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PER WINNING LOCAL GOALS

INTRODUCTION

Where is the school?

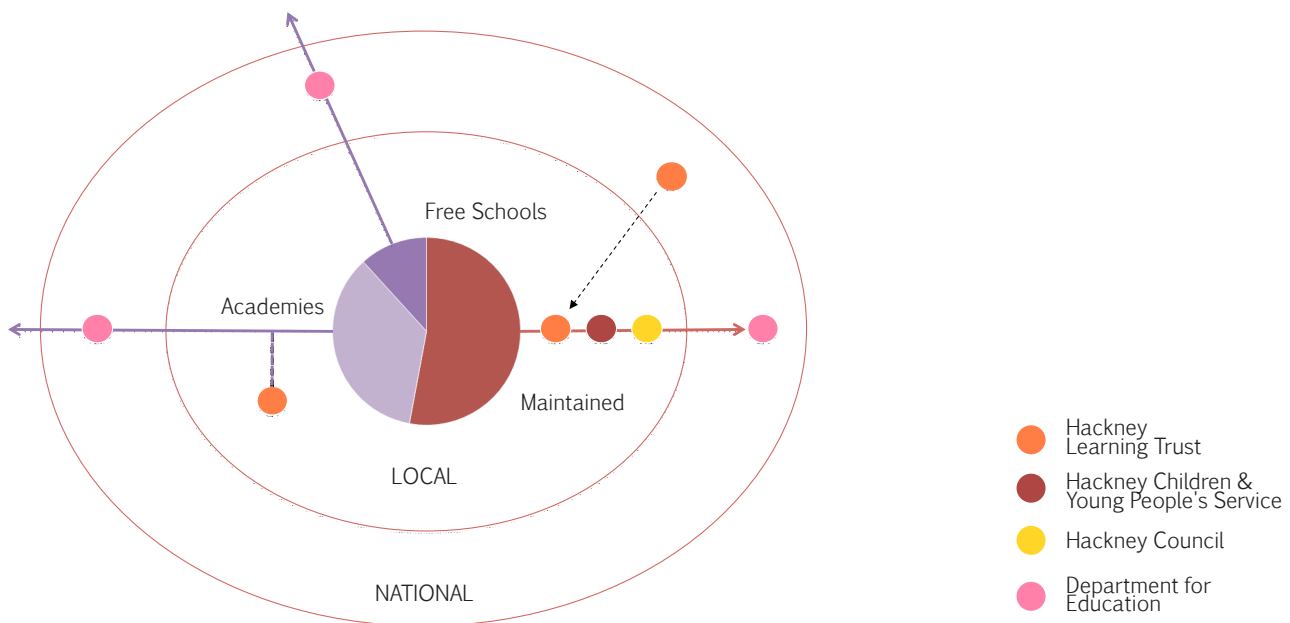
Elisha's drawing of her route to school is captivating. The door number of each flat in her block is noted, the position of parked cars is marked and full bin bags, their tops neatly knotted, are drawn lined up alongside a rubbish skip. She notices everything. Coming in by bus, Anwar's drawing is equally dense, detailing a labyrinth of bus routes and junctions to be negotiated. The fine-grain of the urban world these children inhabit is appreciated with magnifying-glass scrutiny. But where is the school in these mental maps? From all maps created, only two show the school. This is a surprise. Like the other new schools in Hackney, the school building is loud; a large, colourful structure, different from its surroundings. As if that were not sufficient, high periphery fences clearly announce the school's exclusive presence to the neighbourhood. Too obvious to be drawn? Unapproachable perhaps? Disconnected?

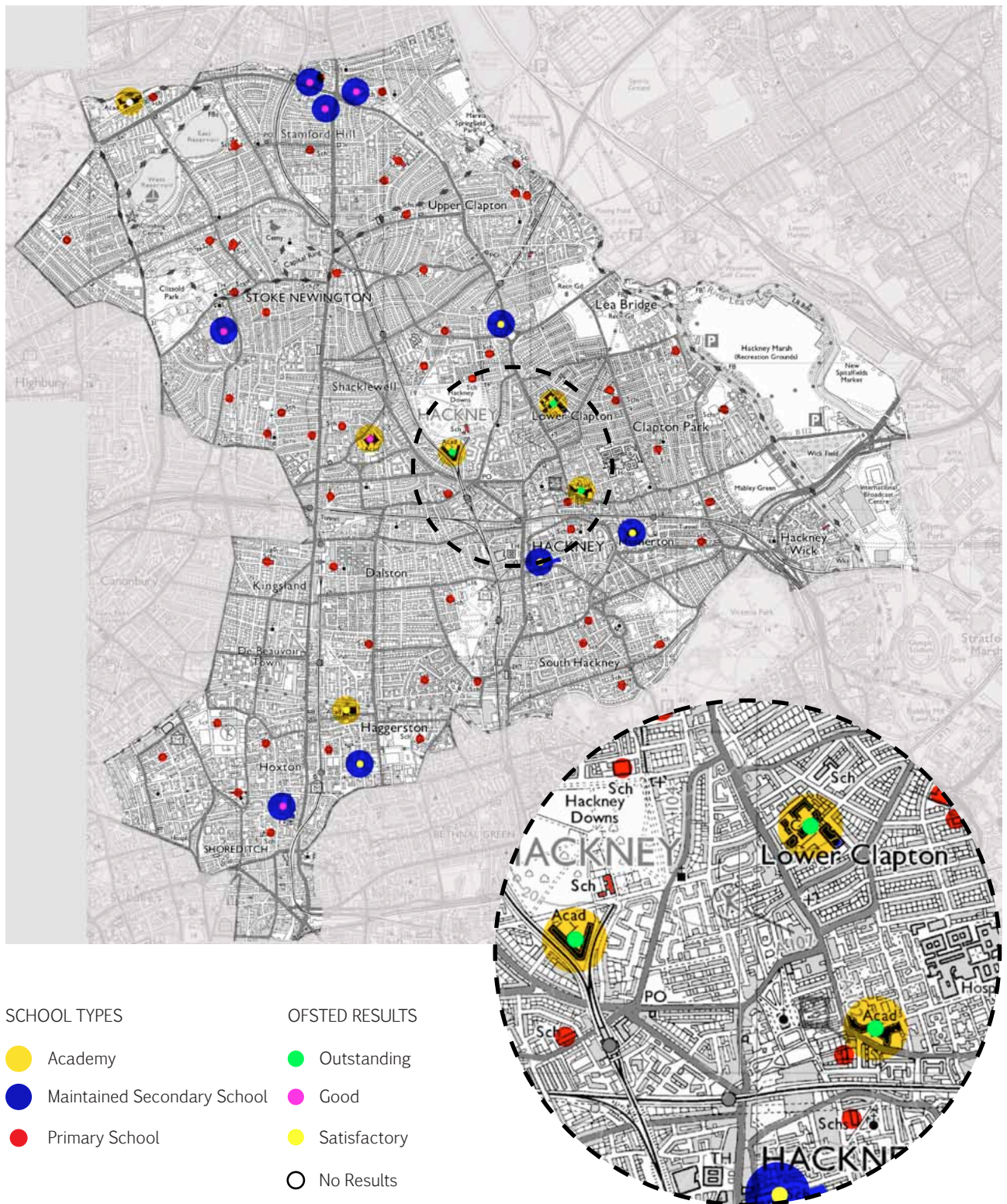
This work sets out to explore the ambiguous relationship the new secondary schools of Hackney have with their locality. In particular it will focus on the “flagship” new-build academies, Mossbourne Academy and City Academy. It posits that social and spatial relations with the local

have been weakened at these new schools and that this matters; the growing-up experience of youth requires an accessible environment for exploration—and mistakes. The new Hackney schools must embed their relationships with the local to support the development of the emerging adults they raise, as well as educate. The concept of a “telescopic school” powered by “spatial curriculum” is put forward to address this challenge. To protect the identity of students and other interviewees, comments have been made anonymous and names changed.

A Radical Restructuring of Education in Hackney

There are 15 state-funded secondary schools in Hackney. Of these, six are newly formed as “Academies”, a further is a “Free School” and another a “University Technical College”. The remaining minority are “Maintained” comprehensives. This array of school types reflects a period of considerable political engagement in education initiated by New Labour in 1997 and sustained vigorously by the Coalition government.





02 Map showing the Location, Type and OFSTED rating of Schools in Hackney

The circular cutout to the right shows the three outstanding academies (green dots on yellow ground): Mossbourne Community Academy (left), Clapton Girls (right above) and City Academy (right below).

The Academies, Free School and University Technical College are independently-managed schools funded directly by the national government. The Maintained schools are funded via the local educational authority which, today, is under the control of the Hackney Borough Council.

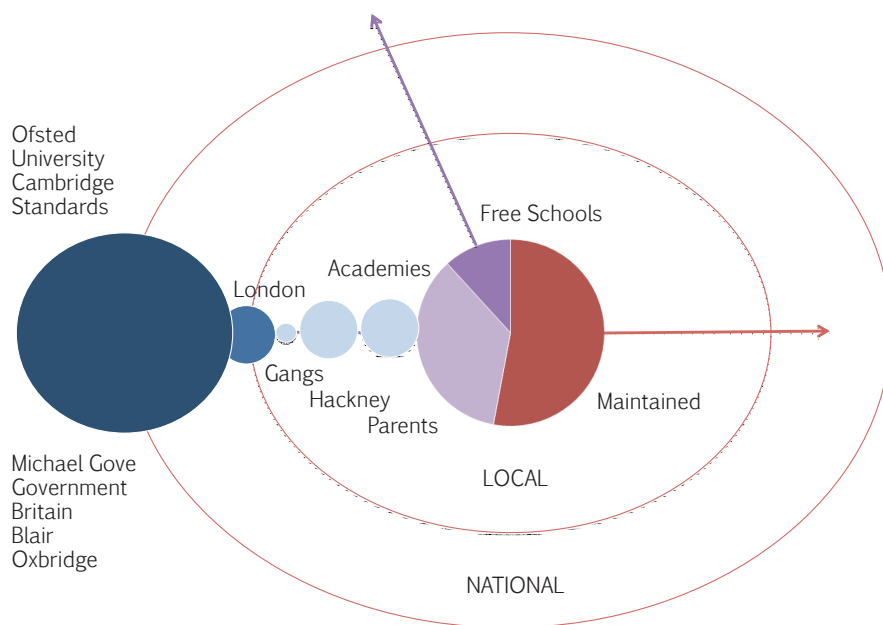
The academies have spearheaded what many portray as a miraculous educational turnaround in the fortunes of Hackney over the last decade (Boyle and Humphreys, 2012). One of London's most deprived boroughs according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Hackney used to be one of the "worst" boroughs for education in Britain. Following a series of radical interventions that eventually led to the ceding of control for education from the borough to the independent Hackney Learning Trust in 2002, local actors made use of government legislation to form new schools. Of the academies, three are wholly new—Mossbourne, City and Bridge—and three re-found existing schools—Clapton Girls, Skinners' and Petchey. According to the national evaluation authority, OFSTED, Mossbourne, City and Clapton Girls perform at an "Outstanding" level, Petchey is "Good" and Bridge "Satisfactory/Good". Skinners', opened in 2012, has yet to be fully assessed. None of the Maintained schools are rated "Outstanding", though five are rated "Good".

Considering that Hackney's schools educate a large number of children from financially strained households—levels of free school meals are at twice the national average—and that these financial strains often translate into social strains as parents attempt to cope with shift-working or life on benefits—not to mention Hackney's multi-ethnic profile and reputation for a gang-driven youth scene—these results are remarkable.

In 2012 Mossbourne students achieved double the national average number of A-C grade passes in five GCSE subjects. All but five A-level pupils were offered a place at university. City Academy likewise performs well above the national average. The public response has been highly positive; the new schools are heavily oversubscribed and Mossbourne receives eight applications per place. Previously 40% of parents used to send their children outside of the Borough to be educated, this number has now fallen to 17%.

A Story in Space

There is a tangible spatial element to Hackney's education "drama" as several of Hackney's old schools were torn down and new schools built making use of funding from the Building Schools for the Future programme. Indeed, new educational architecture is a note-worthy feature of the Borough with bright, glassy schools jutting out like modern-day ocean liners from the midst of drab estates and terraces.



△ 03 The frequency of key words used in interviews with Hackney academy headmasters plotted in relation to the Local or National orientation.

▽ 04 City Academy
(Left) Academy surrounded by a double defence line
(Right) Academy's ground floor is windowless

ANALYSIS

Why Challenge Success?

Considering this turnaround, why question the schools of Hackney and their relationship with the local community? As will be explored below, the transformation of Hackney's schools, and in particular the construction of its flagship academies, raises questions about their relation to the local in political, discursive, spatial and social terms. The schools have become national insertions in the local whose relations with the community remain underdeveloped.

Jane Jacobs (1961) argues that this matters because growing-up is a situated activity, better done within an understanding community. It requires a stimulating yet relatively benign context where young adults can explore and test themselves before going out into more unknown and indifferent environments. Citizenship, Richard Sennett (2002) comments, requires contact with the complexity of the street and its people; it is an outcome of life in the Agora, as well as the Academy.

Separation in Politics and Media

The transformation of Hackney schools has implications for local accountability. The academies have good relations with the Hackney Learning Trust (now incorporated back in to the Hackney Borough Council) but these are voluntary. Each academy states a positive approach towards the community in its literature; in practice this translates in a limited manner to a Parents Association and the hiring out of facilities.

This “unlocalness” is reinforced in the media discourse built up around the transformation of Hackney's schooling. Coverage levels of the Hackney transformation are exceptionally high in national media. Photos of new buildings accompany interviews with headmasters whilst national politicians, indeed three Prime Ministers, have been snapped smiling, awkwardly, alongside Hackney students.

Looking more deeply, in an analysis of the language used by Hackney headmasters in their press interviews, it becomes apparent that the majority of words are chosen from the national arena. Talk of “standards”, “Oxbridge” and “Britain” is more common than mentions of “Hackney”; “rowing” is mentioned more often than “rioting”. Michael Wilshaw, founding headmaster of Mossbourne, is openly dismissive of the local: “If local democracy had worked, if local governing bodies had worked in the most challenging schools and for the most disadvantaged children, we would never have needed academies” (Wilshaw, 2011).

Separation through Space and Performance

The buildings of the school and the policies of the school also mark a separation from the local; in particular the schools are distinguished through an all-encompassing culture of discipline.

School design: a spatial way to educate

Higgins et al (2005) note that school structures are a tool in learning processes, affecting the educational potential of students. In conversation a headmaster stated clearly that the design of the school supported the academy's educational philosophy of providing order through tight supervision. Order is required for children to learn and teachers to teach; the buildings and their sites aim to produce this order.



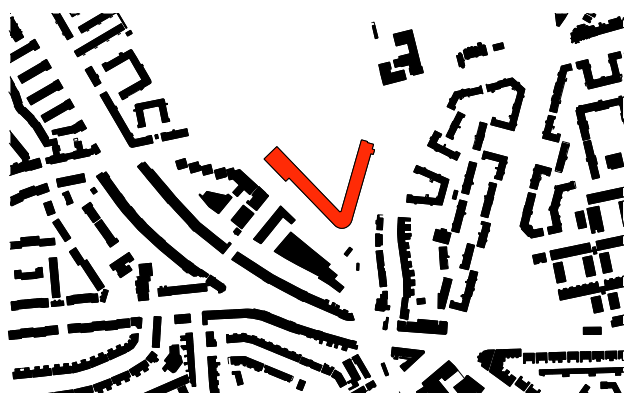
The openness and visibility that comes through an extensive use of glass, both on the exteriors and interiors of the new-built academies, functions not only to bring light into school but also allows the staff to check the students at all times. It was commented by a member of staff that this transparency also means the teachers are monitored—by each other as well as the leadership. Privacy is rare; a 15-year-old male academy student responded to an interview question that: “if you want to have privacy you have to go to the toilet to mind your own business”.

At the scale of the local, Mossbourne Academy and City Academy are clearly legible in the urban grain. Reflecting on how the schools address the urban grain, it is apparent that impermeable and solid boundaries are formed, rather than softer borders (Sennett, 2008). The Mossbourne site is challenging as it is separated from Hackney on two sides by railway tracks. However it is notable that the school wall facing these tracks, though brightly painted, has no openings toward the outside—presenting a blank, inaccessible façade. The entrance of the site faces a park, Hackney Downs. Here the school has chosen to separate itself from the park by a wall with fencing on top. Whilst all

schools have walls, the school building is separated further from the first wall by fences and functional elements such as bicycle racks—establishing a series of “barricades” before the students reach the building.

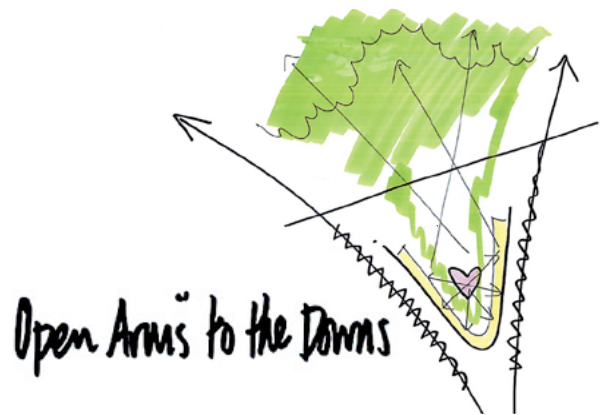
In a conversation with Richard Rogers, the architect responsible for Mossbourne’s design, he expressed a sceptical attitude towards how education works nowadays, reflecting that it seems much stricter than in his own times. He added that the closed-ness of the school towards the community was not considered in the architect’s vision of the new schools in Hackney.

On approach City Academy has a transparent and colourful façade that seems welcoming. The building, however, is lifted up and the ground level is not only closed off but protected by a functionally unnecessary fenced wall. There are moments of openness—in a side street towards the canteen—however the prevailing language is that of a boundary. Whilst the headmaster we interviewed emphasised that fences are “indispensable” to keep strangers out and the kids in, it can be argued that double fences are not.



A painful analogy with the boundaries of prisons comes to mind through such defences and it can be argued that they actually create a sense of threat in the local area. Of course, they clearly separate the schools from the local. It is easy to be critical of such design choices, though notably there is little criticism on the streets of Hackney. Interviews showed that the students themselves are passionate about their schools, especially their fresh and quirky architecture. “Fences, what fences?” one kid answers when asked about the two metre high barbed barricades that locked them inside.

Georg Simmel (1971: 143) makes a useful differentiation between a stranger and an alien. Strangers serve a social purpose, bringing independence of opinion and new perspectives. Aliens are “beyond being far and near” and thus can’t exist as a part of a society. Whilst Hackney has no doubt benefited from “the academy as stranger”, the continued fortification of the schools suggests that they may become more alien-like.



- ▢ 05 **Disruption of the local grain**
The City Academy (left) and Mossbourne Academy buildings (right) disrupt the local grain

- △ 06 **Mossbourne Academy concept**
Richard Rogers' original sketch for Mossbourne Academy
Source: www.richardrogers.co.uk

- ▽ 07 **Mossbourne Academy barriers**
(Top) A blank wall faces out from Mossbourne Academy towards the Pembury estate
(Below) Fences along the front of Mossbourne Academy



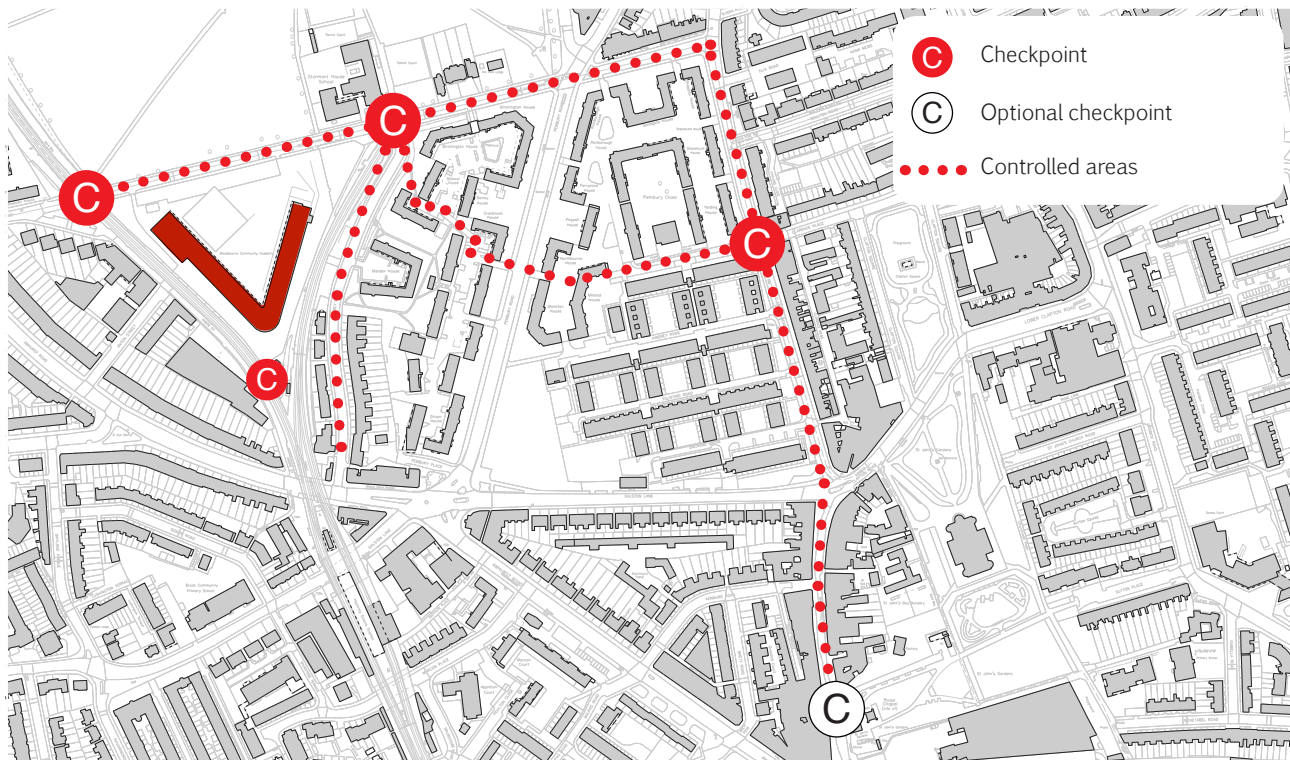
A playground for playing in?

As Cindi Katz (2005) and Sarah Thomson (2005) note, the break times of students today are more controlled, this meaning they lose the “freedom-spaces” they require in order to become “independent thinkers” (Brown, 2012). This was found to be the case at the Hackney academies. At one academy the younger students (age 11-14) chose not to use the designated and sunny seating area, preferring to co-opt the darkest and most unobserved corners of the schoolyard.

Older students (age 14-16) chose to form “privacy zones” with their bodies by forming circles and squares with their back turned towards the teachers. At the end of the break the students have to line up in the centre of the schoolyard before walking in single file back inside the school building.

Social boundaries and discipline

The study also reflected on how the boundaries of the schools are performed through noting student/teacher interactions as the students arrive and depart. At one academy, every morning the students line up, notably at the back gate and not the front, to be inspected by four adults, including the deputy head, who check they are dressed appropriately, down to wearing the right coloured socks. As a headmaster noted when asked about uniforms, from the moment the kids put on their uniform in the morning, they “belong” to the school.



08 Checkpoint map

A map marking the locations at which school staff stand to monitor students on their way home.

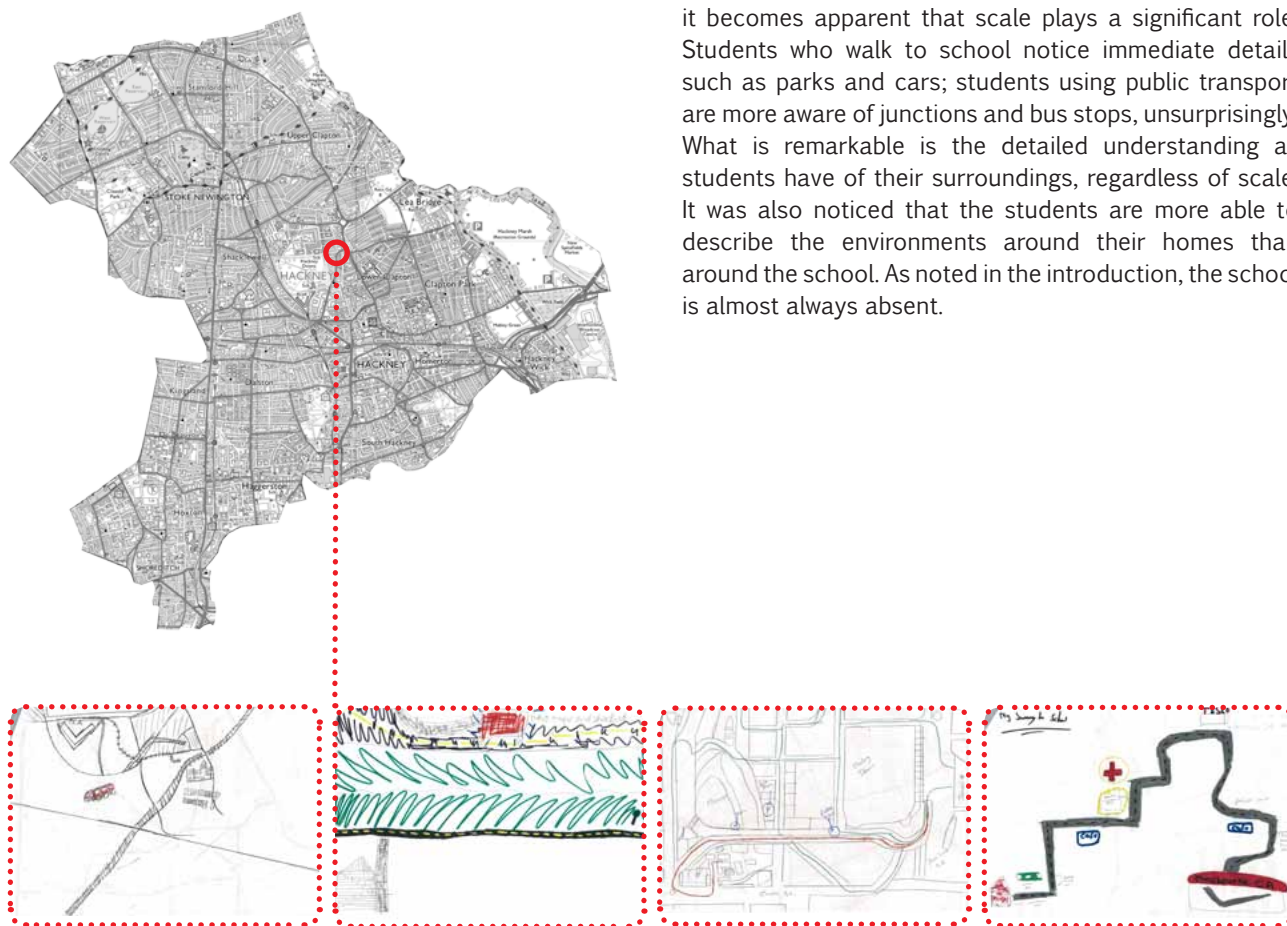
Codes of Conduct

The social control of students is further reinforced by the “Codes of Conduct” produced by the academies and signed by the student and parents upon enrolment. Whilst designed to protect the students, these rules, much like the fences, function as a constant reminder of “threat” with regard to the outside world. No student should have a mobile phone or pocket money because they might be at risk on their way home. When the security guards of one academy were questioned about how many incidents happen in a year, the answer was a low (and unrecorded) “four or five”.

Way home: extending the school into the local

To explore how students interact with the local environment once out of the controlled zone of school, the process of leaving schools was observed over a series of days. Whilst the study did find a few places where kids lingered on the street, overall students rapidly became invisible. The school Codes of Conduct also explains this feature of Hackney life. When outside of the school, these codes prevent students from forming groups. They also require that students reach home within twenty-minutes and prohibit them from stopping in any shops. The school presence goes beyond the school boundaries. Notably, the school polices this; the checkpoint map shows the checkpoints where school staff position themselves in to ensure children follow the school rules.

Against this background, it was decided to explore the children’s own perceptions of their interactions with the local through a workshop held with students (aged 11-14) in which they were asked to draw mental maps of their trips to school. From amongst the diverse maps produced, it becomes apparent that scale plays a significant role. Students who walk to school notice immediate details such as parks and cars; students using public transport are more aware of junctions and bus stops, unsurprisingly. What is remarkable is the detailed understanding all students have of their surroundings, regardless of scale. It was also noticed that the students are more able to describe the environments around their homes than around the school. As noted in the introduction, the school is almost always absent.



The local community and students

Beyond the school boundaries, are the streets of Hackney friendly towards students? A survey of 80 shops and commercial properties on Clarence Road and Mare Street examined the “closed-ness” or “open-ness” of shops towards students. Overall, the commercial streets around the school can be interpreted as hostile and several shops have signs up stating that only one or two students are allowed in at a time. Retailers perceived students as noisy, messy and potentially dangerous. “They come in like a gang” commented one salesman. The diagram below shows the businesses in Mare Street and some of the results of the shop survey together with opinions about students.

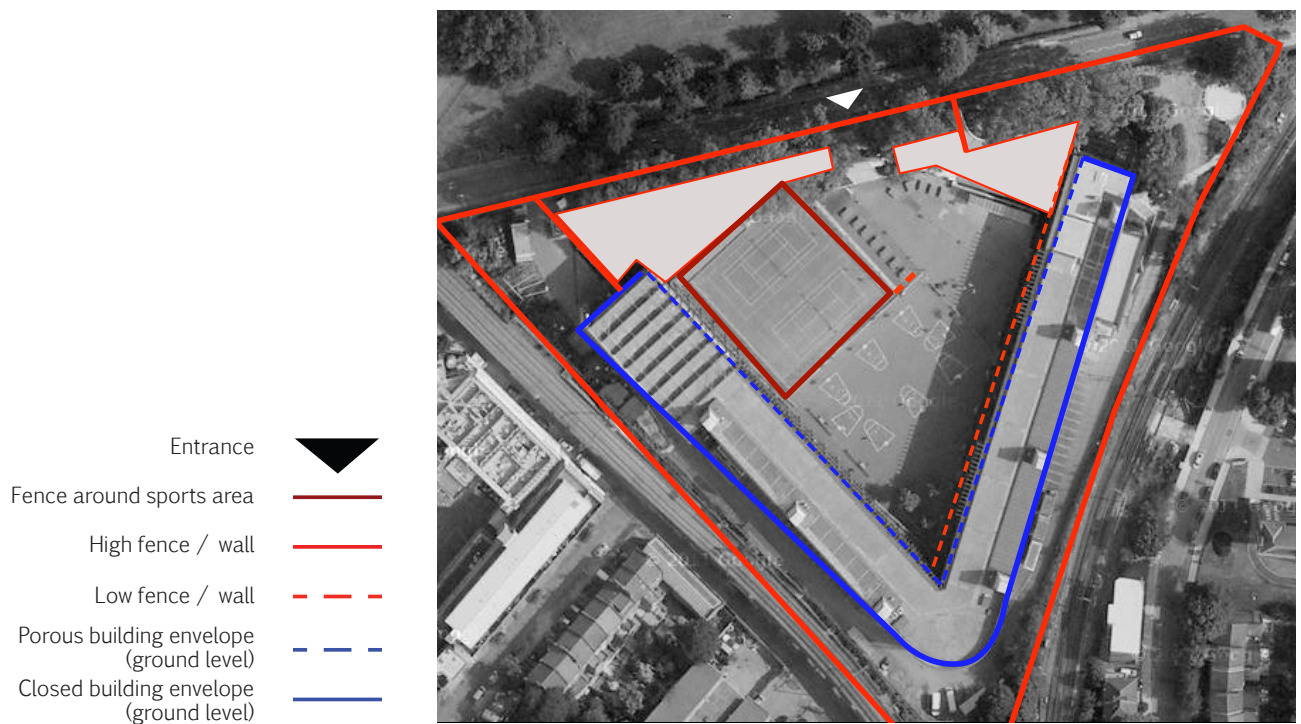
In Summary: local lives?

The preceding discussion raises questions regarding the place of the local in the lives of young people attending the new-build academies. This “in-between layer” is important for youth as they undergo a transition from childhood to adulthood, an “in-between time”. The academies perform well in academic terms but have few interactions with their surroundings. Brittle building design and aggressive boundaries create separate school environments that need to be highly managed. As an analysis of the boundary types show, there is no soft or malleable transition space to allow for a more natural transition to or from schools. Interviews showed that many students no longer consider



stepping outside of their homes and spending time in public in the city as a desirable or pleasurable thing. The emotions, adventures and risks that Sennett and Jacobs argue would help them to become experienced citizens are either not available to them or no longer compelling. A legitimate concern with safety has become interwoven with perceptions of insecurity, which permit authority figures to forbid students from an independent role in the public realm. The students have become both “victims” and “perpetrators”; Mooney and Talbot (2010) note that such a dichotomy poses a serious challenge to the identity of young adults.

Growing up is liminal and by definition full of danger as well as opportunity. To support growing up, schools and the local environment need corresponding transitional spaces—both physical and social—which form buffer zones to support young people. Without transitional spaces, the danger is that youth become passive recipients of discipline and skills training, rather than active learners and engaged local citizens (Beck, 1992).



△ 11 **Spatial analysis of Mossbourne academy**
The school is systematically separated from its environment by a system of fences or barriers that do not allow for an urban dialogue on pedestrian level.

INTERVENTION

Precedents

Having identified the boundaries between Hackney's academies and their local environment as problematic, many questions remain regarding how they might be softened or 're-localised'. An examination of some initiatives that seek to better integrate youth with their local environments illuminates some different approaches.

A Hub Model

Civil society groups in Hackney provide a fertile middle ground between schools and the surrounding city. Hackney is brimming with youth-oriented social organisations; an online directory lists over 300 of these groups. Some reflect the previously discussed discourse that paints the public realm as an uneasy danger zone for youth; a Council-sponsored youth centre, for example, promises to "get young people off of street corners and into clubs" (Young Hackney website). Yet some civil sector initiatives find a positive potential in the local environment. The Building Exploratory, active in Hackney, organises indoor and outdoor workshops and exhibitions, seeking to "put communities in touch with their environment and the way it works" (Building Exploratory website). Another local group called the Hackney Pirates similarly portrays Hackney's local environment in a positive light as an educational resource. Targeting primary school students between age 9 and 11 and focusing on building literacy skills, the group aims to provide an "unconventional learning environment" (Hackney Pirates website). Civic groups like these seem better at building local connections than schools, yet these connections more often than not cluster in external "hubs" and the limited "after school" period, thus remaining external to schools and official school time.

A Distributed Model

A further model is represented by the "Learning Town" initiative started in the small Scottish city of Dumfries. The "Learning Town" approach directly addresses schooling envisioning a more comprehensive localisation through changes in the location of education. Supported by the local Council and aligned with a new national educational policy, the study embodies the idea that a closer relationship between school and city can not only provide a better education and quality of life for students, but also serve as a catalyst for local economic development. A project pamphlet proposes that "learning would become the key prism through which any consideration of the town's future would be viewed" (Learning Town website).

The language of the design proposals is one of decentralisation and integration where schools are sometimes deconstructed entirely and woven into other local assets like theatres, parks, and public squares, which are seen to form "a latent network of educational facilities across the whole town" (3DReid, Learning Town website).

The vision of schools gaining value as general community assets, while capturing the value of other local elements as potential sites of learning certainly hits right at the heart of the problem of over-determined boundaries that needs address in Hackney. Yet the Dumfries context benefits from not only a much smaller local scale but also from a supportive relationship between stakeholders at local and national scales.

Towards a “Telescopic School”

To build a theory of localisation that works with Hackney’s academies, some strengths of the initiatives above—namely the capacity of social organisations to facilitate hubs of local interaction and resource sharing, and the outward-looking, comprehensive approach epitomised in the vision of the Learning Town—become a powerful hybrid. The academies’ strong boundaries, institutional autonomy, and successful image make it difficult for change to be imposed from outside; at the same time, inviting the local inside school boundaries as a ‘special guest’ is not enough.

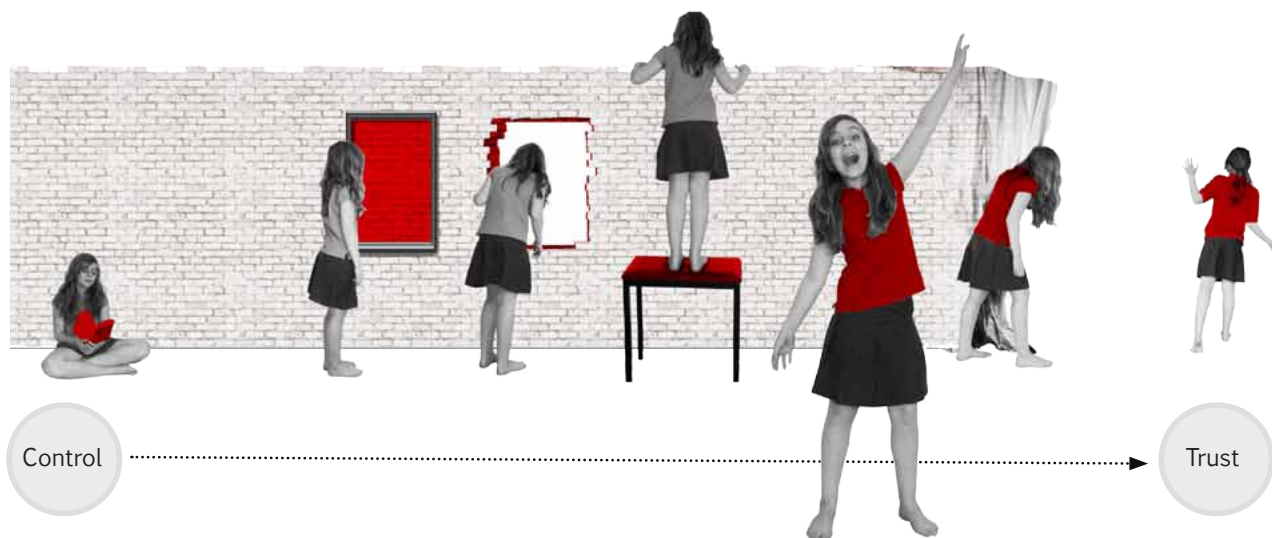
Forming new connections on the inside or outside alone risks avoiding the existence of over determined boundaries rather than questioning or turning them to new uses. These premises taken together form a theoretical guide for intervention that we call the telescopic school. ‘Telescopic’ aims to describe a scalar flexibility that embraces the ambiguous definition of locality, and sees it as a process rather than a particular scale. Given a favourable social and political context, the telescopic school is able to expand and embrace a borough-wide sense of locality, but it could just as easily collapse and focus on the immediate neighbourhood, or gather its local connections inside itself and function as a single hub. These reconfigurations turn static boundaries into obstacles and create a rationale for a softer and more flexible border architecture. The academy curriculum is a site and set of practices that, if redesigned, could begin to put the theory of a telescopic school into practice. The proposal for this redesign is called the ‘Spatial Curriculum’.

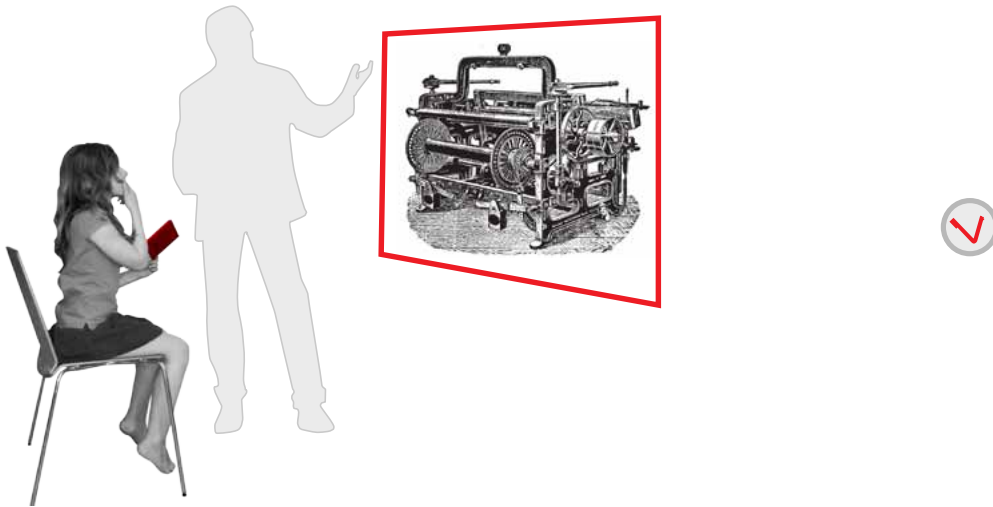
The Spatial Curriculum

The Spatial Curriculum supports the process of growing up by providing a spatial matrix within which a transition from the controlled space of childhood to the self-determined space of adulthood can take place in the local environment. It powers the school as “telescopic”. It describes a way out of school. It is—however paradoxical it sounds—initiated and organised by the school. It leaves the school untouched as an institution (at least in its early phases of adoption) but blurs the boundaries between its spaces and those of the locality. Borders—both physical and non-physical, dominate this condition. The Spatial Curriculum is not about removing these borders entirely; it is about understanding the borders. It is about learning to leave.

Through the Spatial Curriculum the appropriation of social space is expressed physically. Most of this will be ephemeral but at the border traces and remnants of transitions made into the local will be collected, indeed celebrated. This dead, inactive space will be transformed into a place of social and spatial experience that visually expresses the dynamic nature of the school’s border.

The visual concept for the Spatial Curriculum has roots in the idea of the “social sculpture”, developed by Joseph Beuys in the 1960s. A social sculpture aims to unite art and social action; it assumes that art is not the production of static artefacts but the creative act of shaping the social space. This approach has become commonplace in contemporary art practice. Jack Richardson (2010) transfers the idea of avant-garde art practice to the realm of education where a “interventionist art curriculum can be understood as a type of art-informed tactical research”.

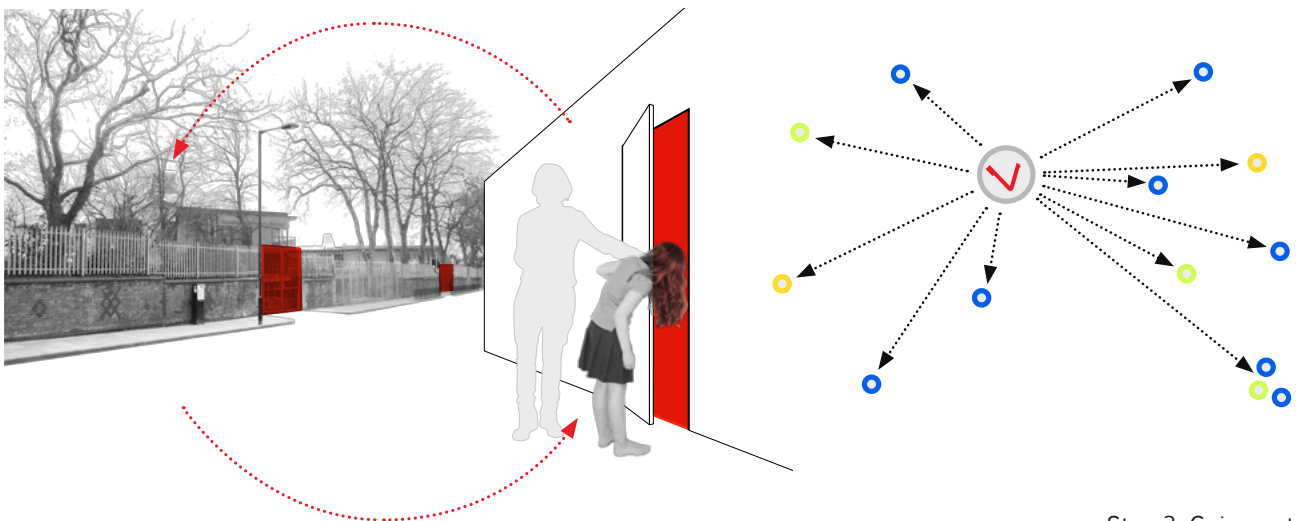




Step 1: Learning inside



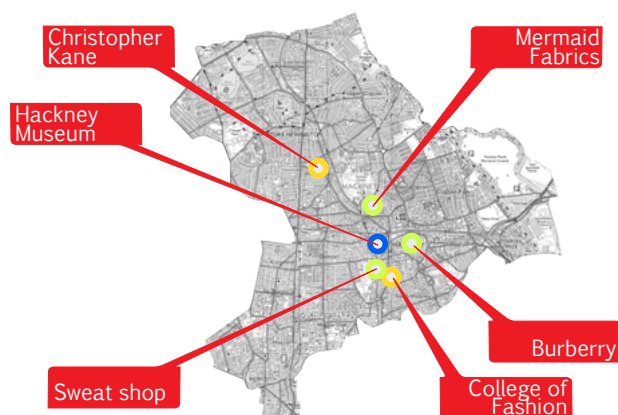
Step 2: Virtual world



Step 3: Going out

The Spatial Curriculum in Practice

In the next paragraphs the Spatial Curriculum process is described, supported by an example of students in Hackney working with the concept of “Making” as part of their studies in geography. It should be noted that even though the steps have a chronological order, they can be adapted to the school, age of the students and educational needs of the specific context. Younger pupils, for example, might only complete the first three steps. The actual focus and content of the spatial curriculum is the decision of the school itself and topics in many disciplines can be introduced through it such as “transport”, “the sustainable city”, “cinema” and “eating healthily”. Neither the scope nor the content is predetermined.



Step 1: Learning inside

The first contact the school and students have with the Spatial Curriculum is deliberately uncontroversial with a topic being introduced as part of the normal curriculum. The school and teachers decide which topic will be investigated using this alternative. Students continue their daily life with the school learning about the topic and through this numbers, concepts, words and significances are given to the students with the aim that they appropriate them. They discuss, ask and learn. The school borders and the locality remain the same. In the “Making” topic, the history of the Industrial Revolution and its social consequences are discussed. The role of manufacturing in the modern economy is also investigated.

Step 2: Virtual space

During this step the learning process extends beyond the school borders and class hours but risks are still low. Students are asked to investigate and to register, using new technologies (computers, mobile phones and apps), sites and places located within the Borough that relate to their topic. Mapping is a powerful tool and several skills are learned through it. An e-map is a final product, built collaboratively by the students and promoting discussions about its contents. The map provides a basis for the next step. The school borders remain intact and locality undisturbed but students bring—virtually—elements of the outside in. In the “Making” topic students map the location of places where things are made in the locality. The topic focuses in on the making of fabric and clothes, industries vital to the local economy.

Step 3: Going out

During this step the students leave the school and enter the local actively—but under supervision. Field visits to places selected via the mapping exercise are organised so that the transition between “learning about Hackney” and “living in Hackney” can be made. The school controls the visit, in so doing starting a relation with the institutions/ places visited. Contacts with “localness” beyond the home and school are deepened. The border is now open. With the school still in control, children have liberty and enter the real world. In the “Making” topic students visit local sites related to the clothing industry and talk with local practitioners about their work, both in the new and traditional clothing industries of Hackney.

Step 4: Back to school

The new experiences and knowledge gained locally are used to support the students in developing their creative and critical abilities. They bring this knowledge back into the school as a source of inspiration for their own practical projects. The school offers spaces to be creative in and the spatial curriculum becomes a “hands on” process. With students, teachers decide what to do and a productive stage begins. Through this students incorporate their understanding and connections with other tools, experiences and sources of information. The border becomes porous as flows of information permeate it constantly carried by students who have become the bond between the outside and the inside. In the “Making” topic, students have collected different fabrics reflecting the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood and now consider what they can make with them.

- ✓ 13 **Sequence of the Spatial Curriculum: Step 1 to 3**
Including map of findings with fabric related places in step 2



Step 4: Back to school



Step 5: Changing the border



Step 6: Becoming local

Step 5: Changing the border

The permeable and absorbent border now becomes a site of learning and communication as the students show their work on it. The students control what will be shown. Group work skills are put in practice and the school acquires an ability to delegate decisions to their own students. Neighbours are involved and can admire, touch, comment or criticise the spectacle the border has become. The border is a chameleon and the student's interventions are not only physical but social, remaining in people's minds. In the "Making" topic the students decide to "embroider" the mesh of their fences through weaving the different fabrics in and out of the structure.



Step 6: Becoming local

This is the most challenging step in the Spatial Curriculum as the school trusts students to perform, show-off and exhibit the products of their local learning in the Borough. Again, students propose and the school guides. The final product should be built outside the school with locals contributing to it. The students leave their "comfort zone" entering a world of risk and adventure. The preparation delivered through the previous steps means that teachers are confident, knowing students will perform well. Now the border has cracked. The school interacts with the local city and the city expects the students to be part of it. In the "Making" topic the students host a "Fashion Weekend" at a local location, showing alternative garments made by themselves and gathered from the local community.

Vision: a permanent hinge with the community

As the Spatial Curriculum is performed over and over again, some schools may want to open up a permanent door towards the surrounding community. The border space, today filled with fences and walls, can be re-imagined to become a "hinge" enabling the school and the local to interact.

In a longer-term perspective, the Spatial Curriculum has potential to transform the school site significantly as interactive projects accrue to fill spaces on and around the border. The border becomes a palimpsest of interaction with the community, eventually molded by this force in to a new form.

Here two longer-term outcomes are imagined. In the first, the school decides to extend its building beyond the boundary so that it touches the street, allowing for a more public type of access and engagement. In the second, the border becomes a crafted space, overrun with the work of students and facilities that promote engagement with the community.

Building a New Type of Local Accountability

The academy schools of Hackney pay considerable attention to their attainments in OFSTED evaluations and results in "Key Stage" tests. Both are national level evaluations and tend towards measures of traditional educational attainment, though OFSTED stresses that it is interested in the "overall wellbeing" of children. Given the responsiveness of Hackney schools to metrics, these should be developed to measure the local impact of schools—and evaluated at the level of the local. Work on school evaluation in Scotland has shown that the evaluation of local impact should be left deliberately broad. Therefore schools would be asked to submit case studies that show the impact they are having on the Borough to a board made up of local stakeholders.

- ✓ 14 **Sequence of the Spatial Curriculum: Step 4 to 6**
Current state of edge of the school. This abandoned place will be a blank canvas for future student generation

CONCLUSION

Current political actions question the category of the local and its relevance. This has serious ramifications for education in particular as the local accountability of schools is challenged. At the same time initiatives such as the Localism Act push to reestablish the context of the local both together with and away from existing political authority. The situation is ambiguous. With regard to growing up this confusion is dangerous. Young adults need a place in which to grow up. Rather than wait for politics to resolve what the local is and how schools should relate to it, the Spatial Curriculum encourages the schools and students of Hackney to make the local themselves.

As the young adults, teachers and locals of Hackney explore the Spatial Curriculum it is envisaged that initial sorties into the local will become both bolder and more natural. School fences will become sites of communication and celebration; they will become visible but this time in a manner that speaks of trust and transition, rather than control and separation. This change will not be delivered by architects but driven by students, the process establishing their spatial agency so they can continue to develop relationships with the city throughout their lives. Through the spatial curriculum the school children of Hackney will learn that they define their environment.

15 Current situation



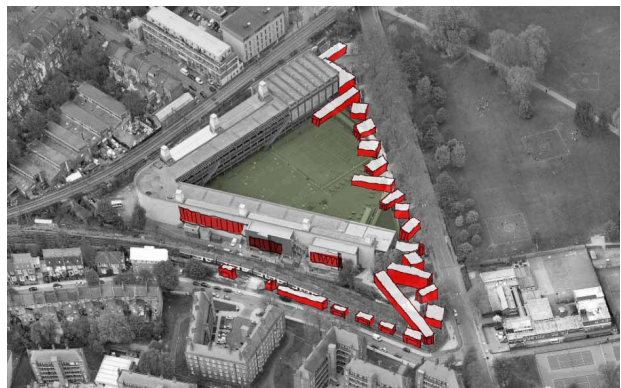
16 Extend the existing, the big gesture

To support engagement with the community, both wings of Mossbourne Academy are extended to touch the street. These provide new doors for the Academy, enabling local people to access resources within the building and students to become part of the community through the symbolism of their connected building. In the extended wings new community functions can be established. With the new circulation route the existing school facilities will be easy accessible by the community. This will facilitate sharing of school and community functions. The reorientation also turns the schoolyard into a private place rather than access route, suggesting more opportunities for independent play.

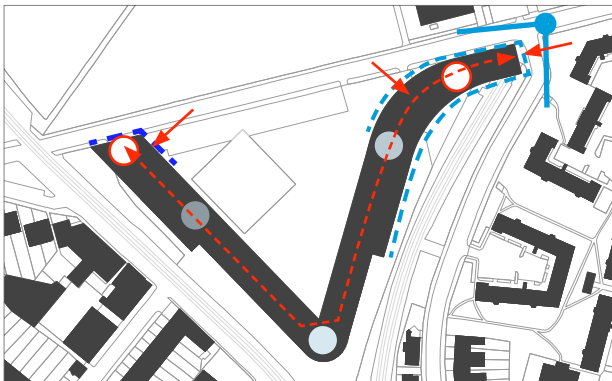
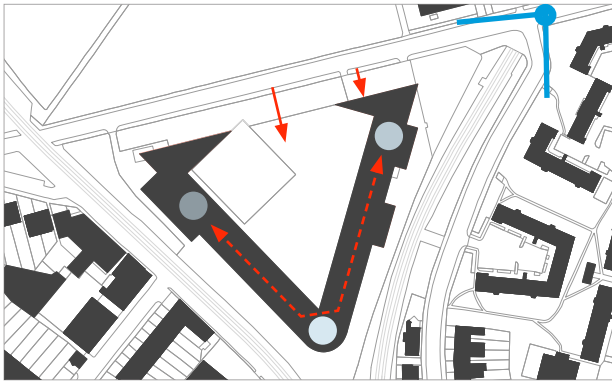
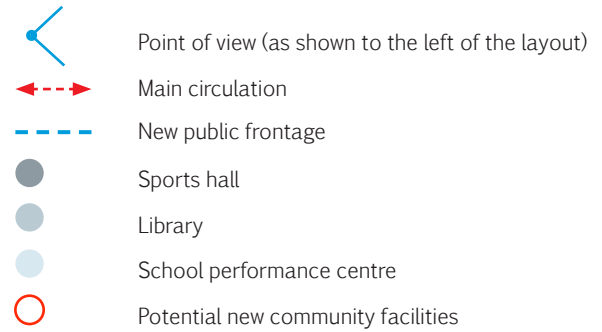


17 Grow the border

Initial displays of products from Spatial Curriculum activities have led to an appreciation of the role of borders and wish on the part of the students to challenge them. They have begun constructing sites for community-school activity along the border such as green houses or debate forums. The border has become a matrix on to which different building elements can be added. Through this process, the points of entrance to the school become multiple and related to interaction rather than authority. The border becomes the place where public and school functions dynamically mix.



Many types of interaction with the local are possible through the Spatial Curriculum meaning that it can address the educational and social needs of many types of students at different stages of growing up. The concept also has potential to be deployed in other neighbourhoods. It will require a heavy commitment from the schools and in particular from teachers; it can be questioned whether a metric of local impact will provide sufficient incentive. The success of the Spatial Curriculum will quite possibly depend on the success of “localism” as a social and political concept more broadly and whether the people of Hackney choose to value the local nature of their schools, alongside their educational achievements.



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RESEARCH RECORDS

13 interviews with local students, school staff, teachers and parents were performed

4 consultative interviews with academics & practitioners

2 observation sessions with a local youth group

A mapping workshop with 9 students from a Hackney academy

Discourse analysis based on 8,200 words from media articles about Hackney academies

5 observation sessions of students' movements on the way home from school.

Survey of 80 commercial places was made aiming to discover how friendly or hostile is the surrounding environment with students.