LEARNING SPACES FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY

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WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST

Learning Spaces for Social Mobility

Exploring the function of learning spaces in post-conflict, impoverished and fragmented societies to reimagine the library

Gabriel Smales

Front cover image: ©Guy Tillim. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

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Contents

Introduction

While many societies worldwide maintain that their resources are allocated on merit, research shows that the distribution of resources often is determined by other social factors such as gender, geography and ethnicity as well as other status characteristics.[1] Even more shocking, perhaps, is that the ratio between wealth and earned incomes seem to be returning to very high levels in low economic growth countries like the UK. Our society increasingly resembles the wealth-based societies of the 19th Century wherein a minority enjoys the wealth of the economy while the rest of the population works for subsistence living.[2]

In Britain the richest fifth of the population have more than 60% of the total wealth in society (and a hundred times more than the bottom fifth). The top 1% has more than the combined wealth of the poorest 60%.[3] And inequality in the UK is rising even by international standards: of the G7, only the UK has recorded rising inequality over the entire 2000 – 2014 period.[4] Inequality has been rising since the end of the Second World War and particularly quickly since the late-1970s.[5] [6]

Some ideologies – such as classical liberalism, neoliberalism and market fundamentalism – are formed around the idea that social inequality is a "natural" feature of societies. Other philosophies go further to suggest that inequality is desirable because it spurs ambition and provides incentives for industriousness and innovation. However, it is increasingly difficult to make such arguments when social mobility – the relationship between an individual's starting point and where they end up as adults – is increasingly dependent on class, wealth and parental networks (and less on effort, ingenuity and competence).[7] "Rags-to-riches" stories are closer to mythology than reality for the many deprived and excluded populations in Britain.

The low level of upward social mobility is a consequence of a number of macroeconomic factors and trends. Growth in demand for high skilled workers slowed in the latter parts of the 20th Century which has made it difficult for workers starting in relatively low skilled jobs to climb the career ladder.[8]

To compound this, research suggests that the "room at the top", occupied by the global elite, grows only slowly and therefore it is not possible to increase upward mobility without a similar rise in downward mobility. Children from advantaged backgrounds are insulated from the downward mobility that low cognitive ability might otherwise dictate because of social and emotional skills linked to

their parent's educational attainment as well as access to degree level education enabled by financial privilege. In turn, this creates fewer opportunities for high achieving children from less advantaged backgrounds to succeed.[9] This is both unfair and a waste of talent.

But it is disparity in the development of 'soft skills' and 'productive relationships' between privileged and under-privileged groups that provides the main contention of this paper. Presentation, conduct in social settings and accent have all been shown to be significant in recruitment to elite professions.[10] Access to productive networks that provide information and relationships that so often help individuals find work is also significant. Comprehensive strategies to tackle gross and unfair inequality should, therefore, give due regard to remedying these disparities. Doing so might remove some of the un-meritocratic benefits afforded to individuals from advantaged backgrounds, and also create environments for new productive activities to emerge via better coordination between skills and employment or innovation through the cross-fertilisation of knowledge between groups.

In addition to potentially fairer and more productive outcomes and policies that develop soft skills and improve networks amongst disadvantaged groups, a comprehensive strategy might also have a number of secondary benefits at a community level. Increasing the flow of interactions between different social groups may help to develop what economists have described as "other regarding preferences" (or, more simply put, empathy).

Learning Spaces for Social Mobility

The lack of mixing between different social and economic groups is a problem that is both pervasive and remediable. Places are often segregated along income and occupational lines, usually as a result of differences in house prices. It means that people with high wage jobs live together in select areas while those with low skill jobs reside in different parts.[11] However research suggest that people who have experienced higher intensity of cultural socialisation are more likely to be upwardly mobile (and can help prevent downward mobility).[12]

If the most attractive places do not integrate different income groups into the functioning of a place then it can become a boutique, depriving all but the wealthiest from their pleasures and practical advantages.[13] Equally, poor planning and zoning that concentrate poor people in particular areas can accentuate poverty, with entire neighbourhoods falling into a cycle of self-perpetuating decline.[14]

Running in tangent to increasing social segregation is the need for the UK library to be rethought both in terms of its business model and social function. On the former, dwindling public spending requires new thinking to mobilise non-state actors, through cross-sectoral partnerships, to ensure these services are economically sustainable.[15] On the latter, we must interrogate our assumptions

about what a library can and should be in 21st Century Britain in light of technological change[16] and declining use.[17]

Most of the research and innovation relating to libraries has focused on making knowledge more attractive, accessible and enriching. However, at least in UK policy and literature, the significance of providing common *learning spaces* that facilitate productive relationships between different socio-economic groups – along with the associated soft skills like presentation, cultural understanding and conduct in social settings – is somewhat neglected. Learning spaces are those places that (i) are free at the point of access to all adults and (ii) provide designated areas and services to support learning of some kind.

The potential benefits of providing properly designed and curated learning spaces demands more attention not least because of data that suggests factors such as human networks and informal knowledge about pathways and behaviours for work are significant in social mobility. The aim of this paper is to frame the discourse on the future of the UK library using learning on effective practice in emergency and developing contexts. The assumption is that if an approach to increasing social mobility can work at the periphery – in post-conflict, impoverished and fragmented environments – then, with proper recognition of contextual particularities, there might be relevant learning for the UK. Conflict can be sites of innovation, transformation and creativity, as well as oppressive, unjust and destructive.

Between April and June 2015 I visited three very different types of learning space – in post-conflict, impoverished and fragmented societies – to look for ideas. The first were two peace building initiatives in Beirut. The *Common Space Initiative* and *UMAM Documentation & Research* aim to facilitate structured and peaceful dialogue between the different sectarian groups in Lebanon, particularly addressing issues of memory and identity linked to the Lebanese Civil War(s) between 1975 – 1989 as well as the latent conflicts that exist within Lebanese society. As will be explored in **Section 1**, I discovered fascinating processes around individuals experiencing common learning spaces in ways that introduce them to the concept of being *public*. Further, that reconciliation (or at least non-violent dialogue) must accommodate and support locally rooted 'truths' and heterogeneous conceptions of justice.

Next was post-Apartheid South Africa where I immersed myself in a township community library located on the outskirts of Cape Town. The resident Xhosa population had been formally marginalised under apartheid via restricted working and habitation rights, then since in more informal ways as they lacked the language, IT skills, and adequate transport links to participate in the urban economy. In **Section 2** I discuss how cross-sectoral partnerships – in this case between municipal libraries, schools, philanthropic organisations, mentoring charities, a soft drinks company and various artists – can achieve remarkable impact if there is a coherent, ambitious and (ultimately) sustainable leadership in place. Further, that services that are both attractive to the local population and deliver good social outcomes need not always be expensive.

The final leg was to Marrakech where I visited a hotel that uses its profits to fund a library and arts residency that is open to residents of the local Berber village, supporting the cross-fertilisation of knowledge between cultures. The Berbers (the indigenous people of Morocco) have found their culture subjugated throughout history, from Islam to the colonial era, though are currently enjoying something of a rebirth following post-Arab Spring concessions made by the King. **Section 3** explores whether grass-root cultural initiatives can effectively support and transmit local cultural identities so to empower that population amidst wide socio-political dominance, thus increasing the social mobility of the subjugated group.

In **Section 4** I briefly evaluate three case studies before setting out five Key Findings from this research. I conclude by suggesting a number of associated Design Challenges that can be considered when developing a new or enhanced learning space offer in a local community.

Conceptual framework: Social and Cultural Capital

This paper is based upon a qualitative research design with anthropological methods in data collection that include ethnographic interviewing, case studies and observation. This approach was chosen because, given the dearth of research in this field, key questions, processes and relationships need first to be explored, rather than tested.[18]

Key to this approach is a conceptual framing on the relationship between mobility and different forms of capital. Given that most research on mobility focuses on economic capital – the distribution, flow and impact of money on someone's ability to climb the social ladder – this research, instead, considers opportunities for intervening to improve the social and cultural capital of target audiences.

Individuals – and their social positions - must negotiate the different social settings they occupy. These settings might be the local community, work or a leisure activity. An individual's position within that setting is subject to three variables:

1. The **rules** of that social setting e.g. John can become a Jockey because he is relatively short and light.

2. The **character and behaviour** of the individual e.g. Fatima is always on time for appointments mainly because she went to boarding school where she learnt to follow a strict timetable.

3. The individual's economic, cultural and social **capital** e.g. Julius is rich and cool so starting a band isn't a problem because he can afford the instruments and attract the band mates he needs. [19]

The rules of a social setting are often determined by elites or by class systems; changing them requires the consistent effort and coordination of influential stakeholders over the long-term. Some "rules" – like gender discrimination in pay – create barriers for some individuals to fulfil their potential, and should be addressed via political action at all levels of society.

But political action to address and remedy undesirable rules is not the only way a society can improve the social positions of the least advantaged individuals or groups. Society can find ways to help the least advantaged by providing them opportunities to develop characteristics and skills that are useful in various settings as well as increase the **capital** they have at their disposal.

Plenty has been said on why limited economic capital (cash assets) can limit an individual's prospects. For example, a randomised controlled trial found that the mental "bandwidth" taken up by worrying about scarcity (of money) reduced IQ by 13-14 points of individuals of all socio-economic backgrounds.[20] But there's another elephant in the room when discussing opportunities for the least advantaged in our society: how individuals accumulate cultural and social capital so to be able to effectively participate and flourish in society.

Cultural capital can be defined as forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society.[21] For example, parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system. Many qualitative studies of educational processes draw attention to the way that middle class parents mobilise cultural capital in supporting their children through the educational sphere, for example by means of additional voluntary lessons, close relationships to the school, economic resources to prevent underachievement or the transmission of a work ethic that puts high value on learning and aspiration.[22] Reading, in particular, influences the children's performance at school positively.[23]

But the disposition of parents to take children to cultural events and facilities and to encourage them to read, to do arts, music, and sport is unequally distributed across social 'classes'. This has a direct impact on educational attainment and increases the chances of 'intermediate' and 'working class' children being upwardly mobile (and protects against downward mobility for children from service backgrounds).[24] These cultural events need not be 'highbrow', with visiting historic sites considered in some studies to be the most influential in upward mobility albeit we should be careful attributing any single factors as causally connected given the complexity of an individual's biography.

Cultural factors have rarely been given major emphasis in British analysis of social mobility which have been coupled with class structural approach centred on the study of movement between occupational class professions.[25] Rational action perspectives – which argue that those from working class backgrounds predominantly pursue the rational practice of acquiring the kind of qualifications which are likely to lead to realistically attainable occupational outcomes rather than risky high level educational qualifications where they might fail - have been

favoured over cultural processes for mobility.[26] Directly challenging this view is evidence showing that even if class differences in ability are partly due to differential genetic endowments, socialisation[27] in early childhood also seems to play a role.[28] Indeed, if you come from a rich family (top quintile) you are twice as likely as those from the poorest (bottom quintile) to get 1 or more A-levels, and 3 times more likely to participate in higher education.[29]

However, what if, by normal channels such as parenting and schooling, a young person fails to accumulate the necessary cultural capital to participate and flourish in society? Are there other channels by which this capital might be accumulated outside of these conventional spaces and, if so, what are the characteristics of these channels?

Social capital can be defined as the resources one achieves based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support from other people. Social capital is a resource produced collectively and shared by its members albeit groups or networks may differ in formality e.g. political parties, families, Harley Davidson owners. The idea turns on the degree to which people associate regularly with one another in a setting of relative quality, thus building up relations of reciprocity.[30]

An individual with social capital is advantaged in two ways. First, they have symbolic power by nature of being associated to a group who provide solidarity, legitimacy and group bargaining power. Second, they have access to new opportunities through an extended network; the idea that "it's not what you know, it's who you know". Is it a coincidence that 46% of the top 50 publicly traded firms in the UK had a British parliamentarian either as a director or a shareholder?[31]

If gaining membership to influential groups or having access to networks of support is not provided by conventional channels – and then if we truly believe in equality of opportunity – we must think more broadly about how an individual can do so. It may well be the case that, through accumulating cultural and social capital, an individual gains functional knowledge about how to enter new, more productive settings and, thus, bypass some of the formal 'rules' that prevent them reaching their potential.

Furthermore, the outcomes of possession of social or cultural capital are reducible to economic capital, the processes that bring about these alternative forms are not. In other words, money alone can't buy status or group membership. For this reason, a more sophisticated approach to generating these forms of capital amongst the least privileged groups are needed

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[1] Rugaber, Christopher S; Boak, Josh *Wealth Gap: A guide to what it is and why it matters*
[2] Piketty, T, *Capital in the 21st Century*, 2014
[3] Inequality briefing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOJ93tAbPP0
[4] Global Wealth Report, Credit Suisse, 2014 https://publications.credit-suisse.com/tasks/render/file/?fileID=60931FDE-A2D2-F568-B041B58C5EA591A4

[5] Income inequality – as measured by Gini coefficient where 0 equals perfect equality – has increased from 0.24 in 1977 to 0.34 in 2012
https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/Income%20Inequality%20UK.pdf
[6] Piketty, T, *Capital in the 21st Century*, 2014
[7] There exists an extensive body of literature on social mobility with many studies for the UK making use of the rich information available from a number of longitudinal birth cohort studies (for example: Dearden et al., 1999; Blanden et al., 2004; Goldthorpe and Mills, 2004). This shows that social mobility in the UK is relatively low by international standards and has not increased over the past 40 years, and it is also suggested that a contributing factor is relatively high levels of income inequality. – See, Institute of Education data in Inequality Briefing 39

[8] Goos and Manning, 2007; Gardiner and Corlett, 2015
[9] Downward Mobility, Opportunity Hoarding and the 'Glass Floor', Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission
[10] Downward Mobility, Opportunity Hoarding and the 'Glass Floor', Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission
[11] Benabou, 'Workings of a city: Location, Education, and Production'
[12] Simone Scherger and Mike Savage, 'Cultural Transmission, educational attainment and social mobility' (2010)
[13] Ed Glaeser, *Triumph of the City*
[14] John Norquist, *The Wealth of Cities*
[15] More than 100 libraries were closed last year in the UK, with at least 441 shutting in the past five years (Speak Up for Libraries, 2015)
[16] Digital technology has offered everyone rapid and wide access to information (Sears and Crandall 2010; Verheul 2010).
[17] In 2014, there were 282m visits to libraries, compared to 322m in 2010, a fall of 12%. In 2004 there were 336m visits to libraries. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/dec/10/library-usage-falls-dramatically-services-visits-down-40m
[18] Marshall & Rossman, 1999
[19] 'Field' (Bourdieu) is a setting in which agents and their social positions are located; a social arena in which people maneuver and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources. The position of each particular agent in the field is a result of interaction between the specific rules of the field, agent's habitus ('a set of dispositions, reflexes and forms of behaviour people acquire through acting in society' (2000:19)) and agent's capital (social, economic and cultural).
[20] Mullainathan & Eldar Shafir, 2013

[21] Bourdieu, P. In *The Forms of Capital*, 1986

[22] Walkerdine, 2000; Reay, 1998; Lareau, 2000; Devine, 2004; Ball, 2003; Butler and Robson, 2003; Savage et al., 2005.
[23] Di Maggio, 1982; de Graaf, 1986
[24] Simone Scherger and Mike Savage, 'Cultural Transmission, educational attainment and social mobility' (2010)
[25] Ibid.
[26] J. Goldthorpe, 'Cultural capital': some critical observations'. Sociologica 2007 & 'On sociology. Vol Two. Illustration and retrospect (second edition)' 2007
[27] Socialisation: The lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within his or her society
[28] Jackson et al., 2007, Marshall et al. 1997, Saunders, 1995)
[29] Inequality Briefing 18
[30] Peter Hall 'Social Capital in Britain', 1999
[31] Jones, O. *The Establishment*, 2014

1 Introducing the public to the concept of being public

Post-war identities and public space in Lebanon

The signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989 brought an official end to the civil war in Lebanon. Since the Spring of 1975, around 40 military conflicts had been waged, many linked but others autonomous, as sectarian and regional powers battled for influence, ideology and income. It claimed an estimated 170,000 lives, wounded 250,000 and displaced two-thirds of the population.[1] Economically, it is estimated that the GDP per capita of 1990 was, in real terms, roughly a third of levels in 1974 and around $25 billion of physical assets were destroyed.[2]

But the Taif Agreement was not a *win-win* outcome for those in power; the international community had endorsed Syrian occupation of Lebanon which brought the cessation of violence, but not to sectarian tensions. The Lebanese people failed to understand how their war ended; they only knew to condemn the violence that had inflicted untold misery on the nation. The violent conflict ended "not because a new social contract had been reached [between society and the state], but simply because the combatants were exhausted".[3]

Beyond reallocating a few seats in a still unrepresentative confessional parliament[4] (Maronite Christians are guaranteed half the seats and the Presidency despite modern estimations they represent fewer than a quarter of the population[5]), the Taif Agreement was less pacification and more an agreement by emerging powers *not* to have a process of remembering the War. By integrating 'rank-and-file' belligerents into state institutions via the Amnesty Act (1991), Lebanon ceded to corruptive influences being embedded into the civil and military architecture of the State.[6] Reconstruction of Beirut was left to the 'magic of the market' following the arrival of the influential, property-rich Hariri establishment from the Gulf.[7]

Twenty-five years on and Lebanese society is constructing memories of the civil war in ways that are not necessarily conducive to reconciliation between the country's sectarian and political groups. Citizens must negotiate highly politicised narratives of the war that are central to the identity of particular sectarian groups as well as a kind of state-sponsored amnesia about the events of conflict.[8] The reconciliation challenge is compounded by the confessional political system which both structures all political decisions along sectarian

lines, and means power brokers are accountable to a class of bankers and patrimonies rather than the public.[9] Further, public debate is hindered as the vast majority of Lebanese continue to live within the confines of sectarian neighbourhoods, associations, schools and even media.[10]

At a mere 10,400 square kilometres and with a population of 4.1 million, Lebanon is one of the smallest states in the world. This is said to have a dual effect on identity. On the one hand, this small scale creates a density of activity and interpersonal relations that intensifies and localises experiences. Conversely, the closeness between different places and communities serves to amplify the gap between psychological and ideological differences of those who inhabit the state.[11]

Taken together these factors – as well as persistent external meddling linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict – mean that social and economic development in Lebanon faces structural barriers in terms of identity politics and access to public space. While the UK is fortunate to have broadly effective and representative institutions of governance, the persistent battle over national identity, migration and the merits of multiculturalism have some similarities to the Lebanese predicament. Segregation between socio-economic groups in the UK often follows – and can be amplified by - ethnic and religious differences.

Mohammad Al-Amin Mosque and St George's Church, Beirut 2015

Supporting locally rooted 'truths' in reconciliation and community building

Those who remain in power in Lebanon would be in the docks if there were a formal truth and reconciliation process. That said, "those who tell the stories also hold the power"[12], so it is vital that locally rooted truths about the Civil War are not drowned out by the louder shouts of sectarian and political powers. The

Lebanese people must deal with collective narratives and deeply rooted historical memories and societal beliefs about the war if there is to be a positive peace.[13] This requires space for dialogue which invites all viewpoints, recognising their existence and an inviting positive forward response.[14]

UMAM Documentation & Research, situated in the Hezbollah-controlled Shia suburbs of southern Beirut, is a "citizens hub" dedicated to what the Lebanese call "the War". It is intended to be a resource for all Lebanese to open "memory issues" about the military conflicts between (and since) 1975-1990, providing documentation, archiving and public dissemination. It's co-founder, Lokman Slim, is careful to ensure neutrality, "it is a citizen approach - not a quasi-academic institution or a kind of NGO – in that we try to be fully open to users and uses (within certain rules), but don't allow our work to take a certain *political shape*."

UMAM's conventional activities include film screenings, exhibitions, archival research, roundtables and workshops on archiving. It approaches truth as a *plural* concept and recognises that most Lebanese have an unresolved understanding about the events of the War and how it ended. UMAM provides some of the tools to "go into details" rather simply condemning the war.

Above and beyond the events and resources hosted at UMAM, the initiative works to promote the circulation of people from richer areas of Beirut to the much poorer area of Dahiya. As Lokman reflects, "One of the first choices was to be in this part of the city [Dahiya]. It is difficult to imagine the life of this part of the city over the last two or three decades. It shifted from being a full ghetto in the 80s, to a quasi-ghetto in the 90s, to what it is nowadays." Dahiya, and indeed the UMAM compound and buildings itself, has endured significant violence in the last decade: first the 33-day bombing campaign by Israel in 2006 (Dahiya is largely Shia area), then various car-bombings by jihadist Sunni militants in recent years.

The idea behind UMAM was to create a physical meeting point which sets a precedent for encounter between the different groups in Lebanon. That precedent can be defined as causing people to change their manners and habits. "This socialisation", Lokman adds, "causes a kind of trauma of the discovery, which is double: the terror of an alien coming into *terra incognita* – a part of the city with different rules and curiosity – and the indigenous people of Dahiya discovering different kinds of practices. In this way it is a kind of socialisation at a city scale."

People visiting Dahiya (via UMAM) see life where they had previously thought life had stopped. The locals who receive them can't always understand why people from downtown bother to come to see a film or an abstract installation, but in being clear about UMAM's purpose they become increasingly confident that there is no conspiracy or plot happening. Lokman is careful to state these encounters are some steps behind reconciliation, "All we can expect is the exchange of ideas and discovery of places". However, he recognises role of UMAM as an *instigator* and *facilitator* in this interaction.

Initiatives such as UMAM – which both promote the mixing of social groups while facilitating a structured dialogue on a contentious societal issue – have an important role in building trust between fragmented communities. They demystify the *other* and encourage critical reflection about presiding assumptions. At best they provide important forums for new truths to emerge and be recognised thus aiding a sustainable peace process.

"A grievance needn't be as great as war in order for there to exist a need for dialogue whereby local actors uncover the truths behind an injustice", Lokman suggests. Indeed, UMAM might be a template for community development in the UK whereby there exists great disparities and injustices – real and perceived – relating to class, exclusion and the financial system, for example.

Introducing the public to the concept of being public

Aside from the educational purpose of libraries, they are also important because they can represent a public expression on the status of knowledge in society, conveying prestige and symbolising progress. Further, libraries provide a cultural meeting place like a public square.[15] With the absence of any historic public libraries in Lebanon, it's fair to say the value of the few libraries that do exist in Beirut is mainly as a shared cultural resource and meeting place.

If the identities of individuals or a social group are formed in relation to the behaviour of others as well as the physical environment, it follows that the lack of public spaces and interaction limits the development of public identities. As mentioned earlier, public debate – and thus public-*ness* – is hindered because the vast majority of Lebanese continue to live within the confines of sectarian neighbourhoods, associations, schools and even media.[16] Further, due to the privatisation of the cities (Beirut in particular) after the civil war, there is very little public realm or public forum. This limits opportunities for meaningful and positive encounters between social groups.

The **Common Space Initiative** for Shared Knowledge and Consensus Building (CSI) states its goal as to "Strengthen the culture of dialogue and consensus building to reach common understanding on key national issues and interests among Lebanon's diverse groups". By providing a diversified range of resources and a shared space for all Lebanese people, it supports knowledge-based dialogues between the sectarian and political factions in this fragile state.

The physical manifestation of the Initiative is an office with large meeting rooms sitting in the former Italian embassy opposite the Lebanese Parliament on Nejmeh Square in Downtown Beirut. Born out of the National Dialogue process under President Suleiman, the CSI provides a convenient, neutral space where second tier politicians (representing their parties), sectarian leaders and experts can come together to meet and discuss pertinent issues in Lebanon's social and

economic development. The content varies from Lebanese-Palestinian relations to contested natural gas reserves located off the coast of Lebanon and Israel. The idea is to support dialogue outside of the heavily partisan debates in parliament thus providing a *safety net* in the political process which should, in theory, reduce the likelihood of armed conflict.

The outcome of the dialogue depends on the content of the discussion but ranges from agreement between stakeholders (for example over the definition of a 'Palestinian Refugee') to the identification of deadlocks and corresponding production of a *roadmap* to overcome these. Where contentious issues are discussed the CSI deploys a strategy of starting the conversation on topics that everyone agrees upon e.g. good living conditions, water, electricity, security, shelter, waste management. Once common ground is established, the stakeholders can move forward to discuss the detail and more salient points. "Starting with a big topic can destroy the dialogue", says the Senior Librarian.

A key feature of the initiative – the physical library itself as well as the meeting rooms – is the technical research support it provides to political and sectarian dialogue. There is a lack of reliable data in Lebanon; the last Census was undertaken in 1932 so any debates on population, for example, require the bespoke commissioning of "in field" research to plug the gaps. The research is often made public thus supporting the popular dialogue with statistical nuance and more sophisticated analyses. In this sense the library – or perhaps more accurately a "knowledge management centre" – is unique in that it develops knowledge in response to requests by those who use it.

Providing a space for dialogue is both a modest and ambitious ambition of CSI's work. Their donors (including the UNDP, Berghof Institute and La Sagresse University) understand this and are satisfied so long as the dialogue is both regular and representative. In light of this, any advocacy by CSI is prohibited as it might threaten neutrality and accessibility of the common space.

While an initiative such as the CSI clearly exists in very particular circumstances (post-conflict society) with a fairly extraordinary remit (to provide a safety net preventing disputes descending into armed conflict), the notion of providing neutral and accessible spaces whereby stakeholders in a public decision making process can enter into a structured, evidence-based dialogue can clearly find resonance in other contexts where there is conflict (be it violent, verbal or latent).

Exercising a similar logic to the Common Space Initiative – albeit with the development of reading skills being central to the approach – is the network of **Assabil** public libraries across Beirut. Following recognition by small group of philanthropically minded individuals that not one library was open in Beirut, they went about working with the municipality to set up and service the three libraries that exist today. Beyond the education benefits of reading they argue it has had a role in facilitating encounters between different socio-ethnic groups after the war.

In addition to fairly conventional albeit modest library spaces, Assabil also provides cultural activities – such as talks, book groups, film screenings, storytelling – that are accessible and attractive to local communities. A senior staff member in Assabil's central office tells me the purpose of the libraries is "introducing the public to the concept of being public". In a place where the different religious and ethnic experiences appear hermetically sealed, coming to a public library is an opportunity to celebrate plurality, to exercise tolerance, to peacefully coexist.

While the socio-economic groups in the UK may not have the same history of conflict, increasing privatisation of public spaces and the gentrifying effect of house prices mean the dynamics of segregation in and between communities is not dissimilar in character. The approach and practice of the Common Space Initiative and Assabil public libraries in Beirut represent models that might be learnt from and/or adapted to achieve similar unifying outcomes in the UK. For example, communities with a recent influx of migrant populations, newly gentrified neighbourhoods or areas with gross wealth inequality.

Social capital initiatives in the most fractured societies should focus, first, on relatively humble outcomes, such as demystifying the other through facilitating contact between different groups in neutral and safe spaces. At best, this might provide a platform for productive relationships and the sharing of skills. At a minimum, these spaces can help normalise everyday interactions, providing something of a safety net when tensions increase.

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[1] Hanf 1993; Khalaf 2002
[2] Ghassan 2007:1
[3] Hovsepian 2007:40
[4] Confessionalism can be understood as an "institutionalized separatism on a sectarian basis in the parliament, cabinet, and administration" (Hudson 1969:251)
[5] Maronites only constitute up to 930,000 (22%) of the total population of Lebanon today (Lebanon – International Religious Freedom Report 2007)
[6] Picard, E. 2000:8
[7] The perspective articulated here rests largely on the interpretation by Historian and Campaigner Lokman Slim though each view is substantiated by the evidence he has gathered via UMAM Documentation & Research initiative.
[8] Sune Haugbolle 'Dealing with Lebanon's Past: Remembering, reconciliation, art and activism' (Accord)
[9] Fawwaz Traboulsi (Accord)
[10] Sune Haugbolle 'Dealing with Lebanon's Past: Remembering, reconciliation, art and activism' (Accord)
[11] Deeb, L 2006:43
[12] Plato
[13] Gauriel Saloman 2005: 293
[14] Ahmad Begdoun
[15] Sholam & Yablonka (2008) in Caue Capille
[16] Sune Haugbolle 'Dealing with Lebanon's Past: Remembering, reconciliation, art and activism' (Accord)

2 Cultivating vocational skills, behaviours & networks

Post-Apartheid South Africa

Children and young adults growing up in post-apartheid South Africa face a mixed picture. On the one hand, apartheid has been buried: all adults have the vote; the government is led by black political leaders; legislation discriminating against black people had been abolished; and racial restrictions on where black people can live or work have been removed. There are no longer restrictions on the schools or healthcare they can receive and welfare has been extended in some small but significant ways.

On the other hand, drastic material inequalities persist and have even increased since apartheid ended.[1] 10 per cent of the population control 80 per cent of the economy.[2] That does not mean that wealth and opportunity are simply split along race lines; a fast-growing proportion of the wealthy in South Africa are black people who have taken advantage of new opportunities and moved up into the middle-class and elite echelons. However, in many respects, class has replaced race as the foundation of deep social cleavages in post-apartheid society.[3]

Apartheid is also echoed in the continuing relationship between race, neighbourhood and class. Most people reside in neighbourhoods whose populations are – in apartheid terminology – overwhelmingly either 'African', or 'coloured' or 'white', but not a mix of these. Almost all white people are relatively wealthy; they continue to live in affluent and safer areas and have succeeded in reproducing privileged education and employment prospects. Almost all poor people are black indigenous Africans and live in areas with compromised infrastructure and services. While the demise of apartheid might have brought some black people a form of dignity, it has not brought real opportunity: poor black South African children typically attend struggling schools; acquire inadequate skills and qualifications; enter a labour market that offers no prospects for unskilled workers; and struggle to access healthcare when they fall sick.[4]

Life and learning at Cape Town's urban edge

Situated a forty-five minute drive from the city proper, Masiphumelele ("Masi") is a relatively small township of about 38,000 people, many of whom have moved there in search of work from the Eastern Cape Province since 1996. It owes its establishment to Apartheid land policies whereby black families were removed from a nearby so-called 'white farming area'. It's layout and relationship with the surrounding area resembles attempts to isolate and control black populations under Apartheid; the only one road in/out of the settlement police were able to seal off the community to prevent the spread of any unrest.

Masi was recognised formally as a township by the city in 1992 and its population is estimated to have tripled since 1996. Ninety per cent of residents live in shacks on small rented plots in inaccessible streets. Average unemployment is thought to be over 60 per cent while approximately three quarters of young people aren't in work. Those who have work are limited to domestic work or commercial cleaning (for women) and unskilled labour and security-guard work (for men).

A few minutes down the road is the small coastal town Fish Hoek. With a largely white population, the unemployment rate stands at about 8 per cent. Residents have jobs as managers, professionals, teachers and nurses. The mean household income in Fish Hoek and its suburbs is eight times that of Masiphumelele.[5] The two neighbourhoods are physically and, to a large extent, socially separated from other communities, with many residents of each never having visited the other.

Masiphumelele Public Library sits "somewhere between a social club and a place of learning" according to its Founder and Senior Librarian, Sue Alexander. It's also an important community centre and provider of educational services. Activities observed on my two-week visit included: computer courses, literacy classes, storytelling, a parents' support group, business skills workshops, formal tutoring, homework club, girl's group, Xhosa lessons and a friendship club aimed at bringing children of different cultures together.

Architect Gary Finlayson, who designed the physical building and courtyard, was asked to create a tranquil, multipurpose facility that expands beyond the function of a traditional reference library. The most striking feature of the completed – and now matured – design is an enclosed shaded courtyard where visitors meet, read and chat. In contrast to the hubbub of Masi's streets, the courtyard cultivates an atmosphere of calm, reflection and curiosity. It's significant in melding the multiple functions of the library providing not only a point of transition but also opportunities for socialising – and even socialisation – around a culture of learning. Further, the modest courtyard is punctuated by pieces of conceptual art (produced for and about the community), heightening the sense that this is an exceptional place in the township landscape.

Other facilities at Masi Library include a modest cinema room, tutorial space, computer lab, bookshelves and an administrative office. The library supports footfall of 10,000 – 18,000 per month, most of whom are children or teenagers.

Book circulation is only a few thousand a year (and far fewer than the >400,000 the neighbouring library in Fish Hoek achieves) but even a cursory visit shows this is a place that is distinct from the stale libraries found in the UK.

The success of the initiative rests upon Sue's ability to attract and engage a diverse group of partners, including national charities, philanthropic foundations and even Coca Cola. "My recipe is good partnerships. People with the same goals and values are the right ones to work with. Avoid those that are exploitative or when the mission is too abstract! For example, a writing workshop by an author won't work because people in Masi need to make money!"

Government funding is preferred for overhead costs – such as computers, Wi-Fi, building maintenance – because it's relatively stable and long-term. Government indicators include meeting targets such as outreach programmes, story times, displays, reading programmes and book rentals. However the library itself wouldn't be there without the generosity of the Thomson family – via their charity Masicorp – who paid for the initial construction of the facility.

Sue relies heavily on her team of volunteers, whom she describes as her "tentacles of support". It's also key that the library is seen to be non-political by the local population not least because there remains the very real threat of vandalism and arson. There have been occasions in recent years where local residents, so disgruntled with the lack of opportunity or lack of decent social services, have committed such crimes and it's imperative that the library does not become a target due to perception of bias or external interest driven engagement.

Khayelitsha, Cape Town 2015

Attractive spaces and activities that socialise learning

Education is arguably the principal challenge facing young South Africans, and thus the country's future stability. Over half the population are under the age of 24 and the overwhelming majority (70%) of South Africa's unemployed are below the age of 34.[6] Most of those unemployed do not have secondary education qualifications. According to the South African National Planning Commission, if a young person does not find employment by the age of 24 the odds are that they will never find it.[7] Without urgent action an entire generation may go their whole lives without ever holding stable formal employment.

Ikamva Youth is an impressive charity that aims to enable high school learners from disadvantaged areas to have access to post-school opportunities. "Ikamva" means "future" in Xhosa (the local language); it connotes the notion that "the future in our hands", according to Nicolas Commeignes the Masi branch coordinator (situated in library).

The process underpinning Ikamva Youth appears simple at first. Young learners commit themselves to three tutoring sessions per week; attend career guidance workshops; mentoring; IT skills; health and life skills (workshops on leadership & HIV prevention); media imaging and expression; educational outings; and are invited to take part in Winter / Summer Schools. If the learner adheres to strict requirements for attendance they will continue to benefit from high levels of support and become "Ikamvanites"; the most successful students go to university, sometimes with tuition paid.

But what draws young adults to both take part, stay the course then return as volunteers is something special; the sense of pride impressed upon those who take part is striking. Ayabulela (aged 16) tells me, "I always had motivation but Ikamva helped me to know *how*. I want to share my experiences when I get older." This view is corroborated by Boinke (aged 18), who explains "Ikamva made me interested in giving back to the community". Indeed, many Ikamvanites return to the library – even while at University – to provide tutoring support. This feedback loop, from pupil to teacher (or tutee to tutor), is evidence of deep and sustainable improvements to a user's – and potentially community – social and cultural capital.

Taken together Masi Public Library and Ikamva Youth provide a compelling and attractive proposition to many young people living in the community. They offer not only an alternative world to that they see at home or at school, but provide the resources and support to develop the knowledge, skills and networks that will be essential to finding work in the wider Cape Town economy.

Inter-community bonding and bridging

During my stay I had the opportunity to engage Masi residents about what they felt were the main barriers stopping them from finding good sustainable work.

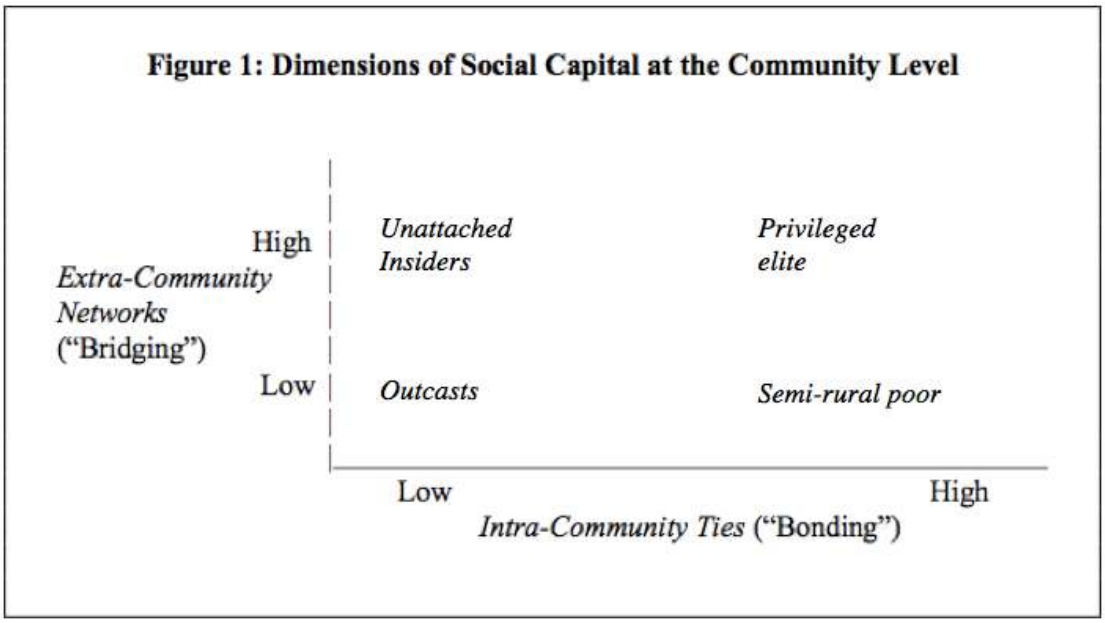
Most cited issues such as: lacking money to go to school, the distance and expense in getting to the urban centre, pregnancy and language skills.

Interestingly, though, the strength of the Masi community was never in question. There's a perception at least that less violence and gang-related activity occurs in Masi when compared to other townships in the region. Barney (aged 18) tells me, "There are some obstacles to stop it [Masi] developing, but it is a pretty awesome place! Here you experience a lot of life and activities, especially when compared to other townships". Sisipo (aged 17) sheds more light on this, explaining "Culture and backgrounds can clash but, overall, the more exposure the better. It creates bonds." She adds, "Masi works because black people represent multiple cultures. Locals are curious to know about those different cultures and come together to learn about them."

The prominence of community organisations, church groups and volunteering indicates decent levels of intra-community bonding. Children in Masi express a positive affiliation with their local neighbourhood and strong ties with townships on the other side of the city as well as villages of ancestral origin in the distant Eastern Cape, with whom they share heritage, language and cultural practices. These connections foster a sense of belonging to a common Xhosa culture.

Robert Putnam's "Networks View"[8] considers "bonding" and "bridging" as distinct types of social capital. *Bonding* social capital denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends or neighbours, while *bridging* social capital encompasses more distinct ties like professional relationships or acquaintances. Applied at a community scale we might explore intra-community bonding and inter-community bridging.

Figure 1 Woolcock & Narayan's[9] Networks View model to help map communities based on their bonding and bridging in and with other communities so to explore the implications for social mobility.



Intuitively this idea makes sense when considering potential barriers to social mobility. A poor girl may grow up in a strong community but lack the professional networks that a boy with rich parents has, therefore lacking a form of social capital that might be significant in helping her find work. This is precisely the dynamic I witnessed in Masiphumelele. Lelthu (aged 17) explains, "We have this thought that if you live in Masi there's no way you can get out".

Charlotte, a long-term Masi resident and occasional tour guide, tells me "Not a lot of people have jobs in Cape Town – it's far and expensive to get there!". Getting to the city from Masi can take several hours via public transport (a taxi, train then bus) and costs several dollars. This consolidates the segregation faced by a community already isolated by its geography.

Many Masi residents lack the language skills to be eligible for good jobs with English-speaking employers in the city. The dominance of English in the South African political economy is a remnant of the colonial era and, thus, unfortunate to the many South Africans who speak an indigenous African language – or even Afrikaans – as their first language. Moreover, Masi residents lack a basic tool to gain acceptance into the dominant urban economy.

Moreover, as Rachel Bray summarises, "When we assess the combined effects of mobility trends we see that the limited everyday movement of young residents of Cape Town's southern peninsula either occurs within networks that share a common socio-economic, linguistic and historical profile, or in one class direction only, namely from poor to middle-class neighbourhoods."[10]

Spending time with first year university students living in Bishop's Court – a wealthy and leafy suburb of Cape Town – heightened my awareness of the structural inequalities at play. Some I met in this area had been given internships to firms run by their parent's friends, getting their foot on the employment ladder purely out of courtesy to their parent's status and networks. Without some heavy social manufacturing, surely those young adults residing in Masiphumelele couldn't access such opportunities.

Segregated places, tunnel vision and downward levelling norms

Social scientists have long believed that contact across group boundaries is conducive to the erosion of prejudice. As Jenkins writes, "the more people have to do with each other in everyday life, the more likely they will be to identify each other as fellow individuals".[11] Without this shared identity not only come parochial or blinkered world views but also the potential for perverse or negative social norms or practices. These "downward levelling norms" threaten to restrict upward mobility if they are pervasive within a community.

The emergence of "downward levelling norms" is often preceded by lengthy periods, often lasting generations, in which the mobility of a particular group has

been blocked by outside discrimination. In Masiphumelele the local community identity is cemented by a common experience of post-apartheid segregation as well as migration away from hometown. It is conceivable, therefore, that individual success stories may lessen the community's cohesion because it undermines this common experience of adversity which says such stories are impossible.

My brief experience of Masi didn't allow for the types of evidence gathering that could substantiate this observation. I have, however, unearthed one example of such "downward levelling norms" at play through my own conversations and in reports documented in more thorough research.[12] Some locals – particularly teenagers – told me of how children who go to school in Fish Hoek (the neighbouring white area) are called "Coconuts" by their peers because they are "black on the outside and white in the middle". It's the idea that crossing racial boundaries is to be ridiculed; that educational attainment is to be pursued by some class of peoples but not others. "Acute colour-based discrimination persists in certain settings… its presence is both a consequence of, and acts to reinforce, [the] neighbourhood's physical, social and political marginalisation."[13] This, in turn, can only serve to sustain young people's immobility.

With the challenge of ethno-racial segregation comes also some opportunities to protect and cultivate some indigenous non-mainstream practices and values. The Xhosa community in Masi – often from rural communities – has a wealth of knowledge and skills that enabled them to prosper prior to moving to Masi. There is a great opportunity, for example, to refine and adjust traditional arts, crafts and cooking practices so they find relevance – and eventually market share – in the regional economy.

The clear challenge to theories – and respective research and policy – of social mobility stemming for the Networks View is thus to identify the conditions under which the many positive aspects of "bonding" social capital in poor communities can be harnessed and its integrity retained (and, if necessary, its negative aspects dissipated), while simultaneously helping the poor to gain access to formal institutions and a more diverse stock of "bridging" social capital.[14]

It is, according to Kiltgaard, "a process fraught with multiple dilemmas, however, especially for external NGOs, extension services, and development agencies, since it may entail altering social systems that are the product of long-standing cultural traditions or powerful vested interests."[15] It seems to me at least that, to be effective, any grass-root change must be complemented by reform at State level to better ensure equality of opportunity and rights between ethno-racial communities (and their respective community rights). Masi Public Library and Ikamva Youth are making a noble contribution to the lives of their service users, but affirmative action by the democratic state will be key to redressing the systemic and structural imbalances.

[1] Growing Up in the New South Africa: https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/2404/Growingup_South_Africa.pdf?sequence=1
[2] Dass-Brailsford, Exploring resiliency: Academic achievement among disadvantaged black youth in South Africa
[3] Leibbrandt et al. 2009; Seekings 2010; Seekings & Nattrass 2005
[4] Growing Up in the New South Africa
[5] Growing Up in the New South Africa
[6] IkamvaYouth Alumni Report 2013
[7] IkamvaYouth Alumni Report 2013
[8] Woolcock & Narayan (2000)
[9] Woolcock & Narayan (2000)
[10] Growing up in new South Africa
[11] Jenkins (1996: 118)
[12] Growing up in new South Africa
[13] Growing up in new South Africa
[14] Woolcock & Narayan 2000
[15] Klitgaard 1990

3 Activating locally-rooted cultures and values

Cultural subjugation, transmission and renaissance

Plenty has been said on why limited economic capital (cash assets) can restrict an individual's prospects. But there's *another* elephant in the room when discussing opportunities for the least advantaged in our society: how individuals accumulate cultural and social capital so as to be able to effectively participate and flourish in society.

Cultural capital can be defined as forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society.[1] For example, parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system. But cultural capital might also be significant in ensuring social groups – and their respective communities – have adequate status to participate in the dominant political economy of a nation. In no place is this truer than Morocco.

Western Africa has been inhabited by Berbers from at least 10,000 B.C, with Mauretania (modern-day Morocco) an independent tribal Berber kingdom from about 3rd Century BC.[2] It later became a province of the Roman Empire though, by the end of the 4th Century, the Romanised areas had been Christianised. The Vandals and Visigoths overran the area before it was recovered by the Byzantine Empire up to the Muslim conquest in the mid-7th Century.[3] Throughout this period, though, the high (Atlas) mountains that made up most of Morocco remained inhabited and *de facto* ruled by the Berber people.

In 670 AD the Ummayyad Muslims brought their language, system of government, and Islam to Morocco. During Arab rule – and after – many Berbers converted to Islam. Fez would become the capital and Morocco became a centre of Muslim learning. From the 11th Century onwards, a number of powerful Berber dynasties arose, ruling territory in Southern Portugal and Spain up to the 15th Century. However, in 1549 the region fell to successive Arab dynasties claiming descent from the Islamic prophet, Mohammad, though this was superseded by an Alaouite dynasty in 1666, who rule Morocco to the present day.

As Europe industrialised in the 19th Century, Morocco fell prize to the colonial interests and ambitions of Spain and France. In 1884 Spain declared coastal

regions under its protectorate while mainland Morocco fell under France's dominion following the 1912 Treaty of Fes.[4] Many thousands of Europeans entered Morocco, bringing contemporary industrial practices, social and legal infrastructure. While Morocco gained independence from 1956, the modern monarchy of King Mohammed VI – and ancillary democratic institutions – are inextricably linked to the systems and values of governance dictated by previous colonial rule.

Moreover, the culture of the indigenous Berber people of Morocco have been subjugated and appropriated by other civilisations and value systems.[5] While elements of Berber culture have survived the many transitions imposed by millennia of external interference and occupation, it has fused and adapted to foreign influences driven by political and economic ambitions of others.

Dar Al-Ma'Mun Library, Marrakech 2015

The House of Knowledge

While Redha Moali is the former Deputy General Manager of Exane-BNP Paribas in Geneva, he is no typical stockbroker. Unlike his peers he is skeptical about a worldview that reduces human beings to a rational *homo economicus*, though he does not deny its dominance as a school of thought. "Today, reality is numbers and everything else should be considered illusion or poetry."[6]

Having grown up a Muslim in a poor Paris suburb, he virulently opposes the post-9/11 conception of that Arab World as an archaic space mainly characterised by oil and dictatorship. He bemoans that 'modernising' has become synonymous with reducing cultural and social reality to western formats; that

the rampant standardisation of cultures and languages means that some populations cannot equally participate in society.

He, Julian Amicel and Carleen Hamon set up **Dar Al Ma'Mun** (DAM), a library and outreach programme located in the Morrocan countryside just south of Marrakech. Naming it after the Caliph al-Ma'Mun, who in 9th century Baghdad founded the house of wisdom as a fountainhead of scholarship and freethinking, DAM aims to provide a cultural platform to support artists and young people exploring and promoting Moroccan and African cultural identity.

Moali believes *art* is key in helping us to reinvent ourselves, and that providing platforms to support this process is particularly key in cultures at the periphery of society, at both local and global scales. DAM supports an artist's residency in visual arts and partners an education charity to deliver literacy programs and a free library service for residents in the local area.

DAM also hosts a translation service whereby Western texts in the social sciences are translated into Arabic and vice versa. The Senior Librarian, Omar Berrada, explained, "The idea is that translation can play a political role in rectifying an image of Moroccan or Arab culture; to challenge, even at a small level, projections of an image upon a whole culture due to a lack of curiosity about the cultural productions of the culture, and lack of access to the texts of that culture".

The physical library is located on the grounds of a luxury hotel just south of Marrakech. The notion is that it is funded using profits from the hotel as well as generating from partnership with a number of international corporations and arts funds.

The library itself is open seven days a week and hosts over 10,000 books, with a footfall of approximately 600 – 700 per month. "We never had the opportunity or intention to make this the most popular library in Marrakech. From the beginning we understood it wouldn't be realistic to make it popular, but it is open to everyone", explains the Juan Gomez, a librarian I interviewed. Indeed, locals, artists, academics and hotel guests mix in the library space, albeit on a relatively small scale.

The most striking feature of the design of the library is the salon: an informal space with a carpet, small tables and comfortable cushions. Local teenagers can regularly be found lounging here while revising for upcoming exams. "People who come to the library behave as they would in a Mosque," Juan explains. "It's a common space of teaching. Shoes are taken off, people don't eat or drink, and there's a garden". Arguably these familiar settings were key to attracting local youths to use what must appear a foreign space in many ways. There are few – if any – public libraries in the region, and none of them have a 25m swimming pool next door occupied by Westerners

Juan neatly described the ethos behind the initiative, "One new reader can change the context and orientation for their friends, their family and for their

own future." Ibrahim, an eloquent 17 year-old Berber studying at the local school, appeared to confirm this. "Dar Al-Ma'Mun changed my life fundamentally because reading books allows you to see another world. It's a world that is definitely different from our real world. I have learned different things about my personality; I have learned a lot of things about personalities".

While at a small scale, the emancipatory role of this subtle, yet well considered initiative, is clear. Ibrahim explains, "Here in Morocco we don't have a material colonisation; we have a mental colonisation. We have the problem of following orders; trusting others without thinking about ourselves". Through coming to the library, however, Ibrahim proposes, "The books have helped me to explore my own culture: here we don't have our own culture in Morocco; it's a combination between Occidental culture and our culture. DAM is an exceptional chance to improve our mentalities."

Musée Berbère

Following Morocco's Arab Spring, King Mohammed VI gave important concessions to those campaigning for proper recognition to Berber people within a pluralist society. The new Moroccan constitution, adopted in July 2011, rendered official the Berber language Amizagh.
It was in this context that Musee Berber was opened within the beautiful urban gardens of Jardin Marjorelle, Marrakech. It is an important site in both honoring the importance of Berber culture in Moroccan history, and in transmitting Berber cultural heritage for future generations.

The process by which cultural transmission takes place is an opaque one, though a UNESCO meeting on "Amazigh Knowledge and Know-how: Disappearing or Adapting?" in 2013, highlighted the importance of documentation of intangible cultural heritage (traditions), ideally involving – and generating pride amongst – the local community.[7] It's most effective when it is reinterpreted or recreated for contemporary functions and modes: "Human beings do not merely reproduce themselves biologically; we are cultural beings, and we therefore engage in cultural reproduction, attempting to reproduce what we believe is most valuable about our way of life."[8]

My aim, to identify spaces that are successful in exploring, challenging and cultivating local cultural identity, was perhaps too ambitious. Identity (arguably) develops over a much longer period of time, through sustained patterns of behaviour and contexts. Thus to provoke a sustained change in someone's identity via a single or multiple visits to a particular 'space' seems unlikely, though I did find some accounts of individuals who had clearly benefitted from using a given space in a culturally relevant way.

Should the question of cultural identity be oriented on transmitting intangible cultural heritage or through creating new, functional practices and values that give power to the oppressed? Perhaps this is a false dichotomy, though I – and others – struggle with what the point of emphasis can and should be, and is the

crux of a classical debate in contemporary political philosophy between liberal values and moral relativism.

I am increasingly confident, though, that too often is it left to oppressed or marginalised social groups to do the "noble acts" to conform with the dominant system or norm. In the American civil rights movement Martin Luther King was often praised for his efforts to bring everyone together in unity. But does this Christian concept amount to the weaker class or group covering the 'distance'? Macolm X took a different approach, recognising that difference contains its own value, and that (civil liberties) struggle must be to advance that value.

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[1] In *The Forms of Capital* (1986), P. Bourdieu distinguishes between three types of capital.

[2] C. Michael Hogan, Chellah, The Megalithic Portal, ed. Andy Burnham
[3] Abun Nasr 1977, p33

[4] Furlong, Charles Wellington (1911). "The French Conquest Of Morocco: The Real Meaning Of The International Trouble". *The World's Work: A History of Our Time* **XXII**: 14988–14999.
[5] Here I take Ralph Linton's definition of culture: "A culture is the grouping of learnt behavior and its results, whose component pieces are shared and transmitted by the members of a given society" (1977:33)
[6] Redha Moali, Ted X Marrakech – Dar Al-Ma'Mun: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-g2cxcWMY8
[7] Les Cahiers Du Musee Berbere. Cahiers No. II, 2013
[8] Snauwaert, Social Justice and the philosophical foundations of critical peace education: Exploring Nussbaum, Sen and Freire

4 Key Findings and associated Design Challenges

This research falls short of drawing academically robust and comprehensively evidenced conclusions about the impact of learning spaces. While the reader will be cognisant of this limitation, there remain several important kernels of discussion and rich seams of learning for how we design and configure common learning spaces in the UK.

This section discusses six key findings around developing learning spaces for social mobility, and the design challenges that they stimulate. They can be used to help inform and frame the revision to existing service offerings or the creation of new common learning spaces in the UK and other contexts.

Key Finding 1: The social dynamics and mobility needs of each locality are varied

Small differences in location, different social groupings and imagined boundaries between local areas can be seen to have a bearing on the people's access to learning services and the spaces in which they are hosted. An understanding about the prevalence and depth of immobility, as identified through ethnographies exposing the lived experience of local residents, can help inform the design of new learning spaces and/or establish which services should be prioritised for protection.

Learning spaces that are most effective in developing the social and cultural capital of its users are those that consider the drivers of immobility then implement strategies to address it. There are theories such as the Networks View of social capital ("bonding" and "bridging") that may provide a useful lens through which to consider an appropriate strategy. The clear challenge to theories – and respective research and policy – of social mobility stemming from the Networks View is thus to identify the conditions under which the many positive aspects of "bonding" social capital in poor communities can be harnessed and its integrity retained (and, if necessary, its negative aspects

dissipated), while simultaneously helping the poor to gain access to formal institutions and a more diverse stock of "bridging" social capital.[1]

Design challenges:

- Identify the mobility needs of the locality in which an intervention is being considered, then tailoring a solution accordingly
- Ensure the interventions designed recognise and respond to the highly particular needs, demographics and social dynamics of each area
- Map local learning assets – including cultural and historical sites – that may be significant channels or resources in improving the upward mobility of the community

Key Finding 2: The leadership of certain individuals is key to creating and delivering learning spaces that are effective in increasing the mobility of its users

The most effective learning spaces benefit from the character, knowledge and networks of the particular "leaders" who manage the delivery of those services. While their roles and responsibilities depend on the scope of their organisation or the composition of the community, these "leaders" have acquired the trust and authority that enables them to both attract people to use their services and then signpost and allocate resources appropriately.

These leaders might be described as "searchers"[2] in that they look for existing local efforts to meet community needs and plug gaps in the service landscape. In doing so they tap into existing passion and trust within the community. Their craft is not only to identify these partners but to find ways to empower and link up services (internally and externally), providing a more comprehensive and attractive offer to potential service users. In this sense the management of services provided is quite different to that of delivery organisations where the remit and methods are institutionally determined and allocated on the basis of top-down classifications.

The challenge is, arguably, to allow sufficient space for the services' new partners to flourish - sometimes through a chaotic, creative process - while maintaining quality and clear lines of communication. The emphasis should be on offering conditions which encourage organic (rather than instrumental) growth; there's no input-output logic but instead an inside-out capacity - give space then partner to provide support.

Design Challenges:

- Identify existing leaders and scale the positive impacts they are having while retaining the essential characteristics that make them effective
- Establish how best to provide the right infrastructure to support leaders to grow services to even better meet the needs of their constituents

- Consider how to effectively support systems for sharing knowledge and best-practice between providers

Key Finding 3: The informality and social components of a learning space is often key to attracting service users

While it is difficult to pinpoint the precise reasons that prevents someone from accessing a service they know to be effective, it's clear that potential service users - including 'hard to reach' groups - accessed services when they felt welcome and safe, often in more informal and social settings.

People also access learning spaces when there's a community around them that supports those beliefs and behaviours. Sometimes people access services when they have strong relationships - formal or informal - with those who provide or use that service, or when they associate with particular design features in that learning space e.g. the salon room in Dar Al-Ma'Mun.

Design Challenges:

- Develop an aesthetic - in terms of the site, its staff and their values – that is welcoming, attractive and interesting to potential service users
- In marketing the service, tailor messaging that reflects the particular values and context of target service users, and that messages are delivered via channels that are used by these groups

Key Finding 4: Recognising the value exchange involved in each person's engagement with the service, then leveraging this to deliver social benefits

When people feel they are getting something in return - like opportunities to learn, get qualifications or socialise - they are more likely to access and sustain use of the services they need. Conduct research then unpack the value exchange: what you are asking of a service user and what are they getting in return? Masiphumelele Public Library offers access to other social networks via the Ikamva Youth mentoring programme while UMAM Documentation & Research offered an opportunity to learn about the civil war to attract users.

Desirability can be increased by having benefits that go beyond a narrowly defined learning aim. For example, the sociability and sense of achievement of having a role in a play can be a great vehicle for building self-esteem, social skills and confidence at the same time as learning new skills. If the value proposition for using a learning space is attractive enough it may deliver secondary benefits, such as the cross-fertilisation of ideas facilitated by bringing different social groups together.

Design Challenges:

- Is the value exchange between the provider and service user fair?
- Latch onto the 'hooks' that have been identified during other engagement, consultation or local expertise
- Identify the mode of experiential learning and how this delivers against desired outcome (e.g. job seeking skills to increase local employment)

Key Finding 5: Innovative corporate partnerships can provide valuable new revenue streams, but should be combined with more stable and long-term funding

There are societal benefits derived from cohesive communities and a skilled/coordinated workforce. Therefore, it is efficient for the private sector to share some of the costs for learning spaces that advance this aim. Identifying and activating corporate partnerships is an important opportunity for generating revenue for learning initiatives, not least because
"Bureaucratic hierarchies move slowly, and entrenched interests shy away from risk."[3]

There may, however, be incongruence between the reporting and accountability structures of statutory services and the types of activities and qualitative impact delivered through grass-root, community and voluntary services. Despite this, and as found with Masiphumelele Public Library and Dar Al-Ma'Mun, clearly ways to partner with unconventional organisations to scale up the impact of an initiative.

Design Challenges:

- Cohering impact measurements and reporting across multiple, distinct funding organisations in a time and resource efficient manner
- Where viable, demonstrate the value proposition and impact of learning spaces using language and indicators that are recognised by private sector organisations whom you are partnering

[1] Woolcock & Narayan, 2000
[2] In development studies, William Easterly distinguishes two types of foreign aid donors: "Planners", who believe in imposing top-down big plans on poor countries, and "Searchers", who look for bottom-up solutions to specific needs. We found this framing useful for understanding different strategies to develop health and wellbeing centres. See the original paper for a fuller explanation of the models: Planners versus Searchers in Foreign Aid, Easterly, William. Asian Development Review 23.2 (2006): 1-35.
[3] Peter Thiel, Zero to One: 10