

# ~~between the margins~~



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Helping Britain's young and socially excluded to achieve  
through global approaches to free or frugal community  
education



Malcolm Richards

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Traveling Fellow 2014

~~between the margins~~

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*I thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for the opportunity, support and patience in enable me to  
research this exciting and important topic.*

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**Malcolm Richards, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellow 2014**

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## Foreword

Non-conventional education exists in all communities. *Community education*, also known as *Community learning & development* refers to an individuals or organization's programs to promote learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. These provisions are often rooted around the culture, language and identity of their local area or region and are therefore able to provide a specific and specialized provision that can use the embedded knowledge of its students.

There are between 3,000 and 5,000 community schools in Britain set up largely by migrant and ethnic minority communities to offer out-of-school educational programmes. These cover areas including the core curriculum, languages, and cultural activities, usually set in an informal learning environment. This approach is designed to provide a pedagogical approach that complements mainstream education. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many socially marginalized groups have used the local language, culture and identity within their range of important activities.

However, the work within these communities has been often overlooked, dismissed or ignored. These culture based alternative provisions, usually free and run by volunteers have, according to a British Educational Research Association (BERA) report often “preserve cultural heritage of a community” and “raise attainment of their children” (2012). BERA suggests that supplementary schools carry out important and successful work with young people who have been “neglected by or excluded from” conventional schools.

This has long been the experience of many from Britain’s African Caribbean population. Since the 1947, when large numbers of migrants from the Caribbean answered the call to support the rebuild of post-war Britain, young people from African-Caribbean communities have experienced significant levels of underachievement within education, when compared to other groups. Today, almost 70 years on, things have not changed at the pace that anyone would expect. Black and dual-heritage young people and those living in poverty are three times more likely to be permanently excluded than other group. Black African-Caribbean boys remain the lowest achievers in England's education system,

alongside poor white working class boys, according to official statistics. This under-achievement is noted at primary school level, where national tests in Mathematics and English show both groups are less likely than others to reach the expected level, and continues up to GCSE level and beyond. Significant anecdotal experiences, academic research and statistical evidence records that almost universally, underachievement for young people is not the result of a single factor, such as behavior or a medical condition, but instead the intersection of different factors, including race, religious belief, disability, gender, sexuality, finance, family circumstance, location and others. As Britain has become more diverse, the more scope there is for mainstream schools to take advantage of, and benefit from, the extensive network of community schools that exists in the country.

In 2009, I founded The Road School ([theroadschool.org.uk](http://theroadschool.org.uk)). My inspiration to develop a community education programme was, in part, developed in my youth growing up in Hackney (London, UK) during the 1980s. There, I had the privilege to attend Dimbaleh Education Centre (Dalston) and Josina Machel Supplementary School (Clapton) were managed, staffed by volunteers who lived locally. Based in part on these organisation, The Road School supports young people (during holiday periods) aged 11 – 24yrs who have found themselves excluded from conventional education environments. We develop and deliver core, life and creative arts and media based education projects to provide an effective means through which students can acquire academic, social and personal development that support the work of their alternative provision. The Road School roots its pedagogical approach in the tangible and intangible culture, language and identity of the community and is often shared with the intangible heritage of educators, staff, peer mentors and volunteers. Students are able to achieve qualifications, develop skills that enable access to careers, college or employment, improve confidence and presentation skills and improve the opportunity of transition into education or adult life. Several young people were inspired to continued to volunteer with The Road School on other projects, or seek a career working in education.

Many critics, which include community educators themselves, argue that organizations like The Road School are not official educational institutions and should be judged by formal exam and test results. Many community organizations have limited or no revenue stream. Their resources,

people and space are volunteered or donated. This results in limited financial opportunities to develop. In addition, community education operates through good will and generosity, and often through the drive, determination and endeavor of a few well-intentioned people, leaving them vulnerable to closure. However, these schools fit within the UK's tradition of successful culture, language and identity based pedagogy. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within any country and is as important for developing States as for developed ones. This form of education is therefore, part of global community education. It has parallels in the tradition of community organization in the USA, sozial pädagogik in Germany, animation in France and socio-cultural work in Belgium. Furthermore, it links up with the thinking and practice of those who have worked for community-based, and democratic schooling - and for child-centred education. It could be seen as close to the Latin American tradition of popular education or the French tradition of la vie associative with its emphasis on association. Many in Academia have written about the use of community, with practitioners both home and abroad believing that if applied, supported and invested in, could provide even more opportunities for our more challenging young people to engage and ultimately achieve. I believe, like many in our growing global movement that community education, if funded and supported, can provide a clear and distinct alternative to conventional education, with tangible and credible results for disadvantaged young people.

## Proposal

As part of my Winston Churchill Memorial Travelling Fellowship, I proposed to research and observe global approaches to free or frugal community education, which catered specifically for young people who could be described as 'challenging' or 'socially disadvantaged'. When selecting countries to visit, I thought about global community education from the perspective of the following broad social-economic definitions:

- Developed, refers to an industrialized country, or "more economically developed country" (MEDC), is a sovereign state that has a highly developed economy and advanced technological infrastructure relative to other less industrialized nations.
- Developing, refers to a nation with a lower living standard, underdeveloped industrial base, and low Human Development Index (HDI) relative to other countries.
- Under-developed, referring to a nation with a lower living standard, underdeveloped industrial base, and low Human Development Index (HDI) relative to other countries.

This categorization would provide a clear cross section of community education settings appropriate to research, in countries where local culture, language and identity are a significant and central theme to the delivery of education in the country.

### **Developed locations**

- Central, Malmo, Sweden
- Norrebro, Copenhagen, Denmark

### **Developing locations**

- Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York, United States of America
- Treme, New Orleans, United States of America

### **Under-developed locations**

- Maubouya Valley, Dennery, St Lucia.
- Plaisance Village, Georgetown, Guyana

## Timetable

I began my travel as arranged, to the following locations during July and August 2014.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Norrebro, Copenhagen, Denmark	19 July – 3 August 2014
Central, Malmo, Sweden	22 July 2014
Canarsie, New York, U.S of America	4 – 9 August 2014
Treme, New Orleans, U.S of America	9 – 15 August 2014
Jackson Heights, New York, U.S of America	15 – 16 August 2014
Despin, Mabouya Valley, St Lucia	16-21 August 2014
Plaisance Village, E.C.D, Guyana	21-27 August 2014
Brooklyn, New York, U.S of America	27-29 August 2014



## Changing plans and objectives

Many of the educators I contacted to visit or to research prior to travelling were unavailable, usually because of either student or adults holiday. I attempted to make contact with many educators in other locations, and found that they too were unavailable to support my visit. This began to alter that way in which my travels unfolded and ultimately resulted in a change of aims for the project. I instead researched global approaches to spaces or place that support free or frugal community education. While 'disadvantaged' young people remain the focus, my focus became how global communities access, claim or reclaim free or frugal spaces and adapt them for community education purposes.

The revised aims for this research were as:

- Observe how communities use publically available (free or frugal) spaces for community education or social interaction;
- Analyse the different ways in which the use of these spaces can begin to practically help overcome social exclusion in United Kingdom locations.
- Investigate how communities use local language and culture to develop inclusive and shared learning opportunities within community spaces.
- Identify how activities within community spaces can support transition into formal education, training and employment and broader community engagement.
- Evaluate and present results across differentiated medium (special event, edited film, printed report, photo journal, and website) which showcases the results of this study and its conclusions, and encourage the development of a network of shared practice between educators.

Practically, I had the opportunity to engage and observe with global projects who have innovative approaches and work towards developing e-resources, videos, audio and resources from an international network of agencies who can work together to achieve this for education provisions specifically for the socially excluded.

## Personal Impact

The personal impact of my Winston Churchill Memorial Trust is vast and significant. I am sure that I have not even begun to recognize its impact, but am aware that it is life changing. My experiences have reinforced my approach in advocating culture, language and identity within education as a means through which some young people are able to engage, participate and potentially transform their lives.

### ***Single points of success and failure:***

Many of the educators I contacted to visit or to research prior to travelling were unavailable, usually because of either student or adults holiday. I attempted to make contact with many educators in other locations, and found that they too were unavailable to support my visit. This began to alter that way in which my travels unfolded and ultimately resulted in a change of aims for the project.

This reinforced the key element community education; community education is administered, run and delivered by ordinary people. These are ordinary people who have work and family commitments, families and of course responsibilities. As with the Road School and any of the organisations in the United Kingdom, often if an educator or key individual is not available to deliver the programmes, the programmes do not run. This has huge implications for the young people who often are able to access these programmes at times when conventional education is not available (weekends, holidays).

To counter this, the *Youth Empowerment Project (New Orleans, US)* demonstrated how organized and committed communities can work to develop education projects, which in term can grow despite circumstance to become firstly an established school, but eventually education provider for a city, using local authority provided spaces to deliver its services. Similarly, *Kultur2200 (Copenhagen, DK)* provided an example of how local authority facilities should encourage communities to own their opportunities of community engagement. While we as educators value our independence as educators, our greatest challenge remains how we provide sustainable education programmes for our young people, and therefore our communities.

### ***Different locations and environments can support participation:***

I have been able to see practically how environment, or space and place can be claimed, reclaimed or adapted to develop education opportunities. I have witnessed educators using spaces such as state sponsored public libraries (*Denmark, United States, St Lucia, Guyana*) as places for education. It has

been apparent that in public libraries, while there have been significant pressures on the services due to building closures, underfunding and limited resources, educators still find inventive ways in which to use the spaces. Public parks, such as the food gardens in *Amagar Ost (Copenhagen)*, the food gardens visited in *Forte Green (New York)* or *Plaisance Village (Georgetown)* were used to support young people in developing their horticulture skills, in a classic teacher-student exchange. These facilities were used and occupied constantly, in part because there were no other spaces available for people to grow food. This is a common theme in communities I have worked with across the United Kingdom, where austerity programmes for government and local council funding gaps have resulted in youth services being closed. While it is clear that the state needs to, and should do more to support these key services, educators and students are adapted, claiming or reclaiming spaces to ensure that community education is delivered. I returned from my Fellowship with a renewed commitment to challenging local council funding and government cuts to public spaces, yet also a greater understanding and a commitment to ensuring that young people are encouraged to use existing local public spaces. This involves an investment of time, connecting with local community groups and resistance organizations to showcase the power of participation with our public spaces.

***The different ways educators can “role model” the claiming and reclaiming of spaces:***

The greatest barrier to community education can often be the educators who seek to lead and support educational opportunities. The financial constraints of community education can be crippling for many organizations, with an overreliance on volunteer staff members, donated resources and a continual need to “ask” for funding. However, this should not, and does not need to prevent the creation genuine and meaningful opportunities for young people to participate. I was able to witness, for instance, in *Norrebro (Copenhagen, DK)*, in the middle of housing estates, public verges, garden space and abandoned ground transformed by individuals using “seed bombs” or “guerilla gardening” techniques to encourage a wealth of wild flowers, vegetables or fruits. I saw the same on the main street of *Plaisance Village (Guyana)*, *King William Street*, when walking around parts of *Canarsie in Brooklyn (New York, United States)* and even on a short journey to the *Central Square in Malmo (Sweden)*. This transformed urban spaces into urban oasis, which encouraged young people to pick and eat fresh fruit, to water and tend the spaces and begin to actively keep areas clean of rubbish and debris. The cost of this kind of activity is very low, but requires educators to be brave enough to use alternative or non-conventional action to begin to affect change in our local areas. By educators taking

the lead in using alternative and non-conventional action for staff, young people are able to follow this lead and begin to take ownership of their environments.

In New York at basketball parks in *Forte Green (New York)* where young people were being encouraged to play with elders, I found examples of community spaces being used, claimed, reclaimed for purposes of education, whether it was literacy, numeracy, chess, or, in the case of *Azide the Beast (New York)*, boxing. Whether it was street food cafes on pavements in Dumbo (New York, US), second hand school book sales in *Central (Castries)* or *Biblotek Blagard (Norrrebro, DK)*, ordinary people were claiming spaces that were not officially theirs, and using it to educate young people. The people I met, whether they were students, educators or the ordinary community continually expressed a dissatisfaction at lack of social and cultural understanding in conventional settings, concerns that this was at odds with the opportunities their young people could access in the future and satisfaction in the fact that they were active in making changes that would enable the best opportunity possible for their community.

***Placing experiences in a historical and theoretical framework:***

In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw, an African-American academic, coined the term “intersectionality”. Originally used to describe African-American women, Crenshaw describes intersectionality as “an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power.”-Intersectionality takes into account the many factors that make up a person’s environment - economic, socio-political, religious, sexual, racial, gender and location – and how these might increase discrimination. I view much of my experience as an educator within the intersectionality lens. If I place intersectionality at the centre of “space and place” question, I have been able to the way in which space and place is used globally and relating the disadvantage of many in relation to identity and power. In the UK, the Government is responsible for making education accessible and beneficial for *all* children. It was apparent, following my travels, that different Government have different responses to its use of space and place, determined by economics, political difference, and its policies for young people. Government investment can make a real difference to the lives of the young people they aim to include with accurate and measurable outcomes. This contrast was most apparent in Copenhagen, where local government have invested millions in youth orientated infrastructure such as

Kulture2200, which resulted in significant youth usage of community spaces. The polar opposite occurred in Georgetown (Guyana) and Castries (St Lucia), the Government funded facilities available in the *National Library* services (and youth study centers) were inadequate for the community using them, which meant young people were finding alternative spaces to study in. This made the role of voluntary community education spaces, such as *The Eddy Grant Centre* even more important as a space.

### **Light Bulb Moments**

While I had so many specific moments of inspiration, through visits, there were also moments of understanding that happened almost incidentally but which have since impacted my practice. My time in New Orleans made the connects between disadvantage and space, especially in a “developed” country. Travelling around the city from *Treme* on public bus (passengers were almost exclusively African-American) it was clear to see the “intersectionality” of disadvantage, through economic, environmental and racial factors. While in the United Kingdom, these factors are not as visible, there is much to apply to our context. I enjoyed spent time spent at the New Orleans Library. I was able to visit the *African-American Resource Centre* of New Orleans. This reference division, opened in 1997, offered a comprehensive collection of the New Orleans Public Library’s African American studies, cultural programming and education resources. It’s importance is significant, in that following “Katrina”, it has become one of the only programmes of its kind in the city. There, I was able to meet young black men and women from Algiers, The Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward and other outline areas. These young people, lived in locations which due to to the legacy of Hurricane Katrina (8 years earlier), still had no local library service. They therefore travelled for up to two hours on public transportation services to access the learning opportunities that were available, whether that was computer usage, books, literacy classes or peers. These young people were unable to access services such as YEP, but recognized that improving their education was paramount, and were prepared to commit time and effort to accessing what limited services were available to them. I felt, and the interviews conducted indicate that the focus on culture, language and identity of both staff, resources, material and ethos within the library, ensured that there was a clear determination on the part of young people to improve educational opportunities in spite of public service offering. This, to me, demonstrated that despite the intersectionality of social circumstance, young people were motivated to engage with education. This is something I have recognized in the United Kingdom, and was amazed by the

dedication and determination of educators to work within “the margins” to offer education opportunities to its young people.

**Language;**

In each location of my travels I met people services who consistently use and engage in the local language and dialects of the students. This was reinforced when referring to space and place, where local geography and environment is essential to using public spaces. As someone, who is interested in the language of instruction and how it can be adapted to support accessibility of students, witnessing this gave me further confidence in my own approach to language. I have long advocated *code switching*, a linguistics technique that occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages, dialects or “slang” in the context of a single educational conversation. Many community education projects in the United Kingdom have begun to apply and use Higher Education spaces have excellent models of participation, and have a important focus on language, in their teaching activity, but particularly with regards to role modelling for young people. I believe that we need to think more proactively about inventive ways we can inspire young people in owning their environments. I was encouraged to and begin to look at the application of code switching within community and conventional education. It struck me how engaged students were when their ‘teacher’ spoke to them in their language. It remains, to me an important part to creating a more inclusive educational environment.

## Themes

I identified six themes that ran across all of my experiences. I have used the Case Studies to describe, explore and evaluate these themes. Across my varied experiences, I found central to the delivery of education was a clear acknowledgement from the global community I met (whether that was students, parents or educators) that the existing education system was unable to provide a social or cultural experience for its young people and the space and place used provided an alternative opportunity.

- (1) Community education successfully operates inside or outside formal education spaces, relationships or fixed ideas of conventional education systems.
- (2) Communication (whether oral or technological) framed around oral knowledge and history can provide the building blocks for community education opportunity.
- (3) Existing resources can be legitimately claimed for use community education whenever or wherever necessary.
- (4) Local language, culture and identity provide a default means of exchange in this form of community education.
- (5) Community education already provides opportunity for transition, often not captured formally.
- (6) The owners of community education are its participants, who provide lifelong opportunities for its continued use within its community.

These findings, and the experiences I had on my Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship further confirmed my long held belief that (1) accessible education programmes that is (2) routed in the local culture, identity or language of its students can be (3) successful anywhere (city, town or countryside), (4) remain economically viable for its educators and (5) withstand the rigours of external inspection, while (6) securing its achievement, excellence and longevity for its community.

## Case Studies

### **(a) Community education successfully operates outside of any formal education spaces, relationships or fixed ideas of conventional education systems.**

#### ***Case Study: Kultur2200 at Superkillen, Nørrebro, København (DK)***

As Denmark's capital and seat of parliament, København is a uniquely youth orientated city.

According to data (Index Mundi, 2014) Denmark is a country with only just over 5m people, an average population age of only 41.6 years, and almost a total of nearly 900,000 young people aged under 24 years old. Through initial research, I was aware that København is a youth-focused city. The city facilitates over 100 annual cultural festivals each year that cater specifically for young people aged 16+.

Some such as Distortion (<http://www.billetlugen.dk/distortion>) offer a weeklong celebration in spaces across the city. Others are free whilst most are low cost. The local council funds others. All are embraced by the whole city and operate with a volunteer work force of young people aged 16+ who do every job from project management to litter collection.

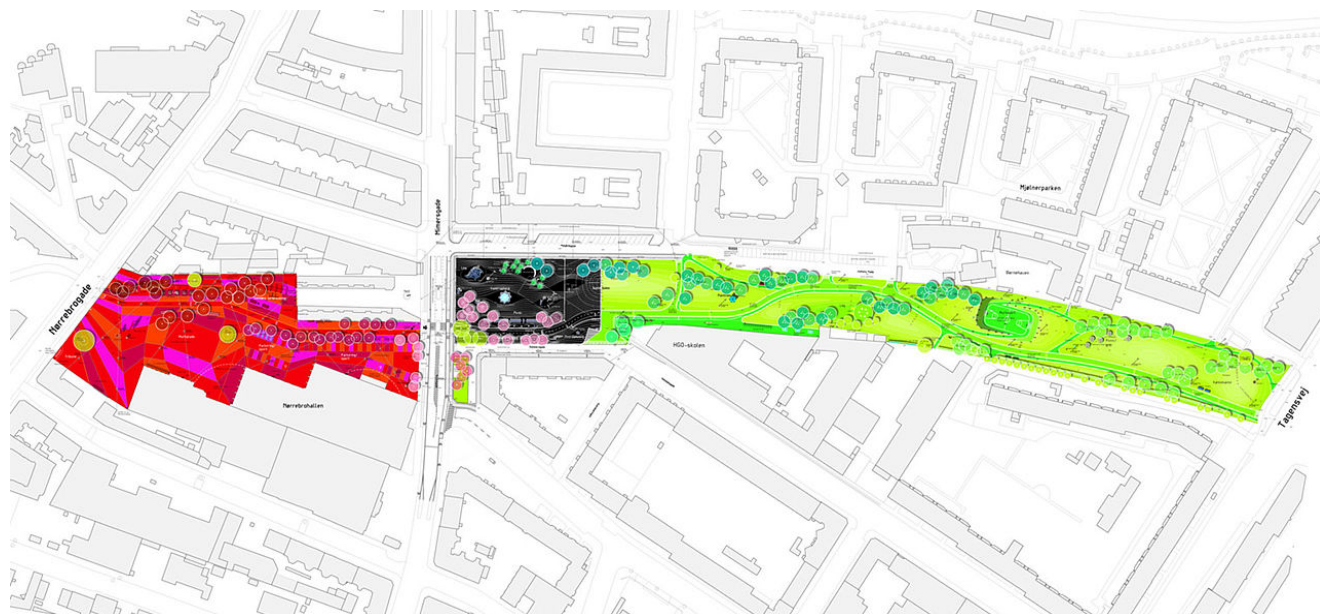


Source: [http://wikitravel.org/upload/shared/thumb/4/4f/Norrebro\\_map.png/350px-Norrebro\\_map.png](http://wikitravel.org/upload/shared/thumb/4/4f/Norrebro_map.png/350px-Norrebro_map.png), (2014)



One of the key locations that these activities take place is Super Killen, which forms part of an urban improvement plan coordinated by the City of Kobenhavn in the city neighbourhood of Nørrebro. The area is often described as socially disadvantaged, and is famous across the country for being the centre of Denmark's 500,000 strong migrant communities, who originate mostly from Europe, the Middle Eastern or sub-Saharan Africa.

However, the neighbourhood, which historically housed social justice and student led campaigns, has been the scene of regular riots over the last 25 years, often a range social condition. The objective is to regenerate Nørrebro to a high standard of urban development liable to inspire other cities and districts. Central to this was to create a place that provided different spaces for community to inhabit engage and adapt.



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superkilen#/media/File:Superkilen\\_plan.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superkilen#/media/File:Superkilen_plan.jpg), 2014

The park is 750 metres (2,460 ft.) in length, along either side of a public cycle track and covering a total area of some 30,000 square metres (320,000 sq. ft.). Superkilen is made up of three main spaces, all inhabiting the same space: a red square, a black market and a green park. While the red square, painted bright red, orange and pink, focuses on recreation and modern living, the black market at the centre is a classic square with a fountain. Filled with objects from around the globe, it is designed as a kind of world exposition for the local inhabitants, covering over 50 nationalities, who have been able to contribute their own ideas and artefacts to the project. It is an amazing space, full of wonder,

excitement, with meeting places, sports arenas, and things to do – everything you could want from a community space.



My first visit, on my first day of travels in July 2014, was, in all honestly, underwhelming. Wanting to start the Fellowship immediately, I arrived at my apartment, jumped on my rented bicycle, and headed straight for the complex. Within twenty minutes, I arrived. I felt that Superkillen was a wonderfully designed park, elements of which I had seen in the United Kingdom, where there are also wonderful community spaces. However, my expectation was that in mid-July, in the afternoon, Superkillen would be teeming with young people. It, as a community space in the middle of the most challenging area of

Kobenhavn, designed for one of the city's most disadvantaged communities should be used. To my disappointment, apart from a few skateboarders, dog walkers and cyclist commuting, Superkillen was empty.

In addition, Superkillen has an extensive art, event and education centre called Kultur 2200, which was also closed on this initial visit. However, there was a fundamental difference to many community sites and parks in the United Kingdom. Superkillen, as a space, has no gates, locks or padlocks preventing access. There also were no security guards, police or CCTV based observations which patrol or preventing any sector of the community from using the spaces. The whole community are empowered to use the space as they wish, at any time they wish.



I was able to make contact with Kultur2200 Operations Manager Ayhan Can, who was able to spend some time talking about Kultur2200 and provide invaluable insight into youth engagement in Norrebro, and the importance of community spaces. Ayhan and his team had specific responsibility for coordinating and developing the Superkillen/2200Kultur space, with successful relationships and partnerships with institutions, community groups, businesses and, of course the local community. After spending a short time with Ayhan, it was clear to see that the 2200Kultur approach to operating

and managing the variety of spaces within Superkillen fits clearly with a collaborative and community orientated approach to management of the space. Key to the approach that 2200 Kultur approach takes is to enable spaces to be made available at Superkillen as easily as possible, to the whole community without exception. Through my observations, this has been achieved in three distinct ways. Firstly, through a combination of regular, diverse and interesting event planning, 2200 Kultur is able to invite or facilitate individuals, community groups, partner organisations to use the communal space to deliver their projects.

Secondly, 2200 Kultur actively work with the whole community to provide services they, the community want in their community space. While there is clear acknowledgement that Superkillen may have been built by local government in response to specific community issues, and now sits in the midst of that community, it retains the autonomy to deliver to the community, by the community. This principle was clear on another visit that coincided with the final day of the Muslim religious period of Eid. Many of the Somali-Muslim community of Copenhagen made their way to the Red Zone of Superkillen to enjoy community based Eid celebrations before breaking their evening fast. Across from the Eid celebrations, skateboarders, BMX enthusiasts and parkour inspired 'free-runners' had an impromptu meet-up and were practising their skills, while looking on at the celebrations of the Somali-Muslim community. Very quickly, I witnessed the skateboarders being actively invited by members of the Somali-Muslim to engage in dialogue and practice with the Eid celebrations. These observations suggest that Superkillen retains, at its heart an emphasis on spaces which whole communities are free to explore and use, without exclusion.

Ayhan spoke of ways in which younger members of the local Muslim community are engaging with the space in contemporary ways. A group of Danish-Muslim girls had walked into his office and asked if they could use a space for a Girls Only music event, and wanted to borrow some DJ equipment and speakers. The girls said that there are very little events that are specifically for girls in their community. They continued to use in their convincing and compelling argument, that Superkillen could provide a space where elders of the Muslim community could ensure the safety of the girls in an public way. Ayhan supported the Girls Only event and found it grew in reputation and success very quickly, becoming a regular event.

Ayhan also referred to the importance of ensuring Superkillen provide services which continue to engage and enthuse young people. Ayhan was able to reference many other youth orientated events that are delivered by 2200 Kultur, The 48 HOURS festival (48timer.com) which takes place in April is a free to attend cultural festival, facilitated by Kultur2200, but specifically features events that are created by associations, operators, citizens and other enthusiasts in Nørrebro. Ayhan described the importance of events providing frameworks that coordinates and create a platform where artists and communities can meet and engage in new and exciting ways, showcase the diversity and inclusiveness specifically found in Nørrebro.

Spending a further week in Kobenhavn and engaging with different community organisations placed my visits to Superkillen into context. It is clear across Kobenhavn that accessible space exists for community use at every level, and at all times. There were very few spaces that prevented access. This starts with space for the immediate community, through the provision of communal areas in almost every apartment block. This extends to communal basketball courts, football pitches and city parks. This creates a culture for young people that encourage use and claim of spaces that can be used.

**(b) Freely available technology and traditional community relationships using oral knowledge and history can provide the building blocks for community education.**

***Case Study: Azide the Beast, Union Square, New York (US)***

Union Square provides an important intersection for several of the city's main roads; Broadway and Forth Avenue. As a pedestrian's location, Union Square is a popular meeting place, central in Manhattan, and with nearby subway routes. On the day I visited, one of New York's famous food markets, the Union Square Greenmarket – was being held. Served by a number of regional farmers, thousands of customers were present, purchasing more than one thousand varieties of fruits and vegetables.

However, approximately 200 metres away, in a small paved area with benches and a walkway, "Azide The Beast", Union Square's Street Boxer is in the middle of his routine. Azide, a 50-something year

old former professional boxer from New York has been conducting boxing exhibitions, street boxing matches or training in and around Union Square for “as many years as he can remember.”



Azide travels to Union Square daily, often accompanied by his wife, also a boxer, and begins his routine of physical training, exhibition, lessons and unofficial sparing fights. He is well known by local young people, as he has been involved in a wealth of youth sports programmes, community groups and boxing organisations. He also spends much of his day sharing his story with young people, using it as a cautionary tale of what can happen to any young people without elders guidance, a formal education and surrounding yourself with “good people”.

Known by locals, shopkeepers, park officials and police officers, Azide is a well-respected and familiar presence in and around Union Square, and provides a clear reference point for many young people in the area. Importantly, as well as providing a memorable local experience to visitors and tourists in Union Square, Azide acts as a reference point and information resource for local young people, in the great tradition of community education.

**(c) Existing resources can be legitimately claimed for use community education whenever or wherever necessary.**

**Case Study: The Eddy Grant Centre, Plaisance Village, Georgetown (GY)**

The Plaisance-Sparendaam Friendly and Burial Society was formed on June 1, 1950 by fourteen dedicated and committed villagers, whose vision was to enhance and develop community by offering financial, medical, practical, and moral support to those who need it.



This facility remains important to my family as two of the founding officers were my great grandfathers, J.A Bowen and H.Nurse, respectively. In its early years, the Plaisance and Sparendaam Friendly and Benefit Society was an example of the societies movement which played an integral part in village life, and their much-anticipated events were highlights on the village calendar. The annual fundraising events of train and boat excursions, backdam picnics, raffles, dances, tea parties, and other social events gave villagers a sense of togetherness and loyalty. Proceeds from those activities boosted the dividends payable for bonuses, loan schemes and even death benefits, ensuring that on their demise money would be available for their burial. This was paid to the person named by the deceased. Such was its popularity, the Society's executives had the foresight to acquire their own building, and hence the birth of 'Society Hall'. This building was the centre of social activities, hosting weddings, parties, church events, wakes, sport activities and other forms of cultural and social forums, which was built in 1967, south of the Railway Embankment on Prince William Street was a hub of activity. However, over the subsequent years, the death of its members and the non-functioning of the society caused the building to be left unmaintained, and it soon fell into disrepair.

In 2012, as part of the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the purchase of Plaisance Village (by freed slaves), the Society Hall was reclaimed and given a new lease on life, supported by the efforts of the local community, Plaisance Village's international community, and its patron, singer Eddy Grant.

Through significant investment from local people, the Eddy Grant Resource Centre provides a multi-media library and Internet space, homework and study area for young people, a cultural venue and a multipurpose centre for the young people of Plaisance village. At the time of my visit, I was hosted by a member of the centre's management committee, Mrs Beryl "Bobby" Haynes. The committee includes local community elders, including Eddy Grant as honouree president. In the tour, Mrs Haynes was able to show the facilities available. The centre comprised a substantial library space, a small office, storeroom and washroom all housed on the ground floor of the Plaisance-Sparendaam Friendly and Burial Society building. The library is open every evening (after 5pm) for homework space and library resources. Two local women are employed as librarian on alternate days. The resources from within the Eddy Grant Centre are provided almost exclusively without cost. Support for administration and the leading of activities are volunteered; books, DVDs, videos, CDs and technology are donated.



The Eddy Grant Centre still has some operational costs that are managed through donation and use of the network of the Guyanese diaspora, located mainly in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada. Central to the Eddy Grant Centre's delivery is that no cost is applied to the young people or wider community using the facility. The centre is also used to run health-care clinics in conjunction with NGOs and medical teams, vaccination and preventative strategy sessions.





Literacy (reading and writing) classes are also delivered from the centre, providing the whole community of Plaisance Village with access to tuition, advice and community education resources. Mrs Haynes was also able to discuss the challenges of running and maintaining the Centre. There is a dire shortage of volunteers in Plaisance and Georgetown, primarily due to the economic situation in the country. Funding opportunities from local government are non-existent, and without the management committee working with the Guyanese diaspora, the centre would struggle to exist. It is also heavily reliant on the patronage of Eddy Grant. The greatest challenge remains that local young people are disenfranchised, face economic and social uncertainty and generally are not committed to their futures. This ensures that they are unable or often unwilling to engage with elders of the centre, and can be unwilling to use the excellent facilities available.

To counter this, Mrs Haynes has a wealth of plans to further improve youth engagement, while encouraging use of the Eddy Grant Centre. Firstly, behind the Plaisance-Sparendaam Friendly and Burial Society buildings is a piece of attached scrub land, unused for generations. She hopes to be able to raise funds and donations to convert this space to a community garden; offering space for the elderly in the community, providing a sustainable system of community food production and opportunities specifically for employment for the community's young people. Mrs Haynes also spoke of a desire to provide social care for the community's elderly, with day centres and even social care, providing a historical link to the benefits systems applied when the Plaisance-Sparendaam Friendly and Burial Society was first opened. The Eddy Grant Centre model has caught the attention of many individuals and groups in Guyana and across the Caribbean. As well as requests to apply the Centre's model to other parts of Guyana, the programme has been championed in Guyanese, Caribbean and international press as a wonderful example of community education, owned and maintained by its community.

**(d) Local language, culture and identity provide a default means of exchange in this form of community education.**

***Case Study: Youth Empowerment Project. New Orleans, Louisiana, (US)***

According to a 2013 estimate by Tulane University (USA), about 18.2 percent of all 16- to 24-year-olds in New Orleans are described as youth offenders, the third-highest rate in the United States,

after the cities of Memphis and Las Vegas. Founded in 2004, the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) was founded by Melissa Sawyer and two colleagues who wanted to support youth people who had been involved with the juvenile justice system to build healthy lives, steer clear of the justice system, and remain safe. Central to the objectives of YEP was a recognition that the local parish, district or city council had provided no programme in New Orleans, or in Louisiana that focused on supporting young people who had were returning home from secure and non-secure offending facilities.

YEPs founders were all former colleagues from the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana's Post Disposition Project. The founders and staff had first-hand knowledge of the lack of services that were provided for former youth offenders, but also recognised the high reoffending rates or early death rates of this particular group of young people. Funded by donation and small scale investment, in its first year of operation YEP operated one small education program, which supported only 25 New Orleans young people, operating from a small-scale under resourced location on the outskirts of New Orleans.



Since then, despite escalating levels of social disadvantage, especially in the wake of 2007's Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, YEP has earned local and national recognition for being at the cutting edge of progressive programs for at-risk youth. The organisation has, out of need and desire grown significantly, strategically and steadily over the past ten years. It now provides the majority of youth based opportunity in New Orleans, from several centres across the city. This strategic growth has also been matched with a corporate based approach to delivery, with multiple revenue streams, strategic management employees and policy designed to ensure the stability and growth of the organisation.

I visited YEP and was due to be hosted by Jerome Jupiter, YEP's Director of Educational Services. Jerome, as part of YEPs 40+ person staff team had specific responsibility for developing successful relationships and partnerships with institutions such as the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, the criminal justice system, prisoner re-entry initiatives, the business community and substance abuse and mental health programs.

However, while waiting for my meeting with Jerome, I was shown to a small reception area. There, I was able to see some of the facilities available at the South Broad Street Centre. From reception, I was able to see that the centre comprised a central reception area, several classrooms, a series of meeting rooms, storerooms and washroom all housed on the ground floor of this anonymous South Broad Street building. A receptionist was located on a central desk, managing calls, greeting guests like myself and coordinating with staff and students class times, contact information and appointments. Observing these interactions, it was clear that the staff members and students all spoke clearly, articulately and passionately in a very distinctive way: using the language, tone and accent of New Orleans. Regardless of racial background, what was fundamental to these transactional or operational conversations was its basis and root in the language of New Orleans. Slang was used repeatedly by staff and young people, with references to places, for example street names from Treme used as reference points. (I was able to identify these as I stayed in the Treme district during my time in New Orleans)

For fifteen minutes I was able to witness personal interaction between young people exclusively, between staff and young people, and even between staff. All were made using the slang or informal language I had heard repeatedly in and around New Orleans. When staff or students spoke were speaking on the telephone to outside professionals, to other visitors, or myself by offering a greeting or offering a cold beverage, it was then that again exclusively formal language, traditionally associated with education was used. It was refreshing to see this change of language use, or *code switching* take place, with the endorsement of staff and professionals. When I met with Jerome, I asked him about this and he was very clear in its advocacy. He reiterated the fact that fundamental to YEPs strategic

growth is an organisation whose internal work, including delivery of its education programmes are rooted in the local language, culture and identity of the New Orleans young people it serves.

A key point highlighted, observed and championed via the YEP website is that over 70% of YEP staff members were born and raised in New Orleans. Similarly, the vast majority grew up in the same neighbourhoods as the young people they support, demonstrating a commitment to community education principles. YEP's staff members personal experiences and understanding of the challenges that New Orleans young people face, with the families and communities of the young people themselves provide the unique experience and qualifications required to provide support to YEP youth.

Jerome went on to say that there is high importance at YEP on community education being delivered by people in the community, especially when working with young people who are returning from secure detention provisions. The familiarity of shared culture, identity and language for young people is vital when attempting to overcome any negative stigma attached with previous education experience. This, according to Jerome had helped grow and develop the organisation from a small-scale education project to its present size and scale.

In 2014, YEP was recognised as the largest, most comprehensive youth serving organization in New Orleans, managing an annual budget of over \$3 million and serving over 1,000 youth through eight programs that operate out of seven different city locations. Through our eight programs, YEP supports young people aged of 7 and 24 with an wealth of youth focused services that include high school equivalency and literacy education programmes; assistance with transitioning into post-secondary education and employment opportunities; job readiness training; afterschool enrichment; academic support and tutoring; summer programming; mentoring; intensive case management; assistance with basic needs; and holistic pastoral services that are unique to individual circumstances.

With its mass appeal to New Orleans's young people, Jerome was able to discuss the strengths and new challenges of the organisation. He recognised that more and more young people are being referred to YEP or attempting to access their services, often by local charter schools as well as government-led youth services. However, the organisation, while receiving some local funding has

over 100 funding streams, many of which are listed on their website. As the services grow, so does the requirement to be able to fund services effectively. This is a great challenge, considering the economic challenges across New Orleans, and in particular in African-American communities, where many YEP students live.

Jerome reaffirmed that the greatest challenge remains that local young people are disenfranchised, face economic and social uncertainty. While YEP and other organisations offer opportunities for education and transition, the social and economic inequality that exists in New Orleans, and across Louisiana will ensure that young people will be unable or often unwilling to engage with community education services, and will as a result, fall into further social disadvantage. However, Jerome maintained that “we got to speak honestly, in the language these kids understand” as a first step in achieving engagement into positive community education programmes, such as those delivered at YEP.

**(e) Community education already provides opportunity for transition, often not captured formally.**

***Case Study: Despin Cinema, Despin, Aux-Lyon, Mabouya Valley, Dennery (SL)***



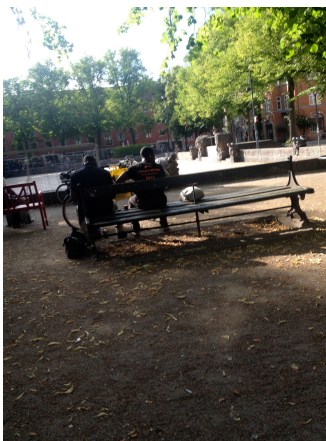
In Despin, the community has long operated within the constraints that seasonal or scare employments bring, and as a result, place significant value on the exchange of skills. A common phrase repeated is “nobody can go hungry in St Lucia”. The reason for this is that the rural landscape contains an abundance of fruit bearing trees, including mango, coconut, breadfruit or the country’s national dish, green banana. Through exchanges of labour, such as someone climbing a tree, carrying out a chore or task, young people are able to earn enough fruits, vegetables and other foodstuffs to feed a family. Despin Cinema provides a key example of this. The cinema, bar and functional hall is a

meeting point for the Despin community. While I visited, there was a requirement to repaint and refurbish the building. The owners decided to have a 'Good May', or working party. By providing ingredients for food and a constant supply of beer during the day for eight local young men were able to work. With an emphasis on professionalism and high value on their skill, the more experienced young men showed the lesser experienced building techniques, which were then applied immediately. This informal 'apprenticeship' provided everyone involved with an outcome. Young people can legitimately claim to have worked and have experience in a valued skill. Several of the newer young workmen were, on the strength of their work at the 'Good May' recruited for temporary work the following week by a local contractor.

**(f) The owners of community education are its participants, who provide lifelong opportunities for its continued use within its community.**

**Case Study: Varmestuen, Stengade, Norrebro, Kobenhavn, (DK)**

In Kobenhavn, near the centre of the Norrebro district, on Stengade sits an unremarkable house. In it is one of the few Varmestuen, or day shelters for young migrant men in Kobenhavn. Every day, at midday, young migrants from across the city arrive to queue for a meal.



As formal employment is illegal for migrants, many must use innovative means to support themselves. One of the most common mechanisms is to recycle, where if you collect recyclable materials, you are able receive vouchers from supermarkets or participating stores. At the centre's midday meal, many of the young discuss their work for the day, and discuss the challenges or successes they have had. Observing these exchanges, it was clear to see that the young men were clearly doing something that contributed to Danish society, and carried out their jobs with the dedication and enthusiasm one can only respect. Invited to listen to the stories, I asked what the vouchers were spent on. The answer

was simple. Universally, the men said “food, shopping and groceries or toiletries.” One of the men named Jasper provided further insight. He explained about the variety of services that the ‘day shelter’ offered, including a meal at lunchtime, beds for shelter and sleep for migrants, as well as a night service. Jasper made it clear that shelters were a safe space for migrants, and enabled many young men to start to build a life in Denmark. The men are from Africa or from Eastern Europe, and come to Kobenhavn to try and make some money to support their families from home, or they come here because of some political troubles in their home country. Jasper went on to rave about the services there, explaining that they are vital to helping ‘the guys’ get by. “Always,” said Jasper, “they are young men here, always.” Jasper explained that the Kommune offers a wealth of services for the migrant men, to help them get into Danish life, including making sure they are fed, have shelter, have access to some health care and also get to, and must, learn Danish.

The services always have to struggle for money, and they work through some state funding and donations, but if they weren’t here, he would have no where to go. Jasper then suggested I met the chef (manager) and perhaps has a real interview and discussion with some of the migrants using the service. In the middle of a busy service, her comments were quite simple and straightforward. “The inspirational men and women who work at the Shelter are almost exclusively volunteers, were migrants who have made a life for themselves, usually coming through this Shelter at some point.”

## Next Steps

My research and subsequent experience confirms that of much research, and anecdotal evidence of many professionals indicate that many young people leave conventional education vulnerable, without skills or resources to adapt to conventional society. This, without doubt helps accelerates the cycle of reoffending, exclusion and risk. My response to this, like many of the supplementary schools providers in the United Kingdom, was to create a community education programme that begins to 'plug this gap' for young people in marginalised community. The spaces and places we use remain under threat, through reduced funding, different Government agendas, privatization of spaces and a move towards formal regulation of the community education sector.

However, as a small, independent provider, like many of my peers, there are some specific challenges:

- Spaces such as libraries, community centres and public venues are not available for education activity to take place, without significant cost implications or legal penalty for use;
- The majority of supplementary schools have not got access to a sustainable revenue stream;
- Community schools, especially in light of the UK Government PREVENT strategy (2011) are perceived with suspicion by local and national government;
- Supplementary schools have fragile, or no relationship with conventional education programmes;
- Measurement of progress, impact and attainment within the curriculum of supplementary schools is difficult;
- Demand for supplementary education is variable, dependent on the relationships within a particular community;

As a result, and after consultation with several school leaders, including those who I met on the journey, my approach to next steps is as follows:

### **Short-term (0-1 year)**

- Continue to develop professional expertise to encourage community education within alternative spaces and place;



- Disseminate my findings from this WCMT Travelling Fellowship to all networks I have access to, including academic, professional teachers and educators, National Union of Teachers and others.
- Connect with national organisations to support networking opportunities for educators who are involved in mainstream and community education activities to investigate how a model of approach could be developed;
- Investigate, apply and share ideas of using (claiming, reclaiming) spaces as means to deliver education in my practice, across educational environments.
- Deliver expertise including focus on space and place for education to fellow educators across any network, including academic, professional teachers and educators, National Union of Teachers and others.

#### **Medium-term (1-3years)**

- Continue to develop professional expertise to include school's management experience
- Develop mentoring and support opportunities for peers within existing networks;
- Work towards writing professional writing focused on opportunities for social and cultural education within mainstream education;
- Continue working with colleagues to explore ways to increase application of social and cultural education within all education spaces;
- Work with academic and professional network to complete a postgraduate dissertation focused on social and cultural education;
- Join existing networks working within the area of social and cultural education in mainstream and/or community education;
- Work with/in mainstream schools to develop partnerships with supplementary schools particularly in supporting marginalised students.

#### **Long-term (3-5years+)**

- Support the development and establishment of a (1) accessible education programmes that is (2) routed in the local culture, identity or language of its students can be (3)

~~between the margins~~

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successful anywhere (city, town or countryside), (4) remain economically viable for its educators and (5) withstand the rigours of external inspection, while (6) securing its achievement, excellence and longevity for its community.

## Dissemination

To capture information, experiences and detail from the experience, I used a range of different social media to showcase my travelling experience. In my initial application for the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship, I was committed to presenting evidence of my journey in a variety of different ways.

This also enabled to fulfill, in part, one of my original and revised aims:

(5) Present results across differentiated medium (special event, edited film, printed report, photo journal, and website) which showcases the results of this study and its conclusions, and encourage the development of a network of shared practice between educators.

You are able to find the results of differentiated medium from my Fellowship report at the following web-based locations:

WordPress	<a href="http://thecultureyard.wordpress.com">thecultureyard.wordpress.com</a>
Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/malcolmrichards">@malcolmrichards</a>
Instagram	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/malcolm_richards">instagram.com/malcolm_richards</a>
Photographs	<a href="http://thecultureyard.wordpress.com/photo">thecultureyard.wordpress.com/photo</a>
Edited Films	<a href="http://thecultureyard.wordpress.com/film">thecultureyard.wordpress.com/film</a>
Printed Report	<a href="http://wcmt.org.uk">wcmt.org.uk</a>

## About Malcolm Richards



Malcolm Richards is a senior leader within mainstream and community education, with a particular focus on additional educational needs education. Since 2009, he has worked specifically with young people who through the intersectionality of disadvantage (economic, socio-political, religious, sexual, racial, gender, disability or location) can find themselves excluded from conventional education settings.

Malcolm is specifically interested in developing education projects that operate across the lifelong learning sector, with particular focus on how oral traditions, innovative teaching and frugal (free) technology can support inclusive education practices for disadvantaged communities.

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Dorte the Librarian,

The gentlemen barber from Guinea,

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### MALMO (SV)

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The Family Nurse (Guyana), Canarsie, Brooklyn.

The fellas playing b'ball from Edmonds Playground, Forte Greene, Brooklyn,

T Dot Flame (rapper), Union Square, Manhattan.

Azide The Beast (boxer), Union Square, Manhattan.

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The Plaisance 'Parliament', The Line, Plaisance

The Families Kellman, Nurse and Bowen,

The Eddie Grant Centre, Plaisance Village,

The Guyana National Library,

Beryl 'Bobby' Haynes, Plaisance Village.

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