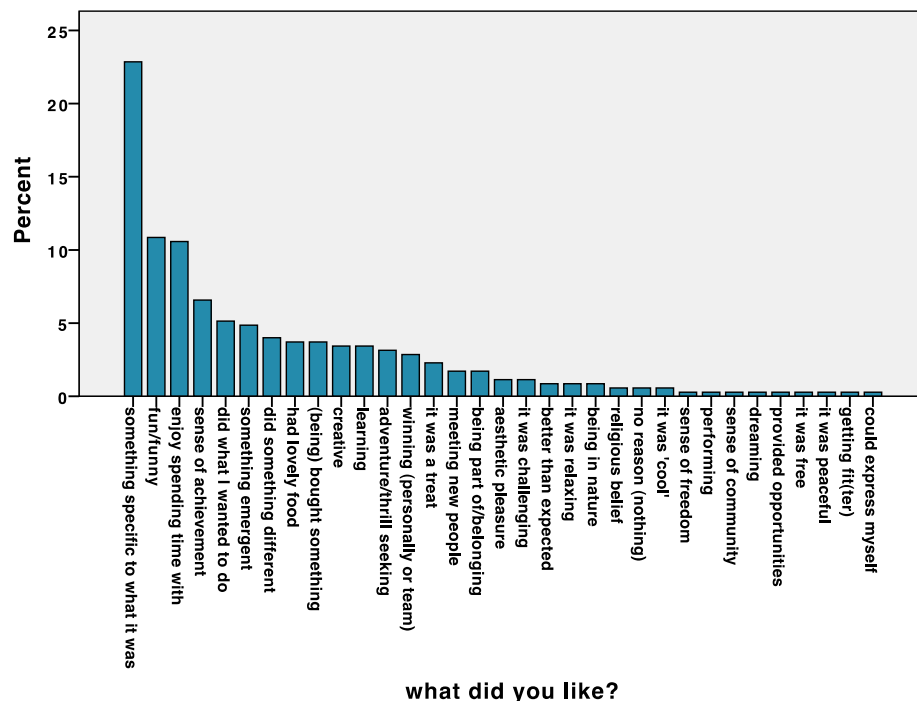
*Where did this take place? Who else was there?*
We see in Figure 3.1 that young people in this sample put considerable value in spending time with their families. This is not confined to the nuclear family. Family here involves a broad sweep of relations and relationships. Particularly frequent reference was made to playing with cousins. But so too to seeing aunts, uncles, nans, granddads, godparents and step-parents. There were many examples of distributed families, sometimes with mum or dad living in other parts of London, in different cities within the UK, or spending time abroad (with several responses referring to picking up a parent from the airport). Some entries also refer to playing with neighbours, indicating a strongly localised everyday life for some young people. Over and above this, the diaries indicate that many of these young people play with friends at weekends, either at each-other's houses, or in parks and playgrounds nearby.

If you have any free time after school this evening, what do you think you might do?
By asking this question, we sought to develop a picture of mid-week activity. As presented in Figure 3.3, despite the wording of the question suggesting that 'free time' might constitute anything after schoolwork was completed, the most commonly cited response listed homework and learning of some kind (14.9%). This is an interesting finding in itself, suggesting that even by this relatively early age (9–10 years old) children are prioritising their studies. Thereafter, playing games on computers and phones was the most preferred activity (14.0%), followed by sport (9.6%) and art & cultural activity (7.0%). This latter figure is revealing to the extent that it is considerably higher than the reporting

of activity over the previous weekend, (and it out-scores spending time with family, (6.1%)). This suggests that art & cultural activity might be a) a more common pursuit during the week — with children 'relaxing' at the weekends in other ways; or b) something that children aspire to do, but (for whatever reason — perhaps because they need guidance or support) do not actually pursue so readily at present.

Figure 3.3
What do you think you might do this evening? (Yr.5)
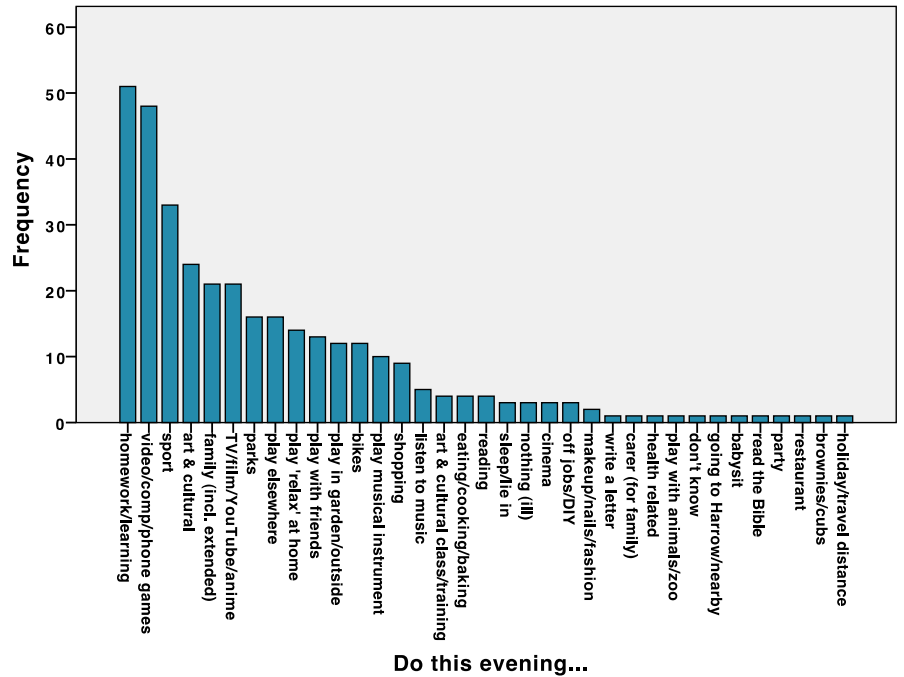
Do this evening...

If you have any free time after school this evening, or another evening this week, and you could do anything you wanted to, what would you most like to do?

Finally, we asked Year 5 students to keep a diary note on what they might like to do if they could do anything they wanted to. The intention here was to move beyond the reality of 'what is', and explore in a little more detail what attractive *possibilities* might be. Asking this kind of question, addressing possibilities and potentials, is just one way to begin to explore the latent aspects of cultural capability, with capabilities understood as a 'freedom' to undertake a certain course of action (in the case of *cultural* capability, the freedom to (co)create culture, and to give form and value to our experiences).

Figure 3.4
If you could do anything you wanted to, what would you most like to do?

whatever you wanted...
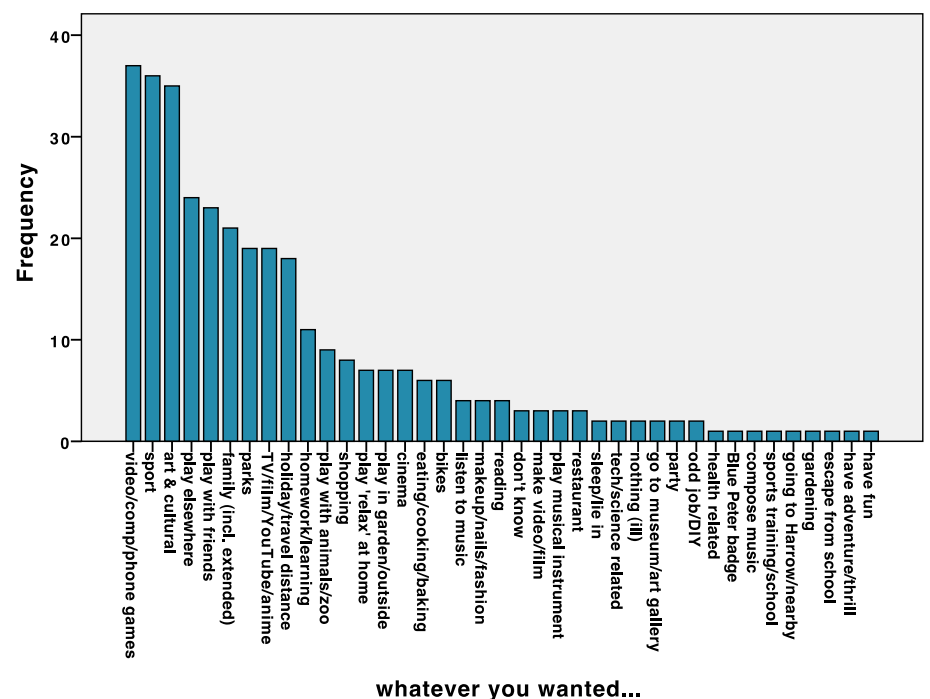
The most popular response to this 'what if?' question is playing on computers, phones and similar technologies (10.9%). To the extent that most children of this age will have at least some access to these devices, this appears to be an answer that strays little from current reality. Indeed, reviewing the range of answers given, it appears that most children remained relatively firmly within their currently existing, everyday 'boundaries of possibility', providing answers that were much more realistic than fanciful. There were just a small number of responses that listed things such as foreign holidays or expensive meals. This, in itself, might raise important questions over the extent to which children of this age actively imagine futures significantly different to their current circumstances. The conditions that enable and constrain imagining alternative possible futures is discussed further in Chapter 6: Aspects of Cultural Agency.

It is interesting to compare these responses of primary school children in Year 5, via their activity diaries, with the views of primary school parents who completed a questionnaire. We asked parents the question, 'What are your child's favourite things to do at the weekend?', with answers being given through written answers to an open-text box, which we then categorised. We should not make extensive direct comparison between these two data sets, since only 15% of the sample were parents of Year 5 children. Nevertheless, a comparison of the responses provide some valuable insights.

Figure 3.5:
Child's favourite things to do at the weekend
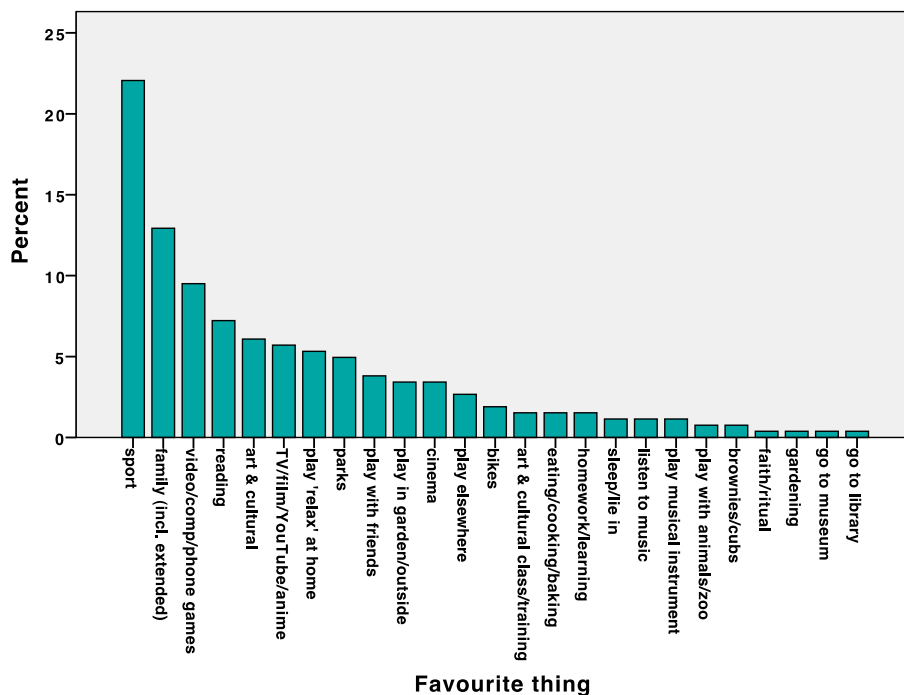
As with the Year 5 diaries, there is a strong focus on sporting activities (22.1%), and it is worth making special mention of 'swimming', which was particularly popular. This is then followed by spending time with family (12.9%), playing computer games (9.5%), reading (7.2%), art & cultural activities (6.1%), TV/film/YouTube/anime (5.7%), 'relax' at home (5.3%), and parks (4.9%).

There is a relatively strong focus in these responses on both reading and art & cultural activities, which each feature less prominently in the responses from Year 5 children. This raises the question as to how well parents know what their children's favourite activities are — including interests that exist as curiosities or potential interests that have not yet had the opportunity to be fully expressed or developed — and the extent to which parents have skewed or incomplete perspectives. This data cannot provide detailed answers to this question. But the results do raise the important issue of the ways in which the role played by parents in supporting their children's cultural learning can be well-informed and

facilitating — working in sync with a young person's curiosities — whilst there is also the possibility of ill-judged support being given to some young people, in some cases. How parents recognise, enable (and/or constrain) their children's cultural opportunities and interests is a significant issue, and would be a valuable area for further research. Within the home, how do practices of cultural care — specifically in respect of parents' *attentiveness* and *responsiveness* to young people's interests and curiosities — operate currently? And how might they do so in the future?

With the data collected through questionnaires with students in Year 7 & Year 8, it's interesting to see how their cultural activities compare to those of the Year 5s. Our first comparison once again responds to the question 'What are your favourite things to do at the weekend?' (Figure 3.6). Again, this was an open-text question, and we have categorised the written answers.

Figure 3.6:
What are your favourite things to do at the weekend — Yr.7 & 8

...how do practices of cultural care — specifically in respect of parents' attentiveness and responsiveness to young people's interests and curiosities — operate currently?
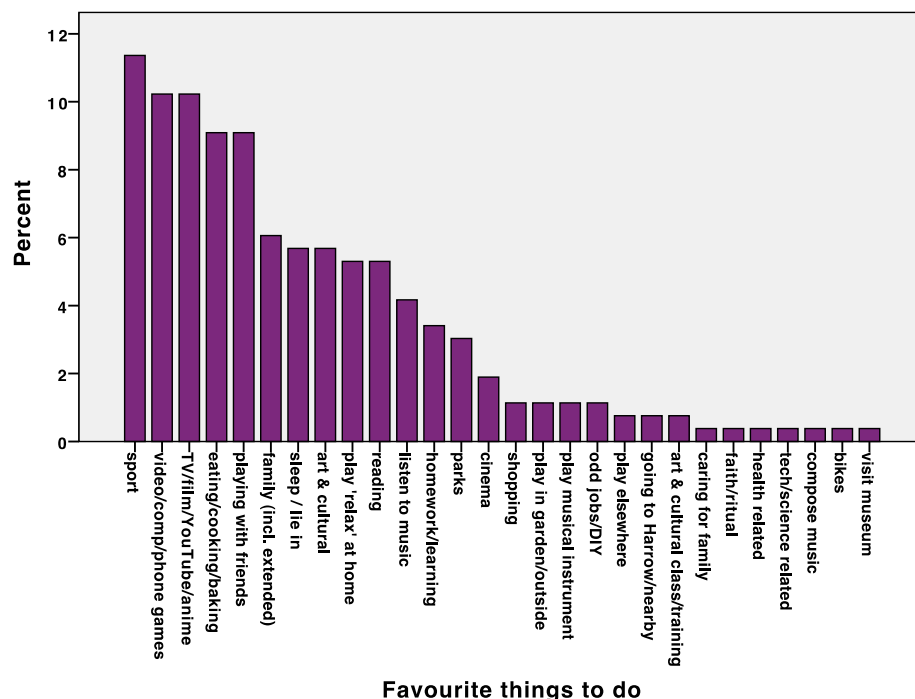
Once more, sporting activities (11.4%) and video/computer/phone games (10.2%) come out strongly. But so too watching TV/films/YouTube/anime (10.2%), eating/cooking/baking (9.1%) and playing with friends (9.1%). 5.7% referred to art & cultural activities (in comparison with 2.5% of the Year 5s above).

We also asked these students what activities they had engaged in during the previous two weeks, with tick-box answers, and with responses collected in respect of each young person's activities at three types of location: home, school, and 'somewhere else'. Beginning with activities *at home*, 83% had taken a photograph; 80% had read a book (not for school work); 74% had done some drawing; 63% participated in sport; 55% had done some crafts; 49% had made a film or video; 48% painted; 45% had played with makeup and fashion (dressing up); 42% had played a musical instrument; 40% had written a story; 34% had written a poem. *At school*: 84% had done some drawing; 76% painting; 75% had participated in sport; 60% playing a musical instrument; 49% had written a story; 45% had written a poem. *Somewhere else*: 61% had listened to music; 55% had participated in sport; 53% watched a music video; 48% played computer games.

The data from both Year 5 students and Year 7 & 8 students indicates the

considerable extent and plurality of cultural activities being undertaken. These young people are engaged in a wide range of activities in their own time. However, as we discuss in subsequent chapters, the high levels of everyday activity indicated in this data should not be understood to show, in and of itself, that young people are highly enabled — and little constrained — in their cultural capabilities. Deeper analysis of our research data, and particularly the material generated through interviews and focus groups, is needed to understand what these high levels of everyday activity tell us about young people's cultural opportunities in Harrow, how cultural learning currently operates within the cultural ecology, and what the key enabling and constraining factors are. To make just one initial point with regards to this, it's instructive to consider the results given to the following questionnaire question:

What are your favourite subjects at school?
We asked this to Year 7 & Year 8 students through a tick-box question. Each student could select as many 'favourite subjects' as he or she wished. The most popular subject is Art (69%). This is closely followed by Food Technology (65%), Maths (64%) and PE (63%). There is then a drop to the next cluster of favourite subjects including Design & Technology (45%), Music (42%) and Chemistry (41%). English appears to be less popular (32%). How does this compare with the 'non-core' subjects taken at GCSE level? Tim Gill's 2015 analysis of the uptake of GCSE subjects in 2014, based on the National Pupil Database makes for thought-provoking reading (our findings in square brackets). Art and Design 13.9%, Fine Art 8.6% [69%]; Music 7.1% [42%]; Food Technology 6.7% [65%]; Dance 1.9% [26%]; PE 17% [63%].[38] Whilst, of course, the education system is not geared centrally to what children *like* doing, these significant disparities raise important questions about the extent to which young people have substantive freedoms, or not, to choose to take cultural subjects at GCSE, and whether there may be 'tipping points' in the school lives of young people at which cultural opportunities become closed off to them. (An issue discussed in Chapter 5: Relationships & Institutions.)

3.3 Emergence, Growth, Evolution & Resilience
In the first part of this chapter, we have begun to observe the wide range of everyday activity young people in Harrow are engaged in. On the other hand, the data also begins to indicate that there may be constraints on young people's cultural opportunities. In Chapters 4 — 6, we present detailed analyses of the conditions that enable and constrain young people's cultural learning in Harrow. Prior to that, in the second part of this chapter we briefly discuss four key terms employed within recent discussions of cultural ecology.[39] In the context of these initial insights into the cultural activities and interests of young people in Harrow, can we begin to test the extent to which ecological ways of thinking have descriptive and analytical power in helping to understand these young people's cultural learning?

Emergence
How is a child's cultural life formed and shaped? Where does it begin? The influence of parents and (extended) family is hugely important. Recognising the crucial role of these early care-givers of course raises question of how the characteristics of cultural care — attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness — currently operate at home, and how domestic cultural care may develop in the future. Our data sheds light on the centrality, especially for younger children, of spending time with family. Here, cultural learning happens most widely through forms of play — whether these are 'free', semi-structured or deliberately organised. The word 'play' or 'playing' features prominently in the responses offered by primary and secondary school children alike — though clearly this can involve very different types and levels of focus, learning and

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38   Gill, T. (2015) *Uptake of GCSE subjects 2014. Statistics report series no.80*. Cambridge: Cambridge Assessment. Available at: http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/222143-uptake-of-gcse-subjects-2014.pdf
39   See Holden, 2015 & 2016.

skill. (Examples include playing with friends, playing computer games, playing a musical instrument, playing football.) Our data suggests that the influence of parents, in particular, is very important, and this is often grasped by young people themselves. For example, one Year 5 diary entry reads: "I just really like to play the sport it's run in my family blood." Adding, elsewhere, "I have not played a board game with them for ages my dad is always busy."

Schools, too, have a centrally important place in enabling and constraining the emergence of young people's cultural interests and opportunities. Whilst Holden helpfully distinguishes between cultural education (within the curriculum) and cultural learning (much more broadly conceived), our research demonstrates the importance of avoiding any simple dualisms between the experiences of cultural learning in school and elsewhere. One of our findings in relation to cultural activities at school is the importance of the extent to which structured opportunities encourage and/or enable 'freedom' and 'creativity' — with many of the young people explaining that they like a particular subject or club precisely because it encourages or enables 'freedom' or 'creativity'. This is the language that the young people often used, without being prompted to do so by the questions asked.

Whilst some answers indicated that after school clubs are preferred to curriculum lessons in these respects, this was by no means always the case. Moreover, there is significant variation in the experiences of young people between the approach taken in different lessons, with some teaching styles experienced as affording much more creativity and freedom than others. Key themes developed in subsequent chapters of this report are *supported autonomy*, *safe spaces* and *spaces of listening*. Young people place value on feeling safe, being listened to, and being supported in ways that allow them to be creative and free. This can take place within school lessons, at after school clubs, and in spaces elsewhere — including youth clubs and within the home.

The forming and shaping of cultural lives happens in a myriad of places and spaces. Chapter 4 focuses in more detail on these. Clearly, however, an important issue for further consideration is the extent to which it is possible, and valuable, for the key providers of cultural care — including parents, schools, youth organisations and local authorities — to be broadly aware of young people's cultural interests and needs, and that their different and necessarily partial perspectives are 'joined up' where this would be helpful. Our research revealed the difficulties of organisations including schools and the local authority being aware of just what young people's cultural activities and interests actually are. As one Head of Music observed, "on the whole, I'd say our students are very quiet about their culture and the things they might do with their families. I know that family is very important to our students. They have big families, big weddings, and they get involved in all sorts of cultural things that they probably don't really understand the [wider] value of and therefore are very reluctant to bring that into school sometimes."

Growth

What does a child's cultural growth mean? How are growth and development nurtured? In the light of the argument made in Chapter 2 — of the need to move beyond ecological *descriptions* of culture to an analysis of the different ways in which culture is actively managed or cared for within and across cultural ecosystems — it's important to raise the question of whether, and how, there is a coordinated or strategic approach to nurturing creative potential. Here lies a tension in respect of what we have already introduced concerning the pivotal role of parents, family and schools. For as much as cultural growth clearly is dependent upon these key care-givers, the development of cultural learning must be something that stems from the engagement, interests, skills and motivations of young people themselves.

An issue to be addressed in later chapters, therefore, is how the right balance can be struck — ensuring that cultural opportunities remain open for each

Young people place value on feeling safe, being listened to, and being supported in ways that allow them to be creative and free.

child to pursue autonomously as they wish (recognising that their decision-making process must itself be informed by knowledge, role models and such like), whilst also providing the level of support and guidance needed for that child to take up the opportunity if interested. As one Head Teacher put it when asked what success looks like for the after-school clubs he offers: "Success is children engaged in opportunities and environments that they don't otherwise — unfortunately — have." It seems likely there is no simple and universally applied formula to providing such opportunities and environments. Rather, our fieldwork indicates that responsive, evolving approaches to enabling *supported autonomy* are needed. A key question is, then, how can an overall approach to managing cultural ecosystems — across one local authority area, say — be developed in ways that allow for such responsive, tailored support to be given in different parts of that ecosystem?

As indicated in the discussion of the 'Emergence' of young people's cultural interests and activities above, one thing that our research makes clear is the correlation between cultural opportunities that enable creativity and a sense of freedom, and *enjoyment*. However, there is not a neat correlation between specific subjects and the extent to which they enable creativity and experiences of freedom. As the following comments from one participant in a focus group held at the Harrow Youth Parliament indicate, the ways in which lessons are structured and run has significant implications:

> In my old school, in Art there was much more freedom. They don't set you a certain style — you get taught something, and then you could mix it up the way you want, in any direction. And the teachers were great — the way they taught Art, it was exciting, it was fun — I really enjoyed Art, not only because I was quite good at it, but because it was fun to learn. And now I've moved to another school and the boundaries are quite constricting, because you're either good at Art or you're not; and it's not about people who really like art but aren't good at it, it's about people who like Art and they are good at it. And they only focus on those kinds of people. So, I think it's unfair for people who like Art, who enjoy Art but aren't that great at it — and I think they should have a bit more freedom to paint what they want, draw what they want, create what they want — instead of the people who are mainly just focused on Art GCSE, and making a portfolio, and the other aspects of Art GCSE. So, I think there should be more freedom.

The critique being articulated here points towards the central issue relating to young people's cultural growth, which is the tension our research reveals between opening up cultural opportunities on the one hand — through enlightened provision and cultural care — and closing them down on the other, in furtherance of increasingly narrow educational attainment goals (SATS, CATS, GCSEs, A levels and anticipated expectations of university admission tutors). In Chapter 5: Relationships & Institutions, we discuss this tension further, exploring whether there are specific 'tipping points' at which young people's cultural opportunities are knowingly or unwittingly closed off. This also introduces the related challenge of whether, and how, schools can proactively support students in purposefully keeping their cultural opportunities open.

Evolution

Is there such a thing as cultural evolution? And if so, what role do young people play in it? To the extent that evolution is dependent upon the introduction of variation, it is important here to acknowledge that young people do not simply repeat and copy the work of adults in their learning, but develop their own novel approaches, techniques, styles and genres in the process.[40]

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40   Whilst a teenage band, for example, may start off playing cover versions of well-known songs, it is in and through their emergent performances that they will begin to introduce and recognise their own voices and ways of giving form and value to their experiences — and these, in turn, represent the variants that make the next stages of cultural evolution possible.

...young people do not simply repeat and copy the work of adults in their learning, but develop their own novel approaches, techniques, styles and genres in the process.

Cultural variation is increasingly prominent, of course, in a world of global travel and migration — and this has a bearing on many aspects of young people's cultural lives. As one primary school Head Teacher noted:

> The vast majority of children within the school — we're talking about over 90% of children — have English as an additional language. A lot of those children are economic migrants, some of them are migrants from war-torn areas. So, we have had Syrian children, we've had children from Somalia, children from Sudan, basically all over. It used to be the majority population was Gujarati. It's now shifted slightly. So, the majority child population is now Romanian. And the children come with different expectations, I think.

With this degree of migration, there is of course considerable movement across different spaces and cultures taking place within the lives of young people in Harrow. On the one hand, our research found that some young people in the borough do not travel far from home. On the other hand, as the above comments indicate, they may have travelled many miles to come to live in Harrow; and every day young people across the borough attend schools with enormously diverse student populations.

A key aspect of our findings, discussed further in Chapter 4, concerns just how much issues of mobility and psycho-geography have a bearing on the cultural opportunities open to young people. The speed of variation and evolution within Harrow's cultural ecology is very fast, and consequential. These features of the cultural ecology raise important questions about how and to what extent such processes of evolution can — and should — be managed, and what such cultural care would be seeking to achieve. These questions are addressed in Chapters 7 & 8.

Resilience

The fourth and final ecological term we introduce here raises the questions: *how is individual confidence promoted? And how does the system of cultural learning develop its own resilience?* These are big questions. Answers to the first of these are developed in Chapters 4 and 6, in particular, where we introduce the ideas of safe spaces, spaces of listening, and supported autonomy. Throughout our fieldwork, time and time again, we heard stories about confidence (and its lack). We saw how providing young people with conditions in which they can develop confidence — to engage, to speak, to express themselves, to create, to travel independently — is central to their resilience, wellbeing and flourishing. Answers to the second question are developed particularly in Chapter 8: Caring for Cultural Freedom: Supporting Cultural Learning, in which we look to the future, and the ways in which cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems could be managed on an ongoing and democratic basis. Our research shows that resilience, or *sustainability*, is a key issue at the systemic level, as well as at the level of individual young people themselves. A key consideration for future partnerships and policies aiming at promoting the cultural capability of young people is how this can be achieved in ways which are both democratic and resilient: attentive and responsive to young people's evolving cultural interests on a sustainable basis.

Chapter 4: Space, Place & Mobility

4.1 Everyday creativity

Young people in Harrow spend a lot of time in parks. They also spend a lot of time playing with their brothers, sisters and cousins. They spend time at home, in their gardens, and shopping centres. What they do much less frequently is spend time at arts centres, theatres and galleries.

Which of the following places have you been to during the past two weeks? (Please select as many as apply.)	
Shopping centre	81%
Park (or playground)	72%
Restaurant or cafe (where you sat down to eat or drink)	49%
Cinema	43%
Public library	30%
Religious building (e.g. church, mosque, temple, synagogue)	27%
Museum or gallery	16%
Theatre	14%
Youth Club	14%
Arts Centre	8%
None of the above	6%
Community Centre	5%
Live music venue (concert hall or gig venue)	3%

Our research in Harrow documents the richness of everyday cultural life for young people in this borough. From drawing, to taking photos, cooking and singing — young people are involved in an array of everyday creative activities outside of any formalised educational or organisational setting.41

Recognising this plethora of everyday creativity poses significant questions to parents, teachers, policy makers and all those with an interest in supporting cultural opportunities for young people. What these findings should not do is lead to the conclusion that young people have all the cultural opportunities they need. With such high proportions engaging — in their own time — in drawing, singing, taking photographs, and more, the impression may be given that everything is rosy, that young people's cultural lives are free and flourishing.

The high levels of everyday creativity indicated by our questionnaires and diaries, whilst a significant indication of the richness of young people's everyday lives, only scratch the surface in attempting to understand their present and

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41   These findings strongly connect with our previous research in which we showed the plethora of everyday creativity that takes place 'under the radar' of much cultural policy and planning. (Wilson *et al*., 2017) *Towards Cultural Democracy: Promoting Cultural Capabilities for Everyone*. With young people, the extent of 'invisible' cultural life may be particularly extensive.

potential cultural opportunities. Once we dig deeper in analysing where young people's cultural lives take place, we begin to see that the picture is more complicated, and rather less rosy. We see more clearly what enables and constrains young people's cultural learning, and how unequal opportunities are. We begin to recognise the significant inhibitors of cultural opportunity for young people, and the ways in which they require attention and action.

4.2 Domestic Spaces

Young people's homes are a key site of cultural learning. The following questionnaire responses indicate the range of domestic activity.

Which of the following activities have you taken part in during the past two weeks? [At Home?]	
Watching a film	92%
Listening to recorded music (on the radio, CD, iPod or online)	86%
Watching a music video	86%
Playing a computer game / video game	85%
Taking a photograph	83%
Watching a TV programme	83%
Reading a book (not for school work)	80%
Cooking	76%
Drawing	74%
Participating in sport	63%
Singing on your own	63%
Watching sport on TV	60%
Crafts (e.g. knitting, sewing; making birthday cards; decorating a room for a party)	55%
Playing a board game or card game	55%
Making a film / video	49%
Playing a game you made up / a friend made up	49%
Painting	48%
Playing with or using make-up / henna / clothes (dressing up) / plaiting or braiding hair	45%
Singing with friends or family (not in a choir)	44%
Practicing a musical instrument, or playing just for fun	42%
Dancing	40%
Writing a story	40%
Reading a comic / graphic novel / manga	36%
Writing a poem	34%

Looking at paintings, sculptures, drawings, or historical objects / artefacts	33%
Religious service or ceremony	32%
Skating or skateboarding	26%

Particularly for younger children, spending time with family at home is a central part of their daily and weekly lives. However, there are also many examples of young people undertaking creative activities by themselves, often in extended and absorbed ways. One Year 5 student completed her activity diary in the following way:

> Q. What was the most enjoyable thing you did this weekend?
> A. I sat at my window and drew my view for 1 hour 55 minutes.
>
> Q. *What did you like about it*?
> A. What I liked about it was that I had all the time I needed to complete the picture I drew.
>
> Q. *Where did this take place? Who else was there?*
> A. It took place at my mum and dad's bedroom at the window at home.

Domestic space can be the site of cultural opportunity through the provision of quite simple conditions: a pencil, paper, a window. But also conditions of safety; the possibility of taking your time. The idea of the 'holding environment' is a significant contribution of the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott. In the clinical contexts from which the idea derives, this refers to the ways in which parents literally hold the baby, and, later, the ways in which psychiatrists and psychoanalysts provide conditions within which patients can explore their experiences. For Winnicott, conditions of reliable 'holding' allow for children — and adults — to explore their environments, and their experiences.[42]

One of the authors of this report has written elsewhere about the possibilities for understanding cultural organisations as holding environments, providing a reliable set of conditions that allow for experiences of valuable absorption and/or exploration to take place.[43] Within the lives of the young people involved in our fieldwork, in addition to recognising the range of activities that take place domestically, we can observe ways in which home life can offer conditions in which to explore, to play and to become absorbed in enjoyable activities, through which these young people can give form and value to their experiences. At the same time, we heard reports from some of the third sector youth workers we spoke to of young people living in the borough whose home lives are characterised by difficulties that would undermine the possibility for positive experiences of safety, absorption and supported exploration within the home.

4.3 Digital Spaces

Digital space is an important location of cultural opportunity for young people. Spending time on mobile phones, PlayStation computers, or YouTube are very common activities for the young people we worked with. It's important to recognise the variety of activities this may cover. When asked what she likes to do at the weekends, one Year 8 student said that "I either go on my phone, listen to music or watch something online." Another said, "Saturday, Sunday, that's like my resting days, so I'll just play on the PlayStation or go on my phone.

Domestic space can be the site of cultural opportunity through the provision of quite simple conditions: a pencil, paper, a window.

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42   D. W. Winnicott, 1991 [1964] *The Child, The Family and the Outside World*. London: Penguin; and, 1990. Home is *Where We Start From: Essays By A Psychoanalyst*. London: Penguin.
43   Jonathan Gross, *Concert Going in Everyday Life: An Ethnography of Still and Silent Listening at the BBC Proms*. PhD Thesis. University of London. 2013.

[...] I'll talk to my friends or play games on it."

Digital space provides the location for individual activities, and for young people to connect with each other. This raises questions of equality of access. One school involved in this research provides an iPad to all its students, in order to establish a continuity between home and school, giving students access to all their learning materials. Further research would be valuable to examine the extent to which young people in London experience inequalities of access to digital technologies, and what consequences this has for their cultural learning.

4.4 Public Spaces

For young people in Harrow, public spaces and the public realm are a crucial part of their lives. This was clear across the range of our research methods, including questionnaires, diaries, focus groups, interviews and the ABCD workshop. Asked what their favourite things to do are at the weekend, these interview responses from Year 7 students are quite typical:

> "Probably just go Park with my friends. [...] Play games, hang out and stuff. Just talk."

> "Go out. Enjoy the fresh air."

> "On the weekends I usually like to go to the park, the shopping centre, or we go to the funfair. It just depends what we feel like doing. Sometimes I really can't be bothered to go out, so I stay at home and watch Netflix, or something like that. Or talk to my friends on the phone."

The young people in this study spend a lot of their time in public spaces, or in digital spaces. The centrality of public spaces within their lives was also indicated by the responses given to the question, 'What would make Harrow a better place to live?', in questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Some young people called for improvements to the public realm, such as improved facilities in local parks. One Year 7 interviewee said:

> I think it's pretty boring living in Harrow because there's not a lot of stuff to do here. [...] There's one shopping centre and one cinema but there's not a lot of variety. If you miss a cinema show there's not a lot of shows that they show in the cinema. The park is nice but maybe they could make the park better. With adding more stuff to the park, like a better gym in the park, because there's this tiny gym in the park and it's really old and it's not really that good.

Parks play an important role in the lives of young people in Harrow. 72% of our Year 7 & 8 respondents reported having spent time in parks in the previous two weeks. Through interviews (across Years 7 — 10) and the Year 5 diaries, young people indicated a number of ways in which these spaces are important to them. In some cases, parks are a place to spend time with family, with friends, or to play sport. Some young people explained that parks provide the opportunity to relax, to enter into a different kind of mood or mental state. As one 18-year-old interviewee put it, spending time in her local park allows her to be more "subtle". In a variety of ways young people express the idea that having the space to be 'free' is very important to them. We will see further examples of this below. Parks are one important place in which young people can enjoy mental and physical freedom.

At the same time, young people express concern about some elements of the physical environment in which they are living in Harrow. In answer to the question, 'What would make Harrow a better place to live?', many answers touch on litter, graffiti and feeling safe on the streets.

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These quotations from Year 7 students illustrate some of these concerns. In the last of these comments, there is a clear indication that feelings of safety can impact on the ways in which young people in Harrow make use of the space, and the extent to which public spaces in the borough constitute spaces of opportunity for them. It was relatively infrequent that the young people involved in this research called directly for specific 'provision' — such as a new cinema, a new arts centre, or a new club — to be provided within the borough, though there were examples of this. Instead, suggestions more frequently focused on improvements to the physical environment, and feelings of safety.

> "It is a great community to be in. If the streets were cleaned and less graffitis, really. Because there's too much graffiti everywhere I go, and rubbish. Dirty streets sometimes."

> "More activities around because there's only really... if you want to do something in your spare time, you can only really go to the park, cinema, the leisure centre, or shopping. And it's not a lot that you can do.

> "Sometimes when high school kids are hanging in gangs, they look sketchy."

> "I like it, but I guess it's kind of dangerous when it gets later. There's all of the stabbings and stuff like that, and gangs hanging round. I mean, I feel safe but sometimes my parents are worried. They want me to like not stay out as late as I would want to."

Figure 4.1
What would make Harrow a better place? (Years 7 & 8)
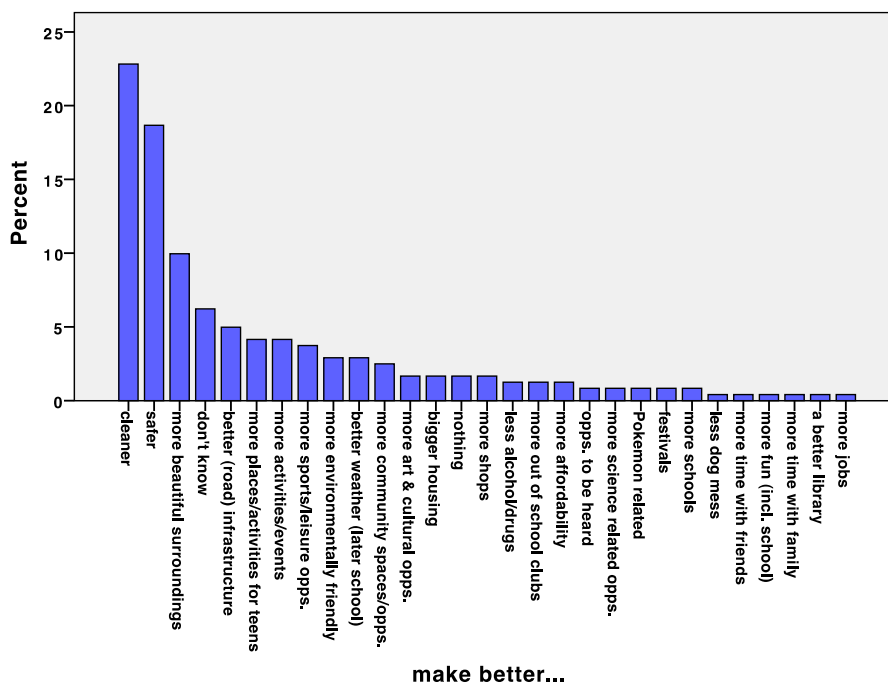
Responses particularly highlight the need for a cleaner (23%) and safer (19%) environment in which to live. These answers, of course, indicate young people's concern with aspects of the collective care for their neighbourhoods, and how this could be improved. There is also a concern to improve the infrastructure — particularly of roads and traffic, as well as better provision of places and activities for young people. Many of the particular comments put forward by these young people reveal lives that — psychologically at least — are impacted by crime, violence, litter and an experience that their environment is not

maximally conducive to their welfare.[44] Harrow would be a better place to live with "more police around"; "no fighting"; "less drunk people"; "people put rubbish in the bin"; "I want it to be a safer place no murder, theft, or any harm"; "be kind".

Parents of primary school children were asked the same question. Here there is a strong focus on the provision of better facilities and surroundings in parks (12%), more activities and places for children (12%), and better (road) infrastructure (12%). The particular focus on safety (11%) and especially being cleaner (5%) is significantly lower than it was for the Secondary school respondents. This suggests that adults (even parents) may not always have a full view of what concerns children most. Understanding how to ensure young people's voices are heard (more), i.e., requiring an attentive and responsive approach, is a key theme running through this report.

4.5. Fourth Spaces

Of course, whilst young people in Harrow spend much more time in public spaces — including parks and shopping malls — than they do at arts centres, there is still plenty of use made of opportunities offered by organisations outside of school, including performing arts schools and groups of various kinds. This came out especially strongly through interviews and focus groups.

One Year 7 pupil, for example, explains that in her free time she likes to dance at her dance school, and she competes once a month. She goes to there on Sundays, and does "all the styles, just not ballroom." She has been doing this since she was four, and taking part in competitions since she was seven. Another Year 7 pupil goes to a theatre arts school on Saturdays. This involves three lessons: dance, drama and singing. She has been doing this for a year, and it was something she initiated — she wanted to do it. She heard about it through a friend, who gave her a leaflet.

In recent research on vernacular spaces of creativity,[45] there has been useful discussion of the notion of 'third spaces'. This term is used — in the context of adults — to refer to a space that is neither work nor home, that provides opportunities for creativity. With children, we might think of these, perhaps, as fourth spaces — neither school, home, nor the public spaces such as parks and shopping centres where young people spend a lot of their time. These may be youth clubs, dance workshops, or weekend drama schools. Whilst young people may be involved in a wide range of cultural activities at home, at school and in public spaces, the current and potential value of these fourth spaces is considerable.

4.6 Spaces of Freedom

For some young people, the cultural activity they do outside of school is more enjoyable than the in-school versions. One Year 8 pupil said, "I'm used to doing dance outside of school, but when I do it in school it's kind of like a bit more controlled, the same as Music. You can't really create your own dances much." A member of the Harrow Youth Parliament said, "The thing about drama at our school, it's all knowledge based — there's not a lot of creativity in it. And I think if the young people had more freedom, then they'd be able to make better work."

Across the fieldwork young people told us that they value conditions in which they feel free. In some cases, this is a way of contrasting two different lessons at school — the preferable lesson is the one in which they feel free. Elsewhere, it is the way the young person attributes value to the time they spend in local parks

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44 Recent research by The Children's Society indicates that this may be a common set of experiences for young people in the UK, with fear of crime, in particular, the most common problem reported by children in the UK, experienced by 2.2 million. The Children's Society (2017), *The Good Childhood Report*. https://www. childrenssociety.org.uk/the-good-childhood-report

45 Tim Edinsor (Ed.) (2010) *Vernacular Spaces of Creativity*.

at the weekend. Or, in some cases, it is the reason they prefer the dance they do at weekend performing arts school to the dancing they do in PE lessons.

Both inside and outside of school, young people value conditions of freedom. What enables young people to feel free, and why is this important? Part of the answer to this question is that it involves the ability of the young person to have meaningful choice over how they spend their time. But there are a number of other components to the experience of being free. Some of these are more obvious than others.

> "[I like dance lessons because] It kind of gives me the space to be free and do what I like and kind of go with the music and things."

> "I like [dance lessons] because you have freedom — you can move around and stuff."

> "Origami lets me create new things. And it lets me be free."

> "In computing club we can select what you have to do, but in lessons they tell you what to do."

> "I feel like Music lessons are more controlled than they could be. Music's usually about being free and letting your emotions and feelings take over. But then in Music we just have a piece and like play."

4.7 The Space to Make a Mess

One condition of freedom can be having the space in which to make a mess. In Chapter 3 we saw that whilst there were high levels of Year 7 & 8 students who have painted at home in the last two weeks (48%), this was considerably less than those who had drawn at home (74%). Having a space in which to make a mess can be an important enabler of creative activity. One of our interviewees was the owner of a new arts and craft café in Wealdstone High Street, Picazzo Arts. Fara explained that she hears from the parents who come into the shop that having the space in which to make a mess is extremely important. To give just one example, since the shop opened a few weeks previously, regular visitors included a parent and child who live nearby at the home of the parent's parents. The grandparents are protective of the carpets and furniture, and so before Picazzo Arts opened, the six year-old was very restricted in her creative activities. Now that Picazzo has opened nearby, she and her mum make use of this space to make a mess, several times a week.[46]

4.8 Mobility

Our research participants — both adults and young people — indicate that whilst Harrow is one local authority, in several respects it needs to be understood as many places. In understanding how young people's cultural opportunities operate, this is a key point, with important consequences. At our Asset Based Community Development workshop, participants told us that in respect of both 'cultural' provision and youth services more broadly, 'assets' are unevenly distributed across the borough. For both adults and young people to report this is a significant indication of their experience of living in the area. However, cultural opportunity needs to be understood beyond the most

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46   Access to appropriate space remains an issue at many stages of life. In a recent report on freelance work within the creative industries, the Creative Industries Federation recommended that government should "Protect freelancers' creative workspaces against development into residential spaces, by making sure usage cannot be changed without planning permission." (Creative Industries Federation, 2017: 5.) Similar issues are highlighted in the recently published *Create NYC* cultural plan for New York. "Create NYC seeks to protect cultural spaces under threat and create new spaces to ensure live, work, and presentation spaces remain affordable for artists and cultural organizations across disciplines." (NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, 2017: 12) So far, less attention has been given to how these issues effect young people. The one significant exception to this is the recent report, *The Cultural (Re)Generation: Building Creative Places for young London* (A New Direction, 2016).

immediately visible cultural assets such as buildings and services. Opportunity needs to be understood, in part, in relation to *mobility* — the freedom to travel, and to spend time in different locations.

Through our interviews and focus groups with young people, we heard very varied experiences of the ways in which young people move around the borough. For some, their activities outside of school are very much centred on the area around their home. This was confirmed by interviews with teachers and head teachers. Teachers in Harrow report that the young people they work with often do not travel beyond a small area in which they live. Because, say, Harrow Arts Centre (HAC) offers a wide range of programmes and events, if a young person in another part of the borough never travels to Hatch End — where HAC is located — what looks like an opportunity is in fact not recognised or experienced as an available choice for that young person.

This point extends more broadly to young people's relationship with London as a whole. Whilst London may have one of the widest range of cultural organisations and events of any city in the world, for many young people these do not constitute available opportunities. One head teacher reported that on a school trip into central London, some of his primary aged children did not know how to use the escalator — they had never taken the tube before. Similarly, a Music teacher in a large comprehensive school told us that when she first moved to the borough she was:

> really surprised how the kids never went on the tube, never went into town. Unless the parents were interested and took them, they very much stayed around Harrow or Kenton area [...] and didn't really see the bigger, wide world. [...] we do a lot to broaden the horizons of our young people, because otherwise it's a very small world for them.

For many children in the borough, travelling into central London is not a regular occurrence. However, this is likely to vary significantly, depending on family circumstances. Through our interviews some young people reported more frequent travel across London. This was often explicitly linked to family — such as visiting or meeting up with relatives. One Year 7 pupil, for example, reported that she goes into central London because her grandma lives there, or sometimes she will go shopping with her Aunt in Oxford Street. One Year 8 pupil reported going into central London with her family "to concerts and theatre shows a lot", to see Leona Lewis, Matilda, Wicked and the Lion King, and she has even travelled with her mum to Manchester to go to a concert.

The comments of the Music teacher above indicate that schools have the potential to play a role in increasing the mobility of the young people they work with. This might be through particular school trips. But our research also indicates that there are other important ways in which young people's mobility might be extended further, which, in turn, may radically open up their cultural opportunities. A key question is: how can young people's cultural mobility be enabled?

What places feel like matters. It can make all the difference to where and how young people spend their time.

4.9. Psycho-geography.
Amongst the factors that influence where young people spend time, a significant factor is whether they feel safe. As we saw above in response to the survey question, 'what would make Harrow a better place to live?', a high proportion of young people indicated that issues of safety are an important consideration. In some cases, young people make clear that safety concerns directly affect where and how they spend their time. Not being able to play outside as late into the evening as they would like to, or feeling unable to use a park when teenagers are increasingly using it to smoke cannabis. What places *feel* like matters. It can make all the difference to where and how young people spend their time. In this and other important ways, psycho-geography has a bearing on cultural capability: the substantive freedom to (co)create culture,

giving form and value to experience.

Although Harrow is one of London's least dangerous boroughs, for some of its young people, everyday life does not feel that way. The Ignite Trust works with young people at risk. Many of these young people are in gangs or on the periphery of gangs. Staff at Ignite explain that for the young people they work with, some post-codes within the borough are out of bounds. Particular post-codes are controlled by particular gangs, and this restricts which parts of the borough the young people will travel to.

The work Ignite does with young people is a three-stage process, "to engage, empower, and transform". This takes place through a number of activities and ways of building relationships. These are described further in Chapter 6: Aspects of Cultural Agency, in which we discuss in more detail how the Ignite Trust works with young people to develop their confidence. One important part of this is to create a safe space for young people — a key feature of the practices of care in this context. This is particularly important for Ignite's participants, because their daily lives in public spaces — and at home — can feel unsafe. As Lynne Burke, the Director of Ignite, explained:

> you've got like today where they're all running round the area because the police are all out in force, so they live in fear. And when they come into our projects it's great to see them relax and have some fun. And we see that as progress. When they first come in they'll come in with their hood up, and their hands in their pockets, and meanness on their face, and as they gradually relax, we start to measure things like their body language, do they say hello to people they don't know. [...] they live in this incredibly violent environment outside. But what we've got is a safe environment to show that actually there's a lot more outcomes to life. You could go into a safe work environment where you don't have to live with fear. So, we're trying to teach that to them, to sort of raise their aspirations, and move them through to the employment.

Lynne Burke explains that an important part of the process of transformation that Ignite looks to achieve is to enable the young people they work with to leave the area. On the one hand, it's the place the young people know, and is home. On the other hand, the area feels unsafe on a daily basis, and restricts their opportunities. "But their lives are too full to think of leaving Wealdstone. It's almost impossible to get young people out of Wealdstone. For them it's their safe area, and to take them out of here is very scary to them. Which is crazy because most people are afraid of coming into Wealdstone!" Part of the way in which Ignite seeks to expand opportunities for the young people they work with is therefore to take them out of the area. One-to-one mentoring meetings with a youth worker sometimes take place further afield; and one indicator of real success, over a period of years, can be a young person leaving the area, taking up opportunities elsewhere.

The fact that Harrow can be both a 'safe' borough, statistically, and at the same time some of its young people experience it as dangerous on a daily basis, raises the importance of psycho-geography.

The fact that Harrow can be both a 'safe' borough, statistically, and at the same time some of its young people experience it as dangerous on a daily basis, raises the importance of psycho-geography. The term was coined in the 1950s by surrealists, most prominently Guy Deboard, who described it as "The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviours of individuals."[47] Speaking to the staff at Ignite, it is clear that the behaviours of the young people they work with are deeply connected with a sense of Harrow as a series of territories that are open or closed to them. When, in an interview, 100% Producers, a programme offered by Harrow Arts Centre for young people to be supported to put on their own music nights, was mentioned, Lynne Burke said that the young people at

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47   Quoted in Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*. Pocket Essentials, 2010: 10.

Ignite would love to do that. At present, however, they would never think to travel to Hatch End to take up this opportunity. This is an issue of information-sharing, but also, more challengingly, of psycho-geography, that "point at which psychology and geography collide".[48] Our research shows that in managing cultural ecosystems for the benefit of all, attention must be paid to psycho-geography, to the ways in which spaces *feel* to the people who move through them; and to the possibility that the psycho-geography of a place can be shifted and developed for the good. One way this can be achieved, as the work of Ignite shows, is through mentoring relationships that enable young people to move about safely. This is of course a very resource-intensive approach, and other creative ways should be considered for increasing young people's cultural mobility, and enabling psycho-geographic experiences that increase the range of cultural choices young people actively feel themselves to have.

The young people Ignite work with are, of course, not typical of all young people in the borough. But the particularly extreme experiences they report are indicative of a more general point: that when it comes to cultural opportunities, psycho-geography matters. This is a key factor to be taken into account in developing ecological understandings of culture; and, when it comes to action, in developing effective practices of *caring for cultural freedom* — in support of opportunities for young people's cultural learning. When we began our work in Harrow, we didn't deliberately seek to investigate the psycho-geography of the borough. Instead, it emerged through the fieldwork as an unavoidable consideration. To the extent that young people at Ignite never think to travel to the Harrow Arts Centre in Hatch End, cultural learning for *them* is clearly restricted in a way that is not going to be the case for others, even living close-by. This emphasises the need to talk about multiple cultural ecosystems, in the plural, rather than one, unified cultural ecosystem; and demonstrates the need to consider what interventions for change can be made.

Zenab — Case Study
Questions of psycho-geography have significance for young people across the borough, and not only for those in gangs, or on the periphery of gangs. Zenab is a black Muslim student in her early twenties. Her parents are Nigerian, and she spent the first six years of her life in Scandinavia, due to her father's job. The family moved to Cambridge, and then to the midlands. Zenab describes the experiences she has had of having the colour of her skin condition how people engage with her in many situations, including the suspicious looks she receives as she walks down the street in Harrow.

She describes the daily experience of people responding to her in ways that are mediated by the colour of her skin: ways in which she is patronised, ways in which people are suspicious, ways in which she is positioned as different. She says that it is even worse for black men — and cites her brother as an example. She describes the everyday experience of 'curtains twitching' as the black man walks down the street. Zenab describes the experience of her family buying a semi-detached house in Cambridge, and being asked by neighbours if their house was paid for by the council — if they were receiving benefits. Zenab and her mother live in a prosperous part of Harrow, but she feels uncomfortable there, experiencing suspicion on the part of her neighbours, and rarely seeing ethnic minorities in the surrounding streets.

It's in the context of these extended discussion of race that Zenab explains why, in her view, arts and culture are so important: people need "platforms", people need to be "listened to". She is very engaged with spoken word poetry, as well as with music and

48   Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*. Pocket Essentials, 2010: 10.

dance. However, she explains that she doesn't engage in these activities within the borough. She'll find opportunities online, and travels to Brixton or Shoreditch. She received a flyer through the letterbox about a fair taking place nearby in Harrow, but she saw it as 'not for her.' Although someone with a keen interest in cultural and creative opportunities, for Zenab, her immediate environment is not one that encourages her to seek out those opportunities nearby — and she instead seeks them elsewhere.

4.10 Creating Safe Spaces

The work of the Ignite Trust illustrates that not only is it important to recognise and understand the particular psycho-geographic features in operation in the lives of young people, but that changes can be made. One of the ways this can happen is by the creation of a safe space. For Ignite, this can be by providing a free meal and a game of football. It can also be by providing one-to-one mentoring with a skilled youth worker.

Other organisations in the borough also speak in terms of creating a safe space. Art4Life offers sessions for young people, some of whom have learning disabilities or mental health conditions. These sessions involve many kinds of arts and crafts. But the two people who run Art4Life emphasise that it is the "neutral space" that they create that is central to the value of their work. These spaces are not school, not home and neither are they medical spaces managed by psychiatrists. It is this 'neutrality' that allows for young people to relax, enter into creative processes, and into positive relations with themselves and with others. The Art4Life team explicitly identify the creation of a "safe space" as the heart of their work. *Practices of care* — characterised by attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness — in offering safe spaces, are central to their approach.

Both the Ignite Trust and Art4Life emphasise the importance of young people being listened to. In Chapter 6 we discuss this in more detail, and its importance. The point here is to recognise that organisations are actively creating conditions in which young people not only feel safe, but in which they feel their voices can be heard. Safe spaces can be listening spaces, too — and spaces of transformation.

Again, Lynne Burke from the Ignite Trust stresses that changing the environment is a really important part of the transformative process that Ignite is ultimately seeking to enable for the young people they work with. This change of environment can be quite small scale in nature — having access to neutral spaces like the nearby Costa Coffee, Nandos, or a gym that has recently opened down the street, where a mentor can spend time with a young person outside of the normal conditions of their everyday life.

For an organisation like Ignite, with very tight budgets, the large majority of which goes on staffing, having partnerships with organisations that can provide free access to appropriate spaces is very important. Even the local Nandos saying 'you can come here for free' is valuable. Having access to more spaces is one of the things that Lynne Burke identifies as how Ignite could more fully realise its mission, alongside having a greater budget to have youth workers "on the ground" and a "bank of opportunities" for their young people, provided by better information-sharing in the area. The Our Cultural Commons[49] initiative foregrounds the idea of sharing resources — including buildings and spaces — within a locality. Voluntary Arts and Arts Development UK are the organisations behind Our Cultural Commons, which does not have a specific focus on young people. Our research in Harrow indicates this way of thinking has potential value in this context, too, and more consideration could be given to how this kind of approach could be developed.

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49   https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/our-cultural-commons

One of the roles that adults can play in the cultural lives of young people is to provide connections for them to locations that they wouldn't otherwise know about or have access to.

4.11 Creating Pathways to New Locations

One of the roles that adults can play in the cultural lives of young people is to provide connections for them to locations that they wouldn't otherwise know about or have access to. Youth workers, as we saw at Ignite, can play a vital role in this respect. The personal qualities of these youth workers is important. Some will be more effective than others. These kinds of qualities are ones that Ignite has thought a lot about, including confidence and 'authenticity', which they look for in recruiting. In doing this, they actively involve the young people they work with in the recruitment process, to observe how potential staff members engage. In the way in which it operates, Ignite provides examples of how young people can be connected to opportunities they would not otherwise have access to. The lessons of their ways of working have much wider implications, exemplifying some of the functions that 'creative citizens' (Hargreaves, I.& J. Hartley, 2016; Wilson *et al.*, 2017) can play. In Chapter 5: Relationships & Institutions, we discuss the ways in which teachers can also act as connectors, enabling young people's cultural mobility; and in Chapter 6: Aspects of Cultural Agency, we discuss how young people themselves can act as creative citizens in this and other ways.

Chapter 5: Relationships & Institutions

As much as discussion of creativity, art and culture often focuses interest on the particular skills and talents of individuals, it is the *relational* nature of culture that characterises ecological approaches. In this chapter, we focus on the social relations and institutions that motivate, enable and/or constrain young people's cultural learning. We begin at home, then consider the pivotal context of schooling, before turning to aspects of wider community.

5.1 Families, Parents & Friends

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart would not have been the extraordinary musical creator he undoubtedly was, had it not been for Leopold, his father and teacher (and of course, for Anna Maria, his mother, though she receives far less attention today). It is saying nothing new to draw attention to the particular influence that parents and wider family have in supporting the creative and cultural activities of young people. But in thinking ecologically about young people's cultural learning, the role of family and parents can be analysed further by considering the aspects of cultural learning at home that can be such a significant influence. The activities being referred to are not always 'subjects' at school, but examples of 'everyday creativity', as this example illustrates:

> I: I like to go outside mainly, and like to go with my family to places. And then I like going to the Park. I like playing with my dad. And if I see something that interests me, I like to go and see it and research about it or something.
>
> JG: *What might be an example of that?*
>
> I: Sometimes I look at these people and they start making robots and everything. So then I like to go and get some pieces from random places, or see some electronics and take it apart and try and make something from it.
>
> JG: *Okay, so getting some electronics to try and make a robot, or something like that. [...] That sounds like an interesting project. Where would you go to get the materials to do that?*
>
> I: Sometimes I go to the attic because there's lots of spare parts there. Or I'll go inside my storeroom and see if there's anything there.
>
> JG: *The storeroom in your house. So there are bits of electronics that...*
>
> I: That my parents don't use or something, or there's a phone that my mum and dad don't use and I just take it apart.
>
> JG: *Gosh. So did someone teach you how to do that?*
>
> I: No, I just like looking at stuff and trying to make something out of it.
>
> JG: *Right. So what kinds of things might you actually make out of it? Something that actually works, or that looks cool, or... ?*
>
> I: Something that actually works.

Parents are often influential role models, advisors, supporters, confidants, providers of old bits and pieces, and much more besides. At the same time, their specific role in nurturing the cultural growth of their offspring varies enormously. Moreover, whilst some parents can take a very active role in enabling cultural opportunities, in some cases they can be far less enabling — either because they are in one way or another not present, or because they actively direct children away from 'cultural' choices.

Parental expectations and attitudes are significant factors. For some parents, arts subjects are not serious and do not provide job security. As one Year 9 interviewee said: "when I was in Year 7 my parents didn't understand Art to be a subject, because they are more Science, English, Maths. So I wasn't really encouraged by my parents to take anything like Drama or Art."

Alongside the expectations and attitudes of parents, it is of course the case that material circumstances — family income, housing, costs of living — all play a critical role in what cultural opportunities are available to young people, from the earliest of ages. These factors don't necessarily fully close off (or fully enable) opportunities altogether, but may well modify them. For example, one Year 7 interviewee would like to have gone to a dance school — seeking to do what she called "other kinds of dance", such as hip hop or salsa — but her family didn't have the money. On being asked what movies they go to see at the cinema one Year 8 replied: "Well we go to the ones at 10 o'clock [on Saturday mornings], because it's cheaper, because its free for children. My mum chooses a movie, or two sometimes and then we pick." Having money is, of course a very real constraint and modifier of cultural opportunities.

In Chapter 3 we saw evidence of young people choosing to spend time with their friends, engaged in many kinds of activities that were more or less 'creative'. Our research certainly confirms the idea that friendship is an important enabler of cultural and creative activity. For example, 49% of Secondary School respondents in our survey with students in Years 7 & 8 had played a game they or a friend had made up in the last two weeks whilst at home, with 38% for both 'at school' and 'somewhere else'.

5.2 Teachers & School

Our research documents the importance of key individuals — teachers, parents, siblings, friends — who are pivotal in ways that even they themselves might often not recognise. Here a Year 9 student recalls being given some transformational advice:

> When I went to put my form in, my Head of Year was there, and I chose History and Geography and Psychology. She said "it's just going to be too much, it's going to be writing all the time. I've seen your artwork and your drama, you should choose that". So she encouraged me, and I thought about it and thought yeah maybe she's right. And I was so thankful that she made me choose Art because now it's really amazing and I love it so much.

A Year 7 student explained that a primary school teacher had told her about a dance class on Saturdays:

> He told me about the place where we could do dance outside of school and then another person saw me who was like... there was two dance groups, there was the medium one, and then there was the better one, and he told me about the better one — so I went to that one.

In many responses from young people, they not only identify the ways in which key people have pointed them in the direction of significant opportunities. They also indicate the level of enjoyment found from discovering, through the

Our research documents the importance of key individuals — teachers, parents, siblings, friends — who are pivotal in ways that even they themselves might often not recognise.

support of a key person, a cultural pursuit or interest that they'd previously dismissed as 'not for them':

> I think that in Primary school I didn't look at Art as anything, it was just there. But when I came to this school and had this Art teacher I suddenly liked it and started doing it. I never thought I was good at Art before, but then when I started doing it I liked it so much and I chose it for my GCSE. It's just like a new world which I hadn't seen, and it just makes me happy. (Year 9 student)

Similarly, this exchange with another Year 9 student indicates the ways in which the teacher was able to provide support:

> JG: So you say your teacher was quite an important...

> I: Yeah. My teacher was so helpful, and the way she was showing me art. The way she was teaching just made me feel really inspired and made me love it.

> JG: Can you say more about how she did that?

> I: I think she was just using her skills in showing us her own personal skills and telling us about herself. And she would make us do different things even if we had never done it before. She would teach us how to do it and show us new things and made me see things that I'd never seen before, so it was really interesting.

Teachers can act in extremely important ways in the cultural learning of young people. This can be by inspiring them within the classroom, in some cases by demonstrating their own skills, by encouraging a young person and telling them that they are 'good', and/or by letting them know about other opportunities they can take up — either in school clubs or outside of school. With the potential to connect young people to other possibilities, including opportunities outside of school, teachers have the potential to act as a kind of creative citizen. The extent to which this currently happens within schools — and the extent to which conditions are in place to support teachers to act as such — varies considerably. Our research shows powerful examples of teachers being responsive to young people's cultural interests and needs. In other cases, *caring for cultural freedom* in these ways is much more restricted.

...teachers have the potential to act as a kind of creative citizen.

5.3 Pathways and Blind-Spots Within School

Observing ways in which teachers open up opportunities for young people through classroom demonstrations or informing them of opportunities elsewhere, the question arises as to whether or not the guidance and suggestions of teachers sometimes directs young people down particular cultural paths at the expense of others.

One head teacher we spoke to commented "It's not my job to try and force the children down one route or another. It's their culture, it's their livelihood. My job's to educate them and to make them get on with one another." Zenab, introduced in the previous chapter, highlighted the sometimes narrow nature of school curricula. In particular, she drew attention to the history syllabus having big implications for how young people see and understand themselves — particularly Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students. What (and whose) history are we taught? She sees this as a very systemic problem — even at university where she is now studying. There is little or no opportunity to study pre-Colonial African history, for example, and she suggests that this reinforces understandings of Africa and African history as framed by colonialism, in ways that are partial, and disempowering:

> I feel like a lot of the problems we see — for example, black male in high schools perform one of the worst demographically — and I

feel that's down to the curriculum not engaging them, not offering them a mirror reflection. If I was a white male or a white woman and the history says how great the United Kingdom is, there's a sense of pride. And I feel like that sense of pride should be given to everybody.

She makes a strong critique of how limited she felt were her opportunities for cultural learning at school, in respect of the kinds of history that was taught, and the range of socially engaged study and discussion that was possible. She links this to her wider experiences of growing up as a black Muslim woman in the UK. She reports on the levels of everyday and institutionalised racism that she and her family have experienced as they sought to make the UK their home, and which her schooling did not do enough to address. "When I went to school [...] my family were the only black family in that school and obviously we faced racism and discrimination. We felt isolated at times. We didn't feel like the school was able to help or connect to us." It has only been in later years, at university, that she has had the opportunity to study issues of racism, colourism, British and African history, in ways that have given her a space and a language within which to understand and respond to these difficult everyday experiences. Zenab indicates that the absence of these opportunities for critical cultural learning, at school, were a significant part of her feelings of alienation.

5.4 Teachers' Knowledge of Students' Lives

It is important in this context to note the challenges for teachers to know what experiences their students are having outside of school, and the kinds of cultural activities young people are involved in. There is quite a mixed picture here. In some cases, teachers told us they feel they have a decent sense of the everyday lives of their students. More often, though, they feel they do not. In some cases, teachers can suddenly become aware of very significant parts of their students' lives, such as illustrated by a Music teacher:

> I went to an Indian music concert in Ruislip, just up the road. And it was a graduation concert of an Indian violinist — south Indian music being accompanied with a mridangam, the South Indian drum. ... [my student] was in Year 7 then. And I was interested to see him there, and when I saw him in school the following week I said: "Oh, it was good to see you there, how come you were there?" And he said: "Well, you know the man who was playing the mridagam?" I said "yes". He said "I'm his teacher". I said: "He's your teacher?" "No. I'm his teacher!"

This example raises both the challenge and the ability of teachers to be aware of the broader cultural backgrounds of their students. It raises a number of important questions, including the extent to which young people might feel that their cultural activities are valued in the school environment, and what new 'pathways' might be opened up for young people if schools had a fuller knowledge of their everyday lives. At the same, young people may well be sensitive about their tastes, interests and outside lives, and the ways in which their identities are framed in the 'public' space of school, so consideration needs to be given to the ways in which teenagers might also wish to keep their activities to themselves.

Nonetheless, the potential for a better knowledge of — and connection between — the cultural opportunities young people have inside and outside of school is an important point this research raises. In particular, the need for better up-to-date and joined-up information about what kinds of services and opportunities are available for young people was an issue that came up repeatedly. This was a concern expressed by the full range of respondents, from young people themselves, to teachers, third sector organisations and council staff. We also encountered it in talking to members of Harrow Youth Parliament — an organisation made up of, and representing, young people across the Borough:

...the potential for a better knowledge of — and connection between — the cultural opportunities young people have inside and outside of school is an important point.

> A number of us found out about Harrow Youth Parliament at roughly the same time we joined it. It's the same for a lot of support services, youth services, cultural services, etc. — people don't know they exist. So, you can Google Harrow Youth Parliament on the council website and there's literally nothing there. To make sure these things are on the map in the first place, you know, is important.

The key challenges of how to improve the availability of information, the visibility of pathways for young people, and the role that new partnerships can play in this, are discussed further in Chapter 8.

5.5 Leadership Within Schools is Essential

The senior leadership team can have a crucial role to play in the ability of schools to actively support the broad cultural learning of young people. One head of Music said the following:

> If I say I want to take a group of students to the Royal Albert Hall, [the head teacher] says "Of course, whatever cover you need, go for it". And I don't think all schools have got that flexibility on budget or have as much understanding with those kinds of opportunities. And I think it's very much down to the individual school and the relationship with the head teacher to allow them to run those projects successfully. Because it's not just [...] for a short term. It could be a three-year project that you're investing in, and sort of seeing the long-term effects and valuing that is not always easy to convince senior leadership teams. I know colleagues of mine have struggled over the years.

Some schools are clearly able to be attentive and responsive to their students' interests, and create opportunities accordingly:

> The Dohl [Indian drum] group I mentioned earlier, it was something that came out because the students were playing, there were a lot of students going to a Dohl club outside of school — 'let's do something in school and then give them the opportunity to perform' [...]. That came about because the students obviously had an interest and we wanted to grasp onto that and actually nurture them further than just going to an after-school club. [Head of Music]

Our research indicates that many schools are offering a diverse range of lunch-time and after-school clubs. Sometimes these come about through the individual interventions of staff. Sometimes they are 'just what the school does', as these comments from a primary school head teacher indicates: "[...] so the person that leads French club, it came about through her because she wanted to do that. The orchestra and choir have been happening for years, so it's sort of just a tradition."

These examples of the importance of both individual teachers and senior leadership teams in enabling opportunities for cultural learning strongly connect with the findings of other research. This includes the extensive evaluation of the Creative Partnerships programme,[50] and King's College London's review of the history of arts policy and children in the UK, which reported that "The arts have tended to either suffer or thrive depending on the existing enthusiasm of teachers and governors, and the degree to which they are seen to enhance the overall educational experience or simply act as an optional extra." (Doeser, 2015: 15) In a similar vein, in *The Virtuous Circle: Why Creativity and Cultural Education Count*, Sorrell, Roberts and Henley argue that

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50   Parker, 2013.

An important question these discussions raise is what 'good leadership' in schools looks like when it comes to promoting young people's cultural learning ecologically.

cultural opportunities for young people in schools require high "standards in school leadership". (2014: 125)

An important question these discussions raise is what 'good leadership' in schools looks like when it comes to promoting young people's cultural learning *ecologically*. Sorrell, Roberts & Henley make the point that "Head teachers have a vital role to play in working with cultural organisations and developing two-way relationships. Such work with organisations and individuals will augment, not replace, cultural education in schools." (2014: 111) But our research indicates that teachers and school senior leadership teams can play many other important roles in listening to their students, responding to their cultural interests and curiosities, and, potentially, developing a wider range of spaces and pathways through which their students can try new things and develop existing interests. In the following case study, we see one secondary head teacher giving a prominent place to this role within his overall leadership of his school.

Clubs as Part of the Vision for a School: Case-study

One head teacher, working in a comparatively under-privileged part of the borough, speaks at length about the local area and the people who live there. His approach to leading the school is closely connected to this. He knows the children often do not have lots of structured activities outside of school, and he is keen to provide as full an offering of lunchtime and after-school clubs as possible. The school also provides an iPad to all children, to link school activities with home. Here we see a teacher actively thinking about links between school and outside, a clear awareness of the particular circumstances of his pupils, feeling he knows quite a lot about what goes on for them — and looking to respond to this. This is a kind of creative citizenship in action; and an example of pro-active 'caring for cultural freedom' through practices of attentiveness and responsiveness to young people's cultural interests and needs.

The programme of clubs is very important, the head teacher says: it's a significant part of his vision for the school. He explains that it's an indication of the importance that clubs have that a new Assistant Principle, joining the school this year, will have clubs as her specific portfolio. The after-school clubs run from 3pm — 4pm each day. The head teacher mentions that some kids say they don't want to leave at 4pm. He has mixed feelings about this. It's great that the children really enjoy the activities the school offers. He thinks that time with family is also very important, though, and is concerned if time beyond school isn't so attractive for the students.

They offer a wide range of clubs at the school. They change the clubs on offer regularly, to keep them exciting and fresh. This is also a kind of "democratic" process, he says, as the school regularly ask students what clubs they want. The head teacher says that he can't accommodate the preferences of all the students, but does his best (and where possible suggestions are taken up). Sometimes he actively seeks to balance the 'majority' preference with the need to represent 'minority' interests.

He wants the clubs, in some cases, to offer students experiences that they don't have within their curriculum — so, for example, encouraging students to attend clubs in areas that he or she has not prioritised within their GCSE pathway. This head teacher says the clubs can take the staff themselves out of their comfort zones — often requiring them to run activities that they are not expert in. He also comments that teachers at all levels of seniority run clubs.

The students requested a gardening club, and now the Executive Head of the whole cluster of schools runs that.

This head visits the primary schools that feed into his secondary school, as part of smoothing the students' transition. He heard from one primary school, from which just a few students would be coming, that origami was very popular — so he set up an origami club, in part to create an opportunity for those students. This has been a very popular and successful club. When we asked what 'success looks like' for a club, this head teacher says that at first it was about the numbers signing up. But now he sees it not only in those terms but in terms of the students' sense of "belonging".

5.6 Institutionalised Career-Focus & Filtering

It's very important to this discussion of the ways in which schools enable and constrain cultural learning that we take stock of the regulated demands made of schools today. Our research revealed the very real pressures schools and their teachers are under in delivering the curriculum, often with very tight resources. The capacity of schools to provide cultural opportunities for all their students is inevitably limited. Within this context, what role schools play in enabling and constraining young people's cultural opportunities becomes all the more pointed. As a third-sector interviewee said, "I think if we're not careful, we stop a young person becoming imaginative and being creative, because we control so much of what they can and can't do and we don't give them opportunities to try loads of different things."

This is not only a question of the time and space within schools for cultural activities. It is the ways in which young people internalise their environments, and make their choices and prioritisations. One head of Music observes that "the media and the academic pressure on young people has meant that they're very reluctant to give up any of their spare time on something that doesn't automatically reflect in a grade, or a mark, or an academic achievement". Furthermore:

> A cultural achievement is not seen by the students and their families as important as an academic one. A lot of the parents aspire for their kids to go into medicine, law, very sort of high-end professions when actually they're not necessarily the kind of students that would make that ...I think the media and with our particular government has not made that easier for us. And obviously devaluing the arts with regards the EBacc.[51]

In this respect "things like the Arts Award have helped" (head of Music). "We've been running the Arts Award for a number of years. Again, an actual qualification that you can actually then sort of say to students, 'you can work towards this, this is something that is going to be valued, give you GCSE points or UCAS points for university.'" However, "students are voting with their feet and are going for subjects which are more likely to get them into those top universities." The reality is that "schools cannot fund a small art class of 10 students when they could have 30 students in a maths class, so paying for that one teacher to teach 30 is more valuable than teaching 10." Adding, "Our head would really love to have a really broad, balanced curriculum. But we just don't have the numbers of students opting for those subjects, so they can't financially say it's viable to run that subject for one or two students, when actually you would be better off teaching a second subject, and teaching a class of 30." It is extremely difficult to see how the move towards an EBacc system, where there are no arts subjects included, is going to do anything but exacerbate this situation further.

We need to think creatively about how knowledge of cultural ecosystems can be generated in ways that are both empirically effective... and practically useful...

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51   Following an 18-month consultation period, the UK Government have published plans to implement an EBacc (English Baccalaureate) that doesn't contain any arts subjects.

At the same time, as one secondary head teacher insisted, it is still possible to buck the tide, or at least be a stone in the stream, and continue to provide a wide range of cultural opportunities if the school leadership commits itself to doing so. For this particular (comprehensive school) head, providing a wide range of cultural opportunities — inside and outside the curriculum — is one of the reasons his school is highly in-demand with parents and young people in the borough, and one of the school's strongest characteristics and strengths.

5.7 Opportunity Costs

Across our interviews, we heard that with cultural opportunities come cultural *opportunity costs*. In the case of school provision, support of one set of activities or subject area is going to make it more difficult to support another. But this is a situation that not only faces schools and their staff, but also young people themselves. In pursuing particular interests opportunities to do *other* things are curtailed. This raises the question: how realistic is it to hope or expect for cultural opportunities to be 'kept open' when there are so many mechanisms (e.g. national curriculum; exams and assessment pathways; career progression; skills development programmes) operating in a child's life that are specifically geared at specialisation, or inadvertently put tremendous pressure on time and energy?

Our research revealed many examples of cultural activity being 'crowded out', as in the case of this Year 8 student:

> JG: So you've done that for as long as you can remember. So, have there been times when you've done lots of drawing, and times when you've done not very much?
>
> I: Yeah when I was younger I used to draw a lot more than I draw now. Now I have lots of other things to do.

Similarly, a Year 7 student described the way in which she is no longer able to go to her dance school on Thursday evenings:

> I: It's just too much stress of school and everything. So sometimes I go, but rarely. [...] with homework, sometimes I'm just too tired after school to go. When I was younger I wanted to do dancing and I couldn't [...]
>
> JG: In what way couldn't you?
>
> I: Because there was so much activity going on. My brother was preparing for his GCSEs, I was preparing for SATS and stuff, too much going on.

These insights into the often pressured lives of young people raises the further question: in what ways, if any, are there concerted efforts within young people's lives to keep cultural opportunities 'open'? We saw — in the 'democratic' system of clubs at one school in the borough, in which the students could propose and vote for the clubs on offer — a head teacher actively seeking to keep options as open as possible for the young people at his school. What other approaches could be taken to ensuring that 'openness' of possibilities is sustained for young people, even with the multiple demands on students' time and energy, and schools increasingly experiencing pressures on their curriculums and resources?

5.8 Tipping Points... and the Organisation of Interest

In the previous sections of this chapter, we have been developing an account of what can be called *the organisation of interest*. In other words, we have been illustrating a number of ways in which young people's interests do not simply come into being and operate within a vacuum. They are subject to ongoing processes of enablement, constraint, encouragement and discouragement,

...in what ways, if any, are there concerted efforts within young people's lives to keep cultural opportunities 'open'?

and, often, the need to make choices and to prioritise. Interests are cultivated, managed or organised through this range of influences. As with the co-management of cultural ecosystems more broadly, these processes can take place with greater or lesser degrees of explicitness and strategising.

So, does what we might think of as the organisation of interest — which, to a greater or lesser extent can be the conscious, deliberate, proactive and strategic oversight of individual children's cultural interests, talents and proclivities — also get framed within a (key)stage model? There are clearly key academic mile-stones at the point a child joins primary school, at the end of KS1 and 2 when they take Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), on arrival at secondary school, and at various points during the years 7-11 prior to taking GCSEs. But how might these relate to any cultural opportunity mile-stones?

On being asked how she had first got into dance classes, one Year 8 student replied, "My mum says it was because I knew words and dances off by heart from the TV show. So my mum just put me in Theatre School." As we have seen earlier, parental influence is often a key factor. Another Year 8 student noted, "When you come to secondary school...You get to know more teachers. In primary, you only get to know like three teachers that teach you. In secondary you get to know a lot of teachers more." An older respondent pointed to another tipping point somewhere around Year 10 and 11.

> But I feel like [...] that's when I started to become aware of societal [issues] — especially that's when social media was slowly starting to become a thing and I had access to a computer and the internet, so I was learning all these things by myself, and I was like "oh, they didn't say that in school, like that's a bit different.

Not only do outside influences grow in these crucial years, but things possibly get trickier for the school to 'organise' as the child develops interests in various different directions:

> What you tend to find, particularly within the arts, you'll get students that are very musical, they love dance, they like doing drama and if you've all got your Year 7 music club or drama club on the same lunchtime, the kids are torn between what they're going to go to. And they'll either go to the clubs that they prefer because they like the teacher, or they've got a goal that they really want to work on, or they've got a show that they're doing, rather than go to another teacher's club, so I think that's also quite a difficult thing to set up and I know that's something we've struggled with over the years, those clashes of running different clubs for students that tend to be the same kind of student that wants to go to those clubs but on the same day. [Head of Music]

It would certainly seem that there are tipping points where a young person's cultural opportunities are framed and thereby supported.

It would certainly seem that there are tipping points where a young person's cultural opportunities are framed and thereby supported. In the best cases, these may take place organically, as a young person's interests develop and are nurtured in ways that feel supportive of the young person and their freedoms to choose. But, importantly, in some case they may well not mesh with the academic 'Key Stages'.

As we have already seen, tipping points may involve individual conversations with key members of staff. These might not be scheduled or formalised in any way, but rather 'just happen'. Despite the best intentions of teachers, for many young people this can remain the luck of the draw. Perhaps even more troublingly, there may be systematic biases to the ways in which ad hoc support is given to young people. As one teacher told us, the additional support that young people can receive to support them in their cultural opportunities — providing information of additional opportunities outside of school, for example — is often skewed towards those that are identified as 'gifted and talented'.

Further consideration needs to be given to making these kinds of tipping points — or important moments of influence — more equitably available to young people. For example, thought could be given to the development of systems of 'career' advice focused on the development of cultural opportunity, creating a space for young people to reflect on their cultural learning at points along the path of their schooling, and opening possibilities for new paths, some of which may lie outside of school.

5.9 Community & Community Groups

We have so far concentrated on family and school. For most young people these are the primary developmental influencers on their day-to-day life. The education system is devised to provide learning on a planned and developmental basis. The national curriculum is set, of course, to enable progression and growth in learning. One might think of it as a journey that follows an increasingly challenging terrain, but where the student is progressively equipped to handle whatever they encounter. When it comes to cultural learning we can, of course, see a similar system in place for certain (especially more formalised) aspects. For example, graded exams for music, drama, dance; junior and senior choirs, orchestras, school productions, and so on. Support for young people's cultural opportunities is played out accordingly.

But it is also important to observe that a great deal of cultural learning (and arguably much of young people's learning *per se*) does not happen in any linear fashion, or according to any pre-ordained schedule. It is the one-off moments of inspiration that are gained through encounter that can have life-changing impact. This can be by going to a professional or amateur play for the first time, being enthralled by a rapper who comes to school to perform and tell their story, reading a story, hearing an orchestra in a concert hall, or watching a YouTube video. It can be through encounters such as these that we give form and value to our experiences.

As Holden has put it, culture often takes place through "flowerings", but these flowerings of culture have deep roots and embeddedness (Holden, 2015: 25). This is one of the reasons developing an ecological understanding of cultural learning is so important. But also why understanding the significance of all those 'other' organisations, relationships and institutions that in some way contribute to a young person's cultural learning is complex. There may be many organisations, groups and individuals involved, some of whose influences in cultural flowerings within a young person's life will be more visible than others.

In considering the relationships and institutions that enable and constrain young people's cultural learning, we therefore address just some of the community assets that play an important role, alongside family, friends and school. By community, here, we refer to a potentially enormous variety of individuals and organisations. One helpful typology put forward by Holden (2015, 2016) describes the cultural learning ecosystem as combining the roles of *Guardians* — who provide opportunities to gain knowledge about existing culture; *Connectors* — who enable subjective understanding and critical choices; and *Platforms* — who nurture creative potential.

Arts Organisations

Recent research by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations provides a related typology. The Gulbenkian's Inquiry addresses the "public" role[52] of arts organisations and their "responsibilities for their communities" (Gulbenkian Foundation, 2017: 19). In doing so, the Inquiry's Phase 1 report, *Rethinking Relationships*, develops the descriptive metaphors of arts organisations acting as *Colleges* (places of learning), *Town halls* (places

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52   The report authors state that in using the term 'civic' they are "seeking simply to emphasize the importance of arts organisations acting as public as opposed to private organisations, ones with responsibilities for their communities and to society more generally." (Gulbenkian Foundation, 2017: 19)

of debate), *Parks* (shared space open to all), *Temples*, (places of enlightenment and solace), and *Home* (places of belonging) (2017: 25).[53]

As we indicated in Chapter 4, the young people involved in this study spend much less time at arts organisations than they do at shopping centres and in parks. At the same time, from our discussions with these young people, as well as teachers, cultural practitioners, local councillors and youth workers, we have reason to believe that the types of organisation described by Holden and the Gulbenkian report are all potentially relevant to the cultural learning of young people in important ways. This encourages us to look broadly at the relationship between arts organisations and young people, and certainly not to restrict this to only those, say, that fulfil the 'college' function, as places of learning per se. Children and young people are just as in need (and just as capable) of engaging in debate, as well as requiring a sense of belonging, and emotional and spiritual solace. Moreover, community organisations that are not 'arts' organisations often play several of these roles (acting as guardians, connectors and platforms) in their support of young people's cultural opportunities.

> **...the contexts and conditions in which young people's cultural growth occurs can — to some extent — be anticipated. But the forms and consequences of this growth cannot be predicted.**

Based on research of the kind presented in this report, the contexts and conditions in which young people's cultural growth occurs can — *to some extent* — be anticipated. But the forms and consequences of this growth cannot be predicted. Indeed, one consequential finding of our research is the importance of being open to 'expecting the unexpected'. For example, one of our adult interviewees, working in the third sector recalled how he had got in to DJing. He had been at a specialist sports school playing competitive rugby, when he got injured. Being at a specialist boarding sports school with an injury meant that there was a great deal of time to get very bored. It was during a long afternoon of trying to find something to do, whilst the rugby training was going on across the field, that he struck up a conversation with another boy who had a set of turntables he no longer wanted. The kit exchanged hands for the modest sum of £10. This proved to be the epiphanic moment, which ultimately lead to a semi-professional career as a DJ.

Culture flowers in unexpected ways. But these flowerings have deep roots, and there are ways in which the soil can be tended. Cultural learning is, clearly, not confined to school or arts organisations alone. But one of the roles such organisations can play is to actively explore and cultivate the conditions that enable unexpected flowerings to occur: expecting the unexpected.

Faith Groups & Organised Religion

As we saw in Chapter 3, a sizeable minority of young people are actively engaged in some form of religious or faith community. In addition to the particular religious practices of specific faith groups and organisations, it is important to acknowledge the broader role they can and often do play in connecting young people with local and wider communities. As with other 'fourth spaces', as we called them in Chapter 4 — including sports clubs, arts groups, Scouts and Cubs — faith groups and organisations can provide an alternative social context and outlook which can benefit a young person's development: potentially providing a supportive environment — outside of the contexts of home and school — within which to give form and value to their experiences of self and self-in-relation: their cultural capability. As we reported in *Towards Cultural Democracy*, art and culture (especially music) play a centrally important role in many religious groups and organisations, providing all sorts of opportunities for cultural learning.

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53   The study also points out that these organisations exist at very different stages of development — referred to as versions 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 respectively. "[Version] 1.0 is where people come along and see the luxury artefacts and become better human beings for the experience.
[Version] 2.0 is one of participation, people participating in art and participating in the museum, in education and community projects and cafes and shops, but all these things work in support of that primary high-art agenda.
[Version] 3.0 is the user-generated version [...] 'so it's not about people trying to join in the art in the museum, it's more about the museum trying to join in with what's going on out there [locally...] and what's happening in the world, and demonstrating how art can contribute to some of the main significant social problems that we have.' Alistair Hudson, MIMA." (Gulbenkian Foundation, 2017: 6)

It can also be the case that such contexts, however unwittingly, close down cultural opportunities.[54] A youth organisation we spoke to operates out of a church in Harrow. Here, as one youth worker put it, young vulnerable people "don't get to express themselves and [explain] really what's going on, because they're worried about the context [and] who's going to find out and how they're going to be judged". Elsewhere, one Year 9 student gave the following response, in answer to a question about whether there were ever activities or opportunities she would have liked that were not available to her: "I'm a Muslim, and to play a certain instrument would be socially unaccepted in my society and culturally.[55] I don't feel like that has set me back, because I don't feel I've ever even took interest in that, or thought of playing an instrument. It's never entered my head, but I feel like that is the only thing holding me back, other than the fact that I don't really take an interest in it."

Youth Clubs

In the course of our research we were introduced to staff working in community and youth clubs engaging with vulnerable young people. These conversations were extremely insightful, opening up new perspectives on the opportunities and challenges facing many young people. Detailed discussion of these insights is presented in several chapters of this report.

KEY ISSUES, ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

5.10 One-to-One Encounters, Small Group Work & Limited Resources

The active management of a cultural ecosystem is necessarily constrained by the resources that are available. Conversations with adults during the fieldwork frequently highlighted the current climate of austerity, funding cuts and financial pressures that impact many parts of the cultural ecosystems within Harrow. What makes this all the more challenging are the many examples we heard about in which small group activities, or even one-to-one work, were particularly valuable to young people's cultural learning. Small group approaches are, of course, the most resource intensive.

> It is a feature of cultural learning that it often thrives on personal interaction and small-scale encounters between individuals.

Discussion in this chapter is framed in terms of relationships and particularly those that operate at an organisational level, be that schools, arts organisations, or community and youth groups. It is a feature of cultural learning that it often thrives on personal interaction and small-scale encounters between individuals. In a formal context, this is the mode of teaching that we find in musical instrument lessons. As one student observed: "I do the flute, and I like it [...] because there's only two people there that do flute. It's just me and another person so the teachers are able to come to each of us and help us practise." But it is also pivotal to the work of youth groups, such as that of the Ignite Trust.

Set up to provide support to 13-25 year olds in and across Harrow, Ignite's vision is "building a community with young people to ignite change". It does this through a variety of means, including providing opportunities for culture (predominantly music) and sport. One of its founders explains how working in small groups with their young people is essential:

> I think in big groups you are pretty much just touching their world. And you can encourage their world to change, and you can encourage their values and morals to change, but you are literally just touching it...the reason why small groups work is because it was all about impact, it was all about a connection, a conversation, skills, learning, all that.

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54   It is noteworthy to read on the Ignite Trust's website that the organisation describes itself as "faith-based but not faith-biased".

55   Some Muslims believe that only vocal music is permissible (halal) and that instruments are forbidden (haram). There is a strong tradition of a cappella devotional singing. Equally, others believe that any instrument is lawful as long as it is used for the permissible kinds of music.

Ignite receives funding from a wide set of supporters, including Children in Need, Church of England, Comic Relief, Harrow Council, Jack Petchey, London Youth and Young Harrow Foundation. As its director Lynne Burke explains, however, free labour and volunteering of staff has played a significant role in the setting-up of the Trust and the continuing work it does in supporting young people in Harrow to reach their full potential.

5.11 Gender

A particular challenge for Ignite is reaching vulnerable and at risk young women. Here, in particular, there is the need for one-to-one work, which is resource heavy. Compounding this, there is more funding available specifically for working with young men. Here, one youth worker explains some of the challenges:

> So there's masses of work to be done with the girls, but at the moment we only have funding for half a worker, so we can just afford 20 hours a week. It's been hard to find female funding, and also to find successful work with females, because there's so little really. It's much harder to engage females, because with males on the whole we can throw a football in and the males will gather round it. It's not true of females. They're much more likely to not want to work with that person, or have fallen out with that person, or not be interested in that, feel too cool to do that. It's much harder to be creative. But the need is definitely there, and a growing need.

During our fieldwork we often found that young people viewed some cultural activities as being more gendered than others. Our interviews and focus groups with young people highlighted dance, in particular, as "something girls do". It is certainly important to think carefully about how art and culture is taught and practiced at schools, and whether this influences a gendered approach.

5.12 Referrals... and Partnerships

Partnership working is a key consideration for many organisations involved in supporting opportunities for young people, including schools seeking partnering with artists and cultural organisations, or with other schools. For third sector organisations partnership working is particularly crucial. Lynne Burke explains that the Ignite Trust draws on a range of partnerships in order to support the work that it does. This can be in the form of referral routes — such as a youth worker on a housing project who directs young people to Ignite; or it can be a Football club providing apprenticeship opportunities for the young people that Ignite works with.

The recent setting up of The Young Harrow Foundation[56] represents a significant step towards collaboration between organisations in the borough, which is seen as essential given ever-increasing pressure on resources, and the need for organisations working with young people in the area not to see each other as competitors. As one third sector worker said, "In the current climate, we've recognised that we have to work together to get results. [...] The Young Harrow Foundation are helping us work out how we cannot be competitors but instead work together."

The Young Harrow Foundation is an example of an umbrella organisation with a specific mission to support partnership working. The Harrow Music Service also functions in this way. They can help build partnerships that serve the mix of functions *guardian, connector,* and *platform* identified by Holden, as this response from a head of Music indicates:

> Harrow Music Service [HMS] has always been fantastic as a source

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56   https://youngharrowfoundation.org/

for partnerships and events that are going on. And Sue McCall [the director of HMS] [...] she always regularly lets us meet up as heads of department to discuss what's going on, and if there are any opportunities she grabs them with both hands and says "this is fantastic, would you like to do it?". And I'll always run with whatever she's offered, and tried to encourage as many local primary schools to be involved as well, because they don't always have music specialists in their schools. So I think Harrow Music [Service] has been very, very important for us — and the relationship we've had over the years — even though they've been under so much financial constraints, had a difficult time of it. Also, I employ some of the music teachers from the [HMS], to support instrumental lessons here. [Head of Music]

Umbrella organisations such as the Harrow Music Service and the Young Harrow Foundation, specifically aiming to support the development of partnerships, may have a key role within the future development of Harrow's cultural ecology.

5.13 Providing Access to 'Platforms'...Through Partnerships

Whilst young people are involved in a wide range of everyday creativity, having the opportunity to perform on a public stage can, nonetheless, be a valuable part of their cultural learning. In focus groups and interviews, in particular, some students told us how much performing in competitions was an important part of their enjoyment of weekend dance or drama groups. Schools have a particular role to play here, helping provide 'platforms' for their students to perform, in some cases through connecting with professional cultural organisations:

...the BBC Singer Project we did with Harrow Music Service, which was a three-year project to increase singing in schools. We worked with primary schools, I did workshops at primary schools with my students, we learnt lots of different repertoire that perhaps they wouldn't necessarily access. [...] And then performing on the Camden Roundhouse on a number of occasions, and doing the Bob Chilcott commission, and then my links within the BBC became quite strong. So, last year we performed at a School Proms for the BBC Ten Pieces Programme that's been going for the last couple of years. And that programme's been fantastic for music teachers, because we can use that to create our own projects within our curriculum, which [the students] can then publish their performances on the showcase online. It just really helps having things like that from those bigger arts institutions that support education and what we're doing. [Music teacher]

> A famous venue — or even a famous person — can have great significance for young people seeking a platform for their creativity.

Not only teachers, but young people themselves reported that having access to appropriate venues to perform and showcase work is really important. A famous venue — or even a famous person — can have great significance for young people seeking a platform for their creativity, and may enable opportunities beyond the initial encounter. Lynne Burke describes how having the pop star Peter Andre spend a weekend in the area on a community music-recording project galvanised some of the young people Ignite works with. The question is, how moments of high profile exposure then lead to *sustainable* opportunities. In this particular case, there was studio equipment — provided by the council — and it was an activity that connected with the interests of the young people. This set of conditions provided an important opportunity for a number of Ignite's participants, with several managing the music studio project, and one then going on to develop a career in the music industry.

5.14 Providing More Pathways... and Better Structures of Personalised Support

It is clear that there are opportunities for further steps to be taken in co-managing cultural ecosystems that make them more vital and democratic — expanding young people's *cultural freedom*. Schools, of course, have a special role to play here. As Sorrell, Roberts and Henley argue, they may be "best placed to ensure quality and champion diversity" (2014: 55). But our research shows the potential for schools to operate in ways that more fully realise their potential as enablers of cultural opportunities for young people.

Teachers can (and do) operate as *creative citizens*, connecting young people to new opportunities outside of school, opening up new pathways. There is also the potential to create more equitable access to positive 'tipping points', by, for example, having a yearly meeting with each student to discuss their cultural learning, and any new opportunities they might welcome: a kind of cultural career-development session. This has the potential for significant benefits at a number of levels, from the individual child's cultural capability, to the school's understanding of its young people, the responsiveness and vitality of the cultural provision offered within the school, to the suitability of student choices, and, ultimately, long-term benefits for cultural ecosystems more broadly, including the oft cited 'talent pipeline' into the creative industries. These issues will be discussed further in subsequent chapters, including in Chapter 8: Caring for Cultural Freedom: Supporting Cultural Learning, which focuses directly on the next steps that could be taken in co-managing cultural ecosystems.

5.15 Supporting Autonomy

In this chapter, then, we have documented the influences on young people's cultural opportunities of family, school and community groups of several kinds, and the range of *practices of care* — characterised, particularly, by attentiveness and responsiveness to young people's cultural interests and needs — that can play an important part in enabling conditions in which young people's cultural learning can take off. Looking to the future, these relationships and institutions are likely to be central to any successful attempts to develop *ecological* approaches to supporting young people's cultural learning.

At the same time, each young person brings their own story, their particular tendencies and interests, and these are necessarily supported in different ways, as well as at different stages in their lives. Sir Ken Robinson's call for every child to be given the support to find their 'element' is very important, and resonates with our findings.[57] But, paradoxically, our research here also suggests that there is a genuine difficulty if this search for "the point at which natural talent meets personal passion" is institutionalised in a formal educational context. This can lead to the type of pigeon-holing that classifies children as 'belonging' to different interest groups — be that arts, science, sports or whatever. For some young people this is not a problem — but this is likely to be those children that are already well on the way to developing their cultural opportunities in ways that are both clearly supported (perhaps by family) and autonomous (freely and happily engaged in).

The *closing down* of cultural opportunities is much more of a problem than has so far been discussed in debates over arts education. Our capacity to give form and value to our experiences of self and self-in-relation is not just a 'nice to have', it is central to our flourishing as human beings. In this regard, far more attention needs to be given to how ecologically managed cultural ecosystems can support the autonomy of every young person to discover and develop their cultural capability.

> **The closing down of cultural opportunities is much more of a problem than has so far been discussed.**

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57   Robinson, 2010.

Chapter 6: Aspects of Cultural Agency

6.1 Agency is Relational and Contextual

We do not exercise our freedoms in a vacuum. Freedoms develop through our interactions with our environments. Our environments can both enable and constrain us. They can also provide us with the internal resources with which to make confident decisions for ourselves, or leave us uncertain about what we want, and with greater or lesser clarity about how to achieve our wishes.

6.2 The Freedom to Choose

As we saw in Chapter 5, for young people their families play a crucial role in enabling their freedoms to make choices about their cultural lives. Some teachers also report that young people are under increasing pressure to choose conventionally 'academic' subjects. They describe how this pressure can come from parents, but that in many cases young people have internalised these pressures from early on their school lives, such that many prioritise STEM subjects.

This puts an additional impetus on teachers to communicate the possibility of a pathway for young people through cultural subjects and activities. Here we see that in terms of the opening or closing of the substantive freedom to give form and value to experience, this freedom is being actively contested within the context of the life of schools, with some teachers feeling themselves to be engaged in an ongoing struggle to hold open these options for their students.

> at GCSE we run Drama, Dance, Music, and Art, a Graphics option as well as Fine Arts. We were doing Photography, but that's now been dropped. At A-level we used to have all of those [subjects] represented at A-level, but now [...] Dance has definitely not got any at A-level anymore, Music hasn't and Art didn't have a year 12 class this year. Looking at what universities are asking [for], with regards the Russell Group universities' specific subjects, the students are voting with their feet and are going for subjects which are more likely to get them into those top universities. [Music teacher]

The choices being made by students, then, has an impact on the provision the school is in a position to make. This situation runs the danger of a vicious cycle: with students feeling pressured to choose STEM subjects, fewer of them may select 'cultural' subjects, leading schools to decrease provision of these subjects. This may, in turn, lead fewer students to select cultural options.

6.3 Information & Pathways

The freedom to choose may be path-dependent in important ways. Conversations with teachers in this study indicate that those young people who are already actively involved in cultural activities outside of school are the ones who are best positioned to multiply their cultural opportunities — to find new ones, access information, and explore possibilities for taking those interests further. This makes it all the more important that, in addressing issues of equity of opportunity, cultural ecosystems are managed in ways that open up more pathways to more young people — making visible the range of options available to them.

6.4 Goals & Incentives

Within the context of constrained freedom to choose cultural subjects, some schools report that offering specific goals for cultural activity can be an

effective way to enable young people to make those choices. In the context of the pressures of exams and qualifications, offering Arts Award is one such way to cut through the competing pressures on young people, offering a clear goal.

> We've been running the Arts Award for a number of years. An actual qualification that you can then say to students, 'you can work towards this, this is something that is going to be valued, give you UCAS points for university'. That kind of helps. And also, I suppose, with the music grade exams, after you get to grade 6, those points get counted toward UCAS, so that helps. [Head of Music]

This, indeed, is the aim of Arts Award, as it "acknowledges that progression is important in a young person's arts education, and that the formal curriculum is not necessarily the best mechanism through which to pursue it." (Doeser, 2015: 19) Through our fieldwork in Harrow we saw that for many young people, having a goal is very important. This can help, for example, with issues of opportunity costs and commitment. With some school clubs, there is more success if the students have a clear goal towards which they are working:

> the choirs, they come and go. Sometimes I have a choir that's 40 strong and fantastic. But it normally has to be a project that has a goal at the end of it, so performing at the Royal Albert Hall for Bob Chilcott's commission for the School's Prom. If there's a goal and they know what they're singing for and they're driven towards that, it's successful. If they're just rehearsing for fun or just rehearsing because it's a nice thing to do, they might go 'actually, drama are doing this, I'll go and do that instead'. [Head of Music]

Having a goal can also help establish the 'holding environments' discussed in Chapter 4 — a set of reliable conditions through which young people can become absorbed in activity, or try new things, including new kinds of creative processes and new ways of giving form and value to their experiences. We will see this with the example of one youth worker in section 6.6, below, for example, working closely with a small number of young men on 'decks', but working towards a specific goal — a potential career as a DJ.

6.5 Confidence, Embarrassment & Vulnerability

Confidence is a key aspect of the freedom to make choices about one's cultural life, and to give form and value to experience. In this study, we observed issues of confidence operating in different ways. During our interviews with Year 7 and 8 pupils, issues of confidence emerged without our having raised them as part of the interview questions. A girl in Year 7 student explained that she has mixed feelings about her Music lessons, as "I like playing instruments. It's just singing and stuff like that I don't really like. Because I'm not very confident with myself." This was typical of a number of comments regarding activities that these young people indicated can be exposing — especially dancing and singing. A boy in Year 7 explained why he does not like doing dance within PE. He doesn't like it "when you fail. [...] Like when you're trying to do a stunt or dance move and then you fall or make a mistake, especially when there's people looking at you, or a crowd." In a variation on this theme, a Year 8 girl said, "Personally dance is not my favourite thing, but I don't mind doing it. I prefer doing it when nobody's around though."

Doing things wrong, or badly — the potential for exposure or embarrassment — was an important consideration for young people during interviews and focus groups. Through our conversations there was an emphasis on ability, particularly in relation to drawing, with many saying 'I can't draw', which seemed to be a readily available idea amongst the young people we spoke with. For some young people, the self-assessment that they are not good at drawing was directly connected to their sense of not enjoying art. One student explained that, "I can't draw, that's the only reason I hate art. I can't draw". But

Confidence is a key aspect of the freedom to make choices about one's cultural life, and to give form and value to experience.

in other cases, art was still one of their favourite subjects at school, even if they reported that they were not good at it, with one student explaining, "I can't draw but I love it." It becomes clear, in this student's case, that having a close family member involved in the activity is an important part of the conditions in which her enjoyment in drawing has developed. "I just want to get better. Because my dad's a really good artist — even though he's not an artist or anything. But because I've got his genes and things. So, I'm like him and I really like art." Another student explains that she has liked art for a long time in similar terms. "When I saw something, I always draw the animal and my mum was like 'you're really good'. I never thought I was really good at art." Having the encouragement of a family member can be an important factor in the development of a cultural interest, even when a young person is self-critical, or doubts their skills or abilities.

Vocabularies of skill and quality seem particularly marked when it comes to drawing, and in some cases, there is evidence from these interviews that young people feeling that they are 'bad' correlates with negative feelings towards those activities. Nonetheless, these discourses of quality do not only operate as disabling conditions. There are also indications that the aim of improvement can be part of what young people mobilise within themselves to motivate and sustain their activities. One Year 7 student explained that he is going to art club at school because "I was saying to myself I want to try more things, try and get better with my art."

The way in which living with vulnerability is enabled or constrained is an important issue.

In creating safe spaces, consideration can be given to how young people can feel able to take risks — both creatively, and with their sense of self. The way in which living with *vulnerability* is enabled or constrained is an important issue, and safe spaces — and holding environments — have an important role to play here. The psychoanalyst Adam Phillips and the feminist historian Barbara Taylor provide a challenging definition of kindness: "the ability to bear the vulnerability of others, and thereby to bear the vulnerability of ourselves."[58] The idea, here, is that we are inherently relational beings (as psychoanalysis shows us), and that in this relationality — in our dependence on and interdependence with others — vulnerability is part of what it means to be human. They argue that during the nineteenth-century ideas of kindness developed in ways that presented it as a 'specialist' practice. The view developed that humans are by nature self-seeking and competitive, and that kindness was for "saints" and "the angel in the house" (wives and mothers) rather than an inclination that we may all have towards caring for others in ways that are both ordinary and difficult, and which involve exposing ourselves to the vulnerability of our interdependencies.

Our interviews with young people indicate that fears of exposure and embarrassment — being seen and judged by others as 'bad' — can be a constraint on their enjoyment of some cultural activities. Further consideration should be given to the ways in which these kinds of vulnerability can — and *already are* — worked with successfully in creating safe spaces for young people. We can think of these safe spaces as holding spaces. Or as spaces of (relational) kindness, in which conditions are conducive to bearing the vulnerability of others, and thereby to bearing the vulnerability of ourselves. This has the potential to have multiple benefits for young people: expanding their substantive freedoms to give form and value to their experiences of self, and self-in-relation.

6.6 Confidence — & Selfhood

The extensive evaluation of the Creative Partnerships programme showed the significant enabling effects that cultural activities can have for young people. "One of the most important, and often one of the earliest impacts of creative work with young people is a growth in confidence. In Creative Partnerships we took this to be the capacity to have self-belief, and to be able to share this with others. The opportunity to take risks in the prior phase of the project was

58   Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor. *On Kindness*. London: Penguin. 2010.

often a strong predictor for learners developing a more confident approach to learning and presenting their own understanding back to groups or audiences." (Parker, 2013: 86)[59] Our research with the Ignite Trust provides a number of important insights regarding confidence. The staff there see how important confidence is within the lives of young people. They understand that a young person may drift towards involvement in a gang because that provides the possibility for a growth in confidence – even within conditions that are objectively high-risk:

> We started the charity in 2001, to work with young people on the fringes of the education system. And at that time it was mostly connected with personal problems, so, emotional arousal stopping them learning. So we were very much focused on positive activities for young people to engage them, build confidence, encourage them. But in the sixteen years we've been in existence, the youth culture has changed really quickly. So that now as young people move towards the fringe of the education system they're likely to engage with a gang for their own confidence. You know, that sort of pack mentality, so that if someone finds themselves being isolated, they will join in with a group they can identify [with]. I think, really, it's moved on from there in that young people can actually be groomed. The younger ones are groomed to become runners for the drugs, so we're seeing younger and younger age groups. [Lynne Burke]

Within this context, the Ignite Trust works hard to enable the confidence of the young people they work with, to support them to make alternative choices – choices that will lead them away from risk, and towards safer and more sustainable futures. However, the role of 'cultural' activities within this is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, cultural activities can provide a safe and enjoyable space within which to develop the relationships through which young people at risk begin a process of developing their confidence, and transforming their relationships with themselves and with others. One youth worker in the borough provides powerful testimony to this in the work he did in Harrow that eventually led to the establishment of Ignite.

He saw that groups of young men were sitting on the steps of his local church, often behaving aggressively towards parishioners. He suggested to the priest that he could invite these young men to a session using DJ decks, that he would put on for them within the church building. (As we saw in Chapter 5,) this youth worker had gone to a specialist sports school, where he was preparing for a professional career as a rugby player. A long-term injury inadvertently led him to develop skills as a DJ. In his late teens, which is when these encounters with the young men on the steps of the church took place, he drew on both his DJ skills and the physical confidence he had as a former rugby player, to offer this opportunity to those young men. He describes how, by creating a particular set of conditions, he was able to work with members of this group in ways that developed *their* confidence. This included explicitly orienting the DJing sessions to the idea that the skills being developed were ones that could be used as a job. He was offering a goal (and a seriousness) with which to create a clarity of purpose – and valuable boundaries – within which this encounter could take place.

Alongside these sessions, he then began organising large games of football for young people in the area. This had its own value, but it was the very small-scale sessions on the decks, often one-to-one, that had the most powerful effects in terms of enabling the young people to develop confidence, and transform their relationships with themselves and others. These kinds of insights have fed

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59   In their review of the research literature as part of the AHRC's Cultural Value project, Crossick and Kaszynka also report that, "the evidence is strong that there are gains from arts education in school for other fundamental requirements of a successful education, such as cultivating confidence, motivation and pro-social behaviours as well as cognitive abilities." (2016: 118)

into the development of the Ignite Trust, and over the 16 years that it has been operating, extensive experience has been developed regarding how to work with young people in ways that support them in building and sustaining their confidence, such that they are empowered in the range of choices they can make in their lives.

Cultural activities can help provide spaces in which young people can develop confidence. There is also evidence to suggest that cultural activities can provide 'materials' with which people can understand the world and themselves. The authors of the AHRC's Cultural Value report foreground one potentially unfashionable aspect of the value of cultural engagement, its capacities to enable *the reflective individual*. "A key component of cultural value is the ability of arts and cultural experience to help shape reflective individuals. This may include giving one an improved understanding of oneself and one's own life, an enhanced sense of empathy with respect to others, and an appreciation of the diversity of human experience and cultures." (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016: 57) In a similar vein, the Cultural Learning Alliance has recently put it this way: "The arts give us the tools and skills that are essential to help us make our way through our lives. Books, music, plays and visual art act as anchors for our existence; they remind us of who we are and what we can be, they are a source for memories, they provide comfort and joy, they inspire us to act and take risks, and they help us to imagine the lives of others." (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017: 8)
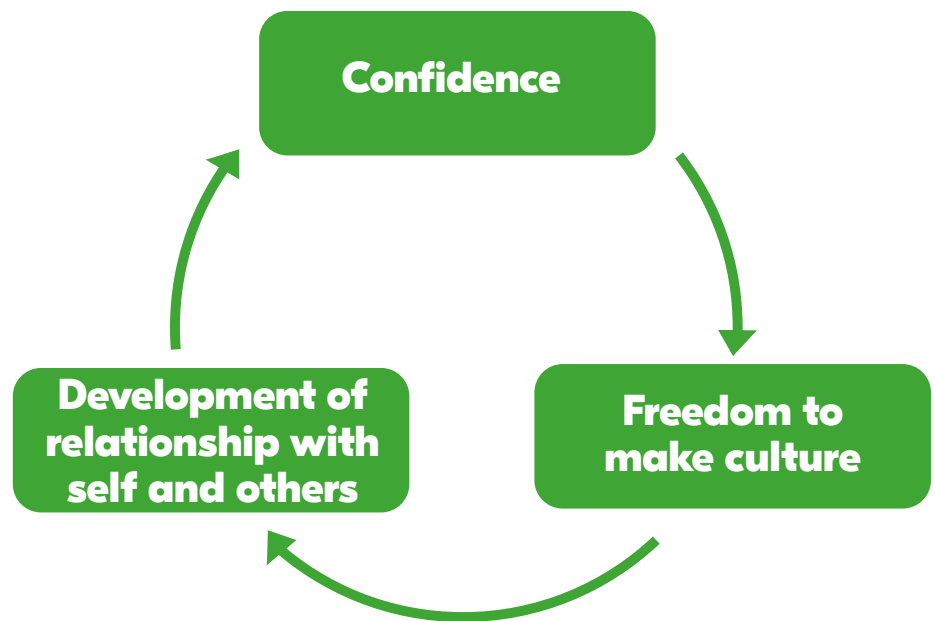
Lynne Burke, explains, however, that there are important respects in which processes of building confidence – leading, ultimately to empowerment and transformation – cannot always begin with a 'cultural' activity, in the way Dan's work with the young men on the steps of the church began with DJ decks. For many of the young people that Ignite works with, making music, dancing or other such activities would require a significant foundation of confidence to already be in place. Ignite is funded to work with the most at risk, and many of those young people will be some distance from choosing to take part in these kinds of activities, in which kinds of vulnerability are likely to be involved. Lynne describes a music project that was extremely successful. It was very popular with some of Ignite's young people, was "extremely positive" and "empowering", and in some cases led to long-term employment in the music industry:

> L. Yeah, so it was a whole project. They would write their own music, they were helped by professionals to write it, produce it, and then it was all out online for them. And we did open mic nights [...] we loved it, it was a great project, very positive.
>
> *JG. And do you think it helped to achieve some of those stages of empowerment?*
>
> L. Oh absolutely, without any doubt. It worked really well. It's just the people in the most need didn't access it.

Importantly, this very successful project was not accessed by the most in need. There is a foundational level of confidence that is required before the young people that Ignite works with are in a position to take up opportunities such as this music production project. In this sense, there is an interrelationship between confidence and cultural activity implied in the work of Ignite:

"A key component of cultural value is the ability of arts and cultural experience to help shape reflective individuals"

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Confidence    │
                    └─────────────────┘
          ↗                                  ↘
┌──────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────┐
│   Development of      │          │   Freedom to     │
│  relationship with    │          │  make culture    │
│   self and others     │          │                  │
└──────────────────────┘          └──────────────────┘
              ↖                    ↙
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6.7 The Freedom to Become Who You Are...Becoming Who You Could Be.

This raises the question of how to enable young people in their confidence to a sufficient foundational level that they then feel able to choose to enter into the kinds of cultural activities that Ignite's work indicates can open up new ways of relating to themselves and others. *Practices of care* are central here. In Chapter 4 we discussed ideas of space, and the ways in which a safe space has the potential to change a young person's psycho-geography. Here we can more fully understand this in relation to the development of confidence, and the freedoms to choose. Lynne describes this in terms of 'head space'. "I don't think the people out there [on the streets of Wealdstone] have head space, because their head is so full of what they're involved in. There's not really much space for creativity when you live in fear." One of the things that Ignite does is to work with young people to enable them to have more head space. We might say that they provide *spaces for head space*.

As Lynne explains, this is not a short-term process, it can take years of developing a relationship with a young person for transformational change to take place. At the same time, Ignite has identified the importance of a number of conditions — including mentoring, one-to-one conversations with skilled youth workers — that help these processes of transformation to happen. There are wider lessons here. The creation of spaces for head space is of potential value in other locations, including schools, and within arts organisations working with young people. As discussed in Chapter 4, through our interviews and focus groups, young people made clear the importance they attached to experiences of freedom. In some cases, this applies to their favourite lessons. In others, it applies to their favourite clubs within school, or activities outside of school. These enjoyable experiences of freedom are not 'only' the absence of constraint. These are not conditions of structurelessness, but alternative kinds of structure. These are conditions in which young people can take a step back from demands made upon them in other parts of their everyday life, and develop confidence in their own choices, and in themselves.

Lynne Burke provides telling description of the challenges that young people can face in being who they want to be. There can be lots of barriers, but one of the things an organisation like Ignite can do is to provide a different set of conditions within which new ways of relating to self and others can take place. Cultural capability, as we introduce that term in Chapter 1, is the substantive freedom to give form and value to our experiences of self and self-in-relation. In the following, Lynne Burke is describing the need for a space outside of

school in order for a young person to give form and value to their experiences of self and self-in-relation:

> *JG. So presumably, if someone has gone through the whole process of empowerment and transformation, they move from being with very little head space as you describe it to having a bit more head space. And that might be the point at which some of these more creative...*

L. Absolutely. That might be when they find out who they really are. I think they lose it in the gang fraternity. They get a street name, and that's who they are, with their street name. And then somehow as we start to impact that, they can start to let the person they've created [slip away]... In fact, I've heard one person describe when she first went in to the secondary school, she said, 'I've joined this huge school and actually, suddenly I didn't know who I was. I had to create a person to survive in this environment.' And so that was a very nice picture of vulnerable young people. Those who speak a second language, those who have gone through trauma arriving in this country or coming through different routes, those who've got a parent at home who has an addiction problem — I think that describes how they must feel when they go into a secondary school. They somehow have to invent who they are. And as they're now obviously possible targets for gang members who want to recruit them, they then invent themselves in a way that's not helpful for them and certainly not for their future.

> ### 'I've joined this huge school and actually, suddenly I didn't know who I was. I had to create a person to survive in this environment.'

Lynne then goes on to explain the importance of the types of spaces that Ignite is able to offer — safe spaces, spaces of transformation. This is in part about the kinds of relationship they are able to develop. But it is also about having access to particular physical spaces, such as a gym that has recently opened in the area and which provides an environment distinct from everyday life, in which the young people Ignite works with can enter a different head space. It's within environments such as this that the 'real person' has a chance of showing itself.

suddenly they're in a peaceful place where they're safe, doing something they can't do but the people with them can. Whereas when we meet them on the streets that's their environment, they feel comfortable, this is how they have to act. But we take them from that into a place where actually they're not sure, they don't really know. So the person that they've created can't survive in this environment because it's so strange. So taking them out of their home environment gives us a chance of finding out who the real person is. And the one-to-one work is important because if we take a group, they will keep their mask in place, because they know they're being observed by the others.

Reema — Case Study
Reema is 18 and grew up in Harrow. Her experiences illustrate a number of the themes in this chapter regarding confidence and the development of freedom. Reema currently works in a health and beauty shop in Harrow-on-the-Hill, whilst studying to become a beautician. At school, Art was one of her favourite lessons. She enjoyed the "freedom" of her art classes — it was more free than her other classes. But another important factor in her enjoyment of Art was her teacher. She explains that this teacher "understood me". When Reema had detentions, this teacher encouraged her to use this time to do drawing. She contrasts her experience of this teacher to other teachers at her school, with whom she got on less well.

In Art classes, Reema could be very self-critical. She says that sometimes her need to make her artwork "symmetrical" got in the way of her enjoyment, saying that, "I think I am a bit OCD." At the same time, her attention to detail is connected to the development of her career. She directly links her enjoyment of drawing and Art classes at school to her enjoyment of applying make-up. She says that the two are connected, involving similar skills; and explains that when she is working in the health and beauty shop, (which sometimes involves applying make-up to people), people tell her she should be a make-up artist.

On a number of occasions, Reema emphasises awards and qualifications. She received lots of awards for basketball and netball. She got UCAS points for activities through the National Citizenship Service. Receiving awards and building qualifications is important to her. She is currently working towards qualifications at college, and this is proving an effective and motivating structure within which she is developing her skills. She is very positive about her college teachers, and one of the things she likes about them is the range of professional networks and contacts they are able to bring to their teaching.

6.8 Treating a Young Person as a Whole Person.

One youth worker involved in this study says that failing to treat a young person "as a whole person" is a major problem within youth services, the youth justice system, and when providing pathways into work. Young people can end up on apprenticeship schemes that don't take account of the skills they already have, and the interests they may be most keen to develop in building a career. We can see how Ignite seeks to treat someone as "a whole person" by giving them spaces in which to "be who they are", outside of the pressures of their everyday lives, as part of the process of transformation. The staff team have extensive collective experience in creating the conditions that allow this to happen. These are considered *practices of care*, in which competent staff are attentive and responsive to young people's views and needs, take responsibility for creating safe spaces, developing and sustaining these spaces and relationships with skill.

During our fieldwork interviews with students, teachers or teaching assistants would sit in on the focus groups and interviews. These adults would often comment that there was much about the young people that they had not known previously, and which they had learnt through being present at the interview. Similarly, and as we saw in Chapter 5, some teachers told us of being taken aback to learn about aspects of their students' lives outside of school, and how incomplete they feel their knowledge of their students' lives can be. This raises the question of the value of treating young people 'as a whole person', and how schools — and the other organisations that are part of young people's lives — can do this further. How can practices of attentiveness and responsiveness be established on a sustainable basis? At Ignite, there are specific techniques that are employed to do this. In the mentoring relationship, a 'life wheel' is used to discuss a young person's needs and goals. Other approaches can be taken, of course, and the one-to-one mentoring approach is resource intensive. But the insights into the value of creating opportunities for young people to be a whole person have broader significance for understanding how young people's cultural capabilities operate, and how they can be enabled.

6.9 The Importance of Being Listened To

Through our fieldwork, we saw examples in which young people are listened to, both individually and collectively, and this has important roles to play in enabling their cultural capabilities. In the case of the Ignite Trust, particular conditions of one-to-one listening are crucial to the process of transformation that the Trust is helping young people to achieve. As Lynne Burke explains:

...failing to treat a young person "as a whole person" is a major problem within youth services.

> From my observation, for many of them it feels like a privilege when an older person that you respect says, 'do you want to spend time with me?'. So I think they actually enjoy that. It's a lift to their self-confidence if someone wants to spend time with them and listen to them. [...] And it gives them a chance to talk if somebody's listening, and they often don't feel heard, especially if they're in school, and they're not doing well. They're likely to get excluded. And the first thing they say is 'nobody listens to me'. 'They don't understand me'.

In other instances, schools are actively listening to their young people in providing after-school clubs that meet with their interests. In the case of the Harrow Youth Parliament, a forum exists in which young people in the borough can meet to discuss and debate, and potentially have their voices heard by decision-makers within the borough. Being listened to has the potential to increase young people's cultural capabilities both through the processes of individual transformation this can involve, and the changes in their environments that can take place as a result.

Research undertaken as part of the evaluation of the Creative Partnerships programme identified the development of opportunities for 'student voice' as a key part of the value of the programme, and a key component of the well-being benefits for young people. "With children and young people contributing to decisions about their own learning, evolving rules of behaviour and in some cases the recruitment of staff, there was a clear shift in the sense of agency they had in determining their learning environment. [...] Pupil's voice was a crucial aspect in promoting well-being and in helping students to function effectively both personally and socially." (Parker, 2013: 88-9)

Further consideration should be given to how young people can be listened to — in a range of ways — as part of the ongoing development of cultural ecosystems. This has the potential to be a key leaver of cultural democracy for young people. There is the potential for real innovation here — not least through creatively developing currently existing practices. At the ABCD workshop held at the end of our fieldwork, it was notable that a new connection was made between the Harrow Youth Parliament and the Ignite Trust. What possibilities are there for the Harrow Youth Parliament to develop relationships with a range of organisations across the borough, in order to expand the ways of listening taking place? In discussing the idea of creative citizenship, Hargreaves *et al*. talk about the "infrastructures of citizenship"[60] (2016: 75). We need to further consider what the specific infrastructures of citizenship are for young people, within the specific cultural ecosystems in which they are living.

6.10 Skills in Potential — Young 'Creative Citizens' in Waiting

Lynne Burk talks about enabling young people to recognise what they're good at. This is tremendously important. It indicates the way in which young people have skills and abilities that are not ordinarily afforded the conditions in which to be exercised.

> Our motto is to engage, empower and transform. So, in every project we aim to engage young people, by making it fun and interesting, empower young people by making them realise what they're good at, whether that's in mentoring, in talking about it, or giving them opportunities in the sport to develop their skills. [...]

Our research indicates that young people often have the potential to operate as creative citizens — enabling cultural opportunities for themselves and others — in ways that are currently not being fully realised. There is a great deal

Young people often have the potential to operate as creative citizens — enabling cultural opportunities for themselves and others — in ways that are currently not being fully realised.

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60   These include "education, representation, communication, training, employment and environment." (Hargreaves & Hartley, 2016: 75).

of potential to better support them to operate as such. To take an extreme example, some of the young people that the Ignite Trust is working with are involved in illegal activities that require of them a considerable range of skills. As one member of staff put it, "They're running a business and some of them are running very successful businesses out there." This raises challenging and important questions. How might the capacity to develop and employ these skills be mobilised in other ways? These entrepreneurial skills have the potential to be employed towards different ends. As the work of Ignite shows, it can be a long process of change. But what we see here, and, elsewhere in our fieldwork, in the very different setting of the Harrow Youth Parliament, is that young people have the potential to operate as connectors, as organisers, as co-leaders and managers of their environments.

The Harrow Youth Parliament (HYP) is run by and for secondary school-aged students. At present, the group exists to discuss issues of interest to young people, and, as and when possible, to make representations to Harrow Council. There is considerable potential here to mobilise this network — and the range of skills they currently exercise, and those they have in potential — to act as creative citizens, realising cultural opportunities for themselves and others. This group demonstrates an impressive confidence and articulateness. Members of the group attended our ABCD workshop, and had strong views about life in the borough, the experiences of young people, and the role of the HYP itself. The current Chair, elected by his peers, took responsibility to encourage other members of the group to attend the workshop and contribute. There is potential here to develop further connections — including, not least, information-sharing between young people themselves — in order to support and expand cultural opportunities for young people in the borough. Further conversations are needed in order to address what would enable members of the HYP to act as creative citizens in that way.

This, in turn, connects to the issue of mentoring, and leadership training. Ignite identifies one-to-one relationships as a key part of the work they do with young people. But in addition to offering mentoring opportunities with an adult youth worker, Ignite provides training for the participants they work with, preparing young people themselves to become peer mentors and leaders. In another example, a primary school involved in this study brings in students from a local secondary school to lead sports activities. In these cases, we see ways in which young people are not only the receivers of mentoring. They are themselves also becoming peer-mentors or co-leaders, with all the potential benefits this has not only in supporting other young people, but in developing their own skills and confidence. There is potential to explore further possibilities for supporting young people to develop these kinds of roles for themselves — becoming creative citizens.

One recent initiative, Sour Lemons,[61] indicates that this is an idea that is gaining traction. Sour Lemons provides leadership training to young people (in this case, 18 — 25 year olds) interested in working in the arts and creative industries, but who may not be in a position to take the more conventional routes. Set up on the basis of a crowd-funding campaign by its founder, its openness to young people of all backgrounds has led in its first year to the recruitment of a diverse cohort. Further conversations need to happen to explore possibilities for supporting young people to become mentors, peer-leaders and creative citizens. Thinking in terms of *distributed leadership* is key here. Moving beyond hierarchical models of organising, the insights of our work in Harrow indicate ways in which horizontal mobilisation is key. On the one hand this can take place organically. On the other hand, it is vital that there are conditions in place which enable people to support other people. This is particularly the case when it comes to young people. In Chapter 8 we suggest that a range of stakeholders come together to develop new ways to become creative citizens and agents for change within their communities.

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61   http://sourlemons.co.uk/

6.11 The Value of Cultural Agency

What, then, might be the value of increased cultural agency for young people? How might this be understood as part of a 'healthy' cultural ecosystem? Simon Johnson of Tate argues that "cultural voice" is vital to the flourishing of a politically engaged society. But it is also a necessary characteristic of culture that it is always being contested and reformed — and for this reason culture *needs* multiple voices to shape it.

> You cannot participate in society without a cultural voice. Culture is a form of record that is created by choice. A healthy cultural ecology is an environment where people feel confident and able to contribute to that record, where they can feel part of it, and find an audience. This means that people create culture, that subcultures can thrive, and that you cannot run a society with a fixed idea of what culture is. At any given moment, certain elements of the cultural ecology will be prized above others. In the seventeenth century it was tulips, now it's Jeff Koons. But if the state valorises just one thing, you have a problem. (Quoted in Holden, 2015: 5)

There is likely to be a dialectical relationship here, with cultural capability enabling political engagement, and political engagement enabling cultural capability.

Here Johnson is suggesting that cultural agency, or voice, is both politically and culturally necessary. The Cultural Learning Alliance has recently pointed towards some of the wider democratic benefits of cultural opportunities. "The arts create a culture of citizenship. [...] Children who engage with the arts are more likely to volunteer and are more likely to vote. We need citizens who can engage with major global challenges such as the environment, community cohesion, and ethical decision-making, and we need artists to make the art that will challenge and inspire us." (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017: 8) There is likely to be a dialectical relationship here, with cultural capability enabling political engagement, and political engagement enabling cultural capability. In their survey of the research literature in this area, as part of the AHRC Cultural Value Project, Crossick and Kaszynska report that:

> The relationship between cultural participation and engaged citizenship has proved a difficult area to evidence, but there is a growing body of work, especially from the US, showing a correlation between cultural engagement and civic behaviours such as voting and volunteering. [...] A variety of studies highlight the processes by which cultural engagement helps young people build confidence for political engagement, how public arts generates reflection about communities and their future and how minority groups find a collective voice, identity and recognition. (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016: 70)

In their extensive survey of the cultural value literature, Crossick and Kaszynska also report on the benefits of cultural activities within the context of the criminal justice system. The evidence shows that, "At the heart of desistance from offending is an ability to think about oneself and others, to see genuine choices and options, and to imagine other life circumstances and other possible futures. Arts engagement in prisons has been shown to make a serious contribution to these processes". (2016: 57) Further consideration should be given to the possibility that one of the roles that cultural capability has to play in people's lives — not only those within the criminal justice system, of course, and including young people — is its capacity to enable people to "see genuine choices and options". Our research indicates some of the ways in which this can work in practice. But further attention should be given to the ways in which enabling cultural ecosystems to flourish — widening young people's cultural capabilities — will entail an enlargement of young people's choices, options and

possible futures more broadly.[62] The development of cultural freedom has the potential to enable the expansion of a range of other freedoms — but perhaps most fundamentally, the freedom to create new worlds for ourselves, and for others.

Our research indicates that there are multiple benefits to be derived from the increase of cultural agency. Fundamental to all of these secondary and tertiary benefits, however, is the value of the young person's cultural freedom itself. Working with the Capabilities Approach, we should see this, in the first instance, as a question of *justice*: just as it is a matter of social justice that people have freedom to a private life, freedom to affiliate, freedom to access education and healthcare, so it is a matter of justice that people have the freedom to *(co)create versions of culture, giving form and value to their experiences of self and self-in-relation*. Many kinds of benefit and value may then flow from the exercise of cultural capability. But one key possibility is that increased cultural capability will foster *other kinds of freedom* for young people too.[63]

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62   In a forthcoming paper, *The Case for Cultural Capability*, the authors of this report argue that cultural capability has a special place within all the 'substantive freedoms' that people might have reason to value. Namely, because cultural capability — 'the substantive freedom to (co)create versions of culture, giving form and value to the experience of self and self-in-relation' — is integral to experiencing and judging value as such, it is an essential component in determining and experiencing what is valuable in all aspects of human freedom.

63   In the context of our proposal here, we note the idea of "fertile functionings" — with its strikingly agricultural language — that Wolff and De-Shalit introduce (2007) and which Nussbaum employs. A fertile functioning (being or doing) is one that "tends to promote other related capabilities." (Nussbaum, 2011: 44)

Chapter 7: Knowledge & Action

7.1 Beyond the Bird's Eye View

The fifth of our five research questions concerns the most effective ways to understand cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems. This is not only an 'academic' question. Our collective responsibility to support (attend and respond to) young people's cultural learning within particular localities is dependent upon our knowledge of their wider cultural opportunities, the conditions under which they operate, and how they are enabled and/or constrained in practice. Asking challenging questions of how we actually go about producing this kind of knowledge is integral to the ecological approach being explored and developed here. As we have seen, ecosystems are by their nature complexly interconnected, and always evolving. These characteristics call into question the value — and possibility — of a single bird's eye view. What is needed, in order to understand the ecology, is to involve multiple people living and working within it, and to do so on an ongoing basis.

7.2 Distributed Knowledge

Who has knowledge of cultural ecosystems? Undoubtedly there will be actors within a locality who have more of an overview than others. People running large cultural organisations, for example, are likely to have developed extensive networks over time — possibly with schools, certainly with other cultural organisations working in their area. Local authority staff may also have a good knowledge of the range of cultural opportunities within the area, and how these are connected. What this amounts to is a situation in which certain individuals are experts in their particular cultural ecosystem (be that a home, school or wider community environment), but may well lack the knowledge of how such cultural ecosystems interact at a higher ecological level.

Our research in Harrow supports this view. At the beginning of our research, we held a meeting at Harrow Arts Centre with a range of stakeholders across the borough. During the session, we asked participants to map the range of cultural 'assets' within the area. This produced a huge web of organisations of many kinds. There is an enormous wealth of organisations involved in the cultural ecosystem. Building on the important critiques of mapping approaches that focus only on buildings and organisations — rather than developing a more ecological perspective that focuses on relationships, skills and knowledge[64] — this initial scoping exercise indicated the considerable difficulty of providing a single overview of the range of cultural assets and opportunities in the borough.

One type of organisation that has the potential to exercise the most comprehensive knowledge of the cultural opportunities within an area is the local authority. Through conversations with members of staff at Harrow council we saw, however, how difficult it is even for council staff to feel they have a sense of what is going on. The inherent challenges here have been exacerbated by deep funding cuts, which have greatly reduced the capacity of the council to actively develop its own knowledge base. To give just one example, a member of council staff explained he is aware that there is a large Romanian population in one part of the borough, but he has no sense of the cultural activities that may be taking place within this population, and what interests members of this group may have in cultural opportunities elsewhere Harrow. In the past, posts within the council included community outreach workers who developed ongoing connections with communities across the borough. As things currently stand, the council is not in a position to know what the cultural ecosystem of the area looks like much beyond the range of high-visibility assets that they are themselves responsible for.

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64   See Chapter 1.

It is in the nature of ecologies that they are complex and evolving, so they need to be understood from multiple perspectives...

There are, then, at least two reasons to emphasise that knowledge of cultural ecosystems is distributed in nature. One is epistemological. It is in the nature of ecologies that they are complex and evolving, so they need to be understood from multiple perspectives, and this knowledge needs to be updated on an ongoing basis. Secondly, the particular conditions of local authority cuts mean that the primary candidate for taking an overview faces considerable practical challenges in doing so. These considerations connect directly to questions of partnership working and information- sharing, about which we will say more in Chapter 8.

7.3 Methodological Openness

A third reason, however, and an important one, is in terms of the politics of knowledge. By taking an approach to understanding cultural ecosystems which emphasises that this knowledge is distributed, we also highlight that the question 'what opportunities are there?' is closely connected to questions of value — 'what opportunities count?', 'what opportunities *should* there be?'. It is partly for this reason that our research design involves kinds of methodological openness. By this we mean the creation of conversational modes in which knowledge can be generated in ways such that the range of possible responses is not overly prescribed by the research methods. There are a series of ways in which we embedded this approach.

The first was to ensure that each research instrument — interviews, diaries, questionnaires, focus groups, ABCD workshop — contained a number of very open questions, which did not prescribe what a 'cultural' activity or opportunity might consist of. For example, in our interviews, focus groups and questionnaires with secondary school students, we asked 'What would make Harrow a better place to live?'. In some cases, this led to suggestions for more space in which to make art, or a new cinema. But in more cases, young people told us they were interested in feeling safe on the streets, in the amount of litter on the pavements and other aspects of what we've discussed in Chapter 4 as psycho-geography. This leads us to an expanded view of cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems, beyond the physical assets of buildings, and the provision of organised activities, and instead opens up a number of important respects in which young people's lives — and the opportunities within them — are interlinked with their experiences of space and place.

Similarly, the way in which interviews were conducted in this study exemplifies a methodological openness. This is partly through asking the kinds of open question just mentioned, but also through the way in which the interviews were conducted, giving research participants the time to develop their answers, and to address issues of cultural opportunity from a variety of angles. Conversations of this kind are not intended to simply extract pre-existing 'facts', but, in part, to give research participants the opportunity to think out loud about their cultural opportunities, potentially formulating their ideas and experiences in ways they have not done previously.[65]

7.4 Studying & Mobilising Cultural Assets

The methodological openness of this research is also evident in the ways in which its approach draws on the tradition of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). At the heart of ABCD are two principles. Firstly, that in addressing challenges and developing projects, communities often have pre-existing potentials to address these challenges, and the emphasis is placed on mobilising and enabling these potentials, realising internal possibilities as much as seeking external expertise. Secondly, the range of 'assets' within that community — there to be drawn upon — needs to be understood to extend far

65   Jonathan Gross has written about how semi-structured interviews can be used in this way to explore complex cultural experiences, some of which may be difficult to put into words, in Dearn, L; Gross, J; Price, S; Pitts, S. 2017. 'The listening experience of the concert hall: what do we learn about the experience and value of concert listening from researching with classical music audiences today?', in *Listening to Music: People, Practices and Experiences*. Helen Barlow and David Rowland (Eds). Published online by The Open University.

beyond the most obvious material assets, such as buildings and money, and instead to include skills, knowledge and relationships. Part of the importance of this second principle, from the perspective of this research, is that it points towards the inclusion of *possibilities* and *potentials*, as well as actualised assets.

We held a workshop at the end of our fieldwork period in which we shared some of the insights from our research, and invited a wide range of stakeholders to take part in discussions in response to these findings and (current and potential) cultural opportunities for young people in the borough. A striking feature of the workshop was that it not only generated valuable insights into the range of possible next steps in managing the cultural ecosystem in Harrow, but that it brought people together, in one room (hosted as a listening space), in ways which already began to create new pathways and partnerships. These included, for example, potential new connections made between the Harrow Youth Parliament and the Ignite Trust, and between a number of small, recently-formed organisations and staff at Harrow Council. Processes of knowledge production can be ways to recognise the resources and potential within a locality. But they can also, in themselves, constitute significant *action* in mobilising these resources.

Our research confirms the value of taking an approach informed by the ABCD methodology. When it comes to understanding how cultural opportunities operate, alertness to knowledge, skills and relationships is extremely important. This has significant implications for how to take forward the management of cultural ecosystems, raising the question of how to establish processes of skills sharing, knowledge sharing and relationship building on a sustainable basis — and especially in conditions in which local authorities are facing deep cuts, and schools, youth services and cultural organisations are all under great pressure of time and money.

7.5 Self-Selection

In the design of our research, we deliberately chose a broad mix of research methods. The value of this was to both to speak to a wide range of people (which in itself required a diversity of ways of accessing these different groups of research participants) and to test out which methods are most effective in understanding cultural learning from an ecological perspective. We used the following range of research instruments:

- » Semi-structured interviews, with life history elements — adults
- » Semi-structured interviews, with life history elements — 18 — 25 years old
- » Semi-structured interviews, with life history elements — secondary school students (Years 7 — 10)
- » Focus groups — secondary school students (including students from Years 7 — 13)
- » Activity diaries — Year 5 students
- » Questionnaires — secondary school students (Years 7 & 8)
- » Questionnaires — parents of primary school children (Nursery to Year 6)
- » Asset Based Community Development Workshop

Our use of these methods was not without its challenges. For example, the process of participant recruitment was at times difficult. Some teachers are clearly under tremendous pressure of time. Similarly, a number of cultural organisations who we had hoped to involve in the research did not take up the offer. In some cases, these are organisations run on a voluntary basis and, again, it may be that pressures of time were a significant factor here.[66]

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66   We had hoped to also undertake ethnographic fieldwork as part of this research. However, attempting to arrange suitable access within which to undertake participant observation with children and young people did not prove possible. We still feel there is considerable potential for making use of ethnography to study young people's cultural opportunities. In the *Towards Cultural Democracy* report (Wilson *et al.*, 2017) we showed how important and powerful a methodological tool ethnography can be in investigating the ways in which cultural opportunities exist through the interdependencies of the publicly supported arts, the profitable creative industries and everyday creativity. Further consideration should be given to how to undertake ethnographic research in the context of children and young people's cultural lives.

When it comes to understanding how cultural opportunities operate, alertness to knowledge, skills and relationships is extremely important.

We invited a very wide range of organisations and individuals to take part in the research. Whilst we are pleased with the range of participants that have contributed to this study, it is important to recognise the degree of self-selection that has taken place. Being aware of this issue from the outset, we took steps to mitigate against it. Nonetheless, self-selection is significant from a methodological point of view, as it of course raises the question of which aspects of the cultural ecosystem remain 'unseen'. It also raises important questions regarding how best cultural ecosystems can be co-managed *inclusively*.

There may be very good reasons why some groups and individuals do not want to get involved in processes of knowledge production and partnership. Clearly there are questions of incentive here — 'what good will come of this?'. There are also issues of sub-culture, with some groups and individuals deliberately preferring to remain beneath the radar of any shared or public knowledge of their cultural practices. This is just one reason why knowledge of a cultural ecosystem will always remain incomplete and partial. This is of the nature of ecological knowledge. It raises the question of how to manage cultural ecosystems in ways that are both maximally inclusive and fully respectful of the wishes of groups and individuals not to contribute to knowledge about, and management of, this ecosystem.

7.6 Mixing Methods, Making Compromises

Each of the methods employed has generated valuable data. There were classic trade-offs between breadth and depth, and the design of the research anticipated this and factored it in. The questionnaires and diaries enabled us to gather comparatively large data sets, and to survey young people's activities — and their views — on a wider scale. The interviews and focus groups generated deeper insights into what enables and constrains young people in their cultural opportunities, which cultural activities they value and why. The interviews with adults were particularly valuable in developing a sense of the current and potential interconnections between different parts of the cultural ecosystem within the borough. Whilst there is no single, authoritative 'bird's eye view', these interviews with adults provided valuable insights into the possibilities and limits of such overarching perspectives.

A study of a cultural learning ecology of this kind — seeking to adopt multiple angles on its object of study — has to place a limit on the number of in-depth conversations conducted. We succeeded in including research participants from primary school, through all secondary school ages, to early twenties, to adults in a wide range of roles across the borough, involving organisations including schools, third sector organisations, the local authority, and a creative business. How to combine breadth and depth of participation in a study of this kind is a practical point, but it also touches on a much larger consideration. Cultural ecosystems are by their nature complexly interconnected, with very many individuals, organisations, tangible and intangible assets involved in them. The ways in which they are studied and understood must reflect this complexity.

7.7 Studying Cultural Potential

The research was designed to pay attention to *potential*, as well as presently existing practices. We had some success with this, as we hope is evidenced in the data and discussions presented throughout the chapters of this report. There were also challenges. In some cases, young people found it difficult to answer questions about opportunities they would like that are not currently available to them. This is an interesting finding in itself. It raises important questions for the future management of cultural ecosystems, and the ways in which they might hold open possibilities for new cultural practices and preferences to be supported, rather than only serving and reproducing current opportunities and interests.

There is scope for further methodological innovation in respect of studying cultural potential. We addressed the challenge of studying cultural potential through the design of our questionnaires, activity diaries, interview and focus group questions; and through our ABCD workshops. We also chose to conduct interviews with young adults, in the 18 — 25 age bracket, inviting them to reflect back on their childhoods and discuss not only the opportunities they had, but the opportunities that, with hindsight, they might have had. We made the decision that to avoid forms of path-dependency and self-selection, this group of interviewees should not be recruited through cultural organisations, but instead should be recruited at random, in public spaces. In practical terms, it proved challenging to recruit participants in this way, but the interviews that resulted made very valuable contributions, and are presented in this report as two cases studies, Zenab (Chapter 4) and Reema (Chapter 6). Building on our work, here, we highlight the need for further research to explore methodological possibilities for investigating cultural potential, as well as current practice.

7.8 Methodological Possibilities

Overall, this study found the triangulation of data very helpful. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was effective, and in response to the challenges posed by the complexities of a cultural ecosystem, this mixed methods approach has clear benefits. Versions of this approach could valuably be developed in other locations.

On the basis of this study, we also suggest there are other types of research project that could be developed. Moving forward with research in this area, it would be beneficial to develop large-scale responses to the kinds of questions we raise in this report. For example, our findings about 'favourite subject at school' for Year 7 and 8 students is striking, especially when considered in combination with wider trends in the subjects young people are selecting for GCSE. Our questionnaire was completed by 88 students, and there is potential to gather this kind of data more widely, at different stages in young people's lives. If asked in combination with other pertinent questions, this would provide important insights into when cultural opportunities widen and narrow within young people's lives, and could potentially indicate what some of the causes and tipping points may be.

There is also considerable potential in undertaking longitudinal studies that map young people's cultural learning journey from early years through to young adulthood. In this report we have shown the value of thinking in terms of a journey of cultural learning, with cultural opportunities being 'opened' or 'closed' at certain (tipping) points.[67] If we are to better understand how autonomy is supported in a school context, it would be very beneficial to undertake a large-scale and longitudinal study. Clearly a difficulty with this is the extra burden of work it would put on teachers — who are already under immense pressures in respect of form filling etc. We think this could be implemented, but might need to be creative in working out how it could be done efficiently and effectively — whilst ensuring high-quality data is captured.[68]

However, the action research element — particularly in respect of the ABCD approach — where the 'doing' of the research is beneficial in its own right — is also important to take forward. In addition to further ecological studies of the kind presented in this report, there is considerable potential in combining this — or, indeed, a longitudinal study of the kind suggest above — with an

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67   Here, the ecological language of emergence and growth is helpful. It's also the case that thinking in terms of a 'career', or pathway, (See Gross, In Preparation) is also a useful framework for understanding young people's cultural learning, and connects to our suggestion that a version of career guidance would be valuable in supporting young people's cultural capabilities, and keeping options open.

68   There may be some practical lessons to be drawn, here, from how biomedical research effectively tracks people over many years.

action research approach, responsive in nature.[69] For example, this could involve 1) identifying key tipping points in young people's cultural learning within a particular ecosystem 2) introducing a range of possible interventions, and 3) testing them for efficacy. This testing could take a number of forms, from randomised control trials, to qualitative approaches including life-history interviews.

Clearly there is very important further research to be done, with considerable potential value, to better understand a) the psycho-geography of cultural opportunity; b) safe spaces; c) holding environments; d) spaces of listening; e) supported cultural autonomy, and to do so across variations in location, including socio-economic factors.

These are areas of research in which embodied, somatic, affective, haptic, kinaesthetic, emotional, psychological and aesthetic factors could be taken into account much further. The research approaches employed in this study have been largely cognitive. It would be valuable to explore what methods might be best suited to developing a fuller knowledge of these areas. For example, some art-based research — using film, music, drama, poetry, images, and stories — could be very helpful. These approaches employ modes of knowledge production that take us beyond the 'standard' forms explored in social scientific study.[70] They could also be effective methods to pursue because young people may well find working with them a good way to have their voices heard; and, in the spirit of action research, as the methods involve cultural creativity, this constitutes (and potentially opens up) cultural opportunities for participants through the research process itself.

7.9 Further Research into Creative Citizenship

As part of the further study of cultural learning in an ecological context, there is potential for additional valuable research that focuses, specifically, on the possibilities of creative citizenship. As Hargreaves and Hartley make clear, we are only at the earliest stages of understanding the role that public policy can have in actively enabling creative citizenship. "A whole new storyline for creative citizenship beckons" (2016: 264), and research has an important part to play in helping to write this story. In addition to investigating how creative citizenship could be supported, there is also important further work to be done in understanding how it can affect change. As Crossick and Kaszynska point out, "we know the role of culture in entrenching and perpetuating existing inequalities. The other side, the role of arts and culture in contesting social exclusion and inequalities, has received less attention from academics notwithstanding its popularity with policy makers in the New Labour government [...] and the relationship between cultural value and emancipation would merit more sustained empirical investigation." (2016: 33)

7.10 Sustainable Knowledge Production

Going forward, an important consideration is, *how can cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems be managed in ways that allow for knowledge of complex, evolving interconnections to be produced collectively?* This is a central question for new partnerships being developed to enable young people in their cultural opportunities. What systems of knowledge sharing can be implemented within these partnerships to ensure that understanding of cultural ecosystems is up-to-date and inclusive? One important consideration here is, indeed, the role of creative citizens — those people who enable cultural opportunities for themselves and others, connecting people, and, in some cases, moving across and between different settings and locations.

> ...how can cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems be managed in ways that allow for knowledge of complex, evolving interconnections to be produced collectively?

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69   It would be a missed opportunity, and ethically questionable, to carry out an extensive longitudinal study, for example, that doesn't incorporate the testing of interventions that are geared to actively opening up cultural opportunities and supporting autonomy.

70   See, for example, Barone, T. and Eisner, E. W. 2012. *Arts-based Research*, London: Sage. And Cole, A. L., and Knowles, J. G. 2008. 'Arts-Informed Research', in J. G. Knowles and A. L. Cole, eds., *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 55–70.

People who operate in this way may have particularly important roles to play in providing insights into cultural learning ecosystems. This could be adults or young people. It could be a youth worker who spends time on the streets of Harrow and working at a youth centre. It could be a member of Harrow Youth Parliament, who has insights as to what is going on in and around school, at a performing arts group they attend at the weekend, and on the streets where they live — and in the discussions had within the Harrow Youth Parliament itself.

There are network organisations within the borough, such as the recently formed Young Harrow Foundation and the long-established Harrow Music Service, whose role it is to nourish connections between different kinds of organisations within the borough. At the moment, the remit of organisations such as these focuses on particular types of provision for young people less broad than 'cultural learning' or 'cultural capability'. Accordingly, and with very limited resources, they currently pull into themselves some kinds of knowledge about the cultural ecosystem, and not others.

For Harrow, then — as for any area seeking to develop a strategic approach to managing its cultural ecosystem, and to supporting the cultural learning (and cultural capability) of its young people — a key question is how to establish a feasible approach to knowing what is going on within the cultural ecosystem that is inclusive, sustainable and effectively linked to action. We have provided a series of indications of how this can work in practice, including by supporting and developing the roles of creative citizens, partnerships, and spaces of listening. Overall, our research points towards a strategic approach characterised by 'caring for cultural freedom': in which practices of *attentiveness*, *responsibility*, *competence* and *responsiveness* in managing cultural ecosystems are broadly shared, by young people and adults alike. Developing knowledge within and across cultural ecosystems would, then, not be a narrowly instrumental process, informing decisions taken 'on high'. Instead, it would be an integral, ongoing part of the practices of care through which cultural ecosystems are democratically co-managed.

Chapter 8 — Caring for Cultural Freedom: Supporting Cultural Learning

8.1 Introduction

The ideas raised in this report are important not just for young people in Harrow, but for the future of cultural democracy across the UK. Not only are young people a vital part of any such democracy, but what happens upstream will have significant positive implications downstream — as young people become adults. In this final chapter, we consider *who* takes responsibility for giving support to cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems, as well as *how*, and what the implications of this might be for all citizens and stakeholders involved.

The answer to the first question might traditionally point at the arts and cultural sector themselves. Certainly, they have a central and leading role to play. But if we follow through on the logic of the major conceptual innovations presented in this report, we might also want to think about this differently. Indeed, what has been argued in Chapter 2, and then evidenced through Chapters 3-6, calls for a radical shake-up in how we think about the place of arts and culture in society. To summarise, the logic of this radical re-think goes like this:

Currently cultural policy in England (and to all extents and purposes in the other home nations) is framed around the mission of delivering 'great art for everyone'. The end-goal of cultural policy is therefore 'great art', and a key objective is to widen access to this for everyone. But, what we have presented in this report points towards an alternative vision for cultural policy that radically extends the focus of its remit to include all types of cultural opportunity, including 'everyday creativity'. Moreover, pursuing the ecological metaphor raised in Chapter 2, notably the organic farming principle of nurturing and sustaining a healthy and fertile soil, we suggest that rather than being the *ends*, as it were, great art constitutes (part of) the *means*: the fertile ground on (and in) which cultural opportunities — and thereby *cultural democracy*, characterised by cultural capability for all — can flourish. We outline the two competing logics in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 **Re-thinking Cultural Policy**

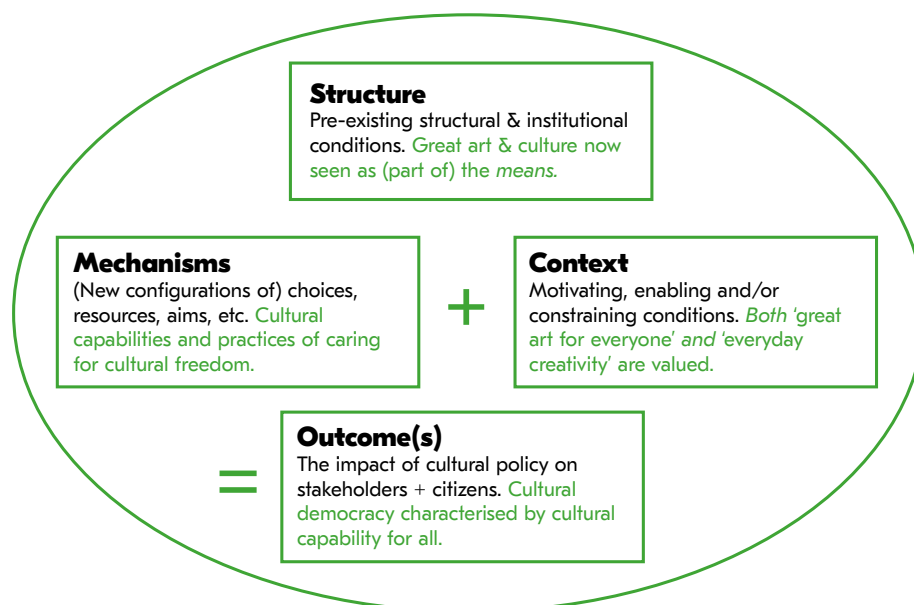| Cultural Policy	Structure (S)	Contexts (C)	Mechanisms (M)	Outcome (O)
The status quo	Great art & culture as the ends	Deficit model	Excellence & Access	'Great art for everyone'
Our proposal	Great art & culture as (part of) the means	Both 'great art for everyone' and 'everyday creativity' are valued	Cultural capability and practices of caring for cultural freedom	Cultural democracy, characterised by cultural capability for all

This Table builds on a realist evaluation point of view,[71] in which outcomes (O) are explained in terms of their underlying mechanisms (M) and contiguous contexts (C), all operating within a pre-existing structural context (S). At the heart of realist evaluation is the idea of 'generative' causality — the idea that outcomes, such as those we are interested in in this context of cultural policy, are caused by certain mechanisms (choices, resources, motivations) being triggered when the context (often involving multiple other contingent

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71   See Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1994), 'What Works in Evaluation Research', *British Journal of Sociology*, 34 (3): 291-206

mechanisms) is conducive, and that this all takes place within an institutionally pre-existing structural context.[72]

Within our report *Towards Cultural Democracy*,[73] we in effect accounted for cultural capabilities as key *mechanisms* of cultural democracy. In this research on cultural learning in Harrow we now augment this understanding by drawing attention to an allied set of mechanisms, namely what we have introduced as practices of *caring for cultural freedom*, characterised by attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness, and which thereby enable supported autonomy. A graphic representation of this relationship is presented in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1
Re-thinking Cultural Policy

Structure
Pre-existing structural & institutional conditions. Great art & culture now seen as (part of) the *means.*

Mechanisms
(New configurations of) choices, resources, aims, etc. Cultural capabilities and practices of caring for cultural freedom.

+

Context
Motivating, enabling and/or constraining conditions. *Both* 'great art for everyone' *and* 'everyday creativity' are valued.

=

Outcome(s)
The impact of cultural policy on stakeholders + citizens. Cultural democracy characterised by cultural capability for all.

In short, the proposal we are putting forward here is an expansion of ambition, framed around providing everyone with cultural capabilities and enabling cultural democracy and human flourishing. This is not, however, a substitutive process — we are not talking about doing away with 'great art'. Rather, it is a wholly complementary process, that sees great art (our living cultural heritage) acting as a fertile base or context (the 'soil') in which young people's cultural growth is rooted. In doing so, we emphasise cultural opportunities in their broadest sense: the substantive freedom to (co)create culture, to give form and value to experiences of self and self-in-relation; and to do so across the boundaries of the publicly supported arts, profitable creative industries, and the under-the-radar practices of everyday creativity. Building on the insights of *Towards Cultural Democracy*, in this report we have shown that there are important ways in which thinking ecologically enables us to better understand these cultural opportunities in the context of the lives of young people, with cultural opportunities operating through the interconnections of different sites of practice, enabled and constrained by broader environmental conditions.

In more detail, then, what implications does this have for *action*? The ecological metaphor raises the question of what kind of cultivation (or environmental management) should be undertaken. As discussed in Chapter 2 and elsewhere in this report, we have highlighted the need for *practices of care* — or practices of relationality — characterised by attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness, which this research has shown to be the enabling mechanisms for *supported autonomy*. In the following parts of this final chapter, we draw out some of the further implications of this report's central conceptual innovation — its account of *cultural care* as a set of related practices, and as an

The ecological metaphor raises the question of what kind of cultivation (or environmental management) should be undertaken.

72   Bhaskar, R. and Danermark, B. 2013. *Interdisciplinarity and Well-being*. Abingdon: Routledge.
73   Wilson *et al.*, 2017.

overall strategic approach to cultural ecosystem management — building on the empirical findings from which it derives.

8.2. Spaces of Listening

Our research highlights the importance of young people having spaces in which they are listened to. This has significant implications for the practices of schools, youth clubs and arts organisations working with young people. It also has broader implications for how cultural ecosystems could and should be managed in the first place. Comments from one youth worker have a particular significance in this context. He stresses the importance of "empowering young people to find what they want rather than we always predict what they want, we always try to control what they want, we always think we know better than actually a young person themselves."

As previously discussed, spaces of listening have value to young people individually, as spaces through which to develop their sense of themselves, and in which to develop confidence of many kinds. But as well as directly benefitting young people through the processes of being listened to and being supported in developing their senses of self and self-in-relation, the need to develop spaces of listening has value systemically, too, for effective decision-making in the co-management of cultural ecosystems. As one youth worker says, "The problem with young people is they're always ahead of us as adults. [...] by the time you've set it all up and you're doing something great, you're nearly out of date already, and you've kind of got to be ok with that." In Chapter 7 we discussed the need for the generation of knowledge about cultural ecosystems to be inclusive and sustainable. This needs to involve ways of listening to young people such that decisions regarding the co-management of ecosystems is responsive to their changing tastes, interests and needs.

What these spaces of listening look like could take many forms. Through this study, we encountered some examples already in operation in the borough. The Harrow Youth Parliament and the weekly 'focus groups' held by a youth worker at the Ignite Trust are two examples of forums in which young people's voices are being heard; whilst at one secondary school involved in this research the range of clubs offered is highly responsive to the requests and suggestions of students. Two questions follow. How can spaces of listening such as these be connected to wider processes of decision-making in the borough? And what other spaces of listening need to be developed? (Where should these be? And who should run them?)

One of the many reasons spaces of listening may be very important, here, is because of the ways in which they make possible an openness to *potential*, and to the constantly evolving nature of the cultural ecosystem. Such an approach also, of course, offers more opportunities for young people's voices to be exercised and to be heard, opening possibilities for processes of greater local democracy. In this context, it's worth drawing on Hillary Wainwright's four principles for popular democracy:[74]

1. If any form of participatory democracy is to achieve legitimacy as a source of power over decisions concerning the government of a locality, it needs to be **open at its foundations to everyone affected by such decisions** — even if only a minority participate.

2. There need to be **mutually agreed and openly negotiated rules**.

3. A third condition is the **autonomy of the participatory process from the state.** Participatory institutions need to have their own life and dynamism, and know that the elected body respects this.

4. **The genuine sharing of knowledge.** Real resources must also be at

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74   Hilary Wainwright. 2003. *Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy.* London: Verso.

stake. The process must get results. It cannot be just another consultation exercise.

Points 2 and 4 connect directly to our discussions in Chapter 7 of the need for the management of cultural ecosystems to be informed by the inclusive and sustainable sharing and production of knowledge. Connecting up and developing a range of spaces of listening, inside and outside of schools, has the potential to do this. Whether or not a shared forum operating according to Wainwright's second and third points is feasible and desirable in this context is a question we pose for readers to take up and discuss. In terms of current practice within Harrow, the Harrow Youth Parliament is one already-existing forum. This may (or may not) provide a promising model for further development in relation to the specific concerns being addressed here, the democratic co-management of cultural ecosystems. Exactly what form new partnerships take in co-managing these ecosystems will require the deliberation and creativity of participants within specific localities, rather than being proposed or imposed from outside, or on high.

...supporting both young people and adults to act as creative citizens has an important part to play in the future management of cultural ecosystems.

8.3 Enabling Creative Citizens — To Cross Boundaries, To Develop Knowledge

Our research indicates that in addition to the provision of spaces of listening, supporting both young people and adults to act as creative citizens has an important part to play in the future management of cultural ecosystems. Again, this connects to issues of knowledge discussed in Chapter 7. A staff member at Harrow Council said the following:

> For all this talk about 'you can economise, and you can come up with innovative ways of doing things', sometimes you just need more money, to be honest. Then I'd be able to have an arts officer who could go out and do the work to get all these groups together, and encourage them to go for funding and set up arts festivals [...] I think it would be really useful to have an arts team who could go out and work with all these people, have contacts outside the borough with the organisations like the Arts Council, and all those other organisations so you can pick up ideas from them, they know who you are, and you can share those ideas.

It's not only local authority staff who feel this way. At the Ignite Trust, having youth workers 'on the ground' is really important to how they operate, and if resources were available, being able to support more youth workers would be a top priority. In both these cases, financial investment is needed to fund staff to work on the ground, connecting with people, sharing information, and developing knowledge to inform decision-making. In *Towards Cultural Democracy*, we recommended that further consideration be given to investment in support of creative citizens, the kinds of people that enable cultural opportunities for themselves and others, often crossing locations and boundaries, developing connections. Partners in Harrow indicate the need and potential value of this kind of investment, with the potential for exponential returns, multiplying cultural opportunities.

Notwithstanding the need of these two organisations for additional funds to make this kind of role possible, there may be other low-cost possibilities for expanding cultural opportunities. Closely connected to creative citizenship is the idea of 'positive deviance' — an approach to behavioural and social change based on the observation that in any community there are people whose uncommon but successful behaviours or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges and having no extra resources or knowledge. This has close associations with an Asset Based Community Development approach. Positive deviance (PD) is a

strength-based approach which is applied to problems requiring behaviour and social change. It is based on the following principles:[75]

1. Communities already have the solutions. They are the best experts to solve their problems.

2. Communities self-organise and have the human resources and social assets to solve an agreed-upon problem.

3. Collective intelligence. Intelligence and know-how is not concentrated in the leadership of a community alone or in external experts but is distributed throughout the community. Thus the PD process's aim is to draw out the collective intelligence to apply it to a specific problem requiring behavior or social change.

4. Sustainability as the cornerstone of the approach. The PD approach enables the community or organisation to seek and discover sustainable solutions to a given problem because the demonstrably successful uncommon behaviors are already practiced in that community within the constraints and challenges of the current situation.

5. It is easier to change behaviour by practicing it rather than knowing about it. "It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into a new way of acting".

One of the important features here is that 'small' differences can have a large impact. We might pose the question to stakeholders within Harrow, and within other localities keen to support the cultural learning of young people within and across their cultural ecosystems: *how can creative citizenship and positive deviance be encouraged and supported?*

8.4. Mentoring

One important way of enabling creative citizenship and positive deviance may be through mentoring. We saw in Harrow a number of initiatives through which mentoring and peer-leadership are being developed, with the potential to be extended further. This in turn connects directly to questions of more effective partnership working. To take just one example, at King's College London, where the authors of this report are based, we have a sizeable cohort of students on the MA in Arts & Cultural Management. These students are highly motivated, capable and socially-conscious, and actively seeking opportunities to engage in real cultural management, to use and share their knowledge and skills. There is potential, here, to develop a scheme through which students such as these could be placed in schools, to help tend existing cultural opportunities — and enable new ones — and to support young people to develop their own skills as creative citizens and positive deviants.

8.5 Making Pathways Visible

One of the things that mentors can do is to make visible the pathways available to young people that they would not otherwise be able to see. This is not only a question of providing information. It is also very much about the context — including the interpersonal relationships — within which that information is provided, so that a young person can see an 'opportunity' as genuinely a choice that is open to them. Through the fieldwork, we heard many examples of pathways being opened up to young people by 'key people' in their lives, such as Year 7 student who has developed an extremely keen interest in photography through her uncle. Further consideration should be given to how new paths can be made visible to young people through meaningful relationships *outside* of the home and family.

It is in the nature of ecologies that they are complex and evolving, so they need to be understood from multiple perspectives...

75   Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin. (2010) *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems.* Harvard Business Press. Print.

Providing relationships of this kind has the potential to make important interventions in the inequalities of cultural opportunity, and disparities in family circumstances. In Chapters 5 and 6 we heard from a Music teacher, explaining that it is the students engaged in organised cultural activities outside of school — such as those who go to a performing arts school on Saturdays — who actively seek further information and opportunities. We can see, here, how cultural opportunities may multiply themselves, extending inequalities. This makes the possibility for making pathways visible for all young people, through mentoring schemes and other initiatives, all the more important.

A recommendation of the recent Creative Industries Federation report on freelance work in the creative industries resonates with our research here. That report calls on government to "Support a creative careers campaign — a UK-wide advertising campaign that inspires people to enter into the creative industries and dissolves misperceptions about careers within it, including freelance work." (Creative Industries Federation, 2017: 5) This is a good idea, but it needs to be combined with support that begins much earlier in young people's lives, particularly though mentoring programmes, and making pathways visible through partnership working. It is important, too, not to focus only on central government, and instead to address what can happen locally (and regionally), whilst working in partnership with central government.

8.6 The Benefits of Partnership Working

We heard mixed reports from teachers as to whether it is possible, at present, to connect their students with opportunities outside of school. Some teachers are reluctant or unable to do this. Those that do often feel it is only possible on ad hoc basis. A number of conditions will need to be in place to enable these connections between different sites and agents of cultural opportunity to be connected. One of them is to see the benefits of devoting time and energy to cultivating the partnership — with clarity of purpose.

We see examples within Harrow of purposeful partnership working in action. The Young Harrow Foundation has a clear brief to connect organisations in the borough working with young people, in order to combine forces and leverage funding. In developing the co-management of a cultural learning ecosystem, developing a clear statement of the aims and benefits of the partnership will be an important condition of its success. We've seen through this study that there is an appetite for further partnership working. Key questions concern the form these partnerships take, their precise aims, and what resources are required in order to make them a success.[76]

> — "partnership working is really a key through to finding funders, because we get the best solution when there's more than one organisation bringing things in. So, networking is an important part of my work."

> — "[What would help us more fully achieve our mission would be] more partnerships, definitely. Recognising other people who want to work with us, particularly for employment opportunities [for young people]. I'd love local businesses to work with us."

> — "I think networking and partnerships with other organisations and projects that run for a length of time [is very important], not just a very short time but something that's going to run for a few years [...]. And having those cultural venues to raise [students] aspirations and to see what potential careers they could go into within the arts. And it being a viable career."

76   The King's Cultural Enquiry, *The Art of Partnering*, reported that "The importance of the human dimension — building relationships, working practices and communication — was frequently cited [by research participants across the cultural sector] as being most significant in determining success in how to partner. This suggests that brokering partnerships is evolving as a new role, with leadership attributes that need embedding within organisations." (2015: 3)

What does seem clear, is the importance of enabling conversations through which the overall purpose of the partnership is clarified and developed by those involved. This is one of the lessons that can be learnt from the extensive evaluation of the Creative Partnerships programme.

> Partnerships in any line of work can be immensely productive, bringing additional resources and expertise to bear on a given task; but it would also be true to say partnerships can increase the chances of confusion and misinterpretation. By definition, with a multiplication of viewpoints and agendas, there is an increased need to understand what work is to be embarked on, to understand it from a range of perspectives, to be clear why it is better to do it as a collaboration, and what the particular skills and advantages of each partner might bring to the desired outcome. [...] In essence, to successfully work in partnership we are faced with a choice: we can carry sets of assumptions and hope they are not going to be exposed down the line or we can ask questions of one another up front and establish clear roles and open communication from the outset. Yet, this also raises several questions. Why is it better that we embark upon this work together, rather than apart? And what do we get out of it? Are they the same benefits or different altogether? (Parker, 2013: 13)

8.7 Local Authority Cultural Strategy

In considering how cultural ecosystems can be co-managed, the range of organisations already well-placed to support effective partnerships may well include the local authority. In the case of Harrow, the council is in the process of developing a cultural strategy, and staff are keen to work collaboratively in doing so. At the same time, deep funding cuts mean there have been very limited resources with which to develop a strategy, or to do the research required to know what an effective approach might look like.

Harrow Council staff are keen to work collaboratively in developing a new approach, here. But the first challenge is knowing how the land lies. As one member of staff put it, a starting point would be "to identify what we've got, identify what we need, and then look at how we might be able to fill the gaps. That's the basis of it." But, at present, the council is "just kind of without a map really." Our discussions in Chapter 7 highlight that, when an ecological approach is adopted, new perspectives can be taken with regards to what kinds of ongoing processes of knowledge production will be sustainable and valuable for cultivating the cultural ecosystem in a way that goes beyond a supply side model. Indeed, going beyond a supply side model is now a necessity, as well as a virtue, as the council is simply not in a position to directly 'supply' very much itself.

There is a recognition that a new approach is needed. As one council interviewee put it, at the moment, "we don't particularly have a sense of direction, and perhaps the focus has been a bit too narrow in the past, [...] only serving a small proportion of the residents of the borough, [with provision that] probably isn't of particular interest in many ways to people who live in Queensbury or South Harrow, or whatever." The time is ripe for a bold, innovative approach to what a borough-wide cultural strategy could be.

Another member of council staff contrasts the need for an audit, a strategy and a 'tool'. There is value in the council knowing what cultural assets are already 'out there', (an audit), and there is value in the council developing an overall approach to how it enables culture in the borough, (a strategy). The next step would then be the development of a tool that provides practical information to support cultural activity. It should be "Easy to read in the context of what people will easily understand across the majority of Harrow. Easy to be informed that the council is interested in supporting you culturally, to saying, 'I have a knitting group, where can I do it?'"

What a new strategy (and any tools it produces) looks like in practice is open for discussion, and we hope the findings and ideas presented in this report can help inform those ongoing conversations. A recognition of the potential benefits for a shift from a supply side model to one that thinks in terms of co-managing the cultural ecosystem should be a key take-away from this report, alongside the more specific ideas regarding psycho-geographies of culture, safe spaces, spaces of listening, supported autonomy, tipping points, mentoring, making pathways visible, and partnership working. Moreover, with the announcement of the London Borough of Culture initiative,[77] the time is even more auspicious for bold new approaches to be taken to cultural leadership at a local level, and for Harrow and other boroughs to think creatively about how cultural ecosystems can be cultivated.

8.8 Challenges of Ecological Design and Governance

One of the council staff we spoke to discussed possibilities for embedding ecological thinking within redevelopment projects, including the design of new buildings and public spaces. "How can the youth group sit next to a café or whatever other service we're providing — a library that is primarily about Rhyme Time and prams — how do we provide pram support as well as potential gang support? Can we do that architecturally, can we do that through events? And what's the cheapest way?" In the medium and long-term, incorporating considerations such as these could play an important part in projects of co-managing cultural ecosystems. Indeed, A New Direction's recent report *The Cultural (Re)Generation: Building Creative Places for Young London*[78] provides detailed analysis of some of the considerations that developers and their partners might make in ensuring that new building in the capital engages with the possibility of enabling creative opportunities for young people.

What is helpful about the comments from the council staff member, here, is not just the wider perspective they offer on opportunity costs, (an issue highlighted in Chapter 5), but how cultural concerns for different stakeholders dovetail (or should do) with each other in co-managing a cultural learning ecology. How can organisations, buildings, public spaces and services operate ecologically, in the sense of serving *multiple* (potentially competing) purposes and ends? This gets to one of the deep challenges of an ecological approach and the possibility of supporting 'biodiversity' strategically. It re-focuses attention on the ability of an organisation, a space, a building, a network, or a school to exist in an ecological mode rather than a traditional utility-maximising mode, where the emphasis might be on maximising one particular utility over and above others.

The received wisdom is to encourage organisations to have *clear strategies and objectives*. This is important. But if they are expressed in terms of particular narrow areas of concern, they will potentially ignore or ride rough-shod over others, and/or disrupt a web of relationships that take place around or through them. Conversely, we need to avoid the problem of attempting to be 'all things to all people'. This is why a clarity of purpose in co-managing cultural ecosystems, and the partnerships through which this may be achieved, will be an important part of successful ecological approaches.

In the medium and longer term, it will be important to link these considerations to the serious governance issues that may arise. As one member of council staff explained:

> With Section 106, [...] when a big developer, say Barrett's, builds [...] a 125 storey tower which is going to be luxury flats, they do the affordable percentage, but they also give some money back to cultural provision, public realm provision, serving the community. Hilariously, in the '90s public art became a really profitable thing, and because developers could just say 'oh put on a sculpture on

Clarity of purpose in co-managing cultural ecosystems... will be an important part of successful ecological approaches

77   See https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture
78   A New Direction. 2016. *The Cultural (Re)Generation: Building Creative Places for Young London*.

a roundabout'... this happened in Spain even more. So, you've got incredible roundabout art in the most corrupt cities, because no one was there to create that logical link and actual[ly achieve] something for the community.

Here is an example where 'well-intentioned' ecological thinking was corrupted. This is an instructive warning. We need to think in more ecological ways not just about outcomes but also about the process of governance: we need ecological governance too, which is where the 'spaces of listening' and the four principles from Wainwright, above, become particularly important. What is the role of popular deliberation and debate in processes of co-managing cultural learning ecosystems? How can micro levels of decision-making be effectively linked with the meso-levels, such as local authority decision making? And to what extent is this an essential part of achieving a flourishing cultural learning ecosystem on a local level? These are questions for further discussion, as partnerships in support of cultural learning ecosystems are developed.

8.9 Caring for the Carers

The research presented in this report has taken the young person as its focal point of interest. We have sought to better understand how young people's cultural learning happens within and across cultural ecosystems, and in what ways it can best be supported. In the process, we have identified a mode of support that is characterised by cultural care, involving shared practices of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness in enabling young people's supported autonomy. It would be all too easy in this context to overlook the needs of those 'giving support' to young people's cultural learning. Our research has revealed many personal accounts from parents, teachers, youth workers, arts organisation staff, council members and policy makers who are on the 'front line' of caring for young people's cultural learning (whether their own children, pupils, vulnerable young people, audience members, or local / national populations). It is not an unreasonable question to ask what kind of support do 'carers' of cultural learning receive or need themselves?

One interesting finding of this research (reported in Chapter 7) is the extent to which those involved in the ABCD workshops were able to use the context of this research project as a means to develop new and empowering networks and connections. But over and above this, we would draw attention to the sense in which this disparate group of people were themselves able to benefit from the research process providing them with a (safe) space to be heard — a listening space. Not only were our respondents keen to talk, some indicated that they found the process of being listened to valuable. This is itself an important lesson, suggesting the need for further consideration to be given to what kinds of opportunities exist for those giving support to young people's cultural learning to be listened to (outside of a one-off research project).

8.10 Managing Cultural Ecosystems: Implications Summarised

We conclude, then, with a summary of the key implications of this research for future practice in co-managing cultural ecosystems in support of young people's cultural learning and cultural capability. There is much more to be learnt, and every partnership will have a huge amount to contribute from its own experiences. We offer the following as an initial set of suggestions.

1. **Supported autonomy — a central goal.** Young people place great value on freedom, and on the spaces and activities that enable them to experience freedom and creativity. Giving support to young people's cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems needs to place supported (cultural) autonomy front and centre of its ambitions.

2. **Co-produced knowledge is essential.** Cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems cannot be understood from a single bird's eye view. In order to understand and co-manage them effectively, there

What kind of support do 'carers' of cultural learning receive or need themselves?

must be in place a sustainable process of co-producing knowledge about that ecosystem, with many voices heard, on an ongoing basis.

3. **The psycho-geography of cultural opportunity should be considered**, and factored into how we give support to young people's cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems. By psycho-geography we mean the ways in which people experience the spaces and places in which they live as complex environments — shaped by a range of historical and contemporary factors including class, race, gender and (collective) memory — in which "psychology and geography collide".[79]

4. **Safe spaces & holding environments are vital**. Reliable conditions that allow for absorption, vulnerability and creativity play a crucial role in enabling young people's cultural capability. Based on research of the kind presented in this report, the contexts and conditions in which young people's cultural growth occurs can — *to some extent* — be anticipated. But the forms and consequences of this growth cannot be predicted. One of the roles organisations such as schools, youth clubs and arts centres can play is to actively cultivate the conditions of care — the safe spaces and holding environments — that enable unexpected flowerings to occur: expecting the unexpected.

5. **Spaces of listening are key**. They enable young people to develop their sense of self, and self-in relation. Characterised by attentiveness to the views and needs of young people for the young person, they can play a very promising role in generating inclusive, co-produced knowledge of young people's cultural interests, with the potential to inform decision-making. More of these — and connections between them — should be developed.

6. **Mentoring can help cut through inequalities**. Sharing information within relationships makes opportunities much more real for young people. This is one of the ways in which mentoring is a particularly important possibility.

7. **Tipping points & opportunity costs can be mitigated**. The emergence and growth of young people's cultural interests does not happen in a vacuum. It is guided and shaped by the 'organisation of interest' that takes place through environmental conditions, particularly those of school. Further thought needs to be given to how to keep cultural options open for young people, minimising the foreclosing effects of tipping / decision points, and the opportunity costs of choosing one option rather than another. Mentoring and ongoing cultural 'careers' advice are promising possibilities.

8. **Creative citizenship / positive deviance has great potential** to expand cultural capability, and democratise cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems. Much more could be done to support both adults and young people to operate in these ways, which are themselves characterised by practices of care, including *attentiveness* and *responsiveness* to the interests of others, and taking *responsibility* — *competently* — for the conditions in which those interests can be met.

9. **Partnership working needs both adaptability** *and* **clarity of purpose**. Democratic co-management of cultural ecosystems requires effective partnership working. Whilst actively caring for young people's cultural learning within and across cultural ecosystems requires adaptability, there is at the same time — and particularly when schools, third sector organisations and local authorities are so overstretched — a need for clarity of purpose.

79   Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*. Pocket Essentials, 2010: 10.

10. **Ensuring democratic governance is a long-term challenge**. In the medium and longer term, issues of governance — and the relationship between different scales of decision making in caring for cultural ecosystems — will be important to consider.

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