

Commissioned report by University of Stirling for the  
SCOTTISH CENTRE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE

# Intergenerational Place-based Education

*Where schools, communities, & nature meet*





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## SECTION 1

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research, led by the author, Greg Mannion (University of Stirling), in collaboration with Claire Adey (field researcher, University of Stirling) and supported by Jonathan Lynch (advisor and researcher from University of Cumbria), was commissioned by the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice. The report is an exploration of the synergies (existing and possible) between intergenerational practice, formal school-linked provisions, and the field of place-focused approaches to education. Our focus was to consider intergenerational educational programmes that were connected to schools and at the same time, were concerned with making community-wide connections to *some local, outdoor and natural places* through outdoor experiences of different kinds.<sup>i</sup> Thus, the key aim of the research was to consider what were the opportunities and issues for intergenerational place-based education<sup>ii</sup>, what its effects might be, and what the consequences for other schools might look like.

The research comes at a time when schools are being encouraged to respond to new curricular imperatives in Scotland, within the *Curriculum for Excellence* initiative, wherein there is a focus on making learning more active, relevant, engaging, and problem focused especially through outdoor experiences (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). At the same time, new models of curriculum formation, and other forms of school-community linking for educational ends were important contexts as were changing demographics, the continued concern with social cohesion, and sustained interest in educational responses to sustainability within communities.

After providing some definitions of place-based intergenerational education, the report provides evidence from two case studies.

1. The first case we researched was a small primary school in an urban area with considerable experience in this work that engaged with their parents and community members to develop a community garden.
2. The second case was a secondary school in the Highlands who sought to experiment with outdoor 'journeying' in their local National Park with one 'year group'.

These cases provide a useful platform for readers to consider what may be possible across the school system if the resources found in local communities are to be harnessed for learning in, about and for local outdoor natural environments in Scotland and beyond.

## Key Findings

1. **Intergenerational Place-based Education** is an open-ended, ethical, embodied, and situated activity through which places and intergenerational relations are produced and skills, knowledge and values are learned.
2. **Purpose.** The dual purpose will be *to improve intergenerational relations and individual, community, and ecological wellbeing.*
3. **Scope.** Intergenerational Place-based Education will:
  - (a) involve people from more than one generation participating in a common locally purposeful, ethical and material practice that happens in some place,
  - (b) involve different interests across the generations and can be employed to address community vitality and environmental concerns through tackling some 'problem' or challenge,
  - (c) connect local places with other places.
4. **Requirements.** Intergenerational Place-based Education will require:
  - (a) a willingness to reciprocally communicate across generational divides (be it through consensus, conflict or cooperation) with the hope of generating and sharing new intergenerational meanings, practices and places that are held in common,
  - (b) a willingness to be responsive to each other, to other species, and to the world through taking shared action, and
  - (c) a shared task in some place that addresses a problem or challenge via learning skills, generating understanding, and addressing values.
5. **New Ways of Dwelling in Places:** Intergenerational place-based education encourages an examination of people's everyday ways of life, or, how they inhabit places. Importantly, this gives rise to new ways of dwelling in places that are formed through new intergenerational relationships. Programmes can bring generations closer together and contribute to social cohesion.
6. **Ethics.** Intergenerational place-based education is an ethical, embodied, and place-based practice founded on a process of the valuation and re-evaluation of places and of people's contributions across the generational divides. This includes the passing

on of values and ethical practices from one generation to the next and the creation of new ones.

7. **Outcomes for learners.** For any case, aside from outcomes relating to wellbeing and intergenerational relations, a wide range of locally specific outcomes are possible through intergenerational place-based education. These could be skills, knowledge and understanding, or values and attitudes.
  - a. Skill learning could be about a wide variety of topics: for example, horse riding, basket making, gardening, or plant identification. There are a multitude of possible skills that can be learned, as these are locally specific and determined by a localised curriculum set within a national one.
  - b. Knowledge and understanding is made possible through finding out about current and alternative ways of life, and how these are brought about in changed places through changed intergenerational relations.
  - c. Values and attitudes: improved appreciation of place and of intergenerational solidarity and the value of different ways of inhabiting a place. How and who decides on what counts as 'improved' may be agreed, contested or undecided at the outset.
  
8. **Effects on schools.** Through intergenerational place-based education, schools will likely need to change how they operate and maintain their boundaries. They will involve many new stakeholders and target groups from all generations both as participants in learning and in the design of curricula. Schools will become sites of reciprocal flows in knowledge and understanding across generational boundaries as school staff and pupils, school and local communities, people and place relate to each other differently.
  
9. **Material, sensory learning.** As an approach, intergenerational place-based education programmes affords many ways of making learning more engaging and memorable, more tangible, sensory in nature, and materially focused.
  
10. **Environmental Sustainability and Community Wellbeing.** Intergenerational Place-based Education in outdoor and natural places affords new ways of understanding and changing how human culture and nature relate. As such, it affords a way of addressing social, environmental issues and sustainability in the round. By exploring and connecting people to places in new ways, intergenerational place-based

education projects encourage ideas and practices that are directed towards making ways of life more sustainable and life-enhancing.

## Recommendations

1. That schools be encouraged to consider a more collaborative and intergenerational approach to curriculum design involving young people themselves, local people, professional practitioners, and organisations in investigations for understanding and changing local places.
2. That schools be encouraged to further contextualise national curricula and to draw upon local resources, local people and local places thereby taking into account their local environmental and social places (and people's sense of this) and the connections to times and places further afield.<sup>iii</sup>
3. That, as schools embrace a wider programme of outdoor learning (through, for example, Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland), they take more account of local context in its approach by attending to the way local culture interacts with outdoor practices and with 'nature' / environmental concerns.
4. That further research be conducted to advance these recommendations and further questions arising (see p 42).



Figure 1. Children explore a recently designed maze with their parents. See Case One (below). (Video still © the authors 2010).



## SECTION 2

### RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

#### Aim

We aimed to conduct a study of two intergenerational practice projects in Scotland where the generation of a 'society for all ages' was part of the project's aim, where the context spanned school-community boundaries, and where the focus of the work was in, for or about some local natural outdoor place.

#### Research Questions

1. For the two sampled contexts we set out to find out what participants:
  - a. ... expressed as educationally valuable, purposeful and what they saw as the outcomes of these experiences?
  - b. ... found important as they learned about, and through, the practices?
  
2. How was place and context implicated in intergenerational education?
  - a. How is 'place' implicated in the emergence of intergenerational engagement and what if any are the effects on child-adult relations and intergenerational education?
  - b. What are the opportunities and challenges associated with intergenerational practice and education in different kinds of places?
  
3. Can theoretical resources and empirical findings (from above) be synthesised to inform understandings or definitions of intergenerational education?
  
4. What are the implications for future programmes on sustainable place-focused intergenerational practice?

NOTE: See *Appendix One* for a summary of the methodology, methods employed, ethics and analysis process.

## SECTION 3 CONTEXTS

### Demographics and Intergenerational Issues

Scotland, like all countries, has seen changes in its population structure over the centuries. 'The Clearances' is perhaps one notable period in Scotland's history when forced population movement changed how people inhabited their landscape.<sup>iv</sup> In Scotland and the UK, like many other countries, we now face different changes to the age profile of our population and ongoing inward and outward migration. Firstly, there is a risk of a falling population due to a falling fertility and mortality rate. There is sustained inward migration however but this tends to be for work purposes. The result is less young people, more older people, and a more ethnically diverse culture. We expect the percentage of the population over 50 years of age to rise to about 40-50% by the year 2035.<sup>v</sup> We expect family structure to become extended through being made up of more generations but to be smaller in number within generations.<sup>vi</sup> Intergenerational justice is also becoming a new policy concern with younger generations suggesting preceding ones have not acted fairly with respect to the needs of those following (see Smith, 1999; Tremmel, 2009). With these changes comes a policy worry around the cohesiveness of society and particular concerns with the needs of the older population. While relations between the generations within families are seen to be relatively stable and self-sustaining, intergenerational relations outside families are seen to be more under threat (Lloyd, 2008). Factors seen to *adversely* affect strong intergenerational relations include increased longevity, population movements, the 'pace of life' in global times, new technologies, and contests among the generations for reducing resources (see Lloyd, 2008).

### Intergenerational Practice

In this context, the idea of intergenerational practice can be seen as a response to changing times. Intergenerational programmes have been shown to bring solidarity and stability to our economies, community cohesiveness, mentoring and a connection with the past for the young, and increased inclusion and engagement for the older members of communities (see Newman & Hatton Yeo, 2008). A useful definition of intergenerational programmes is provided by Generations United. This emphasises the reciprocal nature of programmes and shared outcomes. Intergenerational programmes are:

Activities or programmes that increase cooperation, interaction and exchange between people from any two generations. They share their knowledge and resources and provide mutual support in relations benefiting not only individuals but their community. These programs provide opportunities for people, families and communities to enjoy and benefit from a society for all ages. (undated, in Sanchez et al, 2007, p35)

Using this definition, 'Intergenerational', must refer to all relations between generations (whether consecutive or non-consecutive).<sup>vii</sup>



Figure 2. Place-based Approach. Outdoor places provide an interesting mix of opportunities for engaging with culture and nature at the same time. Here, the traditional method of using ponies (some of which were Highland ponies with traditional saddle bags) was used to explore a local landscape within a National Park. This area was once more densely inhabited by farmers. See 'Journeys in Nature', Case Two (below). (Video still © the authors 2010).

### **Place-based Education is an Intergenerational Project**

Place-based education (hereafter PBE), (or sometimes, place-based learning) is a community-centred, problem-focused, often hands-on approach to promoting learning that is based on distinctive experiences of pupils in local environments (including its history, literature art, and ecology for example). PBE has called for schools to re-think their relationship to their community. Bowers (2008) acknowledges the importance of local 'elder' knowledge and has called for a thicker description of local practice before deciding on the educative trajectory.

Gruenewald (2008) suggests PBE can offer useful '*opportunities*' for intergenerational collaboration and communication and acknowledge that within PBE, "the study of places can help increase student engagement and understanding through multidisciplinary, experiential, and *intergenerational learning* that is not only relevant, but potentially contributes to the well-being of community life" (2008b, 315, italics added). However, key texts in this area tend not to see *changed relations* between the generations or intergenerational learning as *an inherently critical element* and the intergenerational dimension is often subsumed within the homogeneous term 'community' (see Mannion, 2010b). Theories of PBE therefore lend themselves to being seen as consonant with intergenerational practice, since, on its own

terms, PBE potentially asks us to understand, interrogate and change the intergenerational transfer of routines and ways of life that enhance or harm people-place interactions. Other environmental educators too see schools, places and intergenerational relations as co-evolving and being affected by each other. McKenzie (2008), for example, sees environmental educative experiences as cognitive and embodied *intersubjective* process that involve people, places, and different species. We become who we are *through* both social and ecological relations.

### **Intergenerational Practice is Place-focused**

Inversely, we can suggest that any intergenerational practice is always located in a 'place'. Interestingly, there is a rise in interest in the value of 'shared sites' for intergenerational practice (Jarrott et al., 2006). Doreen Massey explains her view on how places 'work':

A less fixed view of space (Massey, 1994, 2005) suggests that it is more than a backdrop or a container for the action. Instead, spaces are *part of* the action, and very consequential in the forms of behaviour they afford and the emergence of the identities that inhabit them. Within this view, the self and space are intertwined in a co-emergent process. (Mannion, 2009, p. 333)

Massey (2004) invites us to see the identities of places as the products of relations which spread way beyond them. Intergenerational relations then are given expression locally in times and places. Intergenerational practice, when viewed as a place-based activity, allows us to see how new relations between the generations are produced in many different kinds of places. This is because it is through practice-based approaches to changing relations, that we, and our places, get (re-)constructed. Because place is an important player in intergenerational practice, we will also likely need to attend to the gatekeepers of these places and how boundaries are maintained; inclusive / exclusive practices affect membership and presence and, hence, affect subjectification processes.

### **Intergenerational Practice needs to be Open-ended and Educational**

Intergenerational programmes are distinctively focused on *changing* intergenerational relations and want to "promote greater understanding and respect between generations" (Centre for Intergenerational Practice, 2006, p5). This means that all intergenerational practice needs to have an *educational* element. If intergenerational programmes are 'for' a society for all ages, then they will need to be concerned with education that counters any unhelpful 'niching' of generations that works against social cohesion. But the exact local objectives of intergenerational education may be hard to define for all cases or in advance. Intergenerational encounters that are educational will be open-ended activities:

A meeting between generations, for example, therefore represents relations according to which what is sought is not objective results or quantifiable efficacy rates, but encounter, interaction, flows, affection, perceptions, contagion and the wishes of those involved in these relations. (Sanchez et al., 2007, p190)

Research is now suggesting that we understand learning as more of a social practice between people (rather than as an individual practice) (see Hodkinson et al., 2008) and has a generational dimension (Field et al., 2008). Many acknowledge the importance of learning and benefits of many different kinds of place: these include, for example, urban greenspace (Bell et al. 2008; Greenspace Scotland, 2008), homes, workplaces, museums, on-line environments. Learning in these places is likely to happen in ways that cut across generational divides (Facer & Sandford, 2010; Harper, 2009). Schooling provides but one expression of a particular form of generational ordering (see Pain, 2005) that may need further consideration. In Scotland, policy makers are aware that new and emergent *alternative places of intergenerational education* need to be understood and encouraged as the population ages (Scottish Executive, 2007). Schools are already being called upon to see the pupils working alongside their community in *local* (among other) *outdoor places* in order to benefit from well-planned, progressive and sustainable approaches to learning (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010) that make the best use of *natural heritage places* for education for sustainable development (Scottish Government, 2010).

### **Summary**

So far, we have discussed how intergenerational practice is an educational, open-ended process that is place-based, reciprocally experienced, locally expressed, and demands change in relations between any two or more generations. These ideas provide a viable platform for considering the purpose, scope and requirement of *'intergenerational place-based education'* (see Section Six, Discussion & Conclusions) in the light of findings from the cases (Sections Four and Five).

## **SECTION 4**

### **CASE ONE: Westhill Community Garden**

In this section we look at the evidence from the first case of intergenerational place-based education. After a brief introduction, we provide selected evidence under the subheadings of new boundaries, producing places, ethics, values and imaginaries, which arose through our inter-researcher interpretive analysis. A summary is provided at the end.

#### **Context**

Westhill is a primary school in an area of deprivation undergoing urban renewal housing development. The community garden space was left in a state of disrepair until two years ago when the school won an award to work on its redevelopment. The garden project has suffered from on-going vandalism but this has abated over time. The community garden project was part of an on-going effort to change the image of the school and its relationship with its locale. Of late, the school roll had increased as many parents were opting to send their children to this primary school now rather than the other local schools. This was thought to be as a result of the headteacher's distinctive approach to discipline and the 'open door' policy. As researchers we too experienced a generally open, less formal and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Children, staff and pupils were seen to share an entrance and the staffroom was frequented by children as well as staff (for example, in the afternoon pupils would come by to pick up props for the school play). In Westhill, pupil-teacher-parent committees in eco-school, health and school councils were meeting regularly.

The community garden development was one of a number of initiatives that tried to involve and encourage the parents to participate in their children's education. The hands-on aspects of the work for project is often led and organised by Frances, a local parent, through the support and leadership of teachers from the school. The project had received some grants and awards and other support from local businesses. Decisions about what to do in the garden reflected the desire to ensure the children had some pride in and ownership of the work. The children were involved in many stages of the work. The public entrance to the garden had been kept in place in an effort to build relationships with the community and to try to discourage people from the community from vandalising the garden. The children and teachers had access to wellington boots and gardening equipment that was stored in and around the school. Pupils regularly accessed these tools and worked in the garden during their morning break or lunch time and when the school was closed. Each class had worked with a visiting artist to design a particular area of the garden. Frances dedicated a lot of her

time and own resources from her own garden to the project. She regularly worked with the children and other parents during the school day as well as leading garden clubs that involved pupils, teachers and parents after school. Some events in the garden involved parents and their children in subject-focused tasks during the school day. The school held other less formal community events in the garden regularly (including a barbecue, an open day and regular participatory gardening days).

### **New Boundaries**

We found ample evidence that the project was resulting in rendering the school-community boundary more permeable. Parents were encouraged to access the school (often via the garden) even when there were no planned events:

Parent (mother): I came in last week ... they were on lunch and I came in to see what they were doing [in the garden]. You can come in when you like. I was passing [...] they had an open day [for the garden] and I couldn't make it. They [the children] showed me round.

How the school-community boundary worked related to how entrances and exits were used and managed:

HT: I think we genuinely value parents and accept them, differences and all, and understand the difficulties they might have in not coming to the school and so on; and even when they come in late to the school they can take their children to the class; they are not stopped at the office door. [...] it's a huge step in breaking down barriers and also we don't have this, 'if only those parents would behave more middle class we'd be fine!' [...]

We found that traditional school-community boundaries were also breached through subject-focused events outdoors involving parents and children in embodied active intergenerational problem solving experiences:

Parent (mother of P1): It's great to come out, especially if you get together, to actually come out and get to see what they are doing. [Whereas] In the class they are really telling you but [outdoors] it is nice to see them demonstratin' [...] the fact that you are outside, getting more hands on and that kinda thing.

Int.: Does it change the atmosphere?

Parent: Aye definitely. It is not really as claustrophobic I suppose [...]

Int.: Does it make it easier for you to come in?

Parent: Aye it does. You can concentrate. Definitely.



Figure 3. Parents and children worked together to perform maths related tasks outdoors. (Video still © the authors 2010).

Because the events were scheduled outdoors, they were experienced as inviting. The familiar nature of the place meant there were opportunities for active engagement for parents through local, familiar and material practices:

Int.: Does it make a difference that this event is outdoors?

Parent (father): It does in a way. That's what I like all the time. I wouldn't like to be workin inside. This is the kinda thing I would do. [...] the maze ... they are drawin it out. I am telling them [the children] what's left an right [...]

In the last five years, the school has shifted from solely offering indoor formal parent-teacher meetings to offering more problem-based outdoor activities driven by an interest in children's learning at one level:

Int.: Aside from the academic side of things is there any other impact?

HT: We've discovered that the parents won't come to a curriculum thing at night or a curriculum meeting on teaching reading; they just don't come [but] over the last couple of years, we have discovered that they will come to something that the children are doing.

The evidence suggests that the participants were engaged in a variety of boundary practices that were material with strong relational effects. Through the work to change the garden, the school-community boundary became less distinctly drawn and this appeared to allow for new points of intergenerational contact in various times and places (including the home, within the school and in the garden itself).





Figure 4. Parents, children and teachers gather outdoors for an outdoor maths event. (Video still © the authors 2010).

### **Producing Places of Intergenerational Education**

The next evidence supports the view that the making of the garden and its use during and outside of school time afforded an inclusive ‘middle ground’ where different generational groups felt comfortable to participate in practices of various kinds. The next evidence relates to the forms of learning that accrued from various forms of intergenerational education and practice-based links between the school and the community. We note that it was through *practices* of various kinds that the garden as an intergenerational educational space was produced and the attendant relations changed.

While children’s learning was offered as a motivation by both teachers and parents, a more distributed and intergenerational experience of learning was apparent for the headteacher (below) but also parents and pupils:

Int.: Who is learning here today would you say?

HT: The parents, children, everybody. [...] I would hope the parents are learning a wee bit more about how we teach children in primary schools. [...] they don’t realise that and they go away saying we really enjoyed that but most parents will be able to say something they learned.

With respect to subject-focused events in the garden, the outcomes for children were distinctive in that they involved a performative application in an everyday material place:

Int.: What do you see as the role for the garden overall?

HT: The biggest difference is the children can see the relevance of their maths [...] there was too much maths going on where the children couldn’t see the relevance of what they were doing. And they weren’t getting enough opportunity

to apply skills that they were being taught like volume, length, area, [...] I can see an improvement in their maths skill and their ability to work together

Here two teenage boys see wider benefits too that are related to the on-going garden development work, in particular, intergenerational teamwork:

Int.: Whose garden is it?

Local Teenager: The children. So they can work in it and see how it feels and then they can go home [and try it].

Int.: Who is learning here today?

Teenager 1: The children.

Teenager 2: Everyone.

Int.: What kind of things are people learning?

Teenager 2: Teamwork. Aye. [...] working along with other people so that when you are older you know how to work in a team.

Place-based school-supported educational activity meant there were changed relations among parents, children and teachers. There was evidence of a sharing of expertise among parents, pupils and teachers in a range of tasks associated with the garden (for example, weeding, soil enrichment, composting, and so on). Here, the child and the teachers learn from a parent about the use of a wormery:

Int.: Who do you learn the most from [when it comes to] gardening... is it your mother or the teachers?

PP: My mother.

Parent (mother): I brought in wormery stuff and showed the teachers how to make wormeries and I ordered 100 worms from eBay.

Here the pupil reports on how they get to spend more time with their parents, and also have a role in instructing them on 'what to do' while the father makes a different but practical contribution.

PP: I go down in the weekends, I do it with Frances [the parent helper in the garden] if she needs help.

Int.: So what makes you want to go down on the weekends and do it?

PP: When you're bored.

Int.: And do you go down on your own?

PP: Sometimes you need your mum or your sister or your dad to go down with you, but either that if you see Frances like you'll say she needs to come down [...]

Int.: And you said your mum and dad sometimes come down with you? [...]

PP: She plants the plants and she helps like with the digging and stuff.  
Int.: So do you show her what to do or does she show you what to do?  
PP: I show her what to do and then like she'll probably, cos my dad like he was going to make some planters, so she'd go down and take measurements and stuff [...].  
Int.: And is it nice to work in the garden with your mum?  
PP: Yeah cos I never really get to spend time with her cos she's always doing something.

The busyness of adults that is referred to above comes through again in this next extract. The following evidence from the pupils indicated that some of the learning was about gardening but also focused on the desire for changed relations between the generations through changes in place use:

PP: I think the teachers are learning too.  
Int.: What are the teachers learning?  
PP: To garden a wee bit better I think.  
PP: How to look after gardens and to interact with us more.  
Int.: They're learning to interact with you more?  
PP: Uh-huh, cos normally they don't like play with us or talk to us or anything, cos they're always too busy doing something else, and now that we're out in the garden she'll like, or they'll like come up to you and start talking to you  
Int.: So do you get to know your teachers better when you're in the garden, you're all nodding your heads for that  
PP: Yeah we see like the fun side of them  
Int.: You see the fun side of them?  
PP: uh-huh  
Int.: So they're learning how to relate to you differently?  
PP: Yeah [...] it's kind of good when you get to work with adults, apart from like they can do more stuff, but they can understand you more, like you need to do this and they listen to you.

It is worth noting that it was critical *how materials were sourced* as this involved the enactments of intergenerational linkages that brought about learning. The compost (see figure 5 below) was delivered to the school with the help of a parent. During the fieldwork, we took time to assist with moving some compost from the street into the garden. Pink suggests the sensory ethnographer can gain “access to areas of embodied emplaced knowing and to use these as a basis from which to understand human perception,

experience, action, and meaning and to situate this culturally and biographically” (Pink 2009, 44).



Figure 5. As researchers, we assisted with moving compost that happened to arrive the day we were there. We felt the shared activity of moving the pungent compost allowed us to gain some ‘correspondence’ with the participants’ emplacements in the scene. Indeed, the compost’s pungent smell lingered in our clothes, in the school and in our car for some time after! (Video still © the authors 2010).

In a related way, this father considers how the physical and material dimensions of gardening practices adds to what is possible with respect to his son’s upbringing and the way his own expertise gets valued within school:

Int.: What do you think the garden is for?

Parent (father): It’s teaching stuff, learning things. I need to learn how to get my wee boy a job. (laughs).

Int.: What kind of work would you like to see him get into?

Parent: I don’t know. I do grounds works, ... slabbin, fencing, pipe laying.

Choices about how to spend funds, how to enact the gardening were commonly driven by cost alongside a concern for the environment and a concern to make sure pupils and community members could participate in activities. One parent, who led the gardening club, describes her strategy thus: “it’s pretty much using what we’ve got, bits of scrap [...] it’s all imaginative”. Funds were used to employ an artist to help with design work, time was taken to make things, or grow things from seed rather than buying-in ready-made solutions. Materials were selected that were not going to adversely affect the environment (for example, paints with low toxicity were used) and pupils and adults helped with tasks.

PP: We never actually paid any painters, there was only one painter, he showed all the children how to paint and we all just got messy pretty much.

There was ample evidence of intergenerational education that was multi-directional and reciprocal in nature that had been brought about by concern with changing and enhancing a local place through material practice. While formal educational outcomes for children were important, and were planned for within events, these worked at a surface level catalysing other relational and spatial changes that grew from place-based intergenerational education opportunities.

### **Contingent Ethics, Values and Imaginaries**

The headteacher hoped that new ethical valuations would become possible through place-based intergenerational practice. As the garden is interacted with and changed, a future eco-social imaginary was created that might radically change relations among participants.

Int.: What's the big picture?

HT: Ideally, you would have, like we have in the nursery, where parents come in and play and work [with the pupils]. [interruption] Ideally we'd want parents to be coming in naturally and working with the class.

Int.: And the reason for that would be?

HT: Better partnerships to impact on [children's] learning. [...] working together.

'Opening up learning' was a term used by the headteacher to capture this place-based intergenerational imaginary that involved a widening of the target constituency from 'just pupils' to the wider community within new places and practices and through new kinds of valuations and meaning making.

HT: I suppose a lot of it is buying parents into our value system as well. [...] a lot of our children find it difficult moving from one value system at home to another value system in the school. [...] The more parents that are involved the more are likely to encourage their children not to vandalise this area. [...] I suppose we are opening up learning.

Another aspect of the imaginary future that is expressed through gardening practices relates to the school's reputation. While in the past, vandalism had been encountered (as was still a threat to the on-going work) and roll numbers had been low, now, new families were beginning to join the school and vandalism was lower. In part, this was explained by the caring approach to pastoral support, the impact of new building work, but also the gardening project. The pupils supported this view:

Int.: You said 'it's for the reputation of the school', what do you mean by that?

PP: Cos like it makes it look, cos before we had the garden it was all [broken] glass (unclear) and nobody really like came round to the school or walked by (unclear) and stuff like that [...]

PP: I know, I mean everybody looks down now from the flats, or they walk by and they come into it.

Int: Right, so it affects how the school is viewed. Do you think it affects how people think about the school?

PP: Yeah because they might think that we just don't care about like other things, but when we make it look nice they might think the school's like a better school because they're trying to help the community.

Int.: Right, and vice versa, the community helping the school maybe?

PP: Yeah, cos some people really do help the school, like donate raffle prizes or they'll help out in the garden.

### **Summary Comment on Case 1**

Using our definition of intergenerational place-based education (see above), the evidence suggests that the case was an interesting example for a number of reasons. The work to change the garden and improve it required communication and interaction between the parents, teachers and children within and through the *material* practices afforded by the place. For almost all our respondents, the garden functioned as a site or place-holder for working towards imaginary futures (for parents' children, for teacher's school, for children themselves). The practice of working towards these futures connected younger and older people through a process of place production and intergenerational action. The futures being envisioned and to some extent being realised (in respondents' terms) included outcomes such as changes to intergenerational relations, to how the school, was viewed, increased roll numbers, a reduction in vandalism, better partnership in education, and more respect for the natural environment. Through practices, there was a perceivable movement of boundaries around what kind of education was possible and where educational activities were possible which seemed critical. This intergenerational boundary 'work' was connected to local place production via material practices, and the generation of some sharing of ethics, values and imaginaries across the generations.

We notice that practices were both located in one place (the garden) and were yet connected to other times and places (involving shop-bought Wellingtons, worms from eBay, compost from parents, planters from a father's shed and so on the compost was made elsewhere, the seeds came from locals' gardens). The *local* place of the community garden can be seen as itself the effect of local and *extra-local* participation; it is a hybrid production.

The materials too (living and non-living things) that made up the places had a part to play in this meaning making: compost smells, seedlings thrive or die, parents come and sit on benches while their children play, insects populate the bug hotel (Figure 6, below).



Figure 6. The garden club was working to construct a “Bugs’ Hotel” – a place for invertebrates to hide and live. This is an interesting place production: a construction that perhaps symbolically expresses the on-going child-adult cooperation but also an awareness of the importance of inter-species, person-material relations in places. After Ingold (2008) we can consider this ‘bug hotel’ as a place-based ‘gathering’: it is in an on-going process of formation rather than a static ‘thing’. As such it reminds us that we (with other species) live *through* places in an ‘enmeshed’ way. (Video still © the authors, 2010.)

## **SECTION 5**

### **CASE TWO: Riverside High School & Journeys in Nature**

In this section, we explore evidence from the second case. Some context is provided with some examples of the plans for the intergenerational place-based event we researched. Then evidence is presented under the themes of children's experience, changed intergenerational relations, intergenerational sense of place, and schooling: barriers and opportunities.

#### **Context**

Riverside High is a medium sized secondary school located in the highlands of Scotland. It is located within a village and sits within a National Park but has in its catchment some seven other villages and towns and a wide area of sparsely populated countryside. The school is a typical 1970s construction and is surrounded on different sides by a rivers and a mountain range. The 'Journeys in Nature' project reported upon here grew from an initiative by Joyce Gilbert from SpeyGrian (a charitable environmental education organisation, see Appendix Two) to help schools consider the importance of local National Parkland for pupils within its boundary. SpeyGrian's philosophy behind this and its other work is to promote creativity through shared experiential outdoor learning.

The aims of the project were to use the concept of journey as a way to help people discover the intricacy and wonder of their local landscape, wildlife and culture including local RSPB sites, the National Nature Reserve and the National Parkland. In particular, the project sought to explore how a combination of writing, arts & crafts, ecology and history can help people connect across generations and in the process develop sense of place and strengthen community identity & cohesion.

Within the school, there was a desire to explore how journeying can be a meaningful practice that might catalyse changes in pupils' relationship with others and with the natural world. Whilst the school had many on-going practices that linked them to their community (a 'rural skills' programme, visits to farms, local volunteering), this two day event was a bit of a departure for the school in terms of its style of programming. In research, there is a rise in interest in how journeying, such as walking (and 'walking interviews' as a method) helps us understanding and generate sense of place (Ingold, 2006).





Figure 7. Walks took pupils to local historical sites as well as areas of special scientific and environmental interest. (Video still © the authors 2010).

The project idea offered by SpeyGrian was welcomed by the headteacher and staff and was one of a number of initiatives that the school was employing to broaden the curricular experiences for pupils through community involvement within the new framework of Curriculum for Excellence. Many staff members, as you would expect, had intimate knowledge of the locale (either through having local historical knowledge, relationships with friends, or hobbies such as hillwalking or running). It is noted by academics, researchers and participants in the study that these ‘funds of knowledge’ (and other knowledge capacities among the pupils) (Moll et al., 1992) were not that connected to the everyday approaches taken to teaching in school.

In contrast to the other case, the school did not have the same degree of sustained interest in the distinctive *intergenerational* aspects of educational approaches but was keen to consider the possibilities of engaging pupils in a place-focused educational experience that was supported by community members. The school staff were informed of the project and there was a half-day CPD input about intergenerational studies and place-based education. Other meetings facilitated further planning with the teachers. The project itself (aside from the research component) was funded in partnership with the school, RSPB Scotland, and had support from the National Park Local Action Group, Awards for All, a small funding scheme offered by Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice, and, Book Trust Scotland.

The ‘Journey’s in Nature’ strategy was to bring all of the S2 year group (some 90 + pupils) on a set of local intergenerational and arts-based trips in the local National Parkland (which is on the school’s doorstep). A set of nine journeys were planned for all of this group on the same day involving different modes of transport – on foot, by pony, by bike or by canoe.

### Some Example Journeys

- *Using highland ponies and some other ponies to travel up the local glen with a writer and an ecologist and a place-based educator.*
- *Traveling by open canoe through local nature reserve in the company of a poet/nature photographer, a sound artist and the reserve warden*
- *Taking mountain bikes on a network of paths. Teachers, pupils and community group members of all ages, in the company bushcraft instructor & storyteller and artists.*
- *Journeys by foot on network of paths linking the local communities. Pupils, teachers and community group members of all ages, in the company of craftworkers and an environmental historian.*

### Example Plan for one of the Journeys

#### Outdoors – Day 1

- *Moving through the land on horse-back: sensory exercises to compare and focus on the new ways in which we are experiencing and moving through the landscape.*
- *Sharing some information on the process in spring where the women and children made their way to the shieling to set up for the summer (from pupil's research and facilitator knowledge). Engaging practically in this history by setting up a shelter, finding firewood and lighting a fire by traditional methods. We can explore other useful plants that would have been used, and how it might have felt to leave the 'winter town' behind.*
- *Poetry and story at the shieling – shieling songs and poems were very common. Reading some and exploring the themes will lead into the pupils creating and telling some of their own stories around a fire. We can compare new and old ways of entertainment.*
- *Land use at the shieling – exploring the surroundings and signs of change in the landscape through observation, place-names and story. The pupils can produce a before and after drawing of the shieling ground, allowing them time to slow down, observe and consider the changes that have happened in this place.*

#### In Class – Day 2

- *Research into shielings and local stories from this period.*
- *Comparison with 'transhumance' practices from other cultures (many other pastoral herding cultures had the same seasonal patterns)*
- *Development of stories, drawings and mapping on return to the classroom.*

[Thanks to Sam Harrison for permission to include this]

Members of the local community were invited to join the pupils and other local 'experts' in art education or environmental education were enlisted to help. The school sought the help of some ex-teachers but many were unfortunately away at the time. Each group was accompanied by a facilitator drawn from the SpeyGrian network – a diverse group of artists, ecologists, writers, historians, musicians and educators who are experienced at working with people of all ages (see Appendix Two). Members of the network are skilled in facilitation and encourage active participation. The first day of the project involved 'journeying' while the second day involved workshops where participants were encouraged to share their journey

experiences through a variety of media e.g. writing, artwork, crafts, photography, sound recordings.

### **Pupils' Place Experiences and Learning**

Children were interviewed on their journeys on day 1 by three researchers and again on day 2 when pupils across all journey groups were invited to review their experiences. Data below relate to more than one journey and comments used below were the ones we found were reflected across the groups in the main. Across the groups, pupils reported a high level of engagement in learning:

R: Because you are like learning a lot more. Cause you are outside and it's like fresh air. And there's like lots of things around you instead of the four walls in a classroom.

Each journey offered a distinctive social experience of moving in a landscape and these ways of travelling were reviewed as being memorable, and were experienced as being 'out of the ordinary'.

R: We learned by doing things yesterday.

Int: We learned by doing things yesterday?

R: Yeah and not just being like...taught about it.

Int: Right now is that, why, why was that the case I wonder? We learned by doing yesterday because...

R: To feel what it was like.

Int: ...so what were the ingredients that made it learning by doing?

R: Teamwork, other people.

The learning seemed to be experienced as authentic for many children. They compared these outdoor experiences to other ways of learning which when indoors were less active. The interaction of the social, activity, and 'place' dimensions (see Mannion et al., 2007) were what appeared to make the experiences educational and meaningful.

R: Like seeing the horses and actually getting to ride them.

Int: Right.

R: Not just like say learning about them and that.

Int: Yeah okay.

R: It's kind of better when you are with friends as well cause then you have like more to talk about instead of like just being stuck in, in a classroom where you can't really talk and all that.

Learning outdoors also meant having to “deal with” (pupils’ term) the changing weather that made them cold and wet on Day 1, and other ‘unpredictables’, including the behaviour of their horses and their emotional (sometimes nervous) reactions to the animals. Other groups who were walking on foot also had experienced very inclement weather on the hilltops and this was a very notable part of the experience, especially for these pupils. These contingent events meant they had to ‘deal with things from their own perspective’ (pupil’s comment) without others ‘telling them what to do all the time’. One girl claimed she overcame her ‘fear of horses’ but perhaps had now replaced it with a fear of sheep! Horse riding was memorable for all sorts of reasons in fact: children remembered ‘their’ horse’s names perhaps because they developed a relationship with them. They remembered how their coats felt and how warm they were compared to themselves at times.



Figure 8. Many of the journeys involved walking, observing, drawing, writing and recording. (Video still © the authors 2010).

Journeys were often important to pupils because they introduced them to a skill. Fire lighting was mentioned in more than one group and was memorable because they roasted marshmallows, brewed tea, or because they learned how to use gravel from the river in order not to leave a trace on the grass. Mostly, the learning was categorised by pupils as a different or one that you normally ‘do not do at school’ akin to some other life skills.

R: Cause it’s something that you’ll never forget.

Int: Something that you never forget.

R: Cause like you don’t forget how to ride a bike.

Int: Do you think you’ll forget today?

R: No I don’t.

These contingent events encountered by pupils were dealt with by pupils but often with support from the adults present. Teachers, community members and researchers alike all worked to help pupils when needed with keeping the pupils dry, navigating the way, showing how to light a fire and so on. Importantly, the skill learning opportunities and interactions with other plant and animal species were made possible and were facilitated by adults who worked to point things out, indicate what might be happening in places (such as a tree decaying) or what happened there in the past (such as marks in the ground that marked farm dwellings from the time of the Clearances).



Figure 9. The adults pointed out where it was best to drink from the local burn. Many of these children had never drunk from fresh running water outdoors before. (Video still © the authors 2010).

Some of the journeys looked at the history of the landscape, considering how people lived in these glens and farmed them while now they are almost unpopulated except by wildlife.

Int: So...why would a school want to have children understand the way people used to live around here in the past?

R1: Cause it's like our families who [used to] live like that. [...]

Int: Who's place is this?

R1: Everybody's.

Int: You think this is everybody's place.

R2: Nobody's, nobody's like...

R3: The wildlife's.

There were many mentions of animals in the interviews with pupils. Many journeys were memorable because they involved encounters with other species of animals and plants: mentions included finding out about the herons in the marshes, finding caterpillars, and the

signs and traces of animals such as squirrels, pine martin and mice, the foods they ate and the names of different plants and their uses. A good number of the pupils were themselves surprised by what they learned and what they did not know about their area. Staff too learned new things from facilitators like how to recognise a woodpecker's next site. Many pupils had never been to the places visited.

R: [...] like the area you live in, you learn more about habitats and all that. And it's, I like it, it's really fun.

Int: Yeah what makes it [fun]?

R: You just get to mix with people more and you get to actually see what kind of animals you have around this area.

Int: Hmm.

R: Animals you wouldn't think you would normally have here.

Int: What kind of things yesterday then?

R1: Well I think it was just the fake, what is it? Fake...

R2: Truffles.

R1: ...truffles that the squirrels bury [unclear].

Int: Right, oh right yeah.

R2: And the boys were experts at them. They found about twenty something.

One group learned to make baskets from birch and willow they had collected on the first journey day. In this process they learned about local plants and their current and past uses.

ST: ...I mean [name of facilitator] is very good. She's got a lot of background knowledge and plant uses. And, you know, she was talking to them about, they were talking about the smell of the wet willow. [...] And she was saying ... well it's the same kind of derivative as, or same kind of thing as aspirin. And then she starts telling them that in old days they used to give babies willow to chew when they were teething. You know, and so they, they have learnt a lot. [...] they will recognise birch now.

### **Changed Intergenerational Relations**

There was evidence that the two days had affected intergenerational relations between staff and pupils, and, between pupils and other local adults through the work of participating facilitators and community people.

Many pupils noted that teachers' roles had changed through the activities of the two days somewhat: "when you are outside they give you time to think about things [...] when you are outside and you actually learn about stuff. They'll give you a couple of minutes just to think

about what you are actually gonna talk about.” The change in relations between pupils and staff related to pupils sense of ‘fun’ (a term commonly used in pupil evaluations) and feelings of freedom or, as one pupil put it, being ‘let off the chain’ (S2 boy).

Teachers, in turn, noted some changes in their relations with pupils:

ST: And in fact it’s good because you actually have the chance to actually talk to them.

Int: Yeah.

ST: Whereas in the, in lessons it’s often very intense and very full on. And you are sort of, you know, getting through the, the content. And it’s very difficult to get that time, you know, to actually relate to kids directly. But, you know, that’s part of it. But it’s not easy to do. [...] I mean I’ve taught quite a few of them but there’s a few I didn’t know at all. But again it’s just getting to know them better.



Figure 10. One of the teachers explains that this Harris tweed coat was made in the local area and was owned by her father who passed it on to his family. Each of the local estates used to have their own tweed pattern. Local mills drew on the power of water to weave yarn and provide much needed employment. (Video still © the authors 2010).

Pupils liked the opportunity to meet local people and other facilitators for whom they had respect because of their expertise and knowledge. One said of their community member: “He looks like he knows how to do everything”. Another commented:

SP: ...well because like the people who are telling you are normally local so they’d like know more from their ancestors [...] [that] could have like actually lived there.

The next pupil noted something more detailed about their sense of the authenticity of stories from locals which he valued as it provided “different points of view”:

R: Ruairidh’s dad yesterday had actually been there. Like he had actually lived and like seen this.

Int: Right so does that make a difference?

R: So it actually makes a difference.

Int: Does it make it a difference to how it impacts upon you?

R: Cause then you, you’d actually know where it came from then.

Int: Right and that...

R: They can tell you for themselves how they felt about it.



Figure 11. Here, local participants, (left and right) with an educational facilitator (centre) explore how people who used to live in the glen with pupils (out of shot). Stories about past inhabitants’ lifestyles are shared. (Video still © the authors 2010).

### **Intergenerational Sense of Place**

Pupils picked up on the difference between past lifestyles and current ones. Stories were used often to exemplify this difference in many groups. One story related the way sphagnum moss, with its natural antiseptic qualities, was collected by children and sent out to troops in France during World War I. Recent housing developments in a local town were seen as “like kind of ruining the lifestyle that it used to be”. One pupil noted that older people in particular could help with their learning about their local places: “Like all the elderly people cause they can tell us their experience of growing up before it was like all the houses”. A community member noted: “yes there’s lots of people like me that have interest in different things. And I’m sure they could all contribute [to school work]”. A pupil used a term she appeared to have learned that day: “it’s your heritage”; another said the local context was important because “this is where you were brought up” though they wanted to explore other places outdoors too



to be able to compare them. There was evidence of a changed emotional sense of place that was informed by intergenerational dimensions to the experience.

R: And when you are walking about you can, you can like kind of feel like what it was...

Int: Hmm, do you think you see your place differently after yesterday?

R: Yeah.

Int: Really?

R: Yeah.

The presence of adult facilitators and local people in this journey led the pupils to see “how much things have changed” (SP) while another had a developed sense that “the lifestyle that we have nowadays is not sustainable” (SP). Intergenerational contributions afforded a new form of perspective taking:

R: Well yeah because people who are local, like to the area and they’ll moan about it and you can learn from them what’s going on locally and what’s been happening.

Int: Right so what kind of things did you pick up from...

R: Well how Ruaridh’s father was like, he was used to it, and he used to live there and now and then he knew all the history of it.

Int: Hmm.

R: And Ruaridh seemed to know quite a lot too so we learnt from that. So...

Int: ...yeah. Does that give you a different feeling for the place or does...

R: ...well yeah it makes you look back and like how it was.

We have seen how local participants brought diverse expertise and opinions to bear on the educational opportunities the children experienced. This included critique of the expansion of housing, the need to conserve habitats, and the need to change current lifestyles. This local adult summed up his critical approach to introducing the pupils to the previously inhabited landscapes of the highland glens before the ‘Clearances’.

R: Well, you know, the landscape of Scotland today is a lot different from what it was 150 or 200 years ago when these glens were occupied. And I suppose when you go up and you look at the kind of lifestyle that they would have had, there’s quite a few things that come out. But one you can reflect on how well off we are today and how much easier lives are because we have washing machines and we’ve got warm houses and we can cook and we’re dry. [...] I suppose a lot of the children here won’t realise how well off they are, I don’t think.

Community perspectives offered a situated understanding of how places had changed and continued to change and how they might be different in the future. This was made possible by having been a family that have been “around for a while”. Facilitators from outside the village noted that community members had a distinctive vision of ‘being in a place’ that was connected to older farmsteads, families and networks. It was noticeable how some were keen to connect up information about the pupils’ families with the farming families they knew.

R: It’s, you know, you try to, to find connections between people. [...] there’s an old guy [in the village] that, he’s still around today in fact, but always the first question just about he would ask you was “who’s your father?” And that was him trying to, to work out who you were and where you came from

### **Schooling: barriers and opportunities**

Teachers were enthused by the events in the main. Some noticed the difference between the way it was staffed and funded and what might normally be possible. They noted that there were barriers to doing things like this again including finance, child protection issues, staffing, time, exams pressures, and timetabling.

R: There is but I mean I think a lot, a lot of the bottom line does come down to financing it. Because as soon as you’ve got pupils going out, we talk about a one to ten ratio okay.

However, they also noted that they were doing similar work to this through other programmes and that Curriculum for Excellence was providing new opportunities for this sort of approach to be taken. Some staff felt there would be reticence from locals to being involved in the schools’ activities either because of time, lack of expertise or because they had had a poor experience of school themselves. Children seemed less constrained in their expectations of what might be possible. We discussed with the children what role if any community people and locally based experts might play in a school, context.

Int.: Do you think community people would want to be involved?

R: Yeah I think they would.

Int.: Do you know people who would give you a hand with your education?

R: Yeah, like Kathy yesterday at the marshes and like people in historic places and all [the] nature reserves. Cause they’ll be happy to show you around and what is actually going on and...

This topic led these S2 children (aged 13-14) to notice an intergenerational divide and their sense that relations could be reciprocally educational.

Int: Hmm, do you think you know, as kids do you know lots of older local people who are, who know about their local places and...

R1: Hmm, not really.

R2: Not really.

R3: I think they've all kind of, they've all stayed to where they've been and we're just...[pause]

Int: So do you think there's a bit of a division between the generations?

R1: ....I think so.

R2: Cause you don't really see people our age talking to like people much any more. They just ignore them.

Int: Hmm.

R: And like...they don't come in like to talk to us about anything.

Int: Would you like them to?

R1: Yeah.

R2: Yeah we'd like to give them advice for once instead of them trying to give us some.

Int: Hmm, you'd like to do that both ways?

R: Yeah so you have some responsibility.

When children were asked what the school might feel like if more community-based people were involved one said that they thought it would have to become cleaner and would be "always welcome and really busy at the same time".

Int: Right. Do you think schools are connected to their local places?

R: A bit, I think.

R: A bit but not much cause you don't, we tend to stay in classrooms more.

Int: Right.

R: And then learn things like out of books instead of going outside to actually see it.

Another thought that community participation might "make them feel a bit happier and make us learn a bit more about what they love to do".

Int: Hmm, somebody mentioned like game keepers or...

R: Yeah they'll know a lot about the land.

Int: Yeah or just farmers or people working in local businesses maybe or...

R: And people who stayed there for loads of years, sorry.

R: Like all the elderly people cause they can tell us their experience of growing up before it was like all the houses and...

Children's sense of who might be involved compared to staff's initial thoughts which were to call upon local ex-teachers who would have, in their evaluation, more time and expertise and solved their concerns over child protection and the issues around having to get people 'checked'. More fundamentally, the role of the school might be seen as not including too much of an emphasis on learning intergenerationally due to other pressures.

ST: ...but it's not part of our function at the moment is it. [...] the main part of it is if you are looking at it as an assessment, marking, it's exams, it's looking at getting national qualifications. [...] English and maths have got big classes. They've got very full timetables. And, you know, you are just trying to keep up with your workload. To actually have the headspace to say 'right how about going to chat to so and so and see if they can come in that...'

## **Summary Comment on Case 2**

This case has shown that there were outcomes for intergenerational relations between staff and pupils, school and the wider community. There was a realisation that there was an untapped potential by community people, visiting facilitators and pupils. Teachers could see new possibilities within new curriculum framings for connecting coursework to these approaches in ways that could meet teaching and learning outcome imperatives in locally specific ways. Pupils noted that community members brought new authentic, situated, perspectives and had locally valuable knowledge bases. We found that intergenerational place-based learning was quite materially-focused, hands-on, sensory in nature and engendered opportunities for encounters with living and changing places inhabited by people, now, in the past and to be inhabited differently in the future. The activities allowed pupils to be connected with local places in new ways through encounters with living things (domesticated animals as well as wildlife) and non-living things (eg water in the burn, archaeology). These experiences brought many pupils to reflect on how they live now and how they might live in new ways in a place.

Culturally, researchers, pupils and teachers all noticed that the Journeys in Nature two-day event was perhaps a 'step change' for the school; there were suggestions that things would be 'back to normal' once it was over. This was understandable since everyone's sense was that the numbers of visiting facilitators and others in and around the school was exceptional. Most staff felt a more manageable and sustainable approach might be required if it were to be sustained in a different form. However, there were differences between staff members' views and what pupils and community members thought would be possible and who might have input in a more sustained programme of intergenerational place-based education. Particular pressures were strongly felt by staff with responsibilities for older pupils facing

examinations (with the knock-on effect of needing to not interfere with timetabling of class periods). This, alongside the lack of tradition around intergenerational models of place-based education among the school sector generally, suggests that we need to remember that teachers' assumptions, beliefs and actions are likely to be critical in curriculum development and enactment and that as curricula change so too do teachers (see Stenhouse, 1975). This case may have been exceptional in its collaboration with so many outside facilitators. Yet, the case allows us to see what might be possible in other schools.



Figures 12 and 13. Day 2 in the classroom (above). Example map of one pupil's intergenerational journey (below). (Video still © the authors 2010).

## SECTION 6

### Discussion & Conclusion

In this section, we look across the cases to consider our findings and conclusions.

#### *Defining Intergenerational Place-based Education*

We have argued theoretically that intergenerational practice is a place-focused activity and that it requires an educational component. This education will be open-ended, place-based, reciprocally experienced, locally expressed, and demands change in relations between generations. The following working definition captures these key elements.

**Definition.** Intergenerational Place-based Education is an open-ended, ethical, embodied, and situated activity through which places and intergenerational relations are produced, and skills, knowledge and values are learned and shared.

#### *Purpose*

We found that intergenerational education is distinctive from other terms such as lifelong learning, family learning or organisational learning because of the key purpose of advancing a 'society for all ages' and intergenerational solidarity (see Springate et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2010). However, as our cases of intergenerational education showed, 'changed relations', changes in how places are viewed and lived in will also be important. We found our cases worked (albeit differently) to address intergenerational relations and wellbeing *at the same time*: there were outcomes for people as well as places and the relations between them. 'Improved intergenerational relations' may not be a sufficient aim for intergenerational projects.<sup>viii</sup> Therefore, it is worth noticing that in intergenerational education, changed relations might be considered the necessary *medium through which* the participants look to improve the flourishing of communities and places, both local and beyond (see Section Three, and Mannion, 2010a, 2010b).<sup>ix</sup>

**Purpose.** Intergenerational Place-based Education's dual purpose is to improve:  
(a) intergenerational relations, and  
(b) individual, community, and ecological wellbeing.

## Scope

The cases allow us to explore the scope of intergenerational place-based education in practice. The evidence suggested there was a strong ethical dimension to participants' judgments and practices which were often driven by a desire for greater participation, for intergenerational inclusiveness, and for a greater care for the environment. We found a wide array of possible outcomes that were locally specific to projects, which suggests that improving individual, community, and ecological wellbeing will be distinctively expressed because they happen in some place. By attending to how 'place' provides a unique context a role we will begin to notice the local and material dimensions of educational practice too. So in one place, we found that vandalism was an issue but new housing developments were seen as welcome, while in another, land ownership and new housing was sometimes seen as a problem. In one case, participants learned about gardening while in another they learned how to ride a bicycle on uneven terrain or how to light a fire or ride a horse. Through these local practices, places, people and generations were engaged. Our finding is that curricula need to be locally specified and will be dependent on local geographies, local expertise, available resources and local needs and desires. However, by following the connections between people and places, we noticed that local practices were connected to extra-local issues and extra-local times and places. Hence, while local places can be the context for intergenerational education, the scope and reach for the work needs not be limited to local contexts alone. Taken together, we offer the following scope for intergenerational place-based education:

### **Scope.**

Intergenerational Place-based Education will:

- (a) involve people from more than one generation participating in a common locally purposeful, ethical and material practice that happens in some place,
- (b) involve different interests across the generations and can be employed to address community vitality and environmental concerns through tackling some 'problem' or challenge,
- (c) connect local and other places beyond the local through these problem solving practices and diverse interests.

### *Requirements*

Following on from the purpose and scope, we can say that there are some requirements or ingredients in any programme of intergenerational place-based education. There clearly needs to be some shared task or activity for the generations to be involved in and face-to-face interpersonal encounters across generational divide seemed to be important for engendering skill learning, understanding and addressing values. For both cases, it was not predictable whether these encounters would be well received or not, or even what the possible outcomes were going to be. The other requirement, therefore, that we offer is that there needs to be willingness to try these intergenerational experiments. Indeed, it looks likely that being open to how they might run and what their outcomes might be is also important (see below).

**Requirements.** Intergenerational Place-based Education will require:

- (a) a willingness to reciprocally communicate across generational divides (be it through consensus, conflict or cooperation) with the hope of generating and sharing new intergenerational meanings, practices and places that are held in common,
- (b) a willingness to be responsive to each other, to other species, and to the world through taking shared action, and
- (c) a locally specified curriculum wherein shared tasks are devised in some place to address a problem or challenge in ways that allow for the learning of skills, generating understanding, and addressing values.

### *Hybridity: natures and cultures*

The boundaries of traditional schooling were stretched through approaches to place-based intergenerational education. These approaches seem to need to allow for a degree of messiness, playfulness, hybridity, informality and sometimes elements that were unplanned for since the activity arises through a concern to address a problem or task. By definition the task needed to be engaged with and negotiated by school and community, parent and child, teacher and pupil, people and material places (see figure 14, below). It was often somewhat everyday mundane activities that constituted intergenerational place-based education: walking, digging, noticing things, being in conversation, making things together. These activities led to meaning making and these meanings were sometimes contingent on the



relations between people and other living entities (such as bugs, horses, the weather, plants, wildlife) (or the 'more-than human', see Whatmore 2002). We can suggest that intergenerational place-based education arises through different forms of eco-social hybridity or intermingling of activities, people and the elements of place.



Figure 14. A truck offloads compost – itself made up of living things – for the school-linked community garden. The 'problem' to be solved via intergenerational practice was how to get it into the garden. Local people were called upon; pupils were asked to help. As researchers on site, we too got involved in helping move these several tonnes into the garden. See Case One (above). (Video still © the authors 2010).

### *Naturecultures*

Examples of this coalescence were found in good number in the cases. This intermingling or 'meshwork' (Ingold, 2006)<sup>x</sup> in turn 'produced' the places that people inhabited (and the participants' 'sense of place'). The places and the way they were inhabited by participants was always an on-going and emerging process of enactment of 'naturecultures' (Law, 2004). In the same way, the constitution and re-constitution of the people who inhabited these places *and* the school-community intergenerational relations were intimately connected to the on-going production of place. By this view, inter-subjectivity, intergenerationality, and educational practice need to be seen as materially entangled in a world (Ingold 2006); people are corporeally immersed and intertwined with more than the social: the bodies, the ethical practices and the places themselves are co-jointly performed through material-based activity as well as language-based action.

The rhythms and motions of these inter-corporeal practices configure spaces of connectivity between more-than-human lifeworlds; [...] projects of making' more liveable worlds made possible by the on-going interweaving of our lives with manifold others (Ingold, 2000b). (Whatmore 2002, 162-163)



Figure 15. Basket making on Day 2. Pupils interwove artefacts they had found on the walk the previous day into their constructions. (Video still © the authors 2010).

Ingold (2008) argues that organisms (including humans) are entangled or knotted in their places. There were interesting (and quite literal) examples of how participants' lives were *interwoven* with place; consider the “bugs’ hotel” in Case One (figure 6), or the Harris Tweed coat in Case Two (figure 10). The basket making exercise (figure 15, above) too exemplifies this in a material and practical way – the children had collected the willow and identified local trees that went into the making of the baskets back in the school – but this was one of many examples we can read in this way. We could similarly consider the enmeshed way gardening connected people, other species and place, or, the way journeys (Case Two) left interlocking trails through the landscape (see figure 7) and made historical connections too into a ‘meshwork’ of the past. The anthropologist, Gray (2003) looked at shepherds’ journeying in the Scottish highlands; he saw movement as a form of ‘dwelling’ that gets beyond maps and place names and encompasses more embodied aspects. Altshul (2007) suggests that “people [...] make places by moving through them [...] it is only through moving that one can yield an experience of place”. That other species were involved in these experiences and were critical to how memorable they were for pupils is perhaps not incidental. Rather, as Haraway (2008, 42) reminds us, we “are in a knot of species co-creating each other”. Haraway makes convincing arguments for placing “animals and humans together in situated histories, situated naturecultures, in which all the actors become who they are *in the dance of relating*” (Haraway, 2008, 25). The experience of pony trekking in case two was interesting in this respect, connecting past practices with highland ponies with current hobby interests

among the pupils; this happened in a locally situated way through within an evolving interspecies relationship. By this view, intergenerational place-based education is a local open-ended enactment and re-enactment of different naturecultures involving humans and other species too. As such, it offers some rich and interesting opportunities for education. There is also an implication here that at least some of the educational encounter will necessarily be in outdoor places if we are to understand how this intermingling between nature and culture, humans and other species happens and how these relations might change. Further work will be needed to understand more fully how learning takes place within these knotted relations across species as well as generational divides in local places.

### **Schools as Sites of Intergenerational Place-based Education**

Schools have found many different kinds of intergenerational practice projects to be attractive for opening up curricula to local people and connecting to local place (for example, on campus intergenerational kitchens). Similarly, intergenerational practice groupings have found that making links to schools is viable and useful (see Granville, 2000, who looked at the effects, barriers and benefits of older people volunteering in schools; Lowen, 1996). Kaplan (2001) provides us with a very important question that is suggestive of a radical paradigm shift in schools' approaches if we take intergenerationality seriously. Kaplan asks what would schooling look like if it were really informed by intergenerational perspectives? We wish also to ask what would happen if schools took local 'naturecultural' realities seriously. How do we interfere in them over time and thereby enact them and how can we do this differently?

Respondents in the case studies had a lot to say about this idea. They were clear that there were local people who could assist in pupils' education, that they could do so in a way that was reciprocally effective and with benefits for each generation and for relations between the two. Understanding about nature featured highly on pupils' feedback too. Kaplan (2001) suggests schools could be a place where intergenerational interdependence takes form in a "school without walls" where character formation and active citizenship and community wellbeing are important goals. Because local perspectives were different to those received through schools, evidence suggested that improved 'wellbeing' may well be contested and different in different cultures and change over time. Kaplan (2010) acknowledges the importance of noticing and attending to local cultural differences, yet offers a shared belief in an 'intergenerational imperative', namely that:

We are better off – as individuals, families, communities, and as a society – when there are abundant opportunities for young people and older adults to come together to interact, stimulate, educate, support, and provide care for one another. (Kaplan, 2010).

The school-community boundary has traditionally been a well-policed one, with the school site being more easily purified on the inside (containing pupils and teachers under the regimes of timetables and so on) while on the outside, the community resides. Pupils appeared quite shut of from their local places yet were keenly aware they enjoyed being there, and wanted to spend more time there (see also Mannion et al., 2007). The leaky flows between schools, local community members, and local places has mostly been left to happenstance, time-limited projects for sub-groups of schools' rolls, or one-off instances: the 'drop-off' at school gate, special programmes for 'disaffected' students, the annual parent teacher meeting, the occasional letter home, and the occasional school trip. More extensive programmes of intergenerational place-based education would provide a context for addressing this and responding to policy calls for more outdoor education.

Place was more than a background 'context' or container for the action in the cases analysed and this realisation has quite profound affects on how we understand educational contexts (see Edwards, 2009). The cases can be seen as sites of problem solving that disrupted yet enhanced educational possibilities and required a departure from very structured 'indoor' timetables. Because of intergenerational practice in new places, the effect is one of *dispersing education* (among the home, school, in the local environment) in open-ended ways. The community garden was an on-going unfinished project that was contingent on whether plants thrived or compost arrived. Similarly, the journeys were contingent on local weather and people's participation. The participants' responses involved on-going signification or meaning making.<sup>xi</sup> This involved the intergenerational production of unpredictable meanings that arose through contingent inter-species, place-person relations. The consequences of intergenerational place-based education for the role of the schools, its relations to its environs, and the participation of stakeholders in education are yet to be worked out in most schools we suspect.

Gruenewald and Smith (2008) suggest that we must get past the isolation of traditional schooling from community life (Sobel 2004). Gruenewald and Smith (2008, xx) put it like this: "The walls of the schools must become more permeable and local collaboratives and support structures must be built and maintained to that education truly becomes a larger community effort". For this aim to be realized will require changes to *intergenerational* relations and changes to decision making structures and the formation of new collaboratives in and around schools. It will also require attention to the significance of the role of place, materials and other species in the practices and interactions. The vision intergenerational place-based education offers must not be limited by a concern for how adults (educators, NGOs,

community groups and others) might 'service' pupils' learning. Intergenerational place-based education requires us to account for a wider framing of learning for all. It is likely that intergenerational place-based education will disrupt schools' norms since they tend to be order people, time and places in ways that only allow some meanings to be possible (see Nespor, 2008). But the area-sensitive curriculum design task – involving, for example, intergenerational relations, the human with the 'more-than-human' (Whatmore, 2002), changed boundaries, ethical place-based imaginaries, and new everyday place-based practices – has been shown to be both possible and to have sound educational potential.

## **Conclusion**

Through intergenerational place-based education, the participants, their places, and the relations among them have the potential to be co-produced and changed. Evidence suggests that intergenerational place-based education is an open-ended, ethical, embodied, and situated activity that allows for skills, knowledge and values to be altered and through which places and intergenerational relations are produced. Intergenerational place-based education, as we envisage it, requires us to be locally sensitive to physical environmental places, their associated cultures, and how the boundaries around who learns, what is to be learned, and where learning take place are constructed and moved.

Rendering schools more permeable to this sort of work will involve critical decisions about what is allowed into the mix of curriculum planning and its purposes and to what forms of knowledge are valued and harnessed in programmes. Locally, intergenerational place-based education asks community organizations, parents, school staff, pupils and others to reconsider what its goals might be: can it contribute to how places and people can better flourish? But while this is a question that needs to be considered locally, yet, in ways it will need to take account of its extra-local links. Because the intergenerational place-based education is, by definition, contingent on intersubjective, intergenerational, but also person-place-material relations among humans and more-than-humans, we suspect this work is not easily prescribed by a content-led, formulaic programme though our definitions, we hope, may help in this regard. Instead, it will need to worked on, and worked out locally, and in ways that can viably connect to national curricula and meet these requirements too. That a local process of the formation of an intergenerational place-based curriculum is uncertain does not make it less enticing as a project, but rather is the characteristic that makes it viable and inviting as an educational experiment to solve.

## **Some Arising Questions from this Study**

- (a) How might schools engage in 'first steps' towards connecting to communities and local places?
- (b) What supports and structures would be needed for a wider programme of intergenerational place-based education to be realised?
- (c) How might a wider programme support national curricular imperatives (for example, Curriculum for Excellence) in different contexts?
- (d) What is the potential for local places to be starting points for considering extra-local issues in a critical way?
- (e) How can school-based programmes help with decision making about whether to restore, conserve, or change local place-based practices through school-based programmes in order to care for places?
- (f) Is there something distinctive about using different kinds of natural places (eg forests, urban greenspace, school grounds) as starting points for realising intergenerational place-based education?

## **Appendix One**

### **Methods and Approach**

We used a place-sensitive ethnographic approach using individual interviews and focus groups (supplemented by fieldnotes and video evidence of intergenerational and place-based events) within a comparative case study design appropriate to the concrete, context-dependent sites and processes (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Data came from interviews with participating community members (mostly parents), teachers, key parents, school staff, management and pupils, and community-based facilitators. The presented data are punctuated with stills generated from the video footage which Claire Adey, Jonathan Lynch and/or I took (depending on the case). Interviews tended to focus on these areas:

- What members of which generations worked together and how were decisions made? How was this experienced? How did this compare to other forms of learning and education?
- What places were important in the programmes of work and why? Did intergenerational participation make a difference to this?
- How had learning had been brought about, and, what was this learning was about?
- Stakeholder perspectives on the initiatives and school-community links generally.

The approach taken can be described as an ethnographic case study (Yin, 1994). We employed

- *Interviews and Focus Groups.* Interviewing participants and running focus groups comprised the main source of data. Some interviews happened indoors but most were non-sedentary and outdoors either while tasks such as gardening were on-going or while other activities such as walking were being undertaken (see Ingold, 2004). Evans and Jones (2010) have shown that data generated while walking are informed by the landscapes in which they take place.
- *Fieldnotes and Observations.* We collected fieldnotes and observations of a small number of selected events in the two sites. Using participant observation we generated an ethnographic description (Geertz, 1973) of these events. Due to the scale of the study, the time in the field was far more limited than in 'classic ethnography'. However, the spirit of ethnographic inquiry informed the study.
- *Visual Methods.* Video recording was employed to capture evidence from events and this was useful for a record of the relations among person, place, and activity.
- *Documentary Analysis.* Other data became available through the incidental collection of documents and texts (for example, on noticeboards, teachers' evaluations etc).

### *Purposive Sampling of Cases: Advancing a Society for All Ages?*

We took a purposive approach to case selection. Taking account of the importance of place and space in intergenerational relations (Mannion and l'Anson, 2004), and building on Loewen (1996), who used five criteria selecting the two school-based intergenerational programmes<sup>xii</sup>:

1. **Learning.** Did the project seem to set out to address generational niching in their local contexts or beyond? Did it seem important that learning from, about and with each other as different generations seem important for these cases?
2. **Event and Place.** Did the project appear to involve -based activity leading to alternative forms of encounter between the generations? Note: we went on to solely select projects that were place focused in natural, outdoor places to narrow the field.
3. **Relationships.** Did the project focus to some degree on changing relations between generations? Was there evidence of opportunities for new forms of identifications to emerge / new voices to be heard? Do cases have the potential for enabling intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational exchanges?
4. **Reciprocal focus.** Regardless of the nominal beneficiaries, did it seem possible that of ideas, knowledge, skills, routines were being acquired by more than one age groups potentially leading to outcomes for both adults and children/young people?
5. **School-connected and Community-based.** Was the project community-based while also connected to families and their schools?
6. **Difference.** Were the cases different?
7. **Authentic Work.** Did the project likely offer more than a 'feel-good' emotional encounter and actually worked towards making a wider difference?

### *Methodology*

The methodology employed here draws on insights from transactional realism (Biesta 2009a, 2009b). By the transactional view: "as living beings we are always already acting 'upon' and 'with' the world. This means that there is no fundamental gap between us and the world [...]. Transaction means that we are always already 'in touch' with the world and this connection, in turn, ensures that our knowledge is always knowledge 'of' the world". (Biesta 2009a, 37). This transactional approach means that participants' constructions of themselves, their places and the relations between them can be taken as the real effects of local person-place encounters wherein knowledge arises contextually in a given location. Our methods, therefore, were designed to collect data on these constructions and on the transactions and encounters that give rise to them. As researchers we also are in transaction with the world. As participant observers we found ourselves engaging in the



same tasks as the children and community members and teachers. We rode horses, put up tents, walked in woods, shoveled compost and sat in classrooms. These approaches enabled access to the sensory experiences of the participants and provided a valuable tool for triangulating the findings we got from respondents. This approach also meant we developed relationships with respondents and this trust led to valuable insights too.

Critics of some 'place-based' education literature (Nespor 2008) have challenged the binaries of urban vs rural, standardized curricula vs place-focused, modern vs traditional knowledge, globalized vs local or indigenous cultures in accounts. Our methods, therefore, needed to be sensitive to local and extra-local effects and relations that work across these binaries. For us, intergenerational place-based education would not take 'place-as-community' uncritically "as a stable, bounded, self-sufficient communal realm" (Nespor 2008, 479) unconnected to other sites and times.

### *Analysis*

Transcripts, photographs and video were analysed by the main author with assistance from Claire Adey. Data were coded under a number of themes that emerged after a process of inter-researcher readings of the dataset. The two general themes that emerged were 'relationships' and 'place-person interaction'. Sub-themes generated included (i) boundaries (ii) learning and sharing (iii) ethics, values and imagined futures, (see below). 'Int.' is used to denote the interviewer (report main author or a member of the team). Otherwise, pseudonyms are used or acronyms: 'PP' means primary aged pupil; 'SP' denotes secondary aged pupil; 'R1', 'R2', 'R3' ... etc. denote different respondents when in focus groups. 'ST' is used for secondary school teacher, 'PT' for primary teacher; 'HT' for headteacher; 'F' for facilitator.

### *Ethics*

Stirling Institute of Education's ethics committee approved the ethical approaches and methods chosen. Given the nature of the work, we ensured respondents provided informed consent. Anonymity, and degrees of non-traceability were offered and assured to practicable degrees. Special care was taken with permission to use visual data. The authors (as the researchers involved in meeting with children and young people) underwent disclosure processes. The British Educational Research Association's ethical code was adhered to as a minimum requirement. Children and young people's participation was handled so that appropriate degrees of informed consent and the freedom to withdraw from research activities at any time were encouraged. Special care was taken to achieve children's and parental consent.

## **Appendix Two**

SpeyGrian members (and associates), many of whom who helped with facilitation during the 'Journey's in Nature' programme:

Joyce Gilbert environmental educator

Ian Stephen writer/poet/storyteller [www.ianstephen.co.uk](http://www.ianstephen.co.uk)

Gerry Cambridge poet/photographer [www.gerrycambridge.com](http://www.gerrycambridge.com)

Tom Bryan poet/writer [http://www.spl.org.uk/poetry\\_map/pages/bios/tom\\_bryan.htm](http://www.spl.org.uk/poetry_map/pages/bios/tom_bryan.htm)

Barney Strachan sound artist [www.myspace.com/barneystrachansoundart](http://www.myspace.com/barneystrachansoundart)

Chris Salisbury bushcraft instructor/storyteller [www.wildwise.co.uk](http://www.wildwise.co.uk)

Jan Kilpatrick artist/craftworker [www.wildtiles.co.uk](http://www.wildtiles.co.uk)

Bonnie Maggio forest school trainer/artist

Uwe Stoneman artist/ecologist

Linda Cracknell writer <http://lindacracknell.blogspot.com>

Catriona Gilbert artist [www.catrionagilbert.com](http://www.catrionagilbert.com)

Alasdair Hamilton artist/graphic designer

Jane Wilkinson willow sculptor/forest school trainer

Neil Ramsay archeologist/environmental historian

Steve Bretel artist & musician

Emily Dodds environmental educator

Alan Britton environmental educator, initial teacher educator in University of Glasgow

Ian Barr artist

Mr E. R Ormiston. Newtonmore Riding Centre, Biallid Farm, Newtonmore,  
[www.newtonmoreridingcentre.com](http://www.newtonmoreridingcentre.com)

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> We have narrowed the scope here to look specifically at local, natural places which are seen by the authors and many others to offer distinctive learning opportunities. As a term, intergenerational place-based education may of course refer to urban and other kinds of places.
- <sup>ii</sup> The term is used instead of intergenerational *practice* to consider the distinctively *educational* dimension of projects and how this was brought about within local places.
- <sup>iii</sup> These local connections can clearly be the starting point for inputs into a range of subject areas either within-disciplines or across them but we suspect they can also act as a starting point for consideration of wider issues (such as global environmental and intergenerational justice, conservation, climate change, population migration, etc).
- <sup>iv</sup> These happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries when people were forced to leave their homes; this changed the way agriculture was done, how land was managed and the role of the clans system. It also led to mass emigration to lower lying land, the coast and America.
- <sup>v</sup> Depending on the predictions used.
- <sup>vi</sup> Sometimes termed a 'bean-pole' family structure.
- <sup>vii</sup> Importantly, this definition zones in on the UN policy focus of 'a society for all ages'. It also represents a shift in emphasis away from solely being concerned with the needs and inclusion of older adults (who, as an increasing subgroup of the population gave rise to early forms of intergenerational practice) towards the view that it incorporates relations among all generations (and includes therefore communities, multigenerational activities, and activities found within and outside families).
- <sup>viii</sup> We might not want to say that our main aim should be to *generate more mutual respect between the generations* since this may be undesirable for some individual participants' wellbeing or the flourishing of cohesive community or their local places. Consider, for example, the effect of different generations of community-based criminal gangs improving their intergenerational respect for each other and thereby sustaining community oppression.
- <sup>ix</sup> Given our position, it is arguable that these purposes apply to all cases of intergenerational education, not just those that are obviously place-focused or outdoor programmes.
- <sup>x</sup> The concept of a meshwork is different to that of a hybrid. While in a hybrid there are links between things through connectors, in a meshwork the connections are more like lines along which things flow continuously involving more connectivity and intra-action. In this way Ingold sees us as inhabitants 'mixed in' with places rather than 'exhabitants' on the surface of places.
- <sup>xi</sup> See Knorr-Cetina (2001) on 'learning objects'.
- <sup>xii</sup> We selected and did research on more than the two cases reported upon herein. We focus on these two because these were the most comprehensively researched and yielded the most diverse and useful kinds of data when set against our research questions.