

# Enabling the 'Other Community' through Creative Pedagogies for Urban Renewal: Exploring the Affiliation Between Contemporary Art Practices and Democratic Values

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## ABSTRACT

This article draws on an art-in-education project in the UK to explore the value of creative pedagogy in the process of urban renewal. I explore the idea that community engagement is not simply about learning as an instrument to produce a person who is ready for active citizenship within a democracy, but rather to enable newly configured communities where an individual's uniqueness is savoured. Biesta (2006) refers to this as the other community, which contrasts with the idea of a social group in which existing structures are rationalised according to pre-existing rules or values; the other community does not attempt to replicate same-ness. I focus on ArtScapers, an art-in-education project that uses practice research to explore the implications of creative pedagogy on community formation. The exploration of this art project with three UK Primary Schools employs cultural theory to investigate strategies for arts engagement with a particular interest on inclusion. Community consultation is commonplace in urban centres undergoing regeneration, and the potency of public voice can be variable. This article explores ArtScapers as a consultation model in which there has been a process of genuine engagement. Using cultural theory to analyse pedagogy, I assert that creative practices can purposefully draw communities together into mini democracies.

**KEYWORDS:** word; practice research, imagination, inclusion, community, democracy, creative, pedagogy, contemporary art

It is important to *"explore the notion of 'community' in order to understand in more detail what it means to come into a world populated by others who are not like us"* (Biesta, 2006, p. 69).

## A Community of ArtScapers

ArtScapers is a project located at the North West Cambridge Development in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, I was commissioned by Contemporary Art Society and InSite Arts to write a strategy for art in education. Since then, I have been developing ArtScapers with Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination (CCI). CCI was formed in 2002 by a group of artists, educators, researchers, and parents passionate about engaging with the arts and creativity. With children at the heart of their work, the charity has developed a rigorous and well-documented practice that challenges inequality and helps to nurture powerful citizens of all ages. Together, we are developing a nine-year program. The focus is on exploring change and ways that creative practices can help children and their communities engage with the urban renewal happening in their area. We are working alongside children from primary schools<sup>2</sup> adjacent to and within the development. Those schools have agreed to actively participate in a strand of practice-based research that runs alongside the program delivery.

ArtScaping is about engagement with this building development's public art program: an artist-led program of workshops on and off site that lead to mini projects for teachers to use in their classrooms. There is an archive of documentation with learning ideas and extra curricula links for use in artist-led school workshops, artist-led teacher training, and teacher led school workshops. In addition, resources support wider public engagement by representing ArtScapers core values at cultural festivals locally, nationally and online.

## A Framework of Literature to Interrogate Community Building through the Arts

In this article, I use cultural theory to investigate creative strategies for inclusion through the arts which can assist in establishing newly configured communities. I draw upon Biesta's (2006, 2009, 2013)

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1 For further information about the North West Cambridge Development: <http://www.nwcambridge.co.uk>. For further information about the residency program curated by The Contemporary Art Society and InSite Arts: <http://www.nwcambridgeart.com/artist-residencies>. For ArtScapers: <http://www.nwcambridgeart.com/artscapers>

2 Primary schools in the UK admit children from the ages of 5 through 11.

argument that inclusion is the core value of democracy, as well as his skepticism about the concept that democratic society will simply follow once people have acquired the "right" kind of citizenship education and dispositions: in other words, once they are included in the dominant discourse. I argue that creativity can help to imagine a model of society in which people are different from one another. This is in contrast to the notion of education as a means to produce democratic citizens. The idea of democratic citizenship as an end point or as the outcome of an educational process is awkward because it implies that citizenship is only possible after a person has followed a specific educational trajectory. Jacques Rancière (2010) interrogates the idea of inclusion as an end product, the net result of the "right" outside intervention. For Rancière, emancipation is not something to be achieved as a result of correct learning environments, but is to be explored in the present by looking carefully at our interactions and the equality of our ongoing relations. Exploring the infrastructure of art engagement programs can help us better understand how to establish inclusive and equal inter relations and avoid what Denmead (2015) describes as the false notion that "artistic practice helps build relationships across difference" (pp. 74-75). Rather than "community building" in which the dominant social order is often performed and reproduced, arts programs seek a model of what Elster (1998) terms "deliberative democracy" (p. 1). Deliberation contrasts with a model in which people are told what to think. In Biesta's (2006) conception, "deliberation is...one of the ways in which individuals can act... and can come in to the world" (p. 140). Whilst collective decision making has much to recommend it, getting everyone to agree to the same view of the world is not the ideal function of education. I argue that art in education projects are not a means to create like-minded citizens, but rather a means to give people a voice by encountering what is strange, different, and other, and using that to imagine an alternative future.

## The Relationship Between Creativity and Education in Community Formation

Creative projects can provide a sense of purpose through which shared concerns emerge. Whilst art projects rarely set out with the specific purpose of building communities, collaborative endeavor is an important component of social formation. Art projects encourage a number of dispositions like dialogue, risk taking, appreciation of difference, and seeing the world in new ways. These attributes can form an important part of urban renewal, but they trouble our understanding of education's relation to community because they

encourage people to think on their own terms, not as a group. They enable the other community, which Biesta (2006) suggests contrasts with traditional education that prepares young people to operate in the rational world and fit within existing structures and attitudes. Biesta proposes a way of thinking about democracy that signifies the value of creativity in furthering ways in which contemporary society could be organized and could nurture uniqueness. The ArtScapers project explores practices in schools in which adults and children, experts and non-experts work alongside one another in mutually supportive explorations. During the project, teachers, parents, and children have all commented on the value of such a creative and conceptually open approach. A Year One class teacher at one of the primary schools involved with the project talks about the significance of joining in alongside the children in his class. This is made possible by letting artists take the lead.

Me joining in and saying you [artists] get on and lead this as you're perfectly capable...[this allowed me to] have equal conversations [with the children] about what they've done and what I've done...it's given the children an opportunity to show the skills they're developing in interacting on an equal footing with other people –this is very democratic...I liked connecting on a different level. [As a teacher] you're always in charge, it feels like [pupils] often forget that you're a person....an equal approach is more organic...it's an exchange – natural learning rather than structured. (Year One Teacher, personal communication, June 7, 2017)

The ArtScapers project involves creatively speculating about what makes a community. The project draws upon ideas about democracy and cultural inclusion in the aspiration to be open to the ideas and interests of workshop participants. In gallery education, a number of projects have explored how peer-groups of young learners are established in collaboration with one another (Rosso, 2010). Such foregrounding of co-production empowers learners to undertake more self-directed learning in the future. Such strategies are self-determining, aimed at supporting young people in the arts but also in their interactions with society. The ArtScapers project methodology also uses collaboration as a key component; children work with children and adults.

ArtScapers explores how creative activity can support young people to become confident citizens constructing their own cultural lives.<sup>3</sup> It is framed by the overarching questions: What role can artists play in the development of new places for living? How do young people relate to their city as it changes, and how can they help others to think creatively about those changes? ArtScapers is devised as a means to respond to changes in North West Cambridge that will affect people living in the local vicinity. Conducting research about ways in which creative activity can support people to adjust to such changes aims to help formulate the practice into a longer-term strategic approach. The research described here explores what creative activity can do in terms of civic engagement and the development of urban spaces. As the project spans a nine-year period, it is privileged to take a long-term view where engagement is built in from the start. The project approach reflects the underlying philosophies about learning that are explored through the theoretical analysis of practice discussed in this article.

### Co-learning, Creative Pedagogy and Imagination

The particular pedagogic methods that educators have developed in this project have come from the key principles that steer their approach to teaching and learning. The ArtScapers project strategy has marked co-working as a valuable method for producing outcomes of shared ownership and decision making in relation to the local area. In addition, it has the important impact of extending participants' capacity for mutual understanding. The research approach attempts to stay within the project methodology and aims to explore the value of such strategies by applying theory to explicate the over-arching societal aims.

Socially and inter-generationally, ArtScapers explores collectivity where understanding arises through mutual agreement. Collaboration or co-creation is concerned with producing something collectively, making something together, sharing ideas and doing something that you couldn't do on your own. As such, the material engagements between teacher, learner, and knowledge are entangled. What is achieved is made better by being "co," or working together. At the development site, the exchange or co-working between habitation

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<sup>3</sup> ArtScapers supports *My Cambridge*, a Cambridge City Council Project, which has a vision that every young person in Cambridge should be able to confidently construct their own cultural life, drawing on and feeling connected to the whole of the city in which they live.

residency artists,<sup>4</sup> expert academics, arts advisers, the building development team, and ArtScapers is constantly shifting. The pedagogic approach to the ArtScapers project was intended to reflect this ebb and flow; such pedagogy uses collective strategies as opposed to individualistic ones. It is ideological, political, and democratic because it is a refusal of self-interested ways of being and working. It is political in the sense that it asks for a different way of being in the world – a being together rather than being separate or on your own. Working collectively, where there is belief in community and making judgments together, can be seen as a refusal of more individualistic systems. Encouraging children to work collaboratively and encounter a multiplicity of views is part of developing decision-making processes that are essential for an effective democracy.

The terms “peer-led,” “co-production,” “collaboration,” and “co-operation” are based in a social pedagogy where more can be gained by working together than working alone (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970). This approach is in stark contrast to the prevailing ethos in the UK education system that emphasizes individual achievement and competition between peers. I have conducted a number of research projects at Camden Arts Centre, Tate and the Wellcome Collection where I have closely observed how those organizations work with young people between the ages of 15 and 25. One of the most significant aspects of successful gallery youth programs is forming a team and collectively engaging with a group endeavor. For young people, it is the ways in which their experience contrasts with the individualistic curriculum at school that makes group working so appealing (Sayers, 2016). The term ‘peer-led’ used in a gallery setting describes a sharing of knowledge between young people to generate understanding about art. The similar yet subtly different term ‘co-production’ is used more often to describe making something collectively and sharing ideas, perhaps having different skills but working together to achieve a common goal or outcome: to produce something together.

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4 The residency program is the backbone of the Art Programme for North West Cambridge Development. Each year artists are appointed to work in collaboration with University of Cambridge departments and to engage with the North West Cambridge Development site’s existing and future communities. The Contemporary Art Society and InSite Arts curate the artists in residence program; artists are selected annually by the North West Cambridge Development Public Art Panel. See more at: <http://www.nwcambridgeart.com/artist-residencies>

Co-creating in ArtScapers has been about adults working alongside children, where the usual hierarchies that come with age and experience are dismantled. Adult helpers who accompany the children for offsite visits are encouraged to take part. This has been significant in ArtScapers’ ability to engage an intergenerational community. Rarely given sufficient opportunities for their own continuing education, the learning and engagement opportunities for adults involved in ArtScapers has been an important factor for some; we have observed a growing sense of shared effort in relation to adult helpers becoming ArtScapers alongside the children. Through this, we are forming a community of art practitioners, enabling an other community and using collective working to challenge more individualistic approaches.

### **Imagination and Enabling Others**

Imagination allows us to conceive of alternative possibilities and new ideas. Imagining is “possibility thinking,” as Jeffrey and Craft (2004) assert. Through being encouraged to pose questions and to identify problems and issues together, learners can debate and discuss their thinking; they are brought into the heart of the teaching and learning process as co-participants (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004).

Educators negotiate their role as teachers and their notion of what learning is and can become. The pedagogies described here do not assume that what needs to be taught is entirely clear. Instead, they seek to set up a situation in which creativity and learning open up possibilities for seeing the ordinary and the everyday afresh. Creative learning strategies can offer support for a community undergoing a process of change. Changes in our local landscapes call into question our relationships with each other because what is new causes us to reflect upon that which already exists. New homes and streets cause us to see the existing ones in a new light. Existing communities understand themselves differently than the ways in which newcomers experience a place. Therefore, a pedagogical approach that is constructed within the target community is appropriate. Such a pedagogy could be described as an “ecology of practice,” to use Stronach et al’s (2002) term for describing how pedagogy emerges out of the context and culture within which learning takes place. Art can get people talking together and thinking about familiar places in new ways. Art practice is a tool for learning and for research; as Sullivan (2006) asserts, “Art practice, in its most elemental form, is an educational act for the intent is to provoke dialogue and to initiate change” (p. 33). As art practice in education promotes dialogue and

exchange and creative pedagogies provoke exploration and seeing the world anew, together they can provide an opportunity to attend to social and political issues. To perceive, to think, to make judgments and to imagine alternatives: these are all attitudes of mind associated with art practice. They all connect us with the world; judgment in particular connects thinking with the world. As such, judging is one of the most political of our mental abilities. Art education is not simply about teaching people to think about art, but about teaching them simply to think, to decide, and to judge.

### **The Relation between Imagination and Inclusion**

The importance of the arts in education and pedagogy and the specific importance of imagination in inclusive pedagogies are highlighted by Greene (1995) when she talks about “[our] capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society” (p. 5). She goes on to celebrate the plurality of communities “always in the making – the community that may someday be called a democracy” (Greene, 1995, p. 6). She does this through talking about multiplicity and heterogeneity in contemporary society where “so many of us are newcomers and strangers to one another” (Greene, 1995, p. 6). This resonates with Biesta’s (2006) ideas about “the community of those who have nothing in common” (p. 65), which allows for difference between people by advocating for an “other community” (p. 66) in which individuals do not conform to pre-existing ideas or dispositions, but rather learn to speak their own uniqueness. The creative disposition of imagination is important in this understanding because it allows us to consider alternative realities; it allows us to break with the taken for granted.

To form our own opinions about the world rather than accepting the ideas of others, we need to be able to reflect and make judgments. Imagination allows us to connect what we see, hear and feel, thus tapping into circuits in our consciousness (Harwood, 2010). Imagination, representation, and judgment are closely interlinked through thinking. Thinking turns what we perceive, the particular of the world, into representation and image. Therefore, education that teaches us how to think is important in enabling us to become active citizens with our own opinions. Art activity oscillates between imagination, representation, reflection, judgment, and output back into the world again. Because of this interchange, contemporary art, as a catalyst for educational work, often develops participants’ critical thinking.

In my experience in workshop delivery and teaching art, skills to imagine and make judgments are developed through arts practice. This confirms Greene’s (2001) suggestion that such skills are important for children to live effectively in the world. You have to use your imagination if you are to live effectively in a society that allows for and celebrates the difference of others. One way to equip children with the skills they need is through creative tools that can help them use their imaginations and allow them to take other people’s perspectives into account. Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination’s work deliberately plays with children’s capacity to be in an imaginary world as well as the real world, to reject a purely ‘rational’ approach. Greene (1995, 2001) offers an understanding of how creative thinking can open-up our world view. As she argues:

Of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (Greene, 2001, p. 3)

Questions posed during ArtScapers workshops included: how can I imagine the world differently? How can I understand someone who is not like me? These questions resonate with Arendt’s (1978) call to see the world from another angle, change our position, use our imaginations, and take other perspectives into account. Imagination extends us beyond the world we know and the way we normally think. It allows us to imagine different spaces, places, and situations, and to go beyond the present. Imagination is inextricably linked to creativity; imaginative activity happens in the mind and creative action gives it purpose (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999).

To enable people to form their own concepts, educators must encourage new ideas and ones that they have not yet thought of. Butler (2005) talks about being undone; this could be understood as a willingness by educators to occupy the unknown. “Unknown” does not refer to a practical entity, but rather a state of being that rejects the insistence on the known that is a requirement of much pedagogic practice. Unknowingness allows us to interrogate the hegemonic structures which establish other as other. Butler (2005) writes about the “willingness to be undone” in relation to others, to “risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness” (p. 153), but as the term ‘risk’ suggests, it is impossible to occupy the position of the other. However, we can interrogate the logics, those images of thought and established practices that keep people (i.e., teachers and learners)

in their place. Such risk-taking in the process of pedagogical intra-relating has the potential for an expanded comprehension of learning and teaching (Atkinson, 2015).

Dialogue is an important part of community formation. It is not simply limited to dialogue with others, but as Greene (1995) argues, it is also to do with stepping back and considering our own inner beings. Imagination allows to question our own certainties (Foucault, 1997). Imagination, then, is critical if new inclusive communities are to be formed in the North West Cambridge Development. As Nixon (2007) describes:

without this kind of inclusive thinking (inclusive, that is, of the 'other'), humanity would be unsustainable. The human capacity to grasp, through thought, the *otherness* of (i.e., my radical difference from) other lives – other origins, other beginnings, other trajectories, other outcomes – is itself a defining feature of humanity. (p. 233)

How a community is formed and continues to reform itself is crucial. The new community at the North West Cambridge Development will be transient and primarily for short-term leases. Greene (1995) typically explores democracy as something always in the process of becoming. As transient communities settle and reform with much more frequency than previous generations, experiences of constantly becoming are commonplace. Resilience to such transience is important, and creative approaches to its development are useful here. The outcomes of the ArtScapers project demonstrate that change precipitates the need to constantly attend to, adjust to, and find suitable approaches to developing meaningful exchange between disparate groups. By interrogating such pedagogical practices in this research, we are able to call into question what learning can do. We are equipping young people to deal with a fast-changing world; in this respect, they need appropriate skills to creatively accommodate the new. In Arendt's words, we are no longer preparing the young for "the task of renewing a common world" (Arendt, 1978, p. 196). Learning should prepare us for life, and the adult life world that today's children and young adults will inhabit is changing. In North West Cambridge, that occurs on a local level through the physical changes brought about by the development as well as by the local council's objective to draw together the university and town populations, a tension referred to locally as "town and gown." On a macro level, the world that today's young people will inherit is

influenced by the changing demographic of global societies.

I have explored the importance of the unknown in arts pedagogy; however, the drive to reduce uncertainty is strong in our society and could explain the apparent dismissal of creativity in recent UK education policy.<sup>5</sup> Risk taking is an important part of creativity, and being afraid of failure can precipitate a learner to stay within the safe confines of the known. Phelan (1993) talks about pedagogy as "productive failure" where the learner is continually on "the rickety bridge between self and other" (p. 174), moving between what is known and what is not. As educators, we constantly negotiate the unknown; what is familiar to one person may not be to the next. This familiarity could be described, as Harwood (2010) suggests, as "an act of recognition" (p. 359). Understanding what you don't recognize is difficult and creates a problem, one that is especially important when we talk about building inclusive societies. Sometimes, we simply don't recognize what is unfamiliar when we don't have the same points of reference with the world. Appearances are what we perceive of the world. To assist this problem, we need to encourage a mode of looking at the world differently and understanding without naming, which are important cornerstones of creative pedagogy. To be open to the unknown, one must be conscious of oneself, but also aware of the world. This is consciousness, a state between self and other, or to be "two in one" (Harwood, 2010, p. 360) – appearing outwardly to the world and to oneself. Art activity encourages both self-awareness and being aware of the outside world.

Critical thinking is one of the core pillars of creativity, and making connections between disparate ideas is important if we are to think of and build meaningful solutions to the problems we face. To respond effectively to the changing world around us, we need to work *with* our creativity.

### **Working with Contemporary Artists' Practice Helps Community Formation**

ArtScapers takes an approach to arts engagement that has creativity at its core. The North West Cambridge Development Art Programme involves research into the work of contemporary artists who have

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<sup>5</sup> Creative subjects are not included in the five core subject areas of the English Baccalaureate. The 2015 Warwick Commission report documents decline going back further: "Between 2003 and 2013, there was a 50% drop in the GCSE numbers for design and technology, 23% for drama and 25% for other craft-related subjects" (Neelands et al., 2015, p. 44).

been commissioned at the site and research into the site itself: the local landscape and the context and location of Cambridge. It provides a valuable opportunity to address some of the socio-cultural tensions between University and non-University communities. What has emerged through the ArtScapers research is a pedagogical approach with five core values that are based around creative pedagogic theory: slowing down, imagining, co-creating, not knowing, and looking differently.

### Slowing Down

ArtScaping is about taking time to slow down in order to think, to reflect, to rework, to notice things, and to allow things to develop. Slowing down makes a space for deep thinking as opposed to reacting, responding, or following instructions. This is especially important for children. It is a philosophical and conscious action.



Figure 1. ArtScapers have been slowing down whilst wandering, revisiting, and thinking about space.

I have to say it was a really good experience to have these conversations during the drawing and cutting paper, to really have the time to explore this different pace. It's going from rushing all of the time and saying you'll have one hour, to going and exploring slowly and having

the time to develop their ideas. It's good to have that.  
(Emma, Parent, personal communication, July 2, 2016)

Allowing time to consider the changes taking place in the area gives the community a chance to reflect and take charge of their own agenda rather than simply following the tasks and schedule set by others.

### Not Knowing (Being Curious)

Previously, I discussed the importance of the unknown in creative pedagogy and the space it creates to imagine alternative futures. ArtScapers set out to celebrate the unknown, to suppose, to look, and to think again about something you thought you knew. Being curious is searching for understanding and experimenting with the unexpected. For ArtScapers, curiosity is fostered through not being too focused on finding *the* answer. In the process of change, searching for finite answers can limit possibilities. This is a space where wonder and speculation are possible.



Figure 2. ArtScapers have been curious through prospecting and exploring.

### Looking Differently

ArtScapers make space to take another perspective, to see the familiar in unfamiliar ways, and to take on different ideas to guide

thinking. They find ways to take on a different point of view. Looking differently is a conscious action to make the familiar strange by intentionally changing scale, dimensions, direction, and orientation; viewing our environment from a new angle; and challenging ourselves to use our senses in a different way.



Figure 3. ArtScapers have explored looking differently by scaling things up, recycling yourself, tuning in to the sky and renaming.

When I tried the activities I wasn't so free in my thinking! That can make you feel a bit uncomfortable. I suppose because you think "oh I should be more creative" and you know, as a teacher I should be more creative, but then I hear what the children say and it's like "oh I want to be like that!" You kind of learn from the kids as well. (Year Three Teacher, personal communication, December 9, 2016)

### Imagining

ArtScapers work with their imaginations to extend beyond the world we know and the way we normally think. They explore ideas and questions creatively, imagining different spaces, places, and situations, and go beyond the present. This imaginative activity happens in the mind and creative action gives it purpose and makes it visible. Working with children's natural capacity to be in an

imaginary world as well as the real world rejects a purely rational approach.



Figure 4. ArtScapers have been imagining by recycling houses and designing new places for living.

Really fun, all about art, and you got to think about what it might be like in the future, and basically imagine. (Sally, 8, Student, personal communication, May 6, 2016)

### Co-Creating

Being co-creative is about being together with purpose to make something new that you couldn't make on your own. Co-creating demands cooperation, collaboration, and co-production. It's difficult, but it can be rewarding. It is ideological, political, and democratic. It asks for a different way of being in the world – a being together in the world, not being separate or being on your own.

I have talked about how important working alongside the children was for the teacher. This kind of co-working was unusual for the children too. Whilst group work is a common part of classroom pedagogy, the process of co-creating and sharing ideas runs contrary to a culture in which children are tested and measured individually. Ella describes the fun in brainstorming together:

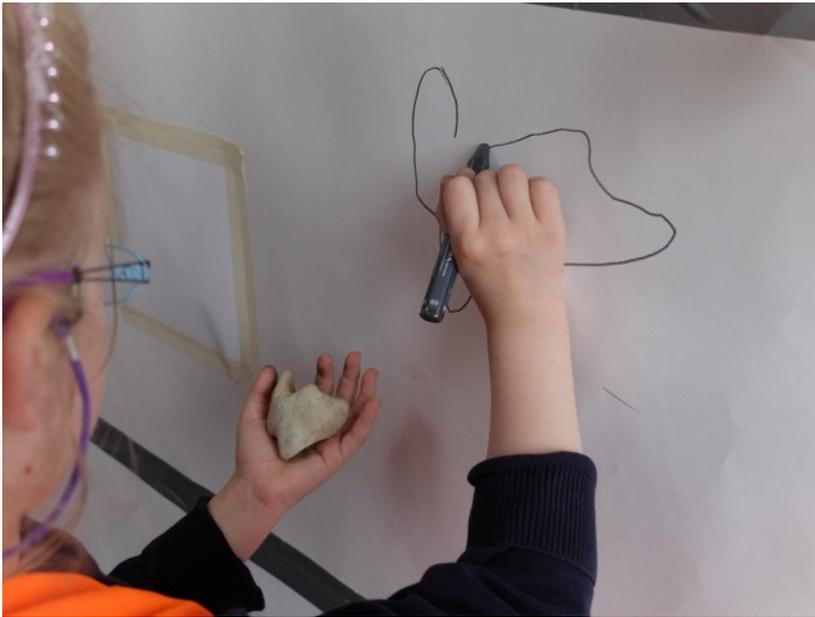


Figure 5. ArtScapers have explored co-creating by planning a cityscape, creating an exhibition, making up enormous numbers together.

If you want to do a pet shop and another person wants to do a pet shop and they decided to put their pet shop in the new development site, then you sort of work together. It was really fun doing that because lots of people listened to your ideas and then you could put your ideas together. (Ella, 7, Student, personal communication, May 6, 2016)

Through these core values, ArtScapers has established an “ecology of practice” (Stronach, 2008), or a territory with established methodologies that are creative because they place value on certain ways of working. These methodologies are set out within the ArtScapers’ core values and are a shared touchstone for all those coordinating the program when devising and evaluating the work. Atkinson (2011) uses the terms “real learning” or “local epiphanies of learning” (p. 135). In these instances, not knowing is a key component of that ecology as it contains within it the possibility of the “not yet” or the “still to be” (Fortnum & Fisher, 2013, p. 13). Such a possibility allows for “communities of those who have nothing in common” (Biesta, 2006, p. 65) and emphasizes difference.

The project philosophy that informs ArtScapers advocates that we see learners as subjects-yet-to-come engaged in ongoing intra-relations with the world from which they emerge changed. Rather than seeing learning as an object or package to be acquired, we see the learner and knowledge in ongoing relation with one another, continually negotiated by the self-determination of the learner. Such pedagogic routes cannot be prescribed, but they can be named as ArtScaping or as pedagogic adventures (Atkinson, 2015).

This activity is about experimental forms of knowledge, having to find things out and feeling fine about not having all the answers. It is concerned with speculating, having provisional ideas, and supposing. All these ways of being are sought and explored by artists and are to be savored rather than overcome. There is great importance in the process of figuring out and even celebrating the unknown. It allows children to be in a state of inquiry and see their teachers not knowing; seeing adults in a place of uncertainty can be reassuring. What is important here is not knowing together, going on a shared journey, and not trying to second guess the answer that the teacher or facilitator has already identified. It is seeing the companionship of children working things out alongside adults. Speculating is the basis of research and searching for knowledge. For ArtScapers, this is not being too focused on finding *the* answer because in the process of change, searching for right or wrong answers can limit possibilities.

### Making the Unknown Productive

Where knowledge is positive, the *unknown* is often simply its opposite: it is *uncertain, invisible, incomprehensible*. *Not* knowing represents a lack, absence or inadequacy to be overcome. (Fortnum & Fisher, 2013, p. 7)

Not knowing for artists is celebrated because “not knowing contains within it the possibility of the ‘not yet’ or the ‘still to be’” (Fortnum & Fisher, 2013, p. 13). However, the concept of not knowing within a building development can be uncomfortable. It is of course important that those responsible for building houses are experts in that professional context. In a professional environment, collaborative inquiry must be balanced with expertise to ensure that the bigger operation works. In some corporate environments, a culture of calculated risk is possible and desirable as it leads to innovative practices.

For the development team in North West Cambridge, the idea of not knowing could be associated with failure, yet for artists, not knowing is “sought, explored and savoured” (Fortnum & Fisher, 2013, p. 7). Professional educators share the same discomfort with uncertainty; not knowing is problematic as they are often expected to be the knowledgeable experts. During the ArtScapers workshops in 2016, it was observed that not knowing can be unsettling for participants. Arengé (2016) comments that, “given the nuanced contradictions of the value ‘not knowing’, perhaps to reap the full benefits of uncertainty when cultivating creative practice and community building there must be a strategic balance between ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’” (p. 43). This is a genuine concern experienced by learners at all levels. It stems from an attitude towards education which posits the teacher/facilitator/artist is the fount of all knowledge. Not knowing for children needs to be handled carefully so that space is made for inquiry without generating anxiety.

An alternative attitude is to see learning as a constant negotiation between teacher, learner, and knowledge. Part of the Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination’s methodology used by Susanne Jasilek, the artist devising and leading the ArtScapers workshops, is an embracing of learner-led creative inquiry, of adults not holding the road map but enabling children to navigate. Jeffrey & Craft’s (2004) “child considerate” approach “views the child as an organism that needs nurturing rather than being democratically included” (p. 9). They suggest that “teaching for creativity could involve a ‘learner inclusive’ pedagogy, where the learner is encouraged to engage in identifying and exploring knowledge” and potentially the lack of it, or the wonder of it, or getting lost in it (ibid., p. 9). Fisher (2013) asserts that “Art insists upon the feeling of being in the dark, of lacking knowledge” (p. 8). Being encouraged to pose questions, identify problems and issues together with the opportunity to debate and discuss their thinking brings the learner into the heart of both the teaching and learning process as a co-participant (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Sustained activity allows participants to move beyond the initial sensation of being at a loss, often associated with not knowing (Arengé, 2016). As the project coordinators, we needed to turn our attention toward that sensation, not away from it – to fall from certainty as a means to achieve more power and potency, not less. But is this disturbance necessary? If the aim is to help create a new community isn’t disturbance counter-productive?

Rancière (1991) embraces such disruption in the forming of democracy. In Rancierian terms, it is to destabilize the “police order,”

to challenge the usual systems by which lives are structured. Rules and laws create certain conditions in which lives are lived and learning takes place. Learning is structured around the idea of the teacher as the “master explicator,” to borrow Rancière’s terminology (p. 4); the teacher is the one who knows. An alternative is to challenge the “distribution of the sensible” and the normal hierarchies of knowledge and grant equal intelligence to all (Rancière, 2004, p. xi). This is about reframing democratic process, drawing away from familiar systems of power, and searching for an alternative ecology. It enables the other community by educating children to explore uncertainty.

On the other hand, where children are to be nurtured, how helpful is destabilization? Perhaps not knowing is pedagogically important for teachers and the bigger social structures, but less important for the children who need the security of knowing. Is not knowing something that could be held pedagogically by teachers so the children don’t have to? ArtScapers has been successful in introducing alternative strategies in which adults have become involved in child-led projects. It has been celebrated by staff at Mayfield School for the fact that the project approach has not been to come into the school and tell professional educators what to do, but rather to collaboratively work alongside teachers and children.

Most experiences we have [through projects offered in school] are somebody coming in and telling us and modelling a way which we are expected to copy. [ArtScapers] is different - a joint thing, everybody’s experience is valued. I think this means more people are willing to [take part]. Children have learnt loads about themselves and working with friends but it hasn’t felt like school and teachers haven’t felt like its teaching [in the usual sense] it’s that reminder of possibilities. (Deputy Head, Mayfield Primary School, personal communication, December 9, 2016)

### **Conclusion: Learner Agency and the Echo of Democracy Formation**

Seeking to form a community in a project such as ArtScapers could have been guided by the idea of educating children to live in a rational world where people are taught to appreciate the “right”

values and dispositions. However, the team coordinating<sup>6</sup> the project decided that this idea was outdated and seemed to refer back to a lost age where people were bonded harmoniously in like-minded communities. Harmony implies a collective or shared endeavor; it also implies sameness. As Biesta (2006) asserts, there is “rational community” (p. 68) where what is said is spoken with a representative voice and there is an ‘other community’ where what is said is spoken in individual ways.

ArtScapers keeps Biesta’s (2006) notion of an “other community” (p. 68) in focus as the kind of learning that takes place is one which confronts the strange and unfamiliar. In ArtScapers, children are encouraged not to acquire pre-existing knowledge, but rather to bring something new into the world: their own unique response (Biesta, 2006).

Working on this project has shown that art in education projects needs to allow for disruption and even disagreement during collaboration in order for people to have their own say. Working collaboratively produces negotiated understandings of knowledge. In this model, new knowledges are formed through production as opposed to reproduction, and they draw from ideas about the “indeterminacy of meaning” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 15). In collaborative art projects, genuine co-working is difficult; a facilitator must accept that they are not trying to bring people around to their way of thinking, but rather allow their own ideas to be challenged and questioned. It is important to be open to other points of view, not necessarily so that we change our own, but so that dialogue can lead us to new understandings. Embrace debate, seek out antagonistic questions, and be prepared for the disruptive nature of an authentic search for equality. We need to consider modes of relating to one another and the ethics of that interaction. The instrumentalist drive toward a cohesive society tends to aim at inclusion as an end-point. Rancière (1991) suggests that we should instead start with equality. For art in education, this means that the way in which a project is envisaged and delivered influences the impact it can have on wider social structures by creating what Biesta (2013) describes as a disruptive process where a range of ideas can be aired.

Arts practice affords ways of working which are open to new possibilities and to the ideas of others. Such creative pedagogies have potential for forming inclusive communities, ones in which

the difference of others is an advantage. The ArtScapers project methodology is important in creating opportunity for social inclusion by building new ways of understanding together, new ways of knowing. It does this by celebrating the uniqueness of participants and by encouraging different ways of thinking about the new and the not yet. The practice based inquiry enabled by ArtScapers makes visible the parallels between democratic society and creative learning and puts this into action by engaging communities in urban renewal and change. To date, ArtScapers has worked directly with over 1200 people linked to three primary schools. They have been involved in over 3,000 hours of creative activities with a further 6,000 hours connecting with the work through a program of events and exhibitions.

Being generative and open ended are important characteristics of this work. Ingold (2013) suggests we “think of making...as a process of *growth*...to place the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials” (p. 21). Creative activity brings new objects and new ideas into the world. In the evaluative interviews, ArtScapers have talked about ArtScaping as an exciting process where the normal rules do not apply. “ArtScapers makes you think differently....you’re free to open your mind” (Jane, 8), Student, personal communication, May 6, 2016).

The five core principles for creative learning that have been established to guide the development of ArtScapers have encouraged strategies that engage learners in creative inquiry. These core values form the basis for the democratic approach to learning and urban change that ArtScapers has devised. In this article, I have used theory to explore the political potential of creative learning in order to highlight ways in which the engagement that is possible through ArtScapers creates conditions for sustainable communities.

An idea often used in the arts projects I have been involved in is: “let’s just see how this unfolds.” This is not about a lack of commitment or an unclear purpose, but instead is a statement of belief in the rigorous process of creating work. Through creative pedagogies, strategic processes and techniques are employed to facilitate unforeseen events. There isn’t an initial proposition because it can change and be adjusted during the making. The ArtScapers approach to the production of new knowledge highlights and prioritizes the agency of the learner in the teaching and learning process. If we acknowledge community as an idea, a collective myth, it is a transitory rather than a sustained collective identity. This attitude is akin to establishing a

<sup>6</sup> In year one ArtScapers was coordinated collaboratively by Ruth Sapsed, Susanne Jasilek, Esther Sayers and Gabrielle Arengé.

mini democracy in which participants have a voice and can shape the way in which the project's narrative unfolds. Thus, ArtScapers are democratically included in the way that pedagogy and core values are introduced. Children are encouraged to co-produce with each other and alongside their adult helpers. They are encouraged to determine their own creative exploration in ways that are similar to Jeffrey and Craft's (2004) "learner inclusive" pedagogy (p. 9).

In terms of democratic practice, ArtScapers encourages participants to "act in ways that respect difference and otherness" (Biesta, 2009, p. 363), to take responsibility for their decisions, and to live with plurality. Within a pedagogy of urban renewal, this means calling into question the role of the "expert" voice and foregrounding children's creative explorations and sense of wonder. This has implications for educators, in particular in planning for the unforeseen and the possibility of the "not-yet" or the "still-to-be" (Fortnum & Fisher, 2013). This willingness to occupy the unknown allows educators to cultivate wonder and be open to otherness, and in so doing we can put the unpredictability of becoming to good use. By embracing risk-taking and allowing ourselves to be undone, we can open up genuine opportunities for difference in the new communities that are formed in regenerated urban landscapes.

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