

Caring for Cultural Freedom



AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S CULTURAL LEARNING

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Key ideas and definitions

Cultural ecology

Emphasis on understanding interdependency, co-development, complexity and change inherent in the cultural sector as opposed to viewing culture as a set of 'offers' or 'provision'.

Cultural capability

The substantive freedom to (co-)create versions of culture – the ability and the opportunity to engage with and make culture as valued and defined by the individual.

Cultural democracy

Only through all having the capability to engage with and make culture can democracy in a civic sense be realised – an issue of rights, agency and voice.

Caring and the ethics of care

The practices of care (being attentive to need, taking responsibility for those needs, being competent at care-giving and being responsive to feedback) can help us understand how to manage a cultural ecosystem, tending and cultivating, rather than imposing or demanding. As an active process, always with ethical implications, care without appropriate attentiveness, responsiveness and respect can lead to (cultural) domination and possessiveness.

Model



The goal

The goal

Young people with freedom and agency



The mission

The mission

Supported autonomy



How?

How?

Through careful management of the cultural ecology

- Utilising the principles of caring –
- Attentiveness
 - Responsibility
 - Competence
 - Responsiveness



Why?

Why?

In this way we respect young people's own valuing of culture, we take account of context and make better and more effective interventions

How do young people in Harrow feel about their place and creative lives?

Importance of family, sport, games, friends, parks, relaxing, shopping – especially spending time with family

Often art is seen as the treat that has to be put aside in favour of more useful pursuits

Young people's lives are regimented and orientated around school work, high degree of stress

Place is crucial

- home, parks, cafes, the cinema, shopping centres – young people often not very mobile and perceive their place differently to adults

Identity and self

is crucial for engagement and countering alienation – Whose culture? Who is reflected in the dominant cultural norms taught in school?

Aspects of cultural agency

- Freedom to choose – means choices have to be on offer
- Information and pathways – young people need to know about what is possible not rely on their own experience
- Goals and incentives – useful tools for engagement
- Confidence, embarrassment and vulnerability – all play a part in enabling or stopping engagement and all can be addressed
- Confidence and selfhood – tools to experience the works and make better choices
- Freedom to become who you are – headspace and time to be creative and build self knowledge
- Being treated as a whole person with a cultural life beyond school or home
- The importance of being listened to is crucial for real agency
- Skills in potential – recognise what you are good at and take this into your life



Challenges going forward

Let go of the idea of mapping and a single bird's eye view – instead refine processes of ongoing engagement and discussion

Give up idea of 'deficit' - children and young people 'lacking access to great art' and embrace young people's valuing of creativity and art in their own terms

Engage with the complexity of the ecology – friends, parents, carers, the media – all have a strong influence on young people's creativity but how are they recognised as part of the story?

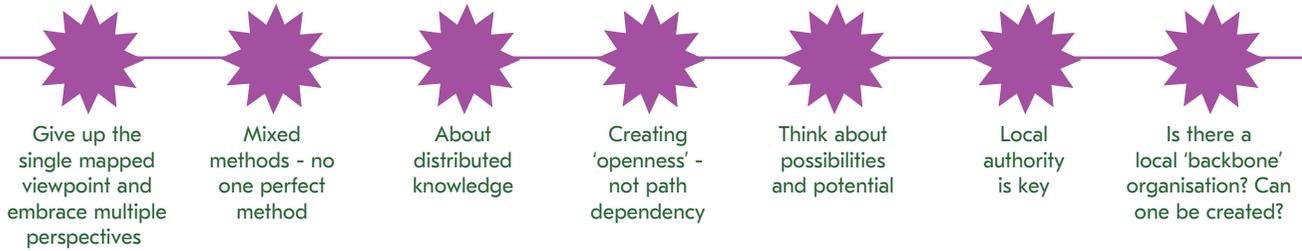
Hierarchies are re-balanced to put the adult in the caring/tending mode – challenge the status of professionals

Ecologies need careful management through distributed leadership – where will this come from and who will pay?

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Overcome vested interests, path dependencies and the disciplinary 'labour of division' – and, instead, teachers, arts organisations, youth workers, parents, policymakers, etc. to see themselves as having very connected roles in enabling the supported autonomy of young people - recognising that this is a genuinely shared endeavour"

Method



Methodological Principles

How?



What next?



Harrow process

