

# **“Like oil and water”? Partnerships between visual art institutions and youth organisations**

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## Abstract

This thesis interrogates partnership working between galleries and youth organisations involved in a four-year, Tate led programme called Circuit (2013-2017). This programme sought to build sustainable networks with youth organisations and services across England and Wales in order to 'improve access and opportunities for harder to reach young people' who may not otherwise engage with galleries and museums (Circuit, 2013a).

Reflecting on the similarities and divergences that characterise practice in gallery education and youth work, this research untangles the historic barriers and tensions that have affected relationships between practitioners, organisations and the youth and visual art sectors. Mobilising Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, galleries and youth organisations are conceptualised as part of distinct 'fields', and their particular traditions, customs and internal contests are analysed. An exploration of the fields' development under successive governments and changing policy priorities reveals that art organisations benefit from a greater affordance of agency and autonomy than youth organisations, which contributes to the uneven power dynamics that often exist in these cross-sector alliances. Reports from engagement with sector events also highlight how concepts of art and creativity frequently deviate between the fields.

Through an ethnographic approach to the research context, participant observations and interviews produce data about Circuit's programmatic decisions, and its efforts to shift problematic habitual practices. A series of in-depth site studies illustrate different ways for organisations to work together, as well as the challenges of collaboration in pressured political and economic circumstances. Cross-site analysis allows for further deliberation on the compatibility of Circuit's wider peer-led programme agenda with the comparative agenda and practice of youth organisations. The ambition for young people to continue an independent relationship with the galleries' programmes is shown to be hindered by a number of sometimes-misrecognised factors that unintentionally alienate certain communities of young people, particularly from working class backgrounds. The final stage of the analysis studies the identity, attitudes and positions of various youth sector agents working and participating within Circuit, and the specific 'capital' they bring to the temporary programmatic field.

In discussing the implications for practice and research, this thesis asks whether (beyond programmes such as Circuit) it would be possible to establish a permanent collaborative or cooperative field between the youth and gallery sectors. I argue that this would only happen if a range of systemic changes were made, such as the development of national and regional structures to support integrated practice sharing; deeper engagement with the meaning and repercussions of partnership working; a determination to work collaboratively to address social urgencies facing young people, and a fundamental commitment to shift pervasive inequalities in the visual art sector.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Research rationale: why explore partnerships between galleries and youth organisations?**

The problem of partnership intrigues and agitates the visual art sector, and the public and private sectors at large (London, 2012). The compulsion to work or cooperate with others is both an innate human instinct (Sennett, 2013) and a symptom of a society that is increasingly interconnected (Brown, 2012).

Partnership working has also become a dominant paradigm in national and local governance, to the extent that most organisations and services are expected to be forging cross-organisational alliances as a matter of course (Douglas, 2009). Nonetheless while the language of partnership has embedded itself as part of the rhetoric of effective governance, there is a common belief that in practice, partnership working is difficult and conflictual (Isaacs, 2004; Miessen, 2010). It is a feature of contemporary professional life that is as complex and testing as it is generative. This makes partnership a consistently attractive topic for research inquiry.

Variously described in different terms – from ‘collaboration’ to ‘coproduction’ – the subject of working together has been the focus of numerous research initiatives, policy directives, conferences and publications, particularly during the past decade. In the cultural sector these activities have included the AHRC’s Connected Communities programme (2010-) exploring academic/community collaboration, and King’s College’s 2015 cultural enquiry into the role of partnership in publicly funded arts institutions. In UK gallery and museum education practice, this work has covered relationships with community organisations and groups (Butler and Reiss, 2007; Lynch, 2011; South London Gallery, 2011; Francke, 2012; Graham et al., 2012; Steedman, 2012), with schools (Smithens, 2008; A New Direction, 2013), with other cultural institutions (Bak Mortensen and Nesbitt, 2012) and with the health sector (Daly, 2012) for

example. However arguably only a few publications concentrate on the specific nuances of partnership working between galleries and youth organisations or services (Edmonds, 2008; Wheeler and Walls, 2008; Tate, 2012; National Portrait Gallery, 2014).

The period in which this research was conceived coincided with a relative surge in interest and activity around connections between the youth and cultural sectors (Creating Change, 2013; Walsh, 2014; Strong Voices, 2015; Slater, Tiller and Rooke, 2016). Much of this activity was not however specific to museums and galleries. Rather it was predominantly located in theatre and performance contexts. In this respect, Tate's multi-sited, four-year programme Circuit represented an opportune moment to rigorously examine the nature of partnership between galleries and youth organisations that would be involved in the initiative.

Significantly then, the warrant for this research originated from a desire by Tate's Learning and Research teams to facilitate empirical study around partnership working with youth organisations. There was an expressed ambition in the studentship advertisement to develop knowledge about ways to create more sustainable and embedded relationships across the sectors. By co-hosting the studentship with The University of Nottingham, Tate had an institutional stake in the research and its findings. The investment of the UK's leading visual art organisation indicated that there was an appetite amongst arts practitioners for deeper insights into this area of work.

As I explore later in the thesis, engagement with the youth sector and youth work literature revealed that there also appeared to be very few examples of studies from this perspective looking at relationships between youth organisations and galleries. Where the arts did feature in youth work publications and events, this was usually in reference to *youth arts* organisations, or non-institutional arts activity (Morford, 2009). Galleries and the institutional visual arts were seldom mentioned in the literature. There was seemingly a need



to develop work in this field of practice that represented the perspectives of youth workers, and to gather findings that could be shared within this sector. The first six months of the research (and the pilot work carried out during this time) confirmed for me that there was enthusiasm for the research amongst youth practitioners – several of whom reported historically problematic experiences of partnership between their organisations and art institutions. I also discovered during this time the extent of the challenges facing the youth sector nationally, and the support amongst youth work academics for any research that dealt with youth work as a subject matter, particularly if it had the potential to offer hopeful future alternatives and creative opportunities for the sector. Turns towards measurement and accreditation in youth work have also meant that quantitative research methodologies are increasingly dominant in the sector, so in the academic youth work community at least there was added interest in longitudinal qualitative research (Wenham, 2014). Despite having not come from a youth work background, I found this (relatively small) community to be very welcoming and encouraging of my investigation and dissemination activities.

The prospect of making new contributions to both practice and research across two sectors, about a universally recognised ‘problem’, is what energised me to adopt and carry out this study. The following section outlines in further detail my aspirations for the work, and the questions that guided the process.

### **Thesis aims and questions**

This PhD was initially established by my supervisors: Dr Emily Pringle, Head of Learning Practice and Research at Tate, and Professor Pat Thomson at The University of Nottingham. I had previous experience of both institutions, having studied as an undergraduate in Nottingham and having worked at Tate Britain early in my career. My hope was that my background and existing relationships at Tate would enable me to be an effective research partner to the programme.

In developing this role as a collaborative doctoral partner, I also sought to build solid relationships with the other organisations involved in Circuit, and to behave as responsibly and openly as possible in my fieldwork, so that findings might be actively shared and utilised. I wanted the research to find an audience amongst both practitioners and researchers in the youth and visual art sectors, and I remain hopeful that the findings might influence practice at Tate and in gallery education in particular (as this is where the research has predominantly been rooted).

The overarching question that directed the course of the inquiry was as follows:

*What does a multi-sited gallery youth programme reveal about the nature of partnerships between visual art institutions and youth organisations?*

In addition, a series of sub-questions (developed with my supervisors) helped to narrow the focus of the fieldwork and provide structure to the thesis:

- *What is the character of the relationship between the arts and youth sectors?*
- *What is Circuit's partnership offer?*
- *How is this offer taken up?*
- *What are the barriers to, and facilitators of, effective partnership working between galleries and youth organisations?*
- *What happens as a consequence of these partnerships?*
- *What could change to improve partnerships between youth and visual art organisations?*

All of these questions were posed in the service of constructing a new body of knowledge around the specific character of partnership between these fields.

## Research context

Circuit provided a valuable platform for the study of cross-organisational partnership for a number of reasons. The programme was one of the largest and well funded of its kind in the UK – functioning with a grant of 5 million pounds from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF). This grant was originally secured by the Learning team at Tate London, acting on behalf of the four Tate galleries (Tate Modern and Tate Britain in London, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives), which would all be part of the programme. This team subsequently recruited six further galleries to take part from the institution's Plus Tate network: Firstsite in Colchester, Mostyn in Llandudno, Nottingham Contemporary, the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester and Wysing Arts Centre and Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. The geographical diversity and financial scale of the programme made this an ambitious and varied setting for research.

The programme's core aims were:

- *To make a positive difference with and for young people*
- *To improve access and opportunities for harder to reach young people through extending and developing sustainable networks between the arts and youth sector*
- *To develop and change practice within and across cultural organisations*
- *To change attitudes and behaviours towards and about young people*

(Circuit, 2013a)

These aims indicate how Circuit sought to inspire personal, organisational and social change through its activities. These goals correlated with my own motivations to develop ways of bettering partnership practice across the youth and art sectors, for the ultimate benefit of young people.

Circuit worked to meet these aims through a cross-disciplinary programme that would facilitate encounters between young people, art and artists in a variety of situations. Four main delivery strands (largely modelled on Tate's experience of youth programming) provided a common structure to the activity and budgets at

each Circuit site. These strands broke down into the following categories:

- **Strand 1: Profile and engagement – Festival**  
*A high profile festival (or similar) event for and by young people aged 15-25 years (1 per partner in one of the 4 years), attracting up to 3,000 young people at each site.*
- **Strand 2: Embedding work with young people – Peer led**  
*A sustained programme of peer-led projects engaging up to 50 young people per annum for four years.*
- **Strand 3: Building sustainable networks – Partnerships**  
*Development of new relationships with up to 4 local youth organisations leading towards project activity engaging up to 20 young people per annum in years 3 and 4.*
- **Strand 4: Reaching wider audiences – Digital**  
*Development of new digital content to empower and engage young people, and share practice across the gallery education sector.*

(Circuit, 2013a)

In practice these four strands were intended not to exist in isolation but to cross over, so that ‘marginalised young people’ would have the opportunity to ‘actively contribute [to], participate [in] and benefit from all strands’ (Circuit, 2013a). The targets set above were also flexible.

The main objectives related to the partnership strand reflected this desire to position partnership working as a route into other opportunities for young people. These objectives are listed below:

- 1. To develop strong partnerships between the youth and cultural sectors and thereby open dialogue and opportunity for those young people with least access and voice*
- 2. To engage hardest-to-reach young people through opportunities, entry points and pathways into cultural activities*
- 3. To open up progression routes for a greater diversity of young people*
- 4. To create a lasting impact and legacy with regard to extending and developing sustainable networks*

(Circuit, 2013b)

The scope of the programme design meant that I could observe different partnership projects, whilst also analysing to what extent these led to further engagements between young people and the broader gallery offer. I was

particularly interested to follow the progress of one of Circuit's key ambitions – which was to support young people from partnership projects to engage with or join the galleries' peer groups, whose role it was to curate programmes and events alongside the institution on a long-term basis. Circuit's other key aspiration to create strong and sustainable networks between the youth and cultural sectors would also provide a chance to explore the feasibility of these types of cross-sector relationships.

Finally, I understood Circuit to be a receptive space to conduct critical research because the programme was itself shaped around an action research model, with an extensive evaluation framework and an ethos that revolved around learning and reflective practice. This combination of conditions delivered a supportive (although complicated) environment in which to conduct collaborative doctoral research.

### **Personal positioning**

Before entering into discussion of the thesis, it is necessary to make note of my personal motivations for taking on this research, and to outline the experiences that inform and influence my interpretation of the context.

I write this thesis from the perspective of a middle class, white, non-disabled, heterosexual, degree-educated female gallery practitioner. Growing up in Gloucestershire, I was taken on trips by my parents and schools to galleries, museums and theatres and was supported to take extra-curricular music and drama lessons, and perform in plays and festivals. As a child I joined the Brownies and attended lunchtime clubs, and as a teenager I completed a Duke of Edinburgh's Award, sang in the choir and chaired the school debating team. I attended private and state grammar schools and was taught in small classes. My school experiences were sometimes socially challenging, but mine was a loving and secure childhood. My father was employed as a director in waste management and my mother as an early years 'special needs' teacher. Both

parents worked long hours and instilled into me a strong work ethic. My mother's work inspired me to consider teaching as a career, but the formality of school-based education never appealed, and I was encouraged to follow my creative interests, and to discover my career path along the way. I never felt particularly gifted academically, but I put a lot of pressure on myself to work hard and to gain good grades, as I was determined to do something socially meaningful and creatively rewarding in my future work life.

This brief account of my privileged background is significant for this research in several ways. Firstly it is important to note that my background is relatively consistent with that of the majority of cultural sector workers - many of whom have at least one parent who went to university and at least one parent who worked in a managerial role (Panic, 2015). It is no coincidence that I felt able to cope with social challenges; that I was driven to achieve academically and that I never felt pressure to pursue a well-paid profession. My happy, stable home life and adult influences provided the optimum conditions to build youthful confidence and resilience, and my exposure to different cultural experiences reinforced the legitimacy of a creative career. These circumstances led me to embark on an Art Foundation diploma and to study Art History at The University of Nottingham, which ultimately became my route into gallery education. Anecdotally, I know that a high proportion of gallery education workers have degrees in Art History, Fine Art or other cultural humanities subjects. These degrees rarely provide vocational training for gallery work - rather they are shaped around developing students' visual literacy, critical thinking abilities, and knowledge of cultural and political contexts. Undergraduates take up these subjects on the understanding that they provide a broad and pleasurable intellectual grounding for a wide range of possible careers. The decision to undertake this type of degree is therefore itself underpinned by privilege, because the subject matter's value is derived from a belief in the currency of a particular type of cultural knowledge. This form of education is quite distinct from the heavily vocational character of youth and community work education, which is much more directed towards developing pedagogical practice and

equipping students with professional qualifications for the workplace (Gibson and Wylie, 2015).

So mine is a background that is situated in the field of gallery work, and the advantages of my upbringing have meant that I was virtually predisposed to work in this field. School, extra-curricular provision and university were comfortable, familiar spaces for me because the social and cultural capitals acquired throughout my childhood were congruent with the practices and values of these spaces (Connell et al., 1982; Thomson, 2002). Because of this, I cannot fully know what it is to resist or feel excluded by institutions such as schools or galleries, either as a young person or a practitioner. This would be a different PhD were it written from a position of rejection and isolation from these institutions. But I *can* know what it is to be a gallery educator, and I can still feel dissatisfied and aggravated by the biased system that includes and validates me, and those like me.

Recognition of my own privileged circumstances and wider social inequity has defined and shaped my personal politics and career journey. As a teenager I grew frustrated with my hometown's lack of diversity and sought relationships beyond the parameters of my immediate school communities. My and my family's experience of adoption further strengthened my resolve to work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and alerted me to some of the failures of pastoral care in formal education and social services. I mention these experiences because they have contributed to my longstanding interests in the challenges of integration between different communities, in the systemic marginalisation of young people and in the value of informal education. I acknowledge that my professional accomplishments and personal fulfilments are partly products of high quality formal and informal youth provision, and as a result of my own experiences I am a believer in the value of youth work and particularly informal arts education.

So I undertook this PhD in the hope that I might eventually support youth and visual arts organisations to work better together, and did not set out to question the validity of partnering with the youth sector. I was however aware of the scepticism that surrounded the practice of youth work. When I started my PhD, a school friend (now a secondary school teacher) asked me why I was researching youth work, because “young people don’t actually go to youth clubs do they? We never did!” I reminded her that we did in fact access lots of informal youth provision when we were younger, but these activities were funded by our parents, run voluntarily or facilitated by our schools. Jeffs (2011) contends that the privately educated understand the value of informal, extra-curricular youth provision to the extent that they will actively pay for it. Ironically, the ruling political class (many of whom are privately educated) will have benefitted from hundreds of hours of ‘youth work’ and informal education through different schemes, residentials, music tuition and performing arts groups, meanwhile state-subsidised youth provision for less advantaged young people has to be constantly justified (Jeffs, 2011). Consequently, another dimension of my research position is a political conviction that all young people, regardless of background, should have access to good quality informal youth/arts provision.

Notwithstanding this argument, it is important to highlight that my history of engagement as a young participant was limited to a very specific form of middle class youth provision focused on cultural enrichment opportunities. I never accessed youth provision as a means of escape from a chaotic home life for instance. This does not disqualify me from speaking about the youth sector, but it does position me as an outsider (relative to my status as an ‘insider’ amongst gallery educators) and as someone who is less able to directly identify with the challenging life circumstances facing many young people engaged by statutory or charitable youth services. During my undergraduate studies in Nottingham I worked to develop more diverse experiences of youth provision as a volunteer, by working in a weekly after school arts club for disabled young people, a drop-in youth club for under 11s and drama and arts youth groups. I also worked as a drama ‘counsellor’ in an American camp for eight weeks. Later in my career I



worked on projects with young care leavers, adventure playgrounds and a pupil referral unit, and worked part time at an inclusive community arts centre. These experiences gave me a slightly more varied understanding of different contexts for informal youth provision, and a greater comprehension of specific needs. While my contact with youth provision has not been as extensive as it has been with galleries, it is an area of practice that I have some familiarity with, which has proven useful in fieldwork situations.

I am conscious however that my early engagements as a young worker/volunteer were often motivated by philanthropic impulses and a desire to build my CV. Both of these motivations are loaded with power relations, which is something I became more aware of as my personal politics evolved. The philanthropic inflection of gallery education is a feature of the practice that I have grappled with and that I know has troubled other practitioners (Smith, 2012; Sayers, 2014). This is partly why I felt comfortable stepping out of youth programmes for five years to concentrate on public programming with and for adults, which I initially found to be a more equitable space of interaction. I inevitably noticed these judgements influencing my reading of Circuit, which sometimes meant I viewed gallery practices more critically than youth sector practices.

The other key element of my personal experience that is relevant to this study is the way in which I received my 'break' into employment in gallery education, through securing an unpaid internship with Tate Britain's youth programme in 2008. While thrilled to be offered this competitive internship after graduating, I recall feeling some anxiety about my legitimacy as a white, middle class 22-year-old working with a group of ethnically diverse young Londoners only a few years younger than myself. I recognised Tate's complicity in creating hierarchies between young people through their institutional practice of offering unpaid internships, which required interns to work for free three days a week for three months. I was admittedly only able to pursue this internship alongside a full time Master's course and a part time job due to the financial assistance of my parents. This internship was immensely rewarding and pivotal to my securing subsequent

paid work with Tate and other institutions, but even though I took advantage of this opportunity, I was conscious that entrenched institutional inequalities (that privileged the financially secure) had facilitated my entry into gallery education. In the years that followed, activism against the structural unfairness of unpaid internships grew in prominence, which helped to encourage organisations such as Tate to pay interns, and therefore widen access into the gallery sector. So my relationship to Tate's youth programme is complex, because I am the beneficiary of the historical culture of free labour that reinforced inequity and social/economic barriers in arts institutions. In many ways this research has led me to confront uncomfortable questions about my collusion in the problems revealed by the research.

Rather than perceive this as a sign of weakness, I have tried to utilise my professional discomfort as a source of empathy with research participants – namely gallery practitioners and youth workers – who I frequently asked to open up about their own professional histories (Mills and Morton, 2013). My career trajectory corresponds in many ways to that of other gallery practitioners, and my role as an implicated (but critical) insider is something to be exploited. By acknowledging these aspects of my positionality, and unpicking the privileges and power structures that shape my researcher identity, I am attempting to adopt a critical research stance, which brings to light inequality and injustice in the context of study (Madison, 2012).

## **Definitions**

Several terms are used repeatedly throughout this thesis that require some clarification. The concepts of the 'gallery education' and 'youth' sectors are unpacked in Chapter 3: *Who are the partners? Parallel histories and policy contexts*. Also discussed in this chapter are the evolving roles of the youth worker and gallery education programmer. It is important to point out that in different organisations, different job titles are used for similar roles. In some of the partnerships I observed, practitioners from youth organisations were sometimes

called ‘advisors’ or ‘support workers’ or ‘programme managers’ for instance. Similarly, gallery practitioners had a number of job titles – from ‘Youth and community officer’, to ‘Curator, Young people’s programmes’. Throughout this thesis I often use the generic terms ‘youth practitioner’ and ‘gallery practitioner’ to describe workers, but in some cases I do use actual job titles, where there is little risk of the practitioner being identified, or where the person interviewed was happy to be identified.

It is also worth highlighting that when I use the term ‘Circuit gallery’, I am referring to one of the ten visual art institutions involved in the programme. Even though ‘gallery’ is an appropriate signifier for these institutions, some of these organisations are also classified as museums because they hold a permanent collection. One of the organisations is also a multi-art form cultural venue and another is an arts centre that also runs studios.

The most contentious collection of terms used throughout the thesis are the various descriptors applied to ‘young people’. Citing Circuit’s literature, I have already used the phrase ‘hard to reach’ in reference to young people who are considered to have least access to arts opportunities. This phrase is regularly critiqued for its apparent disregard for organisational barriers, and in Circuit it often came under scrutiny and fell out of favour with practitioners. I am conscious of the large body of literature across the arts and social sciences that contests the usefulness of dominant concepts such as ‘NEET’ (Russell, 2013), ‘hard to reach’ (Douglas, 2009, p.50) and ‘at risk’ (Kester, 2013; Turnbull and Spence, 2011). Much of this literature argues that these brands of disadvantage individualise social problems and unfairly stigmatise young people (Hall, 2001; Kemshall, 2009). Some critics even consider the category of ‘youth’ to be a ‘social construct’ (Lohmann and Mayer, 2009, p.1; Turnbull and Spence, 2011, p.940). In this thesis I try to apply the principles of the social model of disability to any discussion about disadvantage (Lisicki, 2017). In other words, my understanding is that individuals are marginalised or disadvantaged by *society*, and the individual is not to blame for their marginalisation, nor does it define them. *Not*

to use terms such as ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘marginalised’ would be to ignore the social conditions that create challenges for young people.

### **Boundaries to the study**

The key area of interest in this research is relationships between organisations. While the experiences of young people and artists are important to this study, the impact of partnerships on the lives of participants or the practice of artists is not the focus of this work. Rather, the thesis concentrates on the commentary and experiences of those who represent organisations – namely youth and gallery practitioners. This decision was made in part because the voices of these practitioners (particularly youth workers) were underrepresented in literatures.

Another feature of this research is that I looked at relationships between organisations whose core mission is youth work, and organisations that are primarily rooted in the visual arts. This thesis does not generally explore *youth arts* organisations (although many of the youth organisations in the programme had some form of creative remit). This is largely because most of the youth partners involved in Circuit could not be classified as youth arts organisations. Most of the galleries chose to work with youth partners that did not have substantial existing arts provision. I also felt there was more to be gained from focusing on relationships between organisations that operated in distinguishable fields of practice.

### **Navigating this thesis**

The chapters in this thesis obey a relatively conventional academic sequence. The following methodology chapter brings together the Bourdieusian theoretical framework and my justification for utilising the tools of multi-sited ethnography in the fieldwork. This chapter also provides an audit trail of the field activity, a description of the methods used and a discussion of some of the ethical concerns and conflicts that affected this work. The different steps of Bourdieu’s toolkit are

explored, and their limitations also highlighted. I explain how I mobilise Bourdieu's linked concepts of fields, capitals and habitus to identify and understand the various spatialities at play in partnerships, as well as the forces that influence behaviour within them.

Chapter 3 covers key literature through a chronological overview of the development of the youth and gallery education sectors in relation to social change and policy shifts in the UK. This narrative intends to build an informed picture of the two sectors, and of the ways in which their histories have intersected and varied since their inception. The chapter also seeks to demonstrate how concepts of partnership have advanced and mutated through policy and practice. The chief objective in this chapter is to examine the fields' relationships with the overall field of power in order to ascertain the comparative agency of the fields when entering into partnership. This move is in accordance with Bourdieu's methodological framework for field analysis.

The next four chapters contain reports and analysis from the selected fieldwork data, moving through different scales and sites of interest. Chapter 4 focuses on my observations of sector relations through attendance at sector events. This chapter also presents the perspectives of practitioners around the vexed history of this area of work. Chapter 5 concentrates on Circuit's programmatic design, and efforts by the programme to construct a more effective environment for partnership between youth organisations and galleries to thrive. Three detailed site studies make up Chapter 6, which offers ethnographic snapshots of different approaches to working together. While Chapter 7 zooms outwards again to look at the wider temporary field that Circuit created, and the tensions and power imbalances that existed within this field. In various ways, these data chapters reveal the significant challenges of conducting equitable partnerships between organisations. The final main chapter (8) reflects on the implications of the findings for practice and research and offers recommendations for the sectors, for organisations and for practitioners.

## **Chapter 2: The methodological and theoretical approach**

This chapter presents my qualitative methodological approach to the research, focusing upon multi-sited and organisational ethnography as vehicles for exploring partnership work. I reflect on the range of issues encountered in the fieldwork process, and the advantages and disadvantages of utilising ethnography in this context. A trail of the actual fieldwork carried out provides an account of the methods tested, and the techniques used to organise and handle the data. Finally, this chapter details my use of Bourdieu's analytical framework as a means of deconstructing the different geographies or 'fields' that make up the space of partnership. This section also offers some insight into the arguments that have emerged during the research journey that are driving the narrative of the thesis.

### **Positioning the research**

The setting for this research offered numerous angles for studying organisational partnership. In approaching Circuit and developing my research design I identified four areas of interest:

#### **1. Human relationships**

I.e. The interactions between individuals or groups from different organisations.

#### **2. Organisational relationships**

The nature of strategic, pedagogic or cultural exchange between organisations.

#### **3. Programmatic design**

The ways in which Circuit was designed, managed and implemented to foster partnership between galleries and youth organisations.

#### **4. Sector relationships**

I.e. What Circuit revealed about collaboration between the visual arts and youth sectors on a regional and national scale.

My pilot work (which involved familiarisation visits with each site, participation in Circuit meetings, interviews with practitioners and attendance of youth and arts sector events) revealed that these layers of activity were deeply connected and could not be studied in isolation. For instance, Circuit's governing and delivery structure appeared to be influenced by legacies of engagement between the wider youth and arts sectors, which in turn affected the dynamics of organisational collaboration, the agency of partners and the character of professional relationships. It was evident that all of these factors would need to be considered if I was to formulate a balanced account of partnership in all its complexities.

The sub-questions listed in the previous chapter were therefore devised in response to these conditions, in an effort to guide the fieldwork around the human, institutional, programmatic and sector-based dimensions of partnership working. These questions were deliberately crafted to avoid casting assumptions about the nature of partnership working, in order to represent my intention to work inductively (i.e. without a pre-defined hypothesis), so that theoretical ideas might emerge as a result of an open approach to the fieldwork and analysis, rather than through a set of prior themes (Newby, 2010). However I was also aware that I brought to the fieldwork a number of preconceptions and prejudices that affected my judgements and analysis as a researcher. The lessons of grounded theory were helpful in reconciling this tension. Charmaz (2014) eschews the notion of narrowing the research focus too early, but recommends that the researcher inform themselves of their topic and acknowledge their biases and privileges.

In carrying out this research I therefore adopted a constructivist position, which acknowledges social realities as being entirely constructed, is open to multiple perspectives and which demands that I write myself and my position into the

work at every stage of the research (Charmaz, 2014; Neyland, 2008; Ybema et al., 2009). In subscribing to this perspective, I understand that the phenomena being researched is a product of individuals' actions and interpretations and that no aspect of my analysis can be divorced from my subjectivity (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). My own past experiences consequently have a bearing on my analytical faculties, which is why I disclosed features of my personal background in the introduction.

### **Research design: multi-sited ethnography**

The research context that I worked with was not a single site, but a programme involving multiple sites in eight different regions. In total Circuit worked with ten galleries and over 50 partner youth organisations, thousands of young people and hundreds of youth and arts practitioners. The programme was run by a national team, and managed by a board, a Steering group and a Working group. The organisational sites also functioned in association with universities, local authorities and other agents. Their presences were digital as well as physical - with most sites operating social media platforms, blogs and websites - and their activities were frequently mobile and dispersed across various locations and activities, including events, meetings, train journeys, email and phone conversations. The multi-sitedness of the programme offered an opportunity to scrutinise partnership working in urban, rural and coastal contexts, in small towns and large cities, and amongst organisations and services of varying scales. But it also presented particular logistical and capacity challenges, and the prospect of an overwhelming pool of potential data. Importantly, the promotion of reflective practice, criticality and rigorous evaluation within Circuit made the programme an accommodating space for in-depth fieldwork based around conversation and observation. I sought a qualitative research tradition that would feel sympathetic to the practices of youth work and gallery education, and that would foreground typically marginalised or unrepresented voices. With these circumstances in mind, my supervisors and I concluded that a multi-sited ethnography (based chiefly around participant observation and interviews)



would afford the most generative set of methods for approaching Circuit as a research context.

Multi-sited ethnography is an area of practice that initially gained ground through the work of anthropologist George E. Marcus (1995). While mid-twentieth century conceptualisations of ethnography assumed that the researcher must be embedded in one (unfamiliar) site or community for an extended period of time in order to attain a deep understanding of its dynamics, the concept of multi-sited ethnography fundamentally overturned these accepted conventions (Hannerz, 2003). Responding to dramatic shifts in contemporary working practices and communications, defined by increasingly networked and interconnected societal systems, multi-sited ethnography would provide a methodological approach adapted for the reconfigured spatialities of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Marcus, 1995). The movement towards multi-sited ethnography is a consequence of the shared idea that space is 'socially produced' and constituted through ever changing relationships and interactions rather than through physically defined, localised places (2009, p.4). The fieldwork of multi-sited ethnography can therefore acceptably take place at temporary events, online or through other fluid and virtual 'sites' (Hannerz, 2003; Falzon, 2009; Nicolini, 2009). This was a mode of engagement that would recognise the composite, distributed nature of my research context, and support the inclusion of institutional relations, associations and external forces that are caught up in the process of partnership working (van der Waal, 2009).

This open, critical approach to the spatial definition of the 'field' was also conceptually meaningful for the analytical framework of the research, which sought to employ a set of theoretical ideas for thinking through the emotional, cultural, physical and administrative geographies of partnership. I hoped to retain a flexible outlook on where partnership might be located, and to consider the research 'site' in its different scales and dimensions. This meant conceiving of 'ethnographic places' in both abstract, socially constructed terms, and in terms of

‘bounded’ localities such as neighbourhoods, buildings or national and regional space (Massey, 2005; Ingold, 2008; Pink, 2012, p.118).

Debates about what constitutes the ‘field’ are nevertheless still present across contemporary ethnography, and my approach to the fieldwork was not without concern about the depth and duration of my engagement with specific sites. I was aware that the questions directing this research demanded that I look at various different configurations of partnership – at sector level as well as at organisational and programmatic levels. Organisational ethnographers have sought to develop new strategies for dealing with inherently ‘pluralistic’ organisational contexts, where the manifestation of a fixed empirical field is difficult to identify (Delgado and Cruz, 2014, p.44). It is suggested that to understand a field, or the dynamics of partnership in a professional sector, the ethnographer must look towards events such as conferences, workshops and festivals – otherwise referred to as ‘field-configuring events’ (Delgado and Cruz, 2014, p.44). These events host intensive congregations of practitioners and researchers representing different organisations, all in dialogue with one another. They are also places where common issues get aired and concerns and ideas are voiced. Delgado and Cruz (2014, p.46) suggest that ‘multi-event ethnography’ can provide a solution to the challenges of determining the focus of research activity in contemporary organisational settings. Zilber (2014, p.102) further advocates that ethnographers of inter-organisational spaces should explore ‘trans-organisational structures’ such as professional membership bodies, field-wide events and field-wide agreements and publications, to analyse the composition of sectors. This was the approach I took in order to address the question: *What is the character of the relationship between the arts and youth sectors?* The subsequent two chapters report from engagement with sector-based literature and events to form a multifaceted picture of these independent fields of practice, and the intersections between them. In total between November 2013 and November 2015 I attended and participated in 20 youth sector events and 33 gallery sector events. Some of these events (particularly

those in the gallery field) included cross-sector interaction, or debates about cross-sector work.

The following sub-question: *What is Circuit's partnership offer?* required that I narrow my conceptualisation of the field to examine Circuit's specific programmatic space. It was important to see to what extent youth sector practice and practitioners operated in the programmatic field, and I hoped to understand what type of offer Circuit was making to youth organisations in terms of regional and national network-building. These issues are dealt with in Chapter 5: *Programming for change*. Developing ethnographic insights into the programmatic field was additionally important because Circuit sought to integrate its partnership strand with wider activity, and support young people from youth organisations to take up other opportunities (such as peer group meetings and events) within the programme. For two years then I also took part in bi-monthly and quarterly meetings and gatherings organised by the national team, and had access to online communication platforms, reporting, documentation and evaluation. I attended 31 cross-site meetings held across the country, including residential sharing meetings, Steering meetings with heads of department, Working group meetings with gallery programmers, young evaluator meetings, national evaluation meetings and meetings with the programme's board and gallery directors. I observed 65 Circuit events (such as public festivals, partnership project showcases and workshops), many of which were organised by the galleries' peer groups. I also attended 13 peer group meetings and three staff training sessions. In line with the idea of multi-event ethnography, these experiences enabled me to witness the assembly of practitioners and young people involved in the programme, and observe discussion about partnership working in a range of circumstances. In many cases these events and visits led to contact with individuals who would later contribute to the research as interview participants. Developing this broader overview of the programmatic field allowed me to create relationships with key informants, even if I was not carrying out in-depth ethnographic research at their actual sites.

Critics of this multi-event approach to ethnography would point out that engaging with temporary, fleeting gatherings leads only to a very partial view of a field setting (Hammersley, 2006). While there is recognition that ethnography has had to adapt to the fragmented working conditions of contemporary life, there are concerns that shorter term, dispersed fieldwork can generate misunderstandings about the nature of the field and produce false generalisations (Hammersley, 2006). This was a concern that I felt throughout my fieldwork around Circuit. Meetings and events were sometimes highly orchestrated affairs, where it would be difficult to have fully open and honest conversations in front of all participants, and where some participants felt unable to speak up. Certain events were also too big to really get a handle on the nuances of the activity, and I was also aware when I attended peer group meetings or end-of-partnership showcases that it was rarely possible to grasp an accurate and rounded idea of the groups' identity and experiences through a few observations. However I found that paying attention to the broader programmatic field yielded valuable findings about the *consequences of partnership* (addressing another of my key question areas). It was essential to hear practitioners reflect collectively about what worked and what didn't work in partnership arrangements, and it was possible in meeting settings to write very detailed notes on these reflections. Conversations in break times or snatched recorded interviews with youth practitioners at festivals also provided live, in-the-room feedback while people were away from the daily tasks of their day-to-day jobs. Excerpts from some of these conversations help to populate Chapter 7: *Circuit's field of practice* later in the thesis. I also made efforts to enhance the 'thickness' of my ethnographic representations by using multiple devices and techniques to record observations (such as filming, photography, audio recording and note-taking), and by reading minutes, blog posts, evaluations and reports that would often accompany or follow Circuit events (Smets et al., 2014, p.17). This multi-perspective approach sought to alleviate the danger of capturing only surface-level snapshots of the wider programmatic space.

Nevertheless it was always my intention to parallel this multi-sited fieldwork with more overtly situated and (in two cases) lengthy studies of particular partnerships within Circuit. The extent of my immersion in partnership projects was a major consideration of the research design process. I knew that it would be important to observe the workings of some partnerships up-close and at regular intervals, while other collaborative associations could be viewed and discussed much more remotely. There would neither be time nor the budget to work with each Circuit organisation with equal levels of intensity, so the sites of concentrated activity would need to be purposefully chosen. These site selections were made according to a number of factors, including practical proximity to my base location, and the willingness of the gallery staff to engage with the research. I also tried to ensure that there was some diversity of partnership format in my selection, and that the partnerships included different types of youth organisations. I worked in four of the regions regularly, making weekly visits to two sites over several months, while I continued to have less concentrated contact with institutions in the other four Circuit regions. Data and analysis from three of these site studies provide the content for Chapter 6: *Experiments in collaboration*, which aims to answer the questions: *How was [Circuit's] offer taken up?* and *What are the barriers to, and facilitators of, effective partnership working between galleries and youth organisations?*

My main method of engagement throughout this fieldwork was participant observation, which entailed spending time in chosen settings and joining in with the relevant activity, whilst remaining attentive to moments and actions that might be significant. I regularly took photographs throughout my observations. These acted as visual prompts to aid my writing up of field notes, as it was sometimes not appropriate to take notes during observations. I often used an iPad when making visual and written documentation, as iPads were regularly used in Circuit workshops, so their presence was not unusual. When I did write down observations these were usually in the form of 'scratch notes' – i.e. short notations that could be extended later that day, often on the train home (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015, p.71).

I also initiated semi-structured interviews, usually audio recorded and transcribed at a future date. I approached these interviews utilising the ideas of constructivist grounded theory, which describes the data generated from interviews as being co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee (Charmaz, 2014). While I did plan areas of questioning in advance of these interviews, I encouraged stories and digressions and tried to ensure that the interviews were as conversational and informal as possible. Many practitioners commented that they enjoyed the interview process as an opportunity to reflect on issues and decisions. 63 people took part in interviews for the research. Most were one-to-one, in-person conversations but some were conducted in pairs or small groups, depending on the nature of the conversation. Some people took part in more than one interview. 31 interviewees were gallery staff, consultants and artists, 17 were youth sector partners, 12 were young people, two were board members and one was a funder. I also held 22 meetings with youth sector and gallery sector research participants and eight meetings with members of Circuit's national team to keep the programme staff updated on the research progress.

The more intensive, in-depth interactions with partnership projects, Circuit sites and practitioners did not however grant unbridled and fully rounded insights into the dynamics of partnership. I had, for instance, to come to terms with the difficulties of accessing the usually private space of partnership negotiation. The fact that the gallery staff tended to control this access meant that partnerships were only ever partially visible and observable, and the parameters of the 'field' were often defined by the gallery partners. I learnt over the course of the fieldwork that an ethnographer has to walk a thin line between being an amenable research partner and an effective, persuasive interrogator. They also have to take their (sometimes challenging) experiences of interacting with the research environment and determine how these represent significant learning about that environment. In studying ethnographic traditions I came to acknowledge that ethnography is *always* partial and never completely

comprehensive (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). I would have to embrace my status as a 'modest witness' (Haraway, 1999) and accept the enormity and complexity of my project in the process.

### **Ethical concerns**

The practice of ethnography (which is so fundamentally about 'being there' in person) brings with it a contested body of ideas about ethics and the positioning of the researcher (Geertz, 2000). In educational ethnography for instance, while some sociologists promote the use of systematic, technical methods that support the objective position of the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), other ethnographers contend that 'ethnography needs a theoretical imagination' that aims to produce 'sensitising concepts' rather than claims for objective, legible truths (Willis, 2000, p.viii; xi). My sympathies lie with the latter argument, and with balanced approaches that prioritise the importance of participation and accountability both to research design and to research participants (Mills and Morton, 2013). In writing this thesis I work to cultivate an empathetic and accessible research persona and attend to the interpretivist position that there are 'multiple "truths" that operate in the social world' (Denzin, 1997, p.xv; Mills and Morton, 2013). In other words, these "truths" are socially and culturally constructed, contradictory and changeable, and it is the ethnographer's responsibility to explore these accounts, to unpick their contexts and to explain what the differences in interpretation mean for their enquiry (Denzin, 1997).

Marcus (1995) considered multi-sited ethnography to be an activist project, driven by ethical commitments to renegotiate one's identity and position in different contexts. Wider ethnographic practice is also often understood to be motivated by a desire to represent marginalised groups (Neyland, 2008; Down, 2012). I tried to adhere to these ideas by adapting my behaviour according to the fieldwork situation and giving particular time and attention to people whose voices were either problematized (due to challenging behaviour) or less frequently heard. Much has been written about the political status of the youth

‘voice’ and the rights of young people to be heard in the debates and discussions that impact upon them (Hadfield and Haw, 2001; Thomson, 2008). In making the claim to incorporate young people’s voices, I needed to probe why certain voices were absent, quiet or silent, (Hadfield and Haw, 2001) and think about what tools or situations might support the integration of this voice (through its various expressions) within the research. For instance, while in Circuit national meetings I assumed the role of research partner; in workshops with young people I played down my academic identity and performed the role of assistant, and would find different ways to de-formalise my relationship with young people – by chatting on the floor, participating in activities and joking around where appropriate. My conversations were not all steered towards what might be directly useful for my research purposes – rather I sought to develop friendly relationships with people, and to demonstrate my interest in their lives, irrespective of whether or not this was relevant for my study. I also felt strongly that I didn’t want to parachute in and out of projects if possible, which is why I chose to follow two partnerships over several months and made an effort to attend events curated by young people after my official fieldwork had ended. This relationship-building process meant that I could pick up on issues conversationally, but it also meant there were implications for the gathering of informed consent, which I explore further in the data chapters.

My research context and PhD structure did raise a number of other difficult ethical issues that required navigation. Literature on organisational ethnography confirmed that many of these concerns were common to research in organisational settings. I was conscious for instance that my research predominantly focused upon practitioners and young adults, some of whom would likely also read and potentially critique the research (Brettel, 1993; Denzin, 1997; Ybema et al., 2009). I knew this could have an impact on my own ability to remain critical, and could possibly cause some tension if there were discrepancies. In order to pre-empt this, I wanted to develop a reciprocal relationship with my research participants, whereby I would send typed-up versions of observational notes back to those involved following a visit, as a



gesture of transparency and trustworthiness (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2009). This practice of feeding back was generally well received by youth and gallery practitioners, who commented on the benefits of having someone capture meeting dialogue or document sessions. On occasion I noticed that extracts from my field notes were being used in Circuit reports as pieces of evidence to back up learning from projects. I took this as a sign that the notes were useful to practitioners, but also recognised that there was potential for this to be problematic if any confidential information was being used in a more public document. It was also often difficult to be completely transparent in my field notes, as some comments would be made to me by practitioners about their colleagues or partners, so I had to use my discretion in the editing of field notes if an observation or conversation had the potential to impact negatively on relationships (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015).

I also found it challenging to relay field notes from observations and interviews back to young people as I rarely had a direct line of electronic communication with them, and the notes themselves contained observations and commentary about different individuals that would have been inappropriate to share. I was also aware that pages of written text were fairly inaccessible for young people. I still regard this to be one of the flaws in the research process, but I take some reassurance from the knowledge that the experience of young people was not the major focus of study in this research. Rather my core focus was organisational relationships, and the cultures and workforces of these organisations.

Another determining aspect of the research context was its public dimension. Tate and Circuit were exposed as subjects of the study from the outset of the PhD, so it followed that the galleries involved in Circuit would also be easily identified. Ethical protocol in the social sciences advocates the granting of anonymity to research participants and sites as standard practice (BERA, 2011), nevertheless it is argued there are situations where this may be counterproductive or even unethical, if the research participants feel

disempowered and unacknowledged through their anonymity (Pringle, 2008; Campbell and Lassiter, 2015). There are also arguments to suggest that in doing detailed ethnography work, it is impossible to fully conceal the identities of the sites and participants involved, and that a more open, dialogic approach to research of this nature should be supported (Russell, 2007). I discussed anonymity at regular stages with research participants, as I felt undecided about the best course of action, and wanted to consult those who would be directly implicated. I also knew that my ability to guarantee blanket anonymity would be compromised by the recognisable nature of the partnerships, and the fact that they would be blogged about on Circuit's public website. My participation consent forms included a tick-box option to have one's identity disclosed or concealed in the research, but I quickly realised that this process was complicated by the interconnected character of partnership working and ambiguity about who had the authority to waive the anonymity of organisations and services. As I came closer to writing the thesis, I grew less attached to the significance of the venue or the specific region in my research and decided to attempt to anonymise as much as possible in order to protect individual identities. I tried to keep research participants updated about my thoughts on this matter and wrote a blog post about the politics of anonymity on Circuit's site (Sim, 2016).

Nonetheless, the impossibility of concealing Circuit meant that the programme and organisations involved were still dealing with a certain level of reputational risk in allowing a researcher to conduct ethnographic work alongside their activities (van der Waal, 2009). Throughout the PhD I was conscious of the high profile, high stakes nature of Circuit, due in part to its scale of funding, and the clear risk management culture of Tate, which often compelled staff to follow sign-off procedures when making public communications. But I was also aware of potential threats to the autonomy of the research if I sought authorisation for every piece of publication (van der Waal, 2009). Additionally, my supervisor Emily Pringle worked in a key managerial role on the evaluation of Circuit, so she had a professional investment in the success of the programme and its

evaluation. I had anticipated that Emily's relationship to Circuit and Tate may produce some conflicts of interest in the supervision process, and may have a neutering effect on my ability to critique the programme and the institution. In practice, however, I found the opposite to be true. In fact, because Circuit is unavoidably named as the context for the research, Emily's position as an insider-supervisor was essential for assessing institutional sensitivities. In some cases Emily encouraged *more* critique and questioning at times where she felt I was being uncritical about certain claims and practices.

Issues occurred however when it came to discussing the practices and commentary of particular members of staff at Tate and in other galleries. Over the course of interviews and observations I accumulated considerable insight into the workings of the partnership 'strand' of the programme, which the national staff were keen to draw from. I had to be careful about sharing and withholding information and not betraying the trust of practitioners, who would sometimes raise challenging issues about the conduct of individuals and professional relationships. My positioning within the programme was also sometimes confused with that of an evaluator, so my researcher identity and separation from the programme had to be continually established (Neyland, 2008). My university supervisor Pat Thomson provided essential guidance on the protocol for handling these situations and made me more confidently aware of the boundaries demarcating my role as an independent researcher. I had to ensure that I was sharing information on my terms rather than providing detailed reports at the behest of the programme. For instance I offered to make visits to each site to give informal presentations on my provisional findings, which the national evaluation team and several partners took up in year three. I also blogged about the research where appropriate, shared papers and summaries and filmed a video for Circuit's site.

Some ethnographers highlight the pitfalls of close proximity to a research context - a scenario that is particularly accentuated when the fieldworker is very familiar with their field. Ybema and Kamsteeg (2009) argue that the researcher can

become desensitised to their surroundings unless they retain a 'dual stance', which balances immersion with estrangement, or engagement with disengagement (2009, p.103). Alvesson (2009, p.171) however suggests that 'at-home ethnography' offers a 'sound base for the production of rich empirical accounts.' Tate felt for me like home territory because I had been employed there in the past, because I was friends with some staff members and because the PhD was co-hosted by Tate. Towards the end of my writing-up, I was also employed on a freelance basis to coordinate the end-of-programme conference and to conduct a separate piece of research on the partnership strand of the programme. I did not want to pass up these opportunities, but I am aware that my critical distance to Circuit was potentially compromised at various stages by paid affiliations with the programme. For instance I found that my proximity to the programme through the Collaborative Doctoral Partnership did have an impact on how I was viewed by youth partners, who generally perceived me to be employed by Circuit, or the gallery partner. It was difficult to remove this association because my contact with youth partners was always negotiated through the gallery partners. My proximity to the youth partners was also heavily affected by changes in their circumstances during the fieldwork. Some youth workers that I had observed and interviewed moved jobs due to redundancy, or personal/health reasons. This, combined with a wider gap in our contact meant it was difficult to reach some participants to share research findings with in year three.

In my fieldwork I tried to always mobilise my 'ethnographic sensibilities' (i.e. attentiveness to ethnographic strategy, methods, ethics and field relations) so that I could reflect on these issues as learning points, and inject the emotional processes of trust building with order and structure (Neyland, 2008, p.14). I made the decision not to do day-to-day writing up at Tate (where desks were available), so that I could reinforce my independent researcher identity. By raising these issues throughout the thesis, I seek to ensure that my own manipulations, loyalties and power negotiations do not go unchecked (Fine and Shulman, 2009; Mahadevan, 2012). I intend for the research to be open about

the tensions that exist in researching partnership in the context of a research partnership. Ethnography embraces and invites the articulation and navigation of these issues.

### **Starting the analysis**

Analysis of the data began during the fieldwork as well as afterwards, so that I could identify evolving themes, test these with participants and form an understanding of possible theoretical approaches. I coded field notes and sometimes included the codes on the notes I sent back to participants. I also presented several conference papers and organised a seminar and workshop alongside practitioners and young people involved in my research – all of which I saw as part of this process of continual, dialogic analysis. Some of these papers involved the exploration of specific ‘critical incidents’ that I encountered during the research (Tripp, 1993, 2012; Thomson et al., 2006). Where possible I listened to interviews soon after recording, and transcribed many of these files in their totality, and others as edited versions. Following the conclusion of the fieldwork, I created a data map as a series of tables, divided up by ‘sites’, which included the eight regional locations, Circuit National, youth sector events and gallery education events. I used these tables to create summaries and pull out extracts of important data, which I would then attribute to particular issues or themes relevant to partnership such as ‘professional friendship’, ‘organisational change’, ‘practitioner conflict’, ‘precarity’, ‘taste’, ‘managerialism’ etc. Once I had gathered a long-list of 277 issues, I grouped these into 10 categories: ‘Organisational’, ‘Professional’, ‘Pedagogical’, ‘Programmatic’, ‘Evaluative’, ‘Relational/behavioural/attitudinal’, ‘Discursive’, ‘Material’, ‘Contextual’ and ‘Methodological’. This process enabled me to make a series of different cuts through the data, and to organise a vast quantity of evidence around the key facets of the research environment.

## **A spatial lens**

From the earliest stages of my research there were clear signals that spatiality and theories of space would provide the major prism through which an analysis of partnership might emerge. I became quickly conscious of the multiple symbolic and physical geographies underpinning relationships between galleries and youth organisations, and of the spatialised discourse that accompanied institutional framings of partnership. As a multi-sited national programme, Circuit literally took place across different regions – in towns and cities with varying levels of wealth, social need and cultural status. Within these regions, organisational partnership was also literally situated in different localities and physically contained within a series of highly coded built environments – each seemingly defined by particular assets, or lack of assets. Notably, the galleries involved in Circuit were all sites of architectural significance that occupied large expanses, and which housed expensive art works. They appeared to possess extraordinary cultural status, and profiles that extended nationally and internationally. Many of the youth organisations or services involved in Circuit operated in relatively modest (and often underfunded) spaces that were sometimes used for other purposes. The profile of most of these organisations was also commonly limited to the local area. The unequal distribution of social and economic power in partnership was of obvious relevance to the research. The galleries and youth organisations involved also attracted different populations. They were sites of exclusions and inclusions, and in working together, social differences and hierarchies became illuminated. Programmatic language in Circuit also focused on spatial hierarchies. Of specific concern was the marginalisation and integration of partnership work in relation to the “core” activity of peer-led programming. Additionally, throughout my pilot work I grew progressively aware of the disciplinary territorialism that often shaped cross-sector dialogue. Galleries and youth organisations evidently occupied distinctive domains of practice. Because of these and other factors, a spatial orientation seemed almost inevitable from the outset of the analysis.

I engaged with a number of different theoretical resources and writing around critical geography during the research, and in producing papers for conferences. However in the process of writing, the work of Pierre Bourdieu became increasingly meaningful to the analysis. While the adoption of Bourdieu's ideas in geography is historically limited, his work around the spatial manifestations of socio-cultural capital has received attention (Savage, 2006; Bridge, 2011). In *The weight of the world: social suffering in contemporary society* (1999), Bourdieu offers commentary on the importance of recognising the relationship between 'social agents' (people) and the 'social space' that they occupy (p.124). Social space is said to be constituted through the differences and exclusions that distinguish it from other sites. According to Bourdieu, social space is also expressed in physical space – i.e. in buildings, neighbourhoods and other places – which are designated as the locus for certain goods and communities. In some circumstances social space is home to rich cultural goods and privileged populations, whereas other social space is the site of congregation for marginalised groups. These spaces are therefore characterised by 'hierarchies and social distances', and the agency and power of a social agent is revealed through their position in relation to and within social space (Bourdieu, 1999, p.124). Bourdieu's interpretation of space provides a useful explanatory device with which to frame the key subjects of the research – galleries and youth organisations – and their different accumulations of resources, people and status.

Bourdieu understands the varying degrees of power in space in terms of capital. He posits, for instance, that the capital city is 'the site of capital' (Bourdieu, 1999, p.125). It is the place where power is both figuratively and actually located. This idea was reproduced through the organisation of Circuit, where the management of the programme was centralised in London, and specifically at Tate London, which occupied the most dominant position in Circuit's order of authority, and in the wider UK art world. The commanding venues of Tate Modern and Tate Britain exemplify the 'profits of occupation' (Bourdieu, 1999, p.127), where agents with sufficient capital to inhabit these spaces are rewarded through the

enjoyment of grand, socially exclusive surroundings. For Bourdieu, the capital required to enter particular social space is largely symbolic. While Tate Modern and Tate Britain are free for anyone to visit, these galleries project particular types of (predominantly middle class) cultural behaviour that can feel alien to some individuals and groups (Cousins, 2014). Equally, they may be geographically too distant or inaccessible for less mobile communities to reach. As such, even though these spaces claim to be open to all, they have the capacity to exert what Bourdieu calls 'symbolic violence' on communities who do not possess the types of capital necessary to belong (Bourdieu, 1977). An encounter with an art gallery could for instance confirm an individual's sense of intellectual inferiority or social undesirability through the feeling of being out of place (Bourdieu, 1985; Silva, 2008; McKenzie, 2015). Agents from different social spaces can physically enter the 'habitat' of other agents, but their social proximity to that habitat is determined by a much more complex set of structural considerations (Bourdieu, 1999, p.128). It is these considerations that hold relevance for my analysis of partnership between galleries and youth organisations, which typically stages an encounter between the art institution and young people from working class or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Further, it was clear from the inception of the research that the challenges fostered in this type of cross-sector work called for an enquiry into the properties and characteristics of galleries and youth organisations, and the pedagogical variances between gallery education and youth work. By mapping the distinctive intellectual and social spaces of youth organisations and galleries, I sought to understand the attachments, beliefs and values that were at stake for organisations and their representatives working in partnership. Bourdieu's connected concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field provided important theoretical signposts in this process of analysis. Consequently, this thesis adopts a Bourdieusian framework as a means to conceptualise and understand phenomena revealed by the research. While my fieldwork was not initially designed using Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit, my approach was commensurate with his methodology, as I describe below.



## Analytical process

In Bourdieusian terms, another way of phrasing the idea of social space or spheres of social activity is through the concept of 'fields'. These fields function with their own internal logic, but they are also affected by other fields and forces, and more specifically by the 'overall field of power' (Thomson, 2017, p.8). In relation to my research, the 'field' can be ascribed to several different overlapping spatialities. The youth sector and gallery sector are two such fields, within which pedagogical *sub*-fields reside - namely youth work and gallery education. These spaces also host a vast litany of further sub-fields – some of which are considered areas of practice (e.g. open-access youth work, youth mental health services), and some of which are singular organisations, or even programmes within organisations. These fields also regularly come into contact with the political fields of the local authority or national government, which often set the conditions and policy environment for different organisations and sectors, and the agents that populate them. By naming these interrelated geographies, it is possible to identify how partnership exists within a dynamic network of spaces that operate at various scales. In Bourdieu's framework, micro and macro phenomena are tightly associated, and the actions of the individual cannot be read in isolation from societal movements and structures (Thomson, 2017).

This was significant for my research because much of Circuit's work happened within localised fields – across organisational programmes, and in some cases across the regional youth and cultural sectors. Circuit's focus of change was local as opposed to national, although, as I describe in the thesis, a wider recognition of the structural conditions impacting on practitioners, young people and organisations emerged over time throughout the programme. This thesis therefore moves through these different spaces of attention – starting with the policy histories and social changes that have created, shaped and governed the youth and gallery education sector fields. This first step of analysis aligns with Bourdieu's suggestion that the researcher must first understand the position of

the field in relation to the field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The chapter *Who are the partners? Parallel histories and policy contexts* identifies the extent to which these fields are impacted differently and similarly by policy shifts, and explores to what degree these fields are dominated by, or autonomous from, regimes of governance. I argue that these issues tell us things about the relative agency of the fields, which is important for a comprehension of partnership. Bourdieu contends that the overall field of power works to service the governing agenda, and in the case of youth work and gallery education the forces of neoliberalism are shown to have cast significant influence over the development of the sectors, and over the changing concept of 'partnership'.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, each field also has its own mode of being and practices that subscribe to a certain rationale. Agents have to learn how to play the 'game' of their field and adapt to its protocol if they are to advance their position (Bourdieu, 1985; Bennett, 2010, p.xxi). According to Bourdieu, each field values and legitimates particular cultural and social capitals in its agents that pertain to the logic of that field. Cultural capital refers to the experiences and knowledge accumulated by an individual, as well as the signifiers of this capital – i.e. the possessions and qualifications that demonstrate their status (Bourdieu, 1985). Social capital refers to the social assets acquired through connections with specific groups, organisations and localities. Objectified or economic capital refers to the material assets and monetary wealth of the agent (Bourdieu, 1985). Playing the game of the field is a process of accumulating capitals that are deemed valuable in the context of that field (Thomson, 2017). The following two chapters outline how understandings of prized professional capitals have shifted within the sectors, and contemplate to what extent these sectors differentiate themselves through their distinctive ideas of what constitutes significant cultural and social capital. In this sense, the chapters attempt to enact what Bourdieu refers to as the second mode of field analysis – by charting the competing discourses between groups of agents within the respective fields – as they strive to legitimate their agendas (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This process of

analysis provides insight into the ways in which specific professional knowledge becomes elevated and devalued depending on the dominant belief system of the field – characterised by Bourdieu as ‘doxa’ (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

While ‘doxa’ is described as the received, ‘taken for granted’ way of doing things, Bourdieu stressed that fields are not homogenous spaces, and not all agents are willing to play the game required of them by higher authorities (Bourdieu, 1977, p.164). In many fields, the doxa is a site of contestation, and Bourdieu’s methodology asks the researcher to shed light on these contests. There are for instance conflicting factions within the youth sector that hold opposing ideas about the purpose and activity of youth work. Mainstream state-led youth work is sometimes seen as adhering to an outcome-based practice that propagates the notion that young people can overcome personal challenges and be improved through ‘individual socialisation’ into wider society (Coussée, 2008, cited in Cooper, 2012, p.54). This is in contrast to the more critical faction, which rejects the role of the market and associated targets in youth work in favour of democratic, open-ended relationships on the terms of young people (Taylor, 2014a). This faction seeks to defend youth work from a doxic narrative that pathologises young people and limits their ability to perceive and act against wider structures of oppression exercised by political power (Cooper, 2012). This is a crass illustration of the disparities between different fields of youth work, and in reality there are many who occupy an in-between position of critical compliance. However for many critically engaged youth workers, submission to the national policy discourse is an example of symbolic violence – where the imposition of a dominant worldview disguises systemic inequality produced by authorities (Cooper, 2012). Symbolic violence is said to be enacted in youth work when young people are contained in apparent ‘safe spaces’ and not supported to participate in ‘radical’ action and debate (Cooper, 2012, p.56). The emphasis of many state-funded youth programmes on positive messaging (Baillie, 2015) and developing individuals to become responsible citizens suggests that those who fall outside of this vision are accountable for their own failings (Fitzsimons et al.,

2011). Bourdieu refers to this type of situation as ‘misrecognition’ – where education initiatives are designed to privilege certain forms of capital in young people, and therefore act to perpetuate division and exclusion.

Recognising these conflicting traditions and battles for power is vital to an analysis of partnership. This process enables the researcher to comprehend both the politics of the field and the tensions embodied by individual practitioners as they perform their roles. In a Bourdieusian study of partnership, the ‘partner’ comprises a series of interconnected fields, and agents at different positions in the hierarchy of their field. These fields are complex and changing and cannot be conceived as fixed entities, which has clear implications for partnership sustainability. A youth sector partner or a gallery sector partner cannot be easily defined and generalised, and what counts as good practice in one youth sector setting may differ in another youth sector setting. The doxic frictions of the field also produce dilemmas in cross-sector alliances. Partners from other sectors need to make strategic decisions and judgements about which competing faction they wish to align with – i.e. whether they subscribe to (or resist) the prevailing doxa of the partner field. This area of enquiry is one of the major strands of my site study chapter (6), as I explore the compatibility of relationships between selected Circuit galleries and different types of youth organisations and services. Also of interest in this analysis of partnership is the positioning of different partner agents within the programmatic field. I discuss how Circuit creates horizontal and vertical structures of positioning within its own programme design (noting for instance that youth practitioners are not included in the managerial centre of the programme).

The third major step in a Bourdieusian understanding of the field of practice is the analysis of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). A person’s ‘habitus’ represents the dispositions, tastes and unconscious thought processes they assume which guide their actions, behaviour and motivations. Habitus is a congregation of sentiments, personal qualities and attitudinal leanings that give agents a sense of belonging to a field. These collective

dispositions are generally shaped through an individual's position in social space, which is often governed by educational background and social origin. In developing these attributes, people build an inclination to work within a particular field, and they build capital that is relevant to their occupation. Their occupational field also continues to produce and shore up communal patterns of thought and behaviour. This cyclical set of movements related to habitus and capitals helps to explain why communities of practitioners often originate from similar backgrounds, or possess similar types of academic, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985). In youth work for instance, a lived experience of disadvantage is often considered valuable embodied capital. In gallery education a degree in the arts qualifies as standard institutional capital. The social identity of a professional field and the associated habitus of the practitioner is therefore established through a complicated assembly of class influences, upbringing, geographic location, education and other cultural conditioning. Gender, ethnicity, sexuality, health and ability are also factors that shape the character of the agent and form their professional mentality (Thomson, 2017). Habitus is not a tangible thing that can be straightforwardly passed on from an agent in one field to an agent in another. Nor is it possible in social space to 'group *anyone* with just *anyone* while ignoring the fundamental differences, particularly economic and cultural ones' (Bourdieu, 1985, p.726). This is an issue I explore in the Chapter 7: *Circuit's field of practice* which details the challenges involved in managing clashes of culture when practitioners from the youth sector are recruited to work on Circuit.

Bourdieu's 'habitus' also supports analysis around the different approaches towards art practice that are often seen in youth work contexts and gallery contexts. Attitudes towards art reveal various things about an individual's habitus – their tastes, perceptions, interpretations, privileges and prejudices. Bourdieu's research in *Distinction* (1984) speaks directly to the dispositions of arts workers and initiated participants, who are so closely affiliated with institutions of so-called legitimate culture (i.e. galleries and museums). His research into cultural preferences denotes how aesthetic judgements and tastes

vary in relation to class groupings, and how different art forms and genres are classified within hierarchies of legitimacy. Bourdieu implies that these value systems (reinforced by peer consensus and validation, or rejections and exclusions), can act as divisive as well as unifying forces (Bennett, 2010). More recent studies examining the contemporary application of Bourdieu's *Distinction* have confirmed that the visual arts continue to act as a key marker of social position, and class division in particular. Silva (2008) indicates how taste and attitude in relation to visual art (more than any other art form) manifests exclusivity, tension and instances of defensiveness amongst people.

In my fieldwork then, I looked to explore how aesthetic attachments and inherited cultural values differed amongst practitioners and contributed to tension. In interviews (as is consistent with a Bourdieusian methodology) I asked participants to reflect on their personal histories and career trajectories, their reasons for entering their field, their relationship to art and creativity more broadly, and their core values and pedagogic principles. These conversations allowed me to gather a multi-layered perspective on the key divergences in language and approach that were often identified as signals of cultural clashes between practitioners operating in the youth and gallery sectors. The conversations also revealed how several practitioners involved in Circuit had moved between the fields of youth work and gallery education throughout their careers. While each participant held nuanced ideas about the value of engagement with the arts, there were clear and revealing patterns of difference between the attitudes of practitioners whose background was primarily located in youth work, and those practitioners whose background was primarily located in the visual arts.

If the visual art world is known to incite degrees of discomfort and to reproduce elitist tendencies, it follows that symbolic violence and misrecognition might also be attributed to gallery youth programmes. Subsequently, one of the major areas of interest in this thesis is the doxa of Circuit and its effects on partnership working. In the data chapter on *Circuit's field of practice* I explore the competing

agendas at play in the programme and accompanying processes of recognition and misrecognition. Bourdieu is commonly mobilised in gallery education studies to question hierarchical or elitist assumptions behind institutional programming. These assumptions relate to the characterisation of galleries and museums as stores of significant cultural capital, and to the deficit-oriented framing of uninitiated communities who are often considered to be lacking cultural capital (Sayers, 2014). Bourdieu's work has helped gallery education researchers to articulate the exclusionary behaviour of institutions, and their capacity to reinforce alienation through prioritising the cultural tastes of a privileged minority (Pringle, 2008). In the case of this research, I look at the discourse of 'peer-led' as the core means of youth engagement in galleries. As explained in the introduction, one of the chief goals of Circuit was to provide 'entry points and pathways' for 'hard to reach young people' to access the cultural activity of the gallery (Circuit, 2013b). There was an implicit and explicit ambition that young people from partnership groups might join peer groups at each gallery, and become involved in producing events, projects, exhibitions and festivals for their peers. Utilising data from cross-site observations and interviews, I reflect on the inclusivity of the peer-led pedagogy and contemplate the charge of some practitioners and young people that this way of working reproduced institutionalised practice and fostered limited class diversity. I use Bourdieu to analyse meaning behind examples of disengagement, as well as exceptional examples of transition between partnership and peer groups, and ask whether expectations for assimilation into gallery programmes represent subtle, unconscious forms of symbolic violence. I also explore how the action research framing of the programme provided space for critical reflection around these issues, and how some galleries worked in ways that did accommodate diversity, inclusivity and difference within their programmes.

By analysing these doxic struggles in both sectors I do not seek to place blame on particular organisations, practitioners and programmes – rather I try to demonstrate how these agents and fields are themselves conditioned by a much wider, market-oriented political doctrine that entrenches ideas about what

constitutes valuable capital in society. While partnership often appears to boil down to interpersonal relationships, Bourdieu's theory of practice teaches the researcher to look beyond interpersonal chemistry, and to contextualise individual behaviour with the 'present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.82). By remaining attentive to the structural effects influencing the actions of the individual, the researcher can perceive the impact of the broader field of power on the construction of partnership (Bourdieu, 1999).

### **Avenues for action**

While Bourdieu's theoretical framework appears to reveal the insurmountability of dominant political forces, there are a number of ways in which his methodology can be used to suggest possibilities for change and resistance. Bourdieu proposed for instance that fields are always in flux and 'in tension', and as such they create openings for change (Thomson, 2017, p.21). In my fieldwork I looked for examples of these tensions and opportunities for disruption through my site studies, and became particularly interested in partnership initiatives that took place in offsite, temporary, outsider spaces. In these sites there was potential for typical power geographies to be destabilised, and for doxic boundaries to be renegotiated.

Bourdieu noted that changes in the dominant political order are also possible, and the political upheaval of 2016 (characterised by 'Brexit' and the election of Donald Trump) confirmed this to be true. While these seismic shifts may not have resulted in more socially just systems, the volatility of the time precipitated a moment of global disruption, which arguably injected new political energy and appetite for activism into youth engagement programmes. In my research I wanted to understand how youth organisations and galleries might unite around a shared commitment to informal education, and work together at regional and national levels to preserve spaces for creative, democratic and politically/socially



engaged youth provision.

The ability of agents to adopt positions of reflexivity and criticality within their respective fields is a further indicator of conceivable change, according to Bourdieu (Grenfell, 2012; Thomson, 2017). Throughout the thesis I draw on these reflexive voices, which were encouraged through the programme's learning-centred evaluation methodology. Circuit's focus on reflective practice generated a culture of collective analysis and peer accountability, and supported practitioners to critique their own programming and act upon/embed learning. Bourdieu also saw researcher reflexivity as a vital element of his methodological toolkit (Grenfell, 2012). In interview situations, Bourdieu suggests that while the researcher usually controls the terms of the conversation, steps can be taken to even up the power dynamics and reduce the intrusions inherent in the researcher-participant alliance. These steps include: creating the ideal circumstances for the participant to speak freely and honestly, and adhering to the practice of 'active and methodological listening' (Bourdieu, 1999, p.609). Bourdieu proposes that the process of active and methodological listening compels the researcher to get to know participants and the 'social conditions of which they are a product' in advance, to enable a 'constant improvisation of pertinent questions' (Bourdieu, 1999, p.613). Bourdieu suggests that this sociological approach to interviewing supports participants to unravel the full complexity of their responses.

In building these methodological principles, Bourdieu sought to demonstrate that effective, rigorous research could become a catalyst for action and change (Thomson, 2017). In the final discussion chapter of this thesis I explain and explore the ways in which it might be possible to utilise my findings to beneficial effect in the youth and gallery sectors. I also reflect on learning from conference/seminar activity I initiated as a public extension of my academic work, and outline recommendations I plan to share with future change-makers in this field of practice.

## **Beyond Bourdieu**

While a Bourdieusian methodology lends itself well to a discussion of my research themes, other theoretical resources are mobilised throughout the thesis, where there is demand for more in-depth analysis into specific phenomena. For example, my findings establish that partnerships between youth organisations and galleries are greatly enhanced if they build upon the existing cultural tastes of young people, and find ways to support all agents to have creative agency in a partnership. Bourdieu's work is however critiqued for not recognising the diversity and agency of dominated working class culture and communities (Bourdieu, 1993; Bennett, 2013). In the Rancierian and Freirean traditions, this conception of a hierarchy of knowledge reinforces inequality, and marginalised communities should be considered as having equal but different intelligences to non-marginalised populations (Sayers, 2014). In response to these debates I utilise a range of literature that has attempted to bring critical analytic rigour to the cultural engagements and productions of oppressed and marginalised young people, beyond typical redemption or deficit narratives (Willis, 1990; Yosso, 2005; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Pringle, 2014, McKenzie, 2015; Hanley, 2016a). Critical Race Theory (CRT) for instance, offers an alternative perspective on conventional interpretations of cultural capital, and argues for the recognition of the 'aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital' of 'Communities of Colour' within education institutions (Yosso, 2005, p.69). CRT is deployed as a means to redefine these communities as culturally wealthy and critically active, rather than being culturally deficient through the lens of the white middle class status quo. I looked for literatures that demonstrated the importance of acknowledging young people's own social fields, and of valuing their embodied cultural capital - often derived from knowledge of place, of sub/popular cultures and local youth communities (France, et al., 2013). In doing so I sought to draw upon sources that position spaces and issues of marginality as generative, critical and creative sites of co-production.

Leading on from this, another area of enquiry that some critics suggest is under-developed in Bourdieu's work is the concept of relations and interactions between different fields (Rawolle, 2005). Bourdieu's writing tends to focus on the logics, products, forces and tensions that are specific to individual fields, rather than extensively investigate the intersections and exchanges between them. Analysing the capacity for cross-pollination between fields is obviously centrally important to this research. I have also searched for descriptive tools to meaningfully explain the space created by galleries and youth organisations coming together in collaboration. The work of Lingard and Rawolle (2004) and Rawolle (2005) has been useful in these respects, as they build upon Bourdieu's 1998 publication *On television and journalism*, to convey the potential for 'cross-field effects' and 'temporary social fields'. Their premise is that social fields interact with one another in various ways, and that logics of practice can have cross-field significance. Similarly, agents can operate across different fields, and in some cases they can 'readily convert their capitals to gain advantage in other fields' (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004, p.366). They understand that there are different reasons for fields to interact (e.g. dependency) and that some fields are better equipped at doing this cross-field work than others. These ideas prompt me to deduce which logics of practice and which capitals have been shown to have 'purchase' both in the fields of gallery education and youth work (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004, p.378). Their writing also helps to guide analysis around more external effects (e.g. 'structural', 'temporal', 'systemic' and 'event effects') that have impacts across multiple fields (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004, p.368). In my research I looked for cross field effects and examples of particular incidents, such as negative press about young people that directly impacted both the gallery partner and the local youth service, and which consolidated their rationale for working together.

In addition to these ideas, Rawolle's development of the 'temporary social field' concept offers a means of defining the social space that is generated in the alliance of separate fields that 'share common stakes' (Rawolle, 2005, p.712). The temporariness of these social fields is due to the fact that the association is

usually motivated by a particular event. The notion of a temporary social field is useful in this context as partnerships between galleries and youth organisations are often seen to emerge out of the 'event' of a funded programme, a public initiative or a local issue. However I also want to explore how the concept of a temporary social field might be pushed further to imagine permanent co-operative or collaborative social fields based on systemic change and structures of integrated practice.

In summary, I intend to use Bourdieu's framework to construct a series of ideas for cultivating both a mutual respect for practice between the youth and gallery sectors, and a mutually productive recognition of difference and diversity. I do this work in the hope that these moves untangle the complex reasons behind the challenges that have historically frustrated these types of alliances, and to highlight new ways of thinking about partnership.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have endeavoured to be as candid as possible about the factors that influenced the methodological direction of the PhD study. It became apparent during the research design process that the concerns of the ethnographic researcher were closely aligned with the practice of partnership working, so it was logical that a self-reflexive approach would be critical to an authentic examination of partnership. My emplacement and entanglement in the programme is therefore shown to be central to the generation of knowledge in this research (Pink, 2012; Mills and Morton, 2013).

As described in this chapter, one of the chief benefits of using Circuit as my research context was its status as an action research learning programme. Situated within the critical tradition of gallery education, this programme was itself highly generative and self-reflexive, and was populated by practitioners who understood the value of critically engaged research and evaluation.

Nevertheless, the issues raised demonstrate how, even in this environment, there is cause for consideration of the multiple tensions and conflicts of interest that arise in the ethnographic process.

Finally, this chapter outlines how I came to make use of specific theoretical arguments as explanatory devices for the assessment of partnership working between youth organisations and galleries. Brought together, these arguments illustrate how exclusions, inclusions, agency, collaboration and power relations are spatialised in partnership. By framing these spaces as being socially produced, and performed through the 'repetitious enactment of particular social norms' (Glass and Rose-Redwood, 2014, p.16), this thesis attempts to grasp how it is that these spatialities can be constructed and performed differently.

### **Chapter 3: Who are the partners? Parallel histories and policy contexts**

To comprehend what it means for the youth and gallery education sectors to work together, it is first necessary to understand these fields, both as separate occupational territories and as areas of practice with evident homologies. This is how Bourdieu suggests social spaces (and the relationships between them) can be explored and analysed (Thomson, 2017). Bourdieu also suggests that to understand the comparative position of social fields, they must be considered in relation to the broader field of power, or wider society (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). By charting the origins and major policy movements of the youth and gallery education sectors it is possible to identify the key debates and issues at stake in their interactions, and to determine the scope of each field's political, social and economic agency when working in partnership. This historical account of the sectors' development also seeks to highlight the ways in which conceptions of 'partnership' have been defined and redefined by successive political parties, which have sometimes used the term as a tool of governance. This knowledge (largely derived from academic, policy and practice-based literature) provides important background context to this inquiry into the nature of partnership between the youth and gallery education fields.

This chapter begins with the caveat that it is impossible to neatly segregate the youth and arts sectors, and to arrive at a universally recognised definition of youth work. Rather, the nebulousness of the youth sector in particular is an essential dimension of its character (Bright, 2015). There are in existence numerous types of youth organisations, services and programmes, which sit under the umbrella of the 'youth sector' – from local authority services and faith-based youth clubs, to uniformed, voluntary or detached youth work agencies. Many of these initiatives include provision with an established arts offer. However when the terms 'youth work' or 'youth sector' are used in this thesis, they refer to an area of practice where the core concern is building relationships

with and between young people for their personal and social development (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). The term 'gallery education' meanwhile, is used to refer to a specific field of practice that has its roots in the visual arts, and that is chiefly concerned with enabling people to learn and engage with art through institutions and artists. The contested identity of youth work is a feature that has left the state-supported section of the profession especially exposed to the whims of policy makers (Bright, 2015). The gallery sector (to some extent) enjoys the benefits of the arms-length principle of government funding for the arts, which has partially buffered the sector from direct government influence. However both sectors have felt the effects of shifting policy agendas, and so to research their approach to partnership is to gain an appreciation of the policy lenses through which their activity has been framed.

This chronologically-arranged chapter is shaped around five key phases of UK governance that signify meaningful changes in the histories of the two sectors – from the eighteenth century to 2015, when my fieldwork ended. While these policy narratives are complex, this timeline points to the wider ideological trends and conflicts that accompany the development of the youth and gallery education sectors. These trends are characterised by a general shift from democratic, informal, grassroots movements, towards an increasingly formalised and instrumentalised environment, as the welfare state has expanded and contracted under new political regimes. While class-based discourse and division is shown to have always been a feature of youth work and arts education, the remedial emphasis of this work is revealed to have become more entrenched across the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Matarasso, 2013a). Growing levels of social and economic inequity are also played out in the microcosm of the gallery education and youth sector worlds, where the visual arts community is frequently positioned as a site of privilege, and the youth sector as a site of disadvantage. These imbalances suggest that the practice of partnership between these sectors is bound up in fundamental inequalities, which have potential ramifications for practitioners and organisations wishing to develop equitable, lasting cross-sector relationships.

## **Pre-1960s: Common origins**

The 1960s represent an important foundation moment for contemporary understandings of the gallery education and youth sectors. Nonetheless it is worth briefly retracing their journeys preceding this formative period, to build a more detailed picture of the institutions, principles and struggles that sit behind the respective fields of work.

It is arguable that the histories of arts education and youth work in the UK have been intertwined since their origins. The Foundling Hospital (now a museum) in central London lays claim to representing both Britain's first children's charity (established in 1739 for children in care) and Britain's first public art gallery, under the patronage of William Hogarth (The Foundling Museum, 2016). The hospital, which supported the upbringing of abandoned children, worked closely with artists and used exhibitions and concerts to entice benefactors and complement the moral education of the resident 'Foundlings'. This is one of the earliest examples of art being used as a pedagogical, 'civilising' force for the purpose of the personal and social development of vulnerable young people in Britain (Mörsch, 2016). These endeavours were symptomatic of the times, which were punctuated by much wider debate around the health and education of society, taste, class, the democratisation of culture and emergent paternalistic, colonial discourses of the 'other' (Mörsch, 2016). The history of public museums is therefore caught up in broader societal concerns that also formed the foundations for the development of youth provision outside of formal school-based education.

Some of the earliest accounts of 'youth work' in Britain stretch back to the efforts of evangelical Christians through the emergence of Sunday Schools in the late eighteenth century and volunteer-run 'ragged' schools for disadvantaged children in the early nineteenth century (Smith, 2013). The concept of youth clubs for boys and girls gained familiarity in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and some of these initiatives seemingly adopted a more radical, political mission



- including the furtherance of women's rights. Youth work did however continue to develop as a largely Christian endeavour, with the founding of the YMCA, the first international youth organisation, in London in 1844 and with the formation of the Scouting and Guiding movements in the early twentieth century (Smith, 2013; Bright, 2015).

While most galleries and museums in Britain are notably secular in origin (Duncan, 1995) it is also possible to identify a clear relationship between the early history of arts education, religious virtue, altruism and social reform. Whitechapel Gallery in London's east end (an institution in which I worked for five years) is a key example of the outputs of these combined histories. Founded in 1899 by Anglican cleric Samuel Canon Barnett alongside his wife and fellow social reformer Henrietta, the gallery sought to bring great art to the impoverished communities of Whitechapel, and promoted the idea that art could help to 'empower' and educate the public, and offer 'hope' to those in challenging circumstances (Yiakoumaki, 2012). In its cycle of temporary exhibitions, the gallery presented yearly shows of work by children (mainly from schools) as early as 1902, which gives some indication of the educative partnership activities of this well-known institution. Henrietta Barnett was also hugely influential in developing support initiatives for young people and adults, such as the Metropolitan Association for the Befriending of Young Servants (founded in 1876) and the Country Holiday Fund (1877), which provided rural holidays for poor slum-based children (Smith, 2007). So it is evident that during this period of social reform – which predates the materialisation of youth and arts 'sectors' – arts engagement and work with young people occupied similar and overlapping spaces.

The state gradually established its involvement in youth work after the First World War with the introduction of Juvenile Organising Committees in Local Authorities to tackle 'delinquency', however it took the advent of the Second World War (and concerns about young people's preparedness for service) to motivate the development of a formalised youth service (Smith, 2013; Bright,

2015). Government interest in youth work apparently cooled following the end of the war, when universal schooling for under 15s was established, but it intensified again with the birth of teenage culture in 1950s Britain, and associated 'moral panics' linked with adolescent behaviour (Smith, 2013). The post-war period also witnessed the formation of the Arts Council, which included in its founding statements an expressed desire to advocate for the 'civilising arts' and to open up the enjoyment of cultural experiences to all (Doeser, 2015a, p.10). The aim of engaging young people in the arts was also part of the Arts Council's founding mission, but there was little formal legislation or infrastructure to support this until the 1960s (Doeser, 2015a). The Arts Council also encouraged collaboration with local authorities, and started to utilise the term 'partnership' in its reporting from 1951 (Doeser, 2015b).

So the early histories of youth and arts organisations in Britain reflect some of our contemporary understandings of the tensions inherent in the fields of arts education and youth work. Both practices grew out of a contested space populated by those individuals and organisations with emancipatory, democratic ideals, and those with a more regulatory social agenda aimed at controlling so-called problem communities. The arts and youth work were both perceived in different ways to offer opportunities for personal betterment and civic development. This history also highlights the beginnings of the youth sector's strong voluntary tradition in the Victorian era, when the middle classes in particular were driven by a sense of moral obligation to offer philanthropic support to less privileged communities (Bright, 2015). It is worth noting that this support did sometimes include engagement with music and other arts-based pursuits. National youth initiatives such as Robert Baden-Powell's Scouting movement for instance drew from a combination of militaristic, educational, religious, survivalist, and cultural influences, in its attempt to focus on the self-improvement of the working classes (Savage, 2008). The origins of the arts education and youth sectors are collectively rooted therefore, both in particular concepts of social justice and democratisation of opportunity, and in assumptions about the primacy of bourgeois values, cultures and behaviours.

## **1960s-1970s: Formalisation of the sectors and countercultural collaboration**

Pre-1960s, neither arts education nor youth work had received a great deal of policy attention. This situation was to change however with the publication of the Albemarle Report on the youth service in 1960 and the first arts policy White Paper in 1965.

The arrival of mass youth culture, population growth and the ending of young people's involvement in the war effort created a renewed need for an organised youth service within the emerging welfare state (Bradford, 2015). A sense of urgency built up around negative media representations of young people, instances of race riots and youth-led crime, which compelled the Ministry of Education to form a committee (chaired by Countess Albemarle), to advise on government strategies as a means to address the perceived threats posed by rapidly changing societal conditions. The Albemarle Report highlighted the weak, underfunded status of youth work in England and Wales, and strongly supported the extension of a government-funded, professionalised youth service. As a consequence, the Albemarle Report accelerated the development of formal training programmes for youth workers, and led to state investment in youth centres, clubs and projects (Bradford, 2015). Within the discourse generated by the report, young people were framed as requiring both guidance and discipline to navigate their roles as conscientious citizens, however the report also demonstrated an appreciation of the value of unstructured, friendly and socially responsive forms of youth work (Smith and Doyle, 2002). While the service's capacity to act as a coherent, unified body of organisations was relatively limited due to the small and varied workforce, the Albemarle Report did mark a turning point in the conception of youth work as a professional sector, and this in turn mobilised considerably more practitioners to study and adopt youth work as a career (Bradford, 2015).

Just as the increased political focus on youth work came about partly in response to social anxieties about the rise of the teenager and the creative revolutions

that accompanied this moment, the Arts Council was considered (at least by its Chairman in 1966) to champion high art, as a counterpoint to the growth of popular, entertainment-based or experimental culture, commonly associated with danger and deviance (Savage, 2008; Doeser, 2015a). This is not to suggest however that arts education and youth work were tethered to these reactionary and often elitist ideas of the political and cultural establishment. To the contrary, in the 1960s and 1970s both practices were prominently situated in community-led, radical spaces of activity. The community development movement of the 1970s, largely located in disadvantaged areas of the UK, drew together community development workers from grassroots organisations with artists and theatre makers associated with the burgeoning Community Arts Movement (Matarasso, 2013a). These interwoven movements were embedded in the localities from which they derived, politically engaged and committed to enabling active participation. Involving many different age groups, the creative undertakings of the Community Arts Movement included festivals, mural-making, adventure play, music, dance and radical writing (Matarasso, 2013a). While at this time these endeavours were often set in resistance to the activities of formalised arts institutions such as galleries and museums, many significant figures who eventually helped to establish gallery education had a background in community arts (Allen, 2008; Pringle, 2016; Steedman, 2016).

Community arts activity often took place outdoors in the streets, in housing estates and public parks, however it is also important to acknowledge the vital role played by community centres, which often acted as hubs where youth work and community arts would meet. An example of this is Centreprise – a Hackney-based community centre founded by youth worker Glenn Thompson that opened in 1971 and accommodated a bookshop, youth club, legal advice service, cafe, reading centre, publishing project, crèche and community arts projects (Berger and Busby, 2001; On the record, 2014). Influenced by his childhood experiences of homelessness and the ideas of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, Thompson believed in the potential of literacy, poetry and publishing to empower working class communities, who were culturally underserved due to authorities' low

expectations of their intellectual and creative capacities (Berger and Busby, 2001). Hackney had a history of fostering strong leftist, activist movements and organisations, and in this context, community arts and concepts of cultural democracy were said to have flourished (Worpole, 2013). Chats Palace was (and still is) another pioneering Hackney-based venue for community arts and social provision. In these spaces, practitioners were not aspiring to establish their credentials as high profile artists, but they were largely concerned with people, social injustice, the politics of place - and fun (Gefter and Young, 2013; Worpole, 2013).

As is often the case, the histories of these community-led movements are scattered and located within the memories of those involved at the time. However both Centreprise and Chats Palace are currently the subjects of oral history initiatives, which aim to capture accounts of the important contribution these organisations made to the social and cultural development of east London and wider community movements. There are also a number of contemporary research projects invested in retracing, archiving and analysing the history of the community arts movement in recognition of the paucity of material available (Jeffers and Moriarty, 2014; *Unfinished histories*, 2016; Matarasso, 2016). These types of histories signal how, in the 1960s and 1970s, youth and community clubs were places where working class young people might encounter radical art forms or generate their own cultural experiences (Hanley, 2016b). They also suggest that the roles of play workers, youth workers, community organisers and arts practitioners were often interchangeable. These movements were not based upon a middle class elite facilitating access to institutional assets and canonised knowledge, but on the idea that everyone possessed cultural resources and had the capacity to be an artist, and that grassroots cultural/youth engagement held emancipatory power (Willis, 1990; Worpole, 2013; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2014).

While the Arts Council and Gulbenkian Foundation did fund some community arts programmes, the movement was largely marginalised by Arts Council leaders (Doeser, 2015a). As proponents of community arts championed the

notion of 'cultural democracy' (which opposed the cultural hierarchies of dominant, bourgeois value systems) the General Secretary of the Arts Council argued for the democratisation of high culture for all (Kelly, 1985). The Community Arts movement has since been credited with ensuring the arts were 'part of a common experience', in a way that the post-war Arts Council and exclusionary arts institutions failed to do (Willis, 1990, p.4). But the stigmatisation and criticism of the Community Arts movement (particularly around the issue of quality) is important to acknowledge in regards to this research, because this area of arts education practice was seemingly so closely affiliated with youth and community work. As previously mentioned, the Community Arts movement is also significant because of its role in influencing practitioners who, in the mid-1970s onwards, became involved in the developing field of gallery education.

Allen (2008) contends that as a practice, gallery education is intrinsically allied to the principles and values of the liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s - particularly feminism and the consciousness raising activities of the women's movement. The artists and practitioners active in the early years of gallery education sought to engender an approach that favoured critical, dialogic, experimental and open-ended processes, that valued cross-disciplinarity and that worked to deconstruct power relationships in institutions (Allen, 2008). Children and young people would be positioned as active participants rather than recipients, and their insights valued - in opposition to the notion that their engagements might represent a 'dumbing down' of arts practice (Allen, 2008, p.5). The anti-establishment alignment of gallery education extends to its relationship with formal education. From its inception in the 1970s it was evident that many gallery education practitioners were resistant to the strictures of a curriculum, and aimed to carve out a pedagogical space of engagement beyond the authority and regulations of the school (Allen, 2008). The vast majority of practitioners were (and still continue to be) women, partly due to the origins and character of the practice and the part time working conditions that attracted women otherwise shut out of male-dominated roles in the art world (Allen,

2008).

In the 1970s then, both youth work and gallery education were operating in positions of (both deliberate and imposed) marginality, they were connecting with different forms of localised activism, and they were developing loose networks and critical thinking around the activity of informal education. Collaboration, co-operation and generosity were hallmarks of the practice of community work and early gallery education at this time (Sillis, 2015). The concept of partnership was therefore not yet positioned as a top-down idea, rather it was seemingly a natural condition of practice for organisers, artists, small-scale organisations and local authorities. However if the 1970s were the radical, democratic heyday of these practices, the following years would be marked by an increasing attention towards professionalisation, managerialism and individualism, as a new political orthodoxy gained ground.

### **1979-1996: The neoliberal turn**

The Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher from 1979 ushered in a radically different relationship between government and the welfare state – one that sought to diminish the role of public funding and privilege a mixed economy model (Bradford, 2015). This new era of neoliberalism saw public services, organisations and education institutions pressured into emulating private business models and adopting managerial, enterprising behaviour – a trait that would become commonplace in the youth sector and many areas of the art sector for the following decades (Gielen, 2012; Harvie, 2013).

These changes made an inevitable impression on the nature of youth work training, which became the subject of critique, both from government inspectors, who found the professional skills of youth work to be ill defined, and from grassroots groups, which argued that the professionalisation and academisation of youth work education alienated those more suited to practice-based training (Bradford, 2015). There are long-held debates within youth work about the value

of lived experience of disadvantage versus professional training, and the logic presented by those critical of the creeping bureaucracy and focus on theory in youth work was that these movements undermined the potential for working class practitioners to advance into the field. These different arguments about the professional identity of the good, authentic youth worker ultimately helped to shape the future of youth work training around practice-based competencies rather than knowledge/theory-based learning – framing youth work as an accessible, democratic vocation rooted in hands-on experience (Bradford, 2015).

The distinct education and training cultures of the arts and youth sectors are important in this respect, because they prioritise different skillsets. As a result of the emerging critical factions of the 1970s and 1980s, youth work developed a strong commitment to equity of opportunity amongst workers, and to valuing the expertise of adults who had experienced challenges as young people at first-hand. However this characterisation of youth work as an anti-intellectual practice has also since permeated the field, with sometimes-negative consequences. A common stereotype cited by youth workers is that their practice is regarded as essentially hanging out and playing pool or table tennis with young people (Brent, 2013). This is also partly why the label of ‘youth work’ has lost authority and currency over decades.

Practitioners working in participatory arts (even since the Community Arts movement of the 1970s and 1980s) have tended to emerge from higher education - training either at art schools or universities (Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017). Gallery education also became more professionalised as an area of work in the 1980s, as it received greater political and institutional attention. Following rising unemployment due to the decline in manufacturing, and racial tensions in inner city areas, the early 1980s witnessed rioting and considerable economic deprivation in deindustrialised regions. One outcome of this was the injection of funding into capital projects for new regional galleries and museums in an attempt to develop the cultural economy and kick-start regeneration in deindustrialised areas (Allen, 2008; Matarasso, 2013a). The creation of Tate



Liverpool in the 1980s was one such institution – conceived in the wake of the 1981 Toxteth riots and designed for the derelict Albert Dock. Local opposition towards the gallery was said (by Toby Jackson, then Head of Education), to have compelled the institution to re-examine and prioritise its engagement strategies and ‘develop a critical understanding of the role of the museum in society’ (Dewdney, et al., 2013, p.25). Tate Liverpool was subsequently the first of the Tate galleries to establish a peer-led youth programme. This period signalled the beginning of three decades of considerable regeneration-focused investment in regional galleries and museums, which inevitably helped to expand and consolidate the position of gallery education in the arts sector. The Arts Council also published its first education policy statement in 1983 and allocated increasing amounts of funding to education programmes, which helped to motivate galleries and other arts organisations to employ permanent education staff (Doeser, 2015a). In the later 1980s the concept of a national association of gallery educators (now known as ‘engage’) was born (Sillis, 2015).

While the spaces and places that hosted gallery education activity were growing rapidly (alongside gallery audiences) in the 1980s, the sites that typically housed youth provision were experiencing a sharp decline in use (Smith, 2013). Much debate in youth work has centred upon the relevance of drop-in youth centres - often branded as ‘open-access’ or universal provision - which typically offers opportunities for any and all young people (of a particular age bracket) to engage in leisure-based activities, and to talk to youth workers in a safe, non-judgemental, non-targeted environment (Brent, 2013). Proponents of this type of work argue that its retention is fundamental to the informal, radical traditions of youth work, and is tied to the premise that meaningful relationships with young people should be developed on voluntary (rather than compulsory) terms (Taylor, 2014a). The fall in membership of youth organisations in the 1980s and early 1990s was in large part due to the changing social habits of young people, who had more access to home entertainments and commercial leisure opportunities and less need or desire to socialise in youth centres (Jeffs, 2014). Cuts to state funding also left these clubs lacking the ability to modernise, and

the dwindling numbers attending made it difficult for youth services to advocate for further resources. The seemingly outmoded and uncompetitive nature of these services meant there was a loss of confidence amongst politicians (and some practitioners) in the effectiveness of open-access, club-based provision (Brent, 2013).

In many senses, the Thatcher/Major years brought about a key moment of divergence for the gallery education and youth sectors. Though the visual arts sector was the beneficiary of major investment (as politicians capitalised on the potential of cultural industries and destination galleries to lever regeneration), the profile and funding of the youth sector was simultaneously waning. In relation to youth policy, the government also largely focused its efforts on schooling and further education rather than informal education. This was reflected in the policy statements from the Arts Council in the 1980s, which explicitly concentrated on arts provision in state education (Doeser, 2015a). As described earlier, this period of professionalisation additionally triggered wider debate about the skills and experiences required to operate as a youth worker, which resulted in the promotion of a practice-based training regime that supported those with experience of disadvantage to enter youth work. These changes likely contributed to the progression of the increasingly working class identity of youth work (Batsleer, 2014). Under the advancing neoliberalism that characterised the late 1980s, the concept of community fell out of fashion, and the collaborative, pluralist climate that nurtured the community development and community arts movements was replaced by a more fiscally aggressive and individualised set of social conditions (Matarasso, 2013a).

### **1997-2010: Partnership as a tool for governance**

The election of a Labour government in 1997 was initially well received by the youth sector, which throughout history has most commonly aligned with left-leaning politics and socialist principles as a result of its frontline engagement with young people whose lives are affected by structural inequalities (Sercombe,

2015a). Rather than embrace the politics of socialism however, Blair's centrist New Labour platform sought to fully entrench a neoliberal, pro-marketisation agenda across all forms of public life, through the adoption and promotion of New Public Management techniques as a means of governmental control (Sercombe, 2015a). New Public Management is a system driven by a belief in the benefits of applying private sector managerial methods to the running and administration of public sector institutions, and by the understanding that the market is the most effective mechanism for achieving best outcomes in the public sector (Entwistle et al., 2007; Sercombe, 2015b). This concept precipitated a fundamental reframing of the relationship between public sector workers and members of the public towards a transactional model based on inputs and outputs. Organisations would be tasked with evidencing the value of their outputs via the accumulation of data, and government (now reframed as 'purchaser' of provision rather than 'provider'), would contract out services to those organisations most able to quantify and qualify their worth and to meet government priorities (Sercombe, 2015a).

These reforms to the organisation and delivery of public services under New Labour were to have a profound and lasting impact on the status of the youth sector and on conceptions of 'partnership' (a favoured buzzword), as the government sought to create a climate of healthy competition between public and private agencies and to remodel national youth associations as 'partners' of the state (Davies, 2010). Successive youth ministers in this Labour government criticised the youth service for its perceived patchiness, and as part of the New Labour agenda to modernise the welfare state, strove to instil New Public Management approaches across the sector (Davies, 2010). State-funded provision (e.g. in local authorities) had to shift its emphasis towards achieving statistical targets and outcomes, while in some areas, contracts for providing youth services were open to bids from external 'for-profit' organisations. Adapting to this funding environment, larger scale bodies representing voluntary and community organisations worked to professionalise their operations and developed increasingly business-like practices in readiness to secure contracts.

These bodies, conceived as part of the 'Third sector', were regular recipients of government grants (Davies, 2010). These changes weighted responsibility for the creation of youth policy in the hands of state, as opposed to charitable organisations, and reduced the autonomy of the sector from government.

The notion of 'partnership' in this period became heavily politicised as some practitioners regarded its usage to be a veil for government's tightening oversight and monitoring of all aspects of the public sector (Davies and Wood, 2010). Those organisations in pursuit of government funding would have to demonstrate their ability to perform government policy through extensive evaluating and reporting. 'Partnership' since the late 1990s therefore, seems to have had an association with performativity and a loss of freedom and trust amongst grassroots youth workers (de St Croix, 2016). Critics of the encroachment of neoliberal values in youth work remarked upon the shifts in the practice 'from voluntary participation to more coercive forms; from association to individualised activity; from education to case management; and from informal to formal and bureaucratic relationships' (Jeffs and Smith, 2010, p.11). This critical faction argued that resources were being redirected away from practice-based, person-centred work to managers and administrators, and that measurement indicators failed to grasp the human qualities of youth work. The treasured concept of open access was also felt to be under even greater threat by New Labour's focus on specific social issues such as teenage pregnancy and youth unemployment. The governance orientation of partnership (Glendinning et al., 2002; Geddes, 2006) was grounded in the need to bring greater levels of efficiency and accountability and a more rigorous, coherent evidence base to areas such as youth work that had previously operated in relative isolation from state direction.

Another key development in the use of partnership as a signifier of governmental concerns was the implementation of the phrase 'joined-up working' across youth policy. In England in 2000, Labour launched the £420m Connexions youth service, as a response to findings from its Social Exclusion Unit that there was a lack of

cooperation between the various agents implicated in supporting young people – including youth and health services, schools and careers agencies (Sercombe, 2015a). Ironically, the service focused on universal access, although it concentrated efforts on unemployed and disadvantaged young people, and it utilised youth work methods to engage young people and provide guidance on careers, education, housing and health matters through relationships with personal advisers. While this initiative seemed to portray an endorsement of youth work approaches, it received criticism for its perceived use of young people's personal data as a mode of surveillance (Smith, 2000; 2007).

The 2002 Department for Education and Skills publication *Transforming youth work* married the Connexions strategy with a series of other plans, including developing a curriculum for youth work, accreditation opportunities and performance indicators related to Connexions targets (Smith, 2002).

Contemporary critique of these moves centred upon the seemingly formalised, bureaucratic, school-like nature of the policies and the tendency to target and label young people according to risk categories (Smith, 2002). The requirements of this new regime, which focused attention towards the supervision and guidance of individuals rather than group engagement, were seen (at least by youth studies academics and grassroots practitioners) to be in conflict with the practices and concerns of good youth work (de St Croix, 2010).

Connexions was not sustained long-term as a national initiative for a number of reasons, including doubts over effectiveness and funding constraints (Smith, 2000, 2007). Joined-up working (particularly involving the police) was also highlighted as being problematic for youth workers, who derived their legitimacy amongst young people on the basis of a relationship of trust and discretion (Mason, 2015). The history of Connexions offers some further insight into youth work's fraught associations with cross-sector partnership, which has tended to result in the compromising of core youth work values and ethics. One of the other contributing factors said to have indirectly limited the longevity of the Connexions programme, was the restructuring of children's services under

proposals from the 2003 government Green Paper *Every child matters*. This new initiative also called for greater levels of integration across services and increased the coordination and commissioning powers of local authorities, which ultimately became responsible for deciding how the scheme would be funded (Mason, 2015). The 2005 Green Paper *Youth matters* ushered in an enhanced tranche of ring-fenced funding (£115 million) for local authorities to spend on youth programmes, which represented ‘the first capital funding for youth work in over 30 years’ (Mason, 2015, p.57). Nevertheless, Labour’s restructuring led to many dedicated local authority youth services being amalgamated with children and young people’s departments, and subsumed within multi-disciplinary teams (Davies, 2013). And in return for funding, state-supported agencies at local authority level were also obligated to meet centrally defined objectives. This period of relatively plentiful support for youth initiatives paradoxically helped to advance the erosion of the professional identity and autonomy of the youth worker.

The New Labour years produced mixed fortunes for the youth sector. While young people were in many respects the subjects and recipients of key policies and investments, the government’s deficit-driven agendas and poor regard for the productivity of the youth service soured an already tense relationship between grassroots youth work and the state. This also contributed to a further loss of unity in the sector, and to divisions between those agencies seen as complicit with the government’s agenda, and those organisations and individuals who pledged to resist or challenge policy directives. The In Defence of Youth Work Campaign was founded in 2009 towards the end of Labour’s second term to bring together critical voices and champion the types of practices deemed to be under threat by the prevailing governing parties. Academics and practitioners involved sought to advocate for the value of the ‘voluntary principle’ and democratic practice in youth work; the importance of starting from the concerns of young people, recognising their diversity and ‘attending to the here-and-now of young people’s experience rather than just focusing on ‘transitions’’ (Taylor, 2016). Their activities congregated around conferences, seminars, publications

and social media platforms including a blog and facebook group. Its continuing presence serves to illuminate the persistent fragmentation of the sector, and youth work's almost permanent status of vulnerability.

Similar apprehensions were felt in the arts in this era, as bountiful funding for gallery education was understood to be coexistent with an increase in government influence and outcome-driven approaches to practice. However the professional context in which these tensions arose was quite different to the occupational context of youth work. When Labour was elected on a wave of excitement about 'Cool Britannia', artists and pop culture took centre stage within the political narrative, and contemporary art and its institutions were championed as being good for society (Ballard et al., 2015). The opening of Tate Modern in 2000 was an important symbol of this energy and emotional investment. At the turn of the millennium the Tate galleries represented the advent of a new era in the arts, where dialogues with new publics were prioritised through audience development policies, branding, the improved profile of education work and an orientation towards the 'language of experience' (Dewdney, et al., 2013, p.41). The early 2000s saw the beginnings of permanent peer-led youth programmes - then named 'Raw Canvas' at Tate Modern and 'Tate Forum' at Tate Britain – and the publication of *Testing the water: young people and galleries* (Horlock, 2000), which reflected on learning from the first six years of Tate Liverpool's peer-led programme 'Young Tate'.

Even though Tate had worked with young people beyond a schools context since 1988, this period of time marked a step-change in the institutional standing of peer-led youth programmes (Sinker, 2008). As well as employing many members of staff to its dedicated education departments, Tate and other organisations began titling education staff as 'Curators' of young people's programmes, schools programmes and so on, which helped to elevate the prominence of these roles in the broader arts sector (Charman, 2005). Engage, the National Association for Gallery Education also facilitated 'envision' – a cross-gallery programme resulting in a major resource about gallery education practice, policy and agendas

(Wheeler and Walls, 2008). In the 2000s then, with further investment from Lottery funds and the Clore Duffield Foundation into programmes and learning spaces, gallery educators enjoyed a heightened sense of status (Howell, 2009).

Whereas youth work entered the new Millennium as a relatively embattled practice requiring modernisation and dealing with decreasing numbers of young people - public art institutions, buoyed by the 'Tate effect', were welcoming growing first-time audiences for contemporary art (Nittve, 2016). While the opening of Tate Modern would also reinforce a new system of managerialism in public galleries, for those working in the relatively young field of gallery education, the institutionalisation of the practice would bring job security, employment rights and strong leadership to the profession (Allen, 2015). Here then marks another point of divergence between the youth and arts sectors. As smaller visual arts organisations benefitted from the success of Tate Modern, and the generally collegial gallery education community strengthened, in the youth sector practitioners were dealing with the rising culture of disunity amongst youth organisations, as competition intensified and larger agencies became the main recipients of funding. These distinctions are useful indicators of the source of some of the power imbalances that characterise the relationship between the arts and youth sectors.

There were however by the early-2000s comparable debates being played out within the arts and youth sectors around the political imperative to focus on 'social exclusion', or to target young people 'at risk of social exclusion' (Jermyn, 2001; Sandell, 2003 p.45; Watson, 2007). Just as the youth sector was tasked with redirecting its efforts towards the engagement of 'NEETs' (young people not in education, employment or training), or young people involved in 'anti-social behaviour', (Davies and Wood, 2010) museums and galleries would also be seen as potential vehicles for the tackling of entrenched societal issues (Douglas, 2009). At the same time, in recognition of evidence that participants for the arts were largely white, educated and middle class, the Arts Council under New Labour pursued a cultural diversity agenda, and encouraged its grantees to



implement strategies to remove barriers to participation and broaden their audience base (Panayiotou, 2006). While the definition of 'diversity' was broad, there was a specific focus on racial and ethnic diversity, and on countering institutional discrimination (Panayiotou, 2006).

In relation to an understanding of partnership, the emphasis on diversity created a major incentive for galleries to seek out associations with specific youth organisations and services that might be able to provide access to so-called 'harder to reach' young people. Research by the Gulbenkian Foundation in the late 1990s had shown that there were fewer instances of engagement work between galleries and youth services, as opposed to with the formal education sector, and that youth agencies were 'a comparatively under-used support system in terms of widening young people's attendance at cultural venues' (Harland and Kinder, 1999, p.32). While galleries were not generally set up with the in-house expertise to do the direct work of engaging so-called 'harder to reach' young people via street based methods or referrals, youth organisations represented an opportunity to connect with an existing captive membership of young people from diverse backgrounds. Partnership working with the youth sector was therefore understood to be one of the most effective means of reaching socially excluded young people, who were more likely to be drawn to informal and alternative education provision than their less marginalised peers (Edmonds, 2008).

While partnership working between arts and youth organisations increased, it is worth noting that the vast majority of these partnerships were being initiated by arts organisations rather than by youth organisations (Jermyn, 2004). The motivation to connect with more diverse participants and to make a difference to the lives of young people through the arts was clear on the part of cultural workers (Edmonds, 2008). But for youth workers - galleries, museums and the visual arts were not recognised as natural sites of engagement for socially excluded young people. From a youth sector perspective, it seems there was a more consistent tradition of youth services working together with *youth arts*

organisations (i.e. organisations where the core mission is youth participation). The National Youth Agency's (2009) publication: *Arts work with socially excluded young people* for instance limited its case studies to: music projects run as an integrated part of council youth services; community charities with arts provision and independent arts programmes targeting groups of young people (Morford, 2009). Galleries are seldom mentioned in this rare publication of arts based youth work and partnerships. This was (and still is) quite typical of academic and practice-based literature on arts engagement from a youth work perspective. In many publications the arts are not mentioned at all, but where they are, the focus tends to be on the performing arts or street arts - for instance rap and other popular music, dance and graffiti. Interest has predominantly resided in art forms that young people are likely to be familiar with in their everyday lives, and in practices that young people can pick up themselves in a youth setting, rather than engagement with formal arts institutions.

For those organisations and services that did work together, one of the key concerns for practitioners was building capacity to develop measurements and evaluation techniques for assessing the social value of this work, and particularly its impact on young people's progression (Morford, 2009; Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). Funders, local authorities and government expected to see evidence of outcomes from 'interventions' (as projects sometimes became known), and ideally evidence that provided clear confirmation that the work had made a positive difference to people's lives. This was particularly important in areas such as criminal justice work, where projects had to demonstrate the impact of arts projects on crime prevention, or on the reintegration of young offenders (Hughes, 2005). These pressures triggered a number of impact studies on arts and community participation (Hamilton et al., 2003; Argyle and Bolton, 2005; Macnaughton et al., 2005; Hacking et al., 2006; Daykin et al., 2008). 2005 also saw the launch of the Arts Award, which provided an accredited system of achievement for young people, designed for use by arts and youth organisations and schools, to provide tangible outcomes from arts engagements.

From an early stage in the development of this type of approach, concerns were being raised in the arts sector about qualifying and quantifying the arts in terms of non-arts related outcomes such as social, economic or health benefits (Holden, 2004; Belfiore and Bennett, 2008). For many academics and practitioners in the arts, this issue boiled down to a well-worn debate about the instrumental vs. intrinsic value of the arts (Belfiore, 2002; Sandell, 2004; Belfiore and Bennet, 2007; Gray, 2007; Vuyk, 2010; Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). Critics argued that ambitions to deliver social change through the arts were not only highly questionable, but they also had the potential to compromise and supersede artistic ambitions, and therefore result in poor practice – both social and creative (Mirza, 2006). There were also concerns raised about the equity of the relationships between arts and community partners, the unrecognised power hierarchies embedded in institutions and the class-based divisions between programmes, which seemed to promote ‘aesthetic values for the middle classes, instrumental outcomes for the poor and disadvantaged’ (Lynch, 2001; Holden, 2004, p.25). Some arts education practitioners were particularly wary of the paternalistic language deployed in engagement work with targeted groups of young people, and the potentially stigmatising effects of imposing policy labels such as ‘hard to reach’ or ‘at risk’, which seemed to ignore the cultural agency of young people and reinforce their marginalisation (Hall, 2001; Kester, 2013). These arguments reveal some of the enduring conflicts that lie behind partnerships between galleries and youth or community organisations, and that form the background to this study.

The wider curatorial and academic art community also involved itself in theoretical debate about the shift towards socially engaged practice and the ‘ethics of engagement’ (Downey, 2009, p.593), in the wake of the so-called ‘collaborative turn’ in contemporary art (Lind, 2007, p.15; De Bruyne and Gielen, 2011; Jackson, 2011; Thompson, 2012). During this period, gallery education workers pushed harder for their field to be recognised as having initiated much of the dialogue and practice around institutional critique and social engagement,

and they made the case for more integrated programming models, which would aim to position education staff on equal terms to exhibition staff in galleries and de-silo their work from the rest of the institution's activities (Tallant, 2008; Allen, 2008; Graham, 2008). From 2008 onwards, a number of landmark offsite projects accompanied these moves, including *The Street*, led by Marijke Steedman at Whitechapel Gallery (2008-2012); *The Edgware Road Project* (2008-present) led by Janna Graham and Sally Tallant at Serpentine Gallery and *Making Play*, managed by Frances Williams at South London Gallery (2008-2011). This generation of gallery education practitioners, most of whom came of age professionally under the neoliberal conditions of the late 1990s, sought to challenge the dominant instrumentalisation agenda by working in venues outside of their respective galleries, with communities of place and self-defined (sometimes politicised) communities such as market traders, migrant workers, housing associations and estate residents. These projects situated education staff and artists within socially diverse communities on a long-term, everyday basis - not as outreach - but as a gesture of commitment to working towards achieving 'equitable relations' in projects and privileging un-prescribed, critically responsive associations with people and contexts (Graham, 2012a). While this type of approach was not commonplace across mainstream gallery education, these projects were duly celebrated by the gallery sector as innovations in participatory curatorship - and publications, conferences, exhibitions and press attention were to follow (South London Gallery, 2011; Graham, 2012b; Steedman, 2012).

The critical turn in gallery education is important because the ethos and arguments motivating certain sections of gallery education practice and dialogue in 2008 are similar to those of the In Defence of Youth Work campaign, which launched just one year later. By examining these parallel critical turns side-by-side, it is possible to discern a shared understanding in some areas of the youth and gallery education sectors, about the inherent value of voluntary relationships with different communities, and about the disempowering potential of adhering to dominant political rhetoric. Crucially however, while in youth work this critical

stance was in defensive mode, in galleries it was praised as being new and exciting, and came with the backing of major funding from trusts and foundations (Townley and Bradby, 2009; The Museum Prize Trust, 2011; Seligman, 2012). The gallery sector, because of its broad remit, its 'arms-length' distance from government and its ability to look elsewhere for funding, was able to effectively circumvent many of the directives that seemed to so profoundly affect the character of youth provision (Allen, 2008). If gallery education might have been a sympathetic, radical ally to critical, democratic youth work though, there is scant evidence that much dialogue was happening to this effect. From my own experience entering the gallery education sector in 2008, partnerships with youth organisations and services were still associated with instrumentalised practice and youth workers were not generally identified as politically coherent, radical communities.

The financial crisis of 2008 and consequent years of recession and austerity politics were to foster even greater waves of change, particularly for the youth sector, as budget cuts, club closures and workforce contraction fundamentally altered the landscape of youth provision in the UK (Unison, 2014). Within this climate, and following the England street riots of summer 2011, there was a widespread social reawakening to the political disenfranchisement of young people, and gallery educators would seek to bolster their efforts towards working with marginalised young people and youth partners. In the meantime, the government discourse around partnership facilitated a new and increasingly destructive agenda: to shift funding obligations away from the state and in the process to de-professionalise many public services.

### **2010-2015: Austerity and The Big Society**

The legacy of New Labour neoliberalism continued to be felt during the years of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government from 2010 to 2015, as ministers embraced the project of marketisation through contracting out youth services and encouraging competition (Davies, 2013). However while the Labour

government implemented national frameworks, the Coalition government prioritised a localism strategy - premised on the concept of power devolution, and designed to reorient the way public services were financed and delivered (Kraftl et al., 2012). The cornerstone of the dominant Conservative party's political ideology at the time was the 'Big Society' (Cabinet Office, 2010) – a cross-departmental mantra that brought together the government's claim to want to encourage community-led volunteerism and social action. The Big Society plan was pitched as a response to the economic crisis that was used to justify major cuts, and it pledged to 'introduce new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services' (Cabinet Office, 2010, p.1). It therefore signalled a clear aspiration to transfer local services from the public sector to the voluntary and private sectors (de St Croix, 2015a).

The Coalition approach to youth policy, as detailed in the 2011 *Positive for youth* paper, committed to a focus on local partnerships and local leadership, and on handing responsibility to local authorities to identify areas of need, commission programmes and distribute resources. This policy document suggested that young people should be involved and consulted throughout the coordination and delivery of youth services, and that services should be accountable to local authorities rather than central government (Cabinet Office and Department for Education, 2011). The *Positive for youth* strategy put the onus on community leaders, voluntary groups, local youth organisations, charities, statutory bodies, commissioners and businesses working together to maximise resources and develop new funding opportunities. This proposal seemingly promoted a less top-down approach to youth policy implementation, however the wider reduction in funding to local authorities and removal of ring-fencing around youth service budgets meant that in reality, many councils significantly reduced or cut their youth service offer and redirected funding towards areas where there was greater statutory pressure to sustain services (McGimpsey, 2015). The partnership model prescribed in *Positive for youth* essentially utilised the

language of community collaboration in order to absolve central government of its responsibility to invest in youth services.

Despite the Coalition's localism agenda, the government did funnel substantial funding into some flagship national initiatives, including the National Citizen Service (NCS) social action and residential programme, and the Youth Contract scheme aimed at 16 and 17 year olds out of work and education. Nevertheless the NCS encountered significant criticism for diverting funds from youth services towards short-term projects with the already-engaged, (Taylor, 2013; Murphy, 2014) and the Youth Contract was scrapped early, amid reports that it also failed to meet its targets (Pickard, 2014). Youth work received a further blow in 2013 when the then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (who had shown little interest in the youth service) decided to shift responsibility for the youth service onto the Cabinet Office – thus apparently underlining the government's lack of faith in the pedagogical, professional capacities of youth services.

By 2014 the impact of the austerity-related cuts on council-run youth services was becoming clear. The Connexions service had ended; the youth service lost at least £60 million of funding between 2012 and 2014; around 350 youth centres were closed and more than 2000 youth workers were made redundant (Unison, 2014). These movements have implications for this research, because these are the conditions under which Circuit was launched, and under which much of the partnership work unfolded. Some councils that retained funding for youth services would need to adapt to a capacity building model, where youth workers would be recast as commissioners, tasked with training volunteers to do the work previously carried out by qualified youth workers (Buckland, 2013). The identity of the youth sector was being remodelled, and as such its identity as a partner (and ability to work in partnership) was in constant flux.

From 2009, arts and culture funding was also hit by significant cuts to local authority budgets, DCMS and the Arts Council - however partly because of its mixed funding model, the gallery sector was relatively safeguarded from closures

or widespread job losses. As with the youth sector, 'partnership' and its social and economic incentives were at the centre of the Arts Council's policies during the Coalition government. The national schools programme Creative Partnerships stopped receiving government funding in 2011, but many of the associated regional hubs became Arts Council-funded Bridge Organisations from 2012 – taking on a remit to help connect the cultural sector with the education and youth sectors in 10 regions across England. The Arts Council's vision was one of 'Grand Partnerships', where arts organisations might work strategically within their wider locality through enterprising alliances with councils, planning bodies, education institutions, public sector services, commercial businesses and other cultural agencies. The 'Grand Partnership' was talked about as a 'transformative opportunity', which had the power to unlock funds for the regions (Bazalgette, 2013, p. 8).

In order to further develop frameworks for establishing connections with local authorities, the Arts Council also invested in the Cultural Commissioning Programme, delivered in partnership with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), which aimed to better prepare the arts sector to work with commissioners and secure contracts to 'deliver' elements of local public services in areas such as crime prevention or mental health (Bagwell et al., 2014). Arguably the government and the Arts Council were advocating for arts organisations to engage in contractual relationships as service providers, in order to 'fill in the gaps' left open by cuts to social services (Osborne, 2016). These developments represented efforts to reinforce the infrastructure required to formalise and marketise the work of cross-sector partnership. While this overt instrumentalisation agenda was contentious, some leading figures in the arts believed that the concept of connecting artists with public sector provision and civic diplomacy held powerful subversive potential (Garrard, cited in Caines, 2014). Throughout my fieldwork, I was interested in the extent to which Circuit programmes connected (or disconnected) with these agendas and frameworks.



One result of all of the aforementioned issues around government cuts and policy decisions that disproportionately and negatively affected the young, was a renewed desire in the gallery education sector to work together with the youth sector, and to focus programming energy towards young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who seemed to have borne the brunt of the Coalition's cuts. Circuit was conceived both as a reaction to the circumstances that contributed to the 2011 riots, and in response to calls from service providers for there to be a more 'sustained offer for young people who are hardest to reach' (Suntharalingam, 2012). For Tate in 2012, collaboration had 'never been more important' (Serota, 2012, p.5), and its newly launched Plus Tate initiative would link the institution to a national network of regional agents, which multiplied its collaborative capacity. Discourses of 'partnership' and 'collaboration' would also not go unchallenged during this period, and Tate was involved in developing more nuanced, critical discussion around these concepts (Bak Mortensen and Nesbitt, 2012).

Beyond Tate and the policy context, funders such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) were also playing a key role in the advancement of research and critical practice around partnership. In 2011 PHF published an influential report, *Whose cake is it anyway?* (Lynch, 2011), which became the driver for a subsequent programme: *Our Museum: communities and museums as active partners* (2012-2015). Lynch's uncompromising findings revealed that museums were frequently engaged in a cycle of short-term relationships; that alliances with community partners were not embedded, and that claims made to empower and include partners in decision-making were disingenuous. Lynch's report charged some of the museums involved in the study with treating community organisations as 'passive beneficiaries' rather than 'active partners' (Lynch, 2011, p.14, 7). This report and the *Our Museum* programme argued that active partnership should exist at the centre (rather than the periphery) of an arts organisation's priorities, and they precipitated a body of interrogatory work examining organisational barriers to equitable partnership practice (Bienkowski, 2015; 2016). With these ideas circulating in the art sector, PHF funded a number of other projects,

specific to the arts and youth sectors, which involved action research around cross-sector partnership working. They included *Future Stages* at Ovalhouse theatre in London (2013-2015) and an associated network for youth and arts practitioners called *Creating Change*, as well as Circuit from 2013.

Simultaneously to this, the Department for Education funded *Strong Voices*, which ran concurrently to Circuit for two years (2013-2015) and involved five regional Bridge organisations. This action research programme addressed the question: 'Are there mutual benefits to professionals from the arts and youth sectors working in partnership to deliver arts provision in youth clubs?' (Stavrinou, 2015). The resulting investigation produced a number of programmes, reports, events, and an online archive of material, some of which I draw upon later in this thesis.

Projects such as these offered evidence of the rising levels of attention in arts and funding organisations towards partnership working with the youth sector. By 2015 there were calls – across both the arts and youth sectors – to develop a more rigorous understanding of partnership methodologies, and to bring greater levels of intelligibility to ambiguous and uncritical conceptualisations of collaboration (Davies, 2015; Doeser 2015b; Cunningham, 2016)

## **Conclusion**

This chronology of the intersecting histories of youth work and gallery education tells a story of convergences and disparities - illustrating how the fields emerged out of similar social and political movements and have since fostered similar critical and moral values. Both fields have been heavily affected by successive fields of power, however on balance gallery education has experienced a gradual elevation of its status, while youth work's position in relation to the field of power has become progressively unstable. Throughout modern history in the UK, youth work has fallen in and out of favour with governments of the day, and is ironically most likely to receive attention when negative social attitudes towards

young people intensify. Gallery education however has seen steady growth and increasing visibility, as public engagement objectives of galleries and museums have become more prominent in policy and the educative/collaborative turn in art and curating has enhanced the standing of the work within the cultural sector. An understanding of these structural disparities helps to provide some insight into the unequal distributions of power and agency in partnership between the sectors.

This account also attempts to highlight why it is that the youth and gallery education sectors make uneasy bedfellows. It is notable for instance that the history of youth work is written largely by men, and the history of gallery education is conveyed predominantly by women. This reflects the gender differences of the two workforces - which also differ along class lines. While youth work has (since its beginnings as a pursuit of the middle classes) become a progressively working class occupation and more recently de-professionalised, the gallery education workforce has become increasingly professionalised, and its workforce consistently middle class, white, economically secure and highly educated (Needlands et al., 2015, p.35; Panic, 2015).

Potentially most revealing however is the evidence accrued throughout this history that the idea of cross-field partnership has become a construct, where it was once a normalised and necessary state of being for youth and arts practitioners. The professional distancing of these fields has led to a patchy and (in some senses) problematic record of collaborative work. But there is also clear opportunity for alignment and common ground to draw upon. The following chapter uses data from visits to sector events as well as interviews with practitioners to reflect on the ways in which this evidence played out in the field.

## **Chapter 4: The youth and gallery education sectors: relations and conflicts**

The previous chapter mapped the practices of gallery education and youth work in the UK according to selected literature. This chapter extends the field analysis by drawing its material from fieldwork carried out at sector events (referred to in Chapter 2 as ‘multi-event ethnography’ (Delgado and Cruz, 2014)). The rationale for attending these events and using them as the basis for part of the fieldwork was to better comprehend the wider professional territories of visual arts and youth organisations, as well as their internal (and cross-sector) conflicts.

Understanding competing agendas and positions is a process Bourdieu suggests is necessary for determining the logic of practice, tensions and ‘doxic contests’ in any given field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Grenfell and Hardy, 2003, Thomson, 2017, p.19). This process also allows the researcher to gather a perspective on the ‘relative autonomy’ of each field, which is usually shaped by the ‘nature’ of the constraints’ put upon or felt by agents (Hilgers and Manez, 2015, p.19). It is suggested that fields with a greater degree of autonomy have more acutely defined capitals and less permeable boundaries than those with limited autonomy (Hilgers and Manez, 2015).

These conferences, workshops and seminars provided me with the means to see practitioners in dialogue with one another and to understand the current debates and challenges facing youth and cultural workers that might have an affect on partnership. While most of these events had a youth focus, in my analysis I split these into two categories: those that could broadly be defined as youth sector events, and those which would be best described as arts sector events. In both types of events I would stay attentive to commentary about partnership, and look out for the appearance of arts workers in the youth work events, and vice versa. I hoped to grasp some background knowledge about the dynamic between the sectors and gather first hand insights into some of the past issues that have troubled these relationships.

This chapter also includes extracts from interviews with practitioners who have decades of experience in either the youth or visual art sectors, and whose testimonies add further substance to impressions gained through event-based contact with the fields.

### **Conflict in the field: understanding the youth sector**

Two events in particular informed my understanding of the contemporary identity of the youth sector, as well as the conflicts and pressures being felt by youth practitioners. The first event, the Creative Collisions conference, held on 6 November 2014 in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, was organised by ten leading youth organisations including the National Youth Agency, UK Youth, the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, Foyer Federation and London Youth. The second event was a seminar held the following day at the University of Birmingham, titled Creative Resistance: Why? Where? How? This was organised by the In Defence of Youth Work campaign. While the Creative Collisions conference was clearly framed as the official space and voice of the sector, the Creative Resistance seminar was deliberately framed as a critical, sceptical space for debating the former event's so-called 'collusion with the State's imposed and prescribed outcomes-based agenda' (Taylor, 2014b). I knew that by attending both events I would gather a more diverse view of the issues at stake for the sector. An extract of my notes follows:

*I am signed up to attend the Creative Collisions conference: Uniting for Young People. For a few weeks now the organisers have been sending emails with the agenda, and a reminder to submit questions to ask Rob Wilson, Minister for Civil Society, who will be talking at the event. My impression is that this will be a perfect opportunity to hear politicians, youth leaders and young people from across the country talk about the sector, as they understand it. I'm also intrigued by the inclusion of the word 'creative', and how creativity will be interpreted throughout the day.*

*I arrive at the Copperbox early in the morning, in time for the exhibition and networking section of the day. The venue is a vast arena with a large central*

*sunken space, and thousands of tiered seats reaching up to the ceiling. Around the perimeter of the central space is a walkway populated by a marketplace of bright stands, each representing a different youth agency or charity. The area is already teeming with delegates – mainly adults, with a smattering of people who appear to be in their late teens/early 20s. There are quite a few men wearing suits. I walk around browsing stalls and leaflets. A man from Onside Youth Zones tells me about the work of this national initiative to build state of the art youth centres offering universal and targeted provision for 8-19 year olds. The literature explains that young people have to pay 50p a session. I chat to a very articulate 16 year-old from the British Youth Council about their campaign to secure the vote for people aged 16 and 17. He tells me there's a general assumption that young people lean to the left politically, but it's not necessarily true – he's a Conservative. There are stands promoting volunteering opportunities through programmes such as vInspired, and stands featuring content produced and marketed by the Youth Media Agency. The Arts Award also has a presence.*

*At 10am the 700 or so delegates are ushered into the main space, where a stage is set for the first plenary, to be chaired by TV presenter Rick Edwards. On the panel for this initial session is Rob Wilson MP, Lisa Nandy MP, Shadow Minister for Civil Society, and Jenny Mullinder, a youth speaker competition winner. Conservative Rob Wilson, who is responsible for the government's youth policy, speaks first. He shares anecdotes about his son attending Cubs and his daughter being a Brownie. He recognises the need to ensure that all young people have access to the cultural, sporting and educational opportunities available in the UK, regardless of background. He acknowledges the life-changing work that youth practitioners do, and the important contribution that the youth sector makes in the UK. Mid-speech, a woman in the audience interjects loudly: "Pay for it then!" There is a ripple of applause and some stifled giggling. Wilson implies he's getting to that.*

*Wilson goes on to name a series of government priorities. They want to ensure that opportunities exist beyond formal education, so are continuing to support uniformed youth organisations, the Step Up To Serve programme and the NCS. The government is committed to austerity, and the youth sector is expected to "become more resilient" by forming enterprising partnerships between local authorities, businesses and youth organisations. Wilson also stresses the importance of impact measurement, and welcomes the launch of the new Centre for Youth Impact at today's conference. As he concludes, the Minister apologises because he can't stay as he has other meetings to attend, and as soon as he finishes the speech he swiftly leaves the stage and exits the venue. I'm taken aback by this unexpected departure, particularly as we were asked to submit questions in advance.*

*Later in the session, after Lisa Nandy has spoken, Piers Telemacque, Vice president of the National Union of Students, stands up in the audience and tells the rest of the delegates that he ran after Rob Wilson to ask him why he wouldn't stay and answer questions. Apparently Wilson was looking around the site and*

*hadn't left with any urgency. Telemacque argues that this government has consistently deprioritised young people, and that statutory protection for youth services is needed to ensure their survival.*

[Field notes, 6 November 2014]

The significance of the scarping Minister was not lost on anyone in the conference hall that day. This is a sector that feels abandoned by central government, having recently seen the responsibility for youth policy shift from the Department for Education to the Cabinet Office – regarded by some as the ‘dustbin department’ (Jeffs, 2015, p.12). The message from the Minister around business-led social investment spelt out the government’s intention to reduce youth organisations’ reliance on council budgets, and to endorse public-private partnership models to capitalise upon alternative sources of funding. The government’s financial backing of its flagship NCS programme was an evident point of tension amongst other practitioners. There are concerns that a ‘fast-burn’ social action programme can’t achieve change in the same way that a sustained youth service can (Murphy, 2014). The NUS Vice-President called NCS a “Tory ideology project” directly in front of its Chief Executive. As well as revealing divisions, the event exposed the youth sector’s lack of influence and advocacy power at a national level. The CEOs of the ten organising partners admitted they had tried to place a campaign letter in the national press that day, but no paper or media agency was interested in taking it. The CEO of UK Youth also admitted that the youth sector has been failing to reach all young people. The general consensus amongst the main speakers was that the sector must develop new and better means of collaboration and partnership.

The arts played a fringe role in the day, with Bridge organisation A New Direction running a breakout workshop based around partnerships in their programme *Strong Voices*, which I will discuss later in this chapter. I met one Circuit staff member on the day and also bumped into two youth workers from one of my research sites. They had brought a small group of young people along who had apparently got bored and decided to leave. The youth workers had expected it to be more youth-friendly. This event openly staged the fragmented dynamics of

the youth sector – with some practitioners behaving as antagonists, and others adopting a more compliant stance. The event's location was also picked up as a target for criticism. The In Defence of Youth Work campaign referred to it as 'the corporate heart of London' (Taylor, 2014b). The perceived geography of the event was that it was part of the centre of power.

In contrast, then, the In Defence of Youth Work event was hosted in a modest seminar room at the University of Birmingham's Edgbaston campus. The location was also symbolically significant because of its academic setting and distance from London. Most of the organisations fronting the Creative Collisions event were seen by those in more critical camps (predominantly those aligned with the In Defence of Youth Work campaign) to be conforming to a neoliberal agenda that prioritises market values above a young person-centred practice. The presence of the suited CEOs at Creative Collisions and the discomfort experienced by some of the young people struck me as indicative of the type of circumstances that raise concern amongst the more critical practitioners and academics.

Knowledge of discord between different groups of agents in a field is important from a partnership perspective because these conditions inevitably have a bearing on how a sector acts and interacts with other fields of practice. Recognition of division for instance reinforces the problem of referring to the youth sector as a singular body. From the beginning of my fieldwork, I was interested in the types of youth organisations and values the Circuit galleries might align themselves with. Would Circuit's national team form associations with national youth agencies? Would the galleries find allies in grassroots youth work? While the youth sector was dealing with its own identity and economic crisis, how might Circuit respond? As exemplified by the Creative Collisions event, arts organisations tend to play a relatively minor role on youth sector platforms, but with the current direction of youth policy focusing more on cross sector partnership, and with the future of the youth sector under debate, I wondered whether there might be an opportunity for the visual arts sector to



reconfigure its role in this context.

The Creative Resistance seminar organised by In Defence of Youth Work offered a chance to observe another voice of the sector, and to reflect on some of the long-term challenges impacting upon youth workers. An extract from my field notes is below:

*The following day, I'm heading to Birmingham for the Creative Resistance seminar. As I arrive at the campus I have to ask for directions to find the venue. I eventually reach the seminar room, which is crammed full with around 25 participants. I feel like a bit of an imposter but people are very welcoming and help me find a chair. I recognise a few attendees from some other youth work conferences. The NUS Vice-President from yesterday is here too. I note that there are quite a lot of men in the room, and many of the attendees are older, although there are a couple of students. The group report back from the Creative Collisions conference. They are recalling some of the more volatile moments from the day, and referring to the huge pressure being experienced by youth workers, many of who are feeling compromised and intimidated by the shifts towards privatisation in youth practice. Their argument is that youth work should be seen as a discipline in its own right – that it is about developing an empowering and equal relationship with young people. The youth worker is, as one contributor suggests, "not a watered down social worker".*

*As well as seeing the basic values and professional status of their practice eroded, the group are deeply concerned about the scale of the cuts to youth provision. The NUS Vice-President explains that they have introduced a parliamentary Early Day Motion, which proposes that youth services in the UK should receive ring-fenced, statutory funding, and that responsibility for youth services should sit with the Department of Education. The In Defence of Youth Work leaders are clearly buoyed by the support of the NUS, and are keen to rally their supporters and lobby for signatories. I'm intrigued about the fact that the NUS are so involved in the campaign to halt cuts to youth services. Piers Telemacque reminds us that the NUS represent students in further as well as higher education, and that they have a responsibility to campaign on behalf of youth work students. The situation for youth work courses is clearly bleak. One attendee argues that training agencies are "teaching a subject called youth work that doesn't exist". [Field notes, 7 November 2014]*

This brief extract from my notes of this meeting portrays some of the key issues which have been uniting and dividing the youth sector over the course of my fieldwork. I heard in other events that the identity of youth work is currently

characterised as being wholly dispersed (Green, 2014). Youth work now takes place in a range of settings, including schools and hospitals, which has bred anxiety about the dilution of the practice and its intellectual traditions. In the many youth sector events I attended (including three at the YMCA George Williams College, the UK's only specialist youth work education college), I encountered frustration directed at the growing managerialist culture in youth work, at the fixation on quantitative evaluation/monitoring, and the loss of core costs for programmes. These frustrations have evidently been the source of low morale amongst practitioners. Janet Batsleer, a youth work lecturer who I had regular contact with through various events, talked about the perception of youth and community work as a low status occupation. She argued that the concept of youth work as the "poor relation" of other forms of social and educational work has largely embedded itself in the psyche of the practice (Batsleer, 2014). This pattern of discourse at youth sector events seemed to reinforce the idea that the field and its agents inhabited an increasingly disempowered position, and that the central tenets of open access youth work were under threat.

These accounts therefore appeared to signal the lack of autonomy experienced by the youth sector field. The competencies and capitals required to operate as workers were being devalued and the logic of the field was a point of obvious contestation. Interpretations of the game of youth work lurched between regulation of deficient youth and compliance with new managerialism on the one hand, and concepts of democratic empowerment and consciousness raising on the other (Hughes et al., 2014). The implications resulting from this diminished sense of autonomy were multiple, and they impacted both on the sector's capacity to work in partnership, and on practitioners' relationship to creative practice and institutional visual art, as outlined below.

## Attitudes to partnership in the youth sector

Rhetoric around partnership and collaboration emerged without exception in every youth sector event I attended. A very common issue raised in sector events was the tendency for youth organisations to act competitively rather than collaboratively, in a climate of scarce funding and fear around job security. As well as fighting for pots of money, some organisations are seen to be protective over their cohorts of young people, to the potential detriment of participants' progression. A particularly insightful discussion took place at an event called *Breaking barriers: where evidence goes next*, organised by Project Oracle in London. Project Oracle is a children and youth evidence hub, tasked with supporting the youth sector to use evaluation effectively. Their annual conference brought together youth providers, senior figures in public services and London governance, funders and researchers. The breakout session: *Collaboration – more than the sum of your parts*, staged a roundtable conversation about the obstacles to good partnership working and the types of collaborations needed in the youth sector:

*The Breaking barriers event is held in BASE Kings Cross – a fairly corporate set of spaces on the lower ground floor of a large office building. I've spent the morning listening to a panel discussion featuring Munira Mirza, Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture of London, and Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, head of London's Metropolitan Police. Much of the day has focused on the growing demands on the youth sector to produce and utilise high quality, joined up evaluation. The importance of practitioners working together across services rather than in silos is stressed on numerous occasions.*

*The afternoon's workshop on collaboration promises to look in more depth at the shifts in culture needed to ensure that organisations are prepared to work well in partnership, and able to reflect on challenges. The main speakers are David Warner, Director of London Funders, Sharon Long, Director of Partnership for Young London, and Rosie Ferguson, Chief Executive of London Youth. This appears to be a very over-subscribed session – the small room is packed full.*

*The event begins with a question to the audience about some of the issues affecting partnership work. One delegate says it's about partners being on the same page; another says her concern is how to build trust between large and*

*small-scale organisations. David Warner proposes four principles that should underpin collaboration: leadership, trust, clarity of shared vision and a focus on the ultimate beneficiaries (young people). He suggests that practitioners need to put aside organisational interests and concentrate on being driven by the moral imperative.*

*Rosie Ferguson highlights that as a Chief Executive of a voluntary organisation, she is constantly incentivised to over-claim. She believes funding structures and other factors encourage organisations to fabricate evidence and to demonstrate that their work is the best, which perpetuates a competitive system. Ferguson argues that they need to be thinking like movements, not institutions, and organisations need to have collaborative, mission-focused leaders who are brave enough to refuse to play the game. She lists a set of conditions that need to be in place to enable these changes in culture:*

- 1. You need to like each other in order to go the extra mile.*
- 2. Practitioners need to work with different people and organisations. The risk is that if we only work with people who are similar to us, we will end up with lots of like-minded groups.*
- 3. A culture of honesty is essential.*
- 4. Partners need to relax their organisational ego (some organisations in the sector get hung up on intellectual property and ownership).*
- 5. Partners should hold each other to account.*
- 6. The balance of power should be as equal as possible, so one organisation is not servicing the other.*

*Warner agrees that one of the frustrations of the funding community is the inherent imbalance of power between funders and grantees. Funders are interested in honest feedback about their own performance as funders, as well as the performance of funding recipients.*

*I'm excited by this discussion, as it's the first time I've heard leading figures in the youth sector speak in detail about the cultural conditions required for good partnership working.*

*Some of the audience members describe the challenges they face in trying to enact these types of practices. One delegate admits that her organisation is obliged to over-sell. She says it's hard for organisations to collaborate effectively because "things are shaky". Another delegate believes that if you collaborate too much you can lose your identity as an organisation.*

*The final part of the discussion focuses on fostering local relationships. Warner suggests that the local is going to be an increasingly important place to advocate. Sharon Long agrees that the youth sector is losing connectors and brokerage in local spaces, and there are fewer centralised systems for communicating information. There is consensus amongst the speakers that the needs of localities*

*would be best served by organisations forming local networks, and doing strategic work around horizon scanning and place based evidence.*  
[Field notes, 12 October 2015]

This breakout session helped to identify and confirm some of the sector-wide issues that lay behind organisational attitudes to partnership working. Throughout the fieldwork and particularly at sector events, practitioners would refer to youth organisations' problematic relationship with collaboration - with competition for limited resources clearly a major cause of organisational isolation. The session also highlighted the performativity that surrounds the relationship between third sector organisations and funders. The impulse to perform the role of the successful organisation was shown to impair partners' ability to honestly reflect on learning, and to take risks. The concept of the local as a key site for partnership was another theme that ran through the fieldwork. Practitioners suggested that the reduction of local authority influence on cross-organisational networking had weakened the culture of collaboration at regional levels. It was reported that there were fewer opportunities for practitioners from youth services and charities to meet informally and behave like a collective body. While there was a clear and significant emphasis on collaboration in the youth sector, many of the mechanisms and safeguards that helped to promote an effective environment for partnership working had been removed. These were all important factors to take into consideration when observing Circuit's partnership initiatives.

### **The relationship between youth work and the arts**

The arts are unquestionably considered to be part of what youth work does. Different cultural practices (generally music, dance, theatre and the visual arts) sit alongside sports, mentoring and youth action projects as typical youth work offers (London Youth, 2013, p.22). Nonetheless I discovered during my sector-based research that the presence of the arts in youth work events was very minimal. I encountered very few instances of youth practitioners talking about

art forms and arts-based pedagogies to their youth sector peers. When youth events did incorporate sessions about the arts, these were sometimes led by external arts agencies (such as Arts Council Bridge organisations). In meeting other delegates at youth events, I did come across practitioners who worked in youth theatre contexts, but I rarely met practitioners who worked in or with galleries. It became apparent during the fieldwork that youth theatre traditions were much more embedded in the history and practice of youth work than gallery education.

Recognising that there seemed to be a gap in the conference circuit for an event focusing on youth sector perspectives on the arts, in April 2015 I co-devised a large-scale seminar in association with the British Educational Research Association's special interest group: Youth Studies and Informal Education. This event brought together youth and cultural workers and academics (through invitations and an open call) to address the research and practice agenda across youth work, informal learning and the arts. The response to the call out from both contributors and delegates surpassed expectations and appeared to indicate the strength of interest in these issues. Some of the presenters spoke directly to the question of the historically tricky relationship between youth work and the arts. Brian Belton, a lecturer in youth work professional practice at the YMCA George Williams College, offered a "critique of the dominance of the practical application of art in youth work practice" (Belton, 2015). He suggested that art is primarily viewed in youth work education as a practical, skill-based pursuit, and that its exploratory, discursive potential is underestimated by youth work training institutions. Belton promoted the argument that interaction with art can enable practitioners and young people both to self-reflect, and to address the politics, values and ethics that are central to good youth work practice. Another speaker, youth theatre practitioner Steph Brocken, referred to the notion that arts work has "sometimes been seen as a panacea in youth work – for example 'there is a problem with kids hanging out down by the parade, let's do a graffiti project, that'll solve the problem!'" (Brocken, 2015). Both contributors implied that the arts are not widely understood in youth work

practice, and where the arts *are* valued, they are positioned predominantly as practical tools or instrumentalised interventions.

By way of interrogating these arguments further, during fieldwork interviews I asked practitioners who work or have worked in different positions in the youth sector for many years about attitudes towards the arts in youth services. These interviewees were involved in the Circuit programme to different degrees, and all had some experience of developing or supporting arts-based programmes in youth work contexts.

One former youth worker who was employed for many years in a local authority youth service and alternative education provision in the southeast reflected on the role of creative practice in her career:

**Former youth worker:** *I have an interest in art because I think, personally, that young people who find it hard to communicate will lend themselves towards communicating through art. Sometimes it's just by doing it, and they talk. They forget about not talking, and they talk. Sometimes it's a tool to actually unpick something that they want to unpick rather than being made to sit and confront it. They'll unpick it because that's the way they want to do it. So I think art is really important - I'm not a trained artist but also in schools working with young people, I always ended up in the art room, and it was always the best place to be with a young person most times. Even with young people for whom speech and communication was not easy and hand eye coordination was not easy. It's quite impressive what art can do for people.*  
[Interview, 30 October 2015]

Many of the youth practitioners involved in Circuit referred to art as an important vehicle for communication, or as a useful distraction device, through which meaningful and revealing discussion might emerge. Practitioners also often referred to the value of spending time in an arts space as an alternative context for engagement. In this conversation I tried to gauge the extent to which arts pedagogies were accepted as part of the youth service's wider work:

**Me:** *Would you say there was endorsement across the service or were you a lone voice? Was there a consensus that arts and youth work go together?*

**Former youth worker:** *I think most youth workers have to be creative. Personally, that's what I believe – they have to be creative beings. Because when you're listening to a young person, you have to be thinking at the same time – how can I approach this? And if you're creative then I think art's going to be in there somewhere. In whatever shape or form it takes. [...] For some of the young people that I worked with, that was the only medium that they could speak through, and some of the people who I worked with in alternative education who were really quite vulnerable and very aggressive... art was really such a support and could change a person's life because it gave them the release they were looking for. We noticed that, and then the County Council did run training sessions for creativity, and gave little quick ideas. They used to give you little packs – quick fix things to take in. Because we found that those people that struggled with being creative would latch on to taking these packs that had everything you'd need to run a session – which would support sexual health or mental health, or they did things around finance. All sorts of little things like that. Nobody wanted to keep recreating the wheel so it became that if you needed something you could just take it off the shelf and use it. Sometimes I don't think that's great, but if you're not creative or if you're not confident – I think everybody's creative – but if you're not confident enough to work with somebody in that area, that's a good starting place. But sometimes the best way of communicating is when you both don't know how to go forward, and you do it cooperatively.*

These comments highlight both the therapeutic framing of the arts in youth work, and the mixed confidence levels of practitioners. While the interviewee cited the holistic role of creativity in youth work, they also indicated that some practitioners “struggle” with the applied dimensions of creative practice, and demonstrated how some services adopt a spoon-feeding approach to arts-based training. Many of the youth work practitioners I interviewed in Circuit did have some form of previous personal arts experience (either educational or recreational), but they appeared to be in the minority amongst colleagues.

Some practitioners I spoke to had actually entered youth work via the visual arts. One youth practitioner who worked in a London-based local authority with care leavers spoke to me about his education at art college and training in art therapy. In all of his roles in children's homes, youth offending teams and leaving care services, the practitioner had incorporated arts projects, or made connections with cultural institutions:



**Leaving care practitioner:** *I think doing art projects with young people really inspires them to start thinking, and working with artists who don't give them the answer of how to make something makes them think. Lots of the young people that we work with haven't really developed their thinking skills, and they react more to situations rather than think about how to get out of them.*

[....]

**Me:** *So would you say the children's services have always supported, endorsed and invested in partnerships with cultural organisations? Because I talk to people in other local authorities where it's seen as extra, as an indulgence...*

**Leaving care practitioner:** *I quite agree, I think it's like the cherry on the icing on the cake when you do something like this. And when I started I think people were like – what the hell are you doing? But they liked the fact that I'd got so many of these young people who were called hard to reach involved in these projects, getting up in the morning and coming every day. They were like – oh wow! And they also liked the fact that it was free.*

[Interview, 26 May 2015]

A key distinction between youth practitioners seemed to be whether they accepted open-endedness, experimentation and improvisation, or whether they were more concerned with planned implementation and the development of a recordable product. I found that often colleagues in the same youth organisation harboured different attitudes, and sometimes there was only a single arts champion in an organisation. One artist I interviewed, who had worked for several years in a targeted youth work setting in a coastal town, described how there was one youth worker in the organisation who “got it” – in other words she was the only practitioner who wouldn't come into the art studio and ask what they would be making. She understood that “if a young person picks something up, like an empty bottle, and starts talking about it, then that's great” [interview, 15 February 2015]. Bourdieu (1984) would suggest that the tendency for some youth practitioners to perceive art as fulfilling a function conveys their working class origin and the particular nature of their educational capital. He would also suggest that a person's propensity to visit art galleries betrays various things about their social class position and the cultural capital they have attained outside of the education system.

So youth worker perceptions of galleries also fed into the data set on youth work's relationship to the arts. At an away day for children's and youth services (which I observed as it was held in one of the Circuit gallery sites), youth workers identified some of the perceived benefits and barriers associated with visiting the gallery alongside young people. Several commented on the value of the gallery as a local resource, as a creative hub to develop new skills and as a space to network and socialise. However many referred to the clinical, formal atmosphere of the gallery, and the possibility for "chaotic" groups to be publically reprimanded in the space. Some participants raised the view that galleries are seen as "posh and not relevant", and some admitted feeling that the "intellectualising of art works alienates people" [field notes, 10 January 2014]. This dialogue was interesting because most of the youth workers present had little prior contact with the gallery. I found through my fieldwork that some youth practitioners would retreat behind their feelings of inexperience in relation to the arts, while others would display confidence with their cultural tastes, but often in opposition to the more esoteric works and interpretation devices offered by the gallery or museum.

I deduced from engagements at events and through interviews that youth practitioners are typically more attuned to the principles of cultural democracy than to notions of democratising culture. Practitioners tended to speak about young people's practical creativity and its effects on their wellbeing rather than about interactions with cultural institutions. The instrumentalist or therapeutic positioning of the arts in youth work was clearly entrenched in the practice (Howard, 2017) but there were also many examples of individual practitioners who were aware of the broader potential of creativity and arts engagement. I was particularly intrigued by concurrent research into the idea of the youth centre as "a space of subcultural capital" and the role of youth workers as potential facilitators of young people's subcultural expression (Manchester, 2014). From a youth sector perspective a picture emerged of a field with an ambivalent relationship to institutional arts and culture, which had its own (often overlooked) creative integrity. In embarking on my site-based fieldwork I was

conscious that differing attitudes to art and institutions might be significant in my analysis of tension in partnership.

### **Understanding the gallery education sector**

As already noted, having worked in gallery education for seven years before undertaking this PhD, my understanding of the sector stems from personal experience as a cultural worker. However I took the opportunity throughout my fieldwork to attend sector events and attempt to observe these through the lens of a researcher, in the hope that I might notice features about the field that I had previously taken for granted (Thomson, 2013). By attending gallery sector events and youth sector events in the same time period I was also able to make comparisons between the fields.

One major observation that came out of these comparisons was that there seemed to be fewer examples of open conflict in gallery education events than I witnessed in youth sector events. This conflict seemed largely to do with the youth sector's relationship with government and the crisis being experienced in sections of the youth work community, where particular values and practices were felt to be under attack. In gallery education events, policy was sometimes discussed, although this tended to be in relation to its effects on other fields - such as the devaluing of cultural education in schools (Johnston, 2013), or the oppression of minority communities (Shelley, 2014). While working and funding conditions were discussed as precarious in gallery education sector events, morale was rarely shown to be low, because the wholesale existence of the practice was not in jeopardy. During conferences organised by the likes of engage, the national association of gallery education, and the International Journal of Art and Design Education, the privileged status of the profession was often raised across presentations. While recognised as semi-precarious workers, gallery practitioners demonstrated self-awareness that the profile of the workforce was dominantly white, middle class, female and financially stable (Cisneros, 2015). It was noted that gallery education practitioners don't often live

in the areas they develop projects within (Graham, 2014) and they are not part of the “disadvantaged” communities they seek to engage (Cisneros, 2015). The uncomfortable power dynamics of gallery education practice provided regular content for debate in sector events.

Several senior practitioners further challenged the idea that galleries and museums should sit outside of direct political engagement and action (Fleming, 2014; Desmond, 2014). It was suggested in one engage event that there is a lack of collective protest in the visual arts and that institutions should better utilise art as a form of activism [engage area group meeting, The Showroom, London, 2013]. Having a “personal stake” and a “political position” in projects was said to be vital to collaborative working (Shelley, 2014) but the convention for galleries and museums to remain apolitical seemed to frustrate practitioners at larger institutions (Fleming, 2014). A key theme therefore of many conferences and seminars I attended was the need for organisational change and the disruption of “institutional systems of value” (Hickey-Moody, 2014). Across gallery sector events I realised there was a tendency for practitioners to talk about the repressive forces of visual art institutions [The Ludic Museum conference, Tate Liverpool, 2014] - their containment of risk and control of access and taste [Taste after Bourdieu, Chelsea College of Art, 2014]. Academics in cultural education contexts asked: “how do institutions make themselves vulnerable to new knowledges?” (Hickey-Moody, 2014) and: “how do institutions shift from a dominant, autonomous energy to new, playful structures?” (Facer, 2014).

These types of discussions were significant for the research because they highlighted the very different circumstances of work for gallery practitioners operating in institutional settings, as opposed to youth workers. The privileged, relatively secure, autonomous positioning of the gallery education sector appeared to stand in stark contrast to the genuinely precarious positioning of the youth sector community. The game of engagement and initiation in gallery education was shown to be premised on the belief that interaction with institutional arts and culture is good for communities, and therefore on a sense

of surety and confidence about the value of the field and the capitals required for membership. However these events also revealed commonalities between the fields – such as divisions between the dominant, established order and those in more critical camps, who would defend the social and political potential of their practice. Parallel debates around the merits of impact measurement similarly demonstrated shared resistance towards managerialist cultures of accountability. And in the same way that I encountered people with arts backgrounds in the youth sector, I also encountered several gallery practitioners who had some form of youth work background and training, although they were also in a minority. Despite the evident disparities, observing these different communities at sector events confirmed a range of other cross-field homologies that would be useful for understanding the sectors’ contexts for collaboration.

### **Attitudes to partnership in the visual arts sector**

As was the case in youth sector events, the theme of partnership or collaboration surfaced in almost every gallery education sector event I attended during the fieldwork. In many of these conferences and seminars, speakers looked critically at the contemporary compulsion to partner, and sought to deconstruct popular institutional rhetoric associated with collaborative practice. An observable trend in the gallery sector for instance is the proliferation of language around “co-production” and “co-creation” (Bagshawe, 2014). The concept of co-producing with audiences and communities has enthused practitioners at all levels of organisations, but it has also ignited debate about the sincerity of arts institutions’ collaborative gestures. The discourse surrounding partnership as a form of philanthropy was regularly critiqued in events I witnessed [Social arts and mental health event, Anxiety festival, Chelsea College of Art, 2014]. Terms such as “outreach” were dismissed as “colonial” [Artsworld Arts Award conference, BFI, London, 2014]. And scepticism was voiced about the government’s use of arts collaboration to “massage conflict” through “collaborative visioning”, “collaborative policing” and “collaborative beautification” etc. (Graham, 2014). Lynch (2014) spoke about distrusting the museum’s generosity and

acknowledging how control works in subtle ways through the idea of the “gift of engagement”. She argued that museums are routinely disingenuous in their efforts to forge equal partnerships with community organisations.

Other events contributors shared this view - suggesting that the art world’s newfound fixation with collaboration was not necessarily mirrored in practice. In his presentation “The C word” at the 2014 engage conference, Rohan Gunatillake argued that despite the development of rhetoric around collaboration in galleries, these organisations often produce behaviours that don’t look collaborative, and that have more in common with commissioning (Gunatillake, 2014). He suggested the instinct to commission rather than collaborate stems from institutional reluctance to expose vulnerabilities and relinquish elements of control. Similarly, the iJADE conference on Collaborative practices in arts education, deconstructed (over many papers) the concept of collaboration through its critical legacies, uses and misuses. Curator Janna Graham spoke about the paradoxical rhetoric of democracy and utopian transformation in collaborative work involving galleries and communities, where the dominant mode of producing is actually vertical – i.e. hierarchically organised. Graham argued that funders often dictate the terms of a partnership, and therefore accountability lies with the grant maker, rather than the social and political aims of the partner groups (Graham, 2014). There were additionally many calls for the sector to think more critically about the partnership process, and to shift towards more conscious “rhizomatic” models and metaphors of collaboration than traditional hierarchical/banking models (Sullivan, 2014). These exercises in critical reflection signalled gallery education’s conflicting relationship with partnership. “Collaboration is the new black”, and yet the ethics of collaborative practices by galleries have come under serious scrutiny, where they were previously under-examined (Thomas, 2015).

It is important to note that these attitudes to partnership are not necessarily representative of all gallery education practitioners, and many people I interviewed spoke very positively about partnership work being core to their

practice. However these episodes highlighted that there is a strong culture of self-reflexivity and criticality in gallery education, and practitioners are conscious of the curatorial impulse to co-opt dialogic, socially engaged practice without considering the wider ethical implications of partnership.

This PhD sits within this interrogatory tradition in gallery education, and within its growing community of interest around cross-sector collaboration. The following section looks in more depth at the sector's specific interest in untangling the issues behind partnership activity with youth organisations and services.

### **The problem of partnership between galleries and youth organisations**

As outlined in the literature, there are established and recognised tendencies in partnership practice between cultural institutions and so-called community partners such as youth organisations. These tendencies revolve around the understanding that agency and power usually lies (to a greater degree) with the arts partner. In various events, I encountered many instances of practitioners talking about examples of poor partnership practice, and the habitual nature of this behaviour. These anecdotes helped to illustrate the wider picture of tension and discontent surrounding relationships between the arts and youth sectors.

Below are notes from an event that opened up critical discussion about some of the experiences of youth and community partners involved in collaborative work with arts organisations. This event was hosted by one of the Circuit galleries, alongside representatives from their nearest Bridge organisation, in a local theatre:

*A group of about 20 people are mingling in a rehearsal space over coffee. Some seem to know one another but many are making new introductions. Four Circuit staff members are present. Tables are dotted around the large room to encourage participants to discuss in smaller groups. As we're welcomed by the external facilitator and invited to identify ourselves, I learn that the group includes academics from the local university, a cultural producer from a mental*

*health organisation, engagement workers from the council, a policeman, an artistic director from the theatre, a fuel poverty representative from an electricity company, and someone from a regional branch of a national children's charity.*

*One of the organisers opens up the broad themes of the day by highlighting how institutions sometimes project narratives of disadvantage on young people and often adopt quite unhelpful categories, such as 'at risk', 'NEET' and 'hard to reach', without thinking about the impact of these labels on the participant. She associates the term 'reach' with 'outreach', and implications of communities as beneficiaries and outmoded conceptions of targeted offsite work. This provokes some discussion about how language is utilized across different sectors, and about the exclusionary potential of certain measuring tools.*

*After the initial dialogue, each group is tasked with exploring different ideas (which have come up in the conversations) in more depth. These categories include 'Tokenism', 'Economic deprivation/barriers' and 'Partnership'. I position myself at the 'partnership' table, alongside four other participants. One participant (who works as a cultural producer at a mental health organisation) tells us she feels bombarded with offers from arts organisations that have funding but that don't have the young people to populate their projects. She feels there's an expectation for youth organisations to act as suppliers of young people, and because these organisations are stretched financially, many are forced to run from month to month, jumping onto different projects. Other members of the group agree that young people are often viewed as currency by various organisations. Worryingly, one participant believes that young people's stories of poverty and disadvantage are sometimes exploited by artists and arts organisations for their creative potential.*

*There is a consensus amongst the group that partnership is regularly misrepresented, and that time and resources are rarely properly allocated to the development stage of an organisational relationship. One participant argues that funding bids don't account for partners' drivers, or for building ideas in an open-ended, mutually beneficial way. We sketch a map of these thoughts and feed them back to the wider group. Several attendees claim to recognise these types of attitudes and practices.*

*[Field notes, 25 June 2014]*

These notes portray some of the common grievances levelled against arts organisations (by cultural workers as well as youth practitioners). While youth organisations invariably do the difficult work of grassroots engagement, arts organisations are often accused of making short term offers at short notice, with more regard for the needs of their projects than the needs of the young participants and partners. Additionally, continued debates about the



appropriateness of particular terminology, and the imperialist nature of arts organisations' 'reaching' strategies, expose the power dynamics that partially define the relationship between arts and youth practitioners. There is a general understanding that funding requirements and deadlines contribute to this behaviour, and that these embedded practices are connected to the pressured conditions of the arts education sector, which relies on small, often junior staff teams and temporary pots of funding. However, as was identified in this event, practitioners believe there are more fundamental contributing factors, such as how expertise is recognised and valued (or in Bourdieusian terms, what capitals count in partnership projects).

Throughout the fieldwork, I also maintained contact with another youth-focused arts programme called *Strong Voices* (2013-2015). Led by a consortium of five Bridge organisations, *Strong Voices* emerged as an insightful parallel programme to follow, due to its specific ambition to challenge the arts and youth sectors to come together and collaborate on an action research process. The programme deliberately rejected an impact study evaluation model, in favour of an enquiry that looked at the meeting of these "different worlds" – in other words - "sets of people whose main focus was arts and culture and sets of people whose main focus was driven by youth and community practice" (Cochrane, 2015). The findings from the project helped to confirm some of my own impressions about the general state of the relationship between the arts and youth sectors.

*Strong Voices* also attempted to reframe conventional power relationships, by positioning youth organisations as commissioners of arts organisations in some settings, and by contracting practitioners from both sectors to work together on evaluation. The *Strong Voices* programme operated differently in each region, however there were experiences that were common to the different projects, which brought about key collective findings. Director and CEO of Cape UK Pat Cochrane summarised some of these broad conclusions in the *Strong Voices* national conference:

*We found all over the regions that similar things were going on. So that the youth work orientation tended to focus on enabling young people to make small steps to improve their lives – to improve their ability to function in the real world. And so for somebody from a youth and community background, using a bus to get to a session could have been a real triumph. Whereas from the arts and culture sector, there tends to be much more of a focus on a product, [and on] the need to attend consistently to achieve an outcome; the skill of the arts practitioner tends to be in the art form, [while] the skill of the youth practitioner tends to be in understanding the dynamics and the ways in which vulnerable young people need support. (Cochrane, 2015)*

In this statement, Cochrane pointed to the complementary and conflicting aspects of the relationship between the youth worker and the cultural worker. The skill base, motivations and expectations of the practitioner are identified as features of their distinctive professional “orientation”. The following Venn diagram was used in several *Strong Voices* presentations, to further describe the disciplinary differences fostered by these two types of “orientation”.

### Creating a shared practice

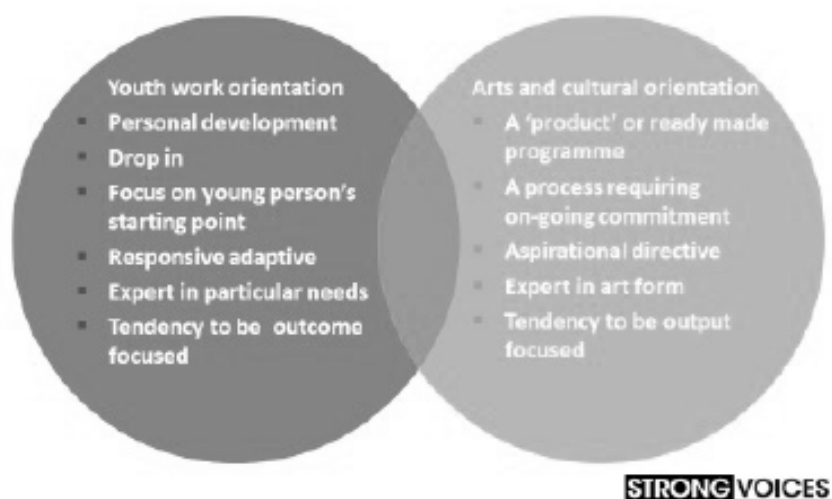


Image: Strong Voices and IVE

Using a Bourdieusian framework, these “orientations” might otherwise be described as characteristics of each field’s individual doxa. They are recognised features of each practice that compel youth and arts workers to act in particular

ways. Crucially, the youth work tradition shown here seems to revolve around a young person-centred approach that is flexible and reactive, while the arts tradition seems to hinge upon a programme-centred methodology.

Spokespeople for *Strong Voices* readily admitted that these indicators are heavily simplified and not wholly representative, but they believed they held a significant measure of truth about the basic character of youth work practice in relation to arts education pedagogies. This diagram divides the two orientations into separate areas of practice, yet notably illustrates the possibility for shared space and a shared site of practice.

Cochrane explained the challenges of mobilising the concept of this shared space, and avoiding compromising the professional identity of practitioners:

*...We don't want to turn cultural practitioners into youth workers, nor do we want to turn youth workers into arts and cultural practitioners. What we want to do is to create a space where there's a shared language, where we're navigating and creating new, shared understandings. [...] And that's much harder than I think any of us ever anticipated. (Cochrane, 2015)*

The difficulties involved in establishing these shared conditions are central to the ongoing 'problem' of partnership between galleries and youth organisations. Cochrane believes the arts and youth sectors need to cultivate a "community of practice" through open and honest reflection, but recognises that the economic environment and assessment culture can hinder these conversations and prevent cross-sector communities from flourishing.

During my fieldwork I came into contact with initiatives in the wider cultural sector, which aimed to develop these so-called communities of practice. One prominent example was *Creating Change* - a national network for organisations involved in participatory arts with young people 'at risk'. Founded by south London-based theatre company Ovalhouse in 2013, *Creating Change* invited numerous organisations and individuals to sign up as core and associate members, and hosted a website featuring resources, research and opportunities

for broader public use. The programme also convened a major conference at the end of 2014, around the theme of ‘creating links’, which included practitioners from across the arts and youth sectors. Like the *Strong Voices* project, this network was cross-art form and involved brokering relationships between small to medium-sized organisations. Most of the core arts organisations involved were theatre and performance-based. It sought to advocate for participatory youth arts and to act as a hub for practitioners who may otherwise feel isolated.

The conference raised a number of points about the nature of partnership between the youth and cultural sectors and it included leading figures from regional and national youth organisations (such as the CEO of Brighton youth centre) to speak about the challenges facing the youth sector. The types of issues raised in relation to partnership included: the difficulties of finding a shared evidence base suitable for the evaluation of both artistic quality and social impact; the complications of navigating different languages and terminology across sectors, and the need to create accommodating programmes that take the unpredictability of young people’s lives into account. One former young offender who had been part of a theatre engagement programme also spoke candidly about her experiences not preparing her for progression into a predominantly white arts industry [Creating Links conference, Ovalhouse, 3 December 2014].

These nascent efforts to create communities of practice across the youth and cultural fields produced valuable platforms for open discussion about the historic and current problems that have limited cross-sector partnerships. However the findings shared by the likes of *Strong Voices* and *Creating Change* also revealed a lack of theoretical insight into the reasons behind the differences between the sectors. I hoped that my research would help to highlight under-recognised factors that contributed to well-recognised tensions.

## **Predicaments and opportunities facing partnership initiatives**

A number of decisions face organisations looking to set up multi-sited partnership arrangements across the arts and youth sectors. These negotiations are further intensified under the pressured conditions of the current policy climate. A partnership initiative involving a partner in crisis (such as the youth sector) has to consider the role and responsibilities of the initiative to act as an ally to that partner field. As discussed in this chapter, the visual art sector has a propensity to comment *on* the political, without necessarily getting directly involved in dispute or dissent (Evans, 2017).

The title of this thesis “like oil and water” refers to a comment made by a gallery programmer and former youth worker about the pedagogical correlations and divergences between youth work and gallery education practice. There are many shared values that make the arts and youth sectors natural allies, however there are also clear differences in the social, educational and training backgrounds of youth and cultural practitioners that contribute to these workers’ distinct attitudes and approaches to practice. These separate fields also work to produce and embed different types of capitals and dispositions in young people. Overcoming (or working with) the distance created by differences in habitus and capital is part of the task of programmes such as Circuit.

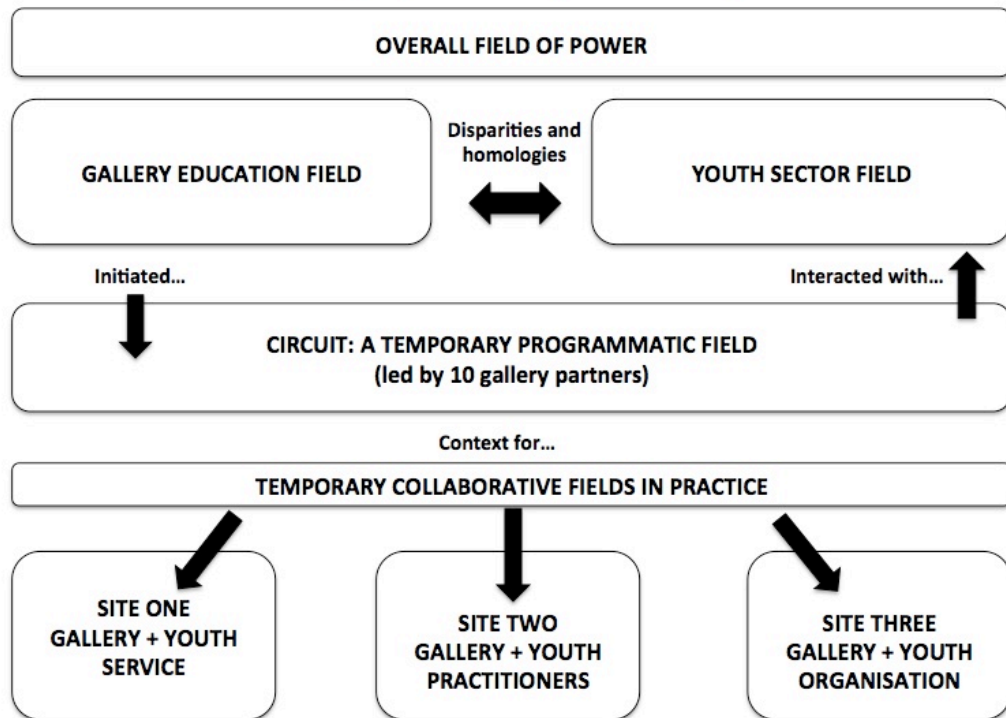
Large scale, longer-term programmes in particular have an opportunity to trial new modes of working, to raise standards of practice and share knowledge across sectors. The following chapter offers an account of the programmatic decisions behind Circuit – shedding light on how those involved sought to confront the many and varied issues connected to cross-field working.

## Chapter 5: Programming for change: Circuit's temporary programmatic field

This chapter begins the work of exploring Circuit's programmatic space – or, as I refer to it – Circuit's temporary programmatic field. Derived from the idea of the 'temporary social field' (Rawolle, 2005) this concept helps to describe the physical and conceived space that is created when a cross-site programme of Circuit's scale and duration comes into being. Bourdieu tended to apply the notion of social fields to permanent structures and institutions, but his criteria for determining fields was flexible, and it has been argued that his theoretical framework can be usefully expanded to examine more fleeting materialisations of social space, particularly those involving multiple different fields (Rawolle, 2005; Hilgers and Mangez, 2015).

Circuit represented the coming together of ten gallery partners to create a new set of relations. As will be unravelled in this chapter, Circuit did not constitute a merging of the youth and gallery sector fields - rather the programme was devised by the gallery sector as a platform for different types of engagement with the youth sector field. Within the programme itself, numerous partnerships were formed, which *did* represent attempts to bring together organisational fields from the youth and gallery sectors. I refer to these as temporary *collaborative* fields. The diagram below illustrates how these geographies are configured in my analysis:

## Geographies of partnership



All of the temporary fields defined above are affected in various ways by events, positions and tensions in the established fields of the youth and gallery education sectors, and in turn by the wider field of power. Equally in temporary fields (as with any field), there are in-built inequalities and struggles for power (Bourdieu, 1985). There are also agreed logics of practice and priorities or goals, which direct the flow of activity. By creating a temporary field that includes multiple organisational partners, these partners and their agents are being asked to subscribe and adapt to a new, temporary set of rules, conditions and modes of practice. Acclimatising to this shared field is likely to be challenging for practitioners who are used to working under the conditions of their own social, organisational and regional fields. This I determined to be one of my key areas of interest in investigating Circuit as a partnership initiative.

Agents, or practitioners, through their social background and training carry with them their habitus, which inclines them to belong and remain in a particular

field. These systems of belonging and natural logics of practice inevitably get disrupted when organisations from different professional fields work together. The previous chapter provided evidence of numerous issues that have consistently troubled relationships between youth organisations and cultural institutions. So I was curious to understand how Circuit would seek to alleviate these tensions through the construction of its 'offer'. How would the temporary programmatic field influence partnership working between galleries and youth organisations? Which logics of practice would prevail? And which capitals would count most? This chapter focuses on the design of Circuit's programmatic field, while Chapter 6 explores three localised collaborative fields enabled by the programme.

## **Designing Circuit**

The first move in understanding the nature of Circuit's programmatic field is to give some indication of its scope and public significance. When Circuit was first announced in December 2012 it garnered considerable interest across the gallery education sector and gained coverage in major national media outlets, including The Independent, ITV and the Financial Times. The size of Paul Hamlyn Foundation's £5 million pound grant attracted particular attention, as did the pledge to focus on 'permanent partnerships with hard-pressed youth organisations', at a 'time of straightened funding for youth services' (Pickford, 2012). Media interest was also piqued by the claim of then Tate Director Sir Nicholas Serota that Circuit represented a cultural response to the 2011 summer riots, which were widely read as a symptom of young people's discontent and a lack of youth provision (Clark, 2012). Inter-gallery youth programmes were by no means a new phenomenon for Tate. Nevertheless Circuit appeared to represent a pivotal moment of investment in gallery-based youth programming, with its extraordinary scale of funding and impressive scope of ambition. This was a programme that sought to have a lasting social impact, particularly for young people with least access to the arts, and it presented an opportunity to establish improved, durable associations with the youth sector. In the following sections I



go on to deconstruct key elements of Circuit's design and discuss their implications for partnership practice.

***- Circuit as a learning and listening space***

Drawing upon experience of effective networked programmes and recognition of historic challenges, the architects of Circuit set out to create the optimum conditions to realise their key aims for partnership. Generous affordance of time and funding were central components of the programme's design – intended to place emphasis on long-term relationship building. The objectives listed in the introduction chapter indicated that the partnerships were expected to be strategic, to target the most challenging or vulnerable groups, and to be integrated into wider organisational activity. Alongside the objectives, one of the intended outcomes cited in the framework was for cultural organisations to acquire knowledge and understanding of youth sector practice (Circuit, 2013b). The framework implied that there is a deficit of knowledge in the cultural sector about youth work practice and about methods for engaging young people with the least access. So an important aspect of the partnership strand was the allocation of a two-year time period for the nurturing of cross-sector relationships, with expectations for project 'delivery' limited to the second half of the four-year initiative. This feature of the design was a specific measure, devised in an effort to break the cycle of short-term, last minute programming in partnerships between galleries and external organisations.

I spoke to several members of staff involved in the setting up and management of Circuit, to clarify the decisions and concerns that influenced the programme structure, particularly in relation to partnership practice. The premise of these conversations was to establish what aspects of Circuit made it different or unique as a set of conditions for partnerships to take place.

One noteworthy dimension of Circuit was the nature of the relationship between the programme and its funder, PHF. The size of the grant ensured that the funder

was much closer to the action and steering of the programme than would usually be the case. Senior staff members from the foundation sat on the programme's board and steering group, and regular meetings were held between the Grants and Programmes Director and the management team of Circuit. This dynamic was significant from a partnership perspective because PHF is known for its investment in challenging traditional partnership models between arts and community organisations (as referenced in the preceding chapters). Below, an extract from my interview with the Director, Grants and Programmes from PHF, offers some insight into the ethos behind Circuit's temporary programmatic field:

*Historically, arts organisations have extended largesse to grateful recipients, whether it was in schools or wherever, and I think the trend in co-designing, which is what we're trying to encourage with the young people involved in Circuit, actually applies to the design of your relationship. So, have you checked whether the people you are offering your services to as an arts organisation - do they want it? Will it be useful to serve their agenda? What is their need?*

*And that kind of dialogue, though it sounds quite trite and quite pedestrian, is not often taking place. Because the arts organisation starts with what they want to do, need to achieve, for a variety of reasons, and then go about it. And in a way it's done to the beneficiary, and I think part of what we're trying to explore with Circuit is a renegotiation of that framework [...] So it's to try and redress the balance of forces, and I think establish links or relationships between a museum or gallery, a Circuit partner and a series of third sector organisations involved in their community to achieve what it is that they need to achieve. So it's actually the museum and gallery as a vehicle for someone else's needs, instead of trying to achieve its own mission in a very single-minded way.*

[Interview, 1 September 2015]

As suggested by these comments, the foundation's representatives saw Circuit as an opportunity for galleries to reshape the imbalances that typify alliances with youth and community organisations. The foundation was aware of the tendency for arts institutions to prioritise their own organisational objectives, sometimes at the expense of listening to the needs of partners. Circuit therefore signified a programmatic attempt to "work differently, better, with targeted groups, organisations and service providers" [interview, 1 September, 2015]. For PHF, a commitment to facilitating, researching and sharing knowledge of effective partnership working is part of its long-term strategic mission, and Circuit was one

programme in a series of major funded initiatives that worked towards this. Crucially then, Circuit was articulated as an action research programme, rather than an independent, stand-alone project:

*Circuit is a way to test or pilot what our values and our ethos feels like in the real world. And it is action research - it's not assuming that we have any solution to these issues. We don't know what will work or what will not work. But what we give is a mandate to the partner organisations to have a jolly good go at cracking what has often proven a tough nut to crack.*  
[Interview, 1 September 2015].

The programme was deliberately investigative and exploratory, with room for trial and error, in recognition of the complexity of the practice. In the interview, the Director, Grants and Programmes stressed the movement away from measurements of success being predicated upon numbers of participants, in favour of “self-reflection”, “analysis” and “transparency” [interview, 1 September 2015]. The foundation was also concerned with shifting the conduct of grantees, to ensure that quality and exchange of learning was prioritised above the perceived requirement to perform the role of the high-achieving grant recipient. From the funder’s point of view, the anticipated learning exchange would allow the programme to broker “meaningful dialogue” between organisations, in a way that “enables them to work together and achieve each other’s aims”. PHF seemed to understand Circuit as a long-term project of behavioural change and knowledge generation, rather than solely as a platform for widening access to arts institutions:

*Circuit is helping to move the goal posts in terms of what kind of conversation to start, and how to continue it over a longer period of time. What it results in I hope is for the gallery, I hope it results in access to a new kind of young people over a longer period of time. But if what results is a few young people that they would have not reached before, but a good understanding of what the third party, the youth organisation needs and how they operate, [...] that understanding would be great.*  
[Interview, 1 September 2015].

Circuit’s temporary programmatic field was built on the idea that galleries and youth organisations (as discrete fields in their own right) needed space and time

to understand one another, so that the unhealthy power dynamic between these types of organisations could be reimagined. The funder (occupying a dominant position associated with the field of power) would seek to support this process by changing usual definitions of success and removing pressure to achieve numbers, in favour of a learning-focused approach to partnership. By changing the terms of the game, the designers of Circuit sought to foster a more equitable playing field for youth and art organisations to work together. The response of the organisations involved in Circuit to these requirements of the programmatic field will be discussed in the second half of this chapter.

### ***- Circuit as a space of cultural democracy***

Another key element of Circuit's design is the fact that it was shaped around an existing model of practice cultivated by Tate. This meant the temporary programmatic field adopted in large part the 'doxa' or accepted wisdom of Tate's Young People's Programmes, and the institution's way of working with youth partners. The Director of Learning at Tate, who was heavily involved in writing the bid for Circuit, explained how this decision was based on the growing profile of Tate's youth programming and recognition of its quality from within and beyond the institution. Speaking of Tate London's youth programme and its reputation for working in partnership, particularly with looked after young people, The Director of Learning remarked:

*They do this great work with the youth sector, and I saw the respect [the Convenor] had within that, and the deeply lovely way that those young people got treated when they were with us, and the trust that developed with youth partners [...]*

This interview revealed internal confidence in the track record of Tate's Young People's Programmes team, and their commitment "to giving space and time to young people who are being failed by the system". Tate was also perceived by the funder to be equipped and experienced enough to lead a new, national programme and to influence peer organisations with their model of peer-led

engagement and partnership working. In the interview, the Director of Learning also articulated how Circuit set out to shift common practices associated with gallery youth programming, based around the “outreach model” of bringing culture *to* communities, rather than recognising the cultural resources *of* those communities. She emphasised the difficulties involved in rethinking this relatively entrenched approach:

*You are working against every model that exists out there, which is: you come, we have a session, we do it, we're terrific, you go away [...]*

The Director argued that in schools as well as arts institutions, young people rarely see their cultural tastes and values fully legitimised, which feeds into the systemic problems of inequality and cultural hierarchy in relationships between galleries and groups of young people. She suggested that Circuit aimed to address these forces by privileging youth cultures and productions rather than those traditionally validated by the arts institution. She said of young people:

*[...] Actually they have culture, they don't not have culture, you know, it's just that those in control don't give any opportunity for them to express their culture within our boxes of what we think culture might be. So what if we open up that box and invite people to express their own cultures in the sophisticated way they do, rather than using our own rather limited quality and understanding measures of what matters and what looks like quality.*  
[Interview, 19 May 2015].

This ambition to broaden out organisations’ own conceptions of cultural value was made manifest in Circuit’s design through the cross-art form scope of the initiative. The interdisciplinary credentials of Circuit were central to the way the programme was communicated from its inception. The film that accompanied the launch of Circuit in 2013 showcased the artistic diversity of Tate’s previous youth events, featuring music, sound, fashion, spoken word performance and digital works for instance. This programmatic focus not only echoed Tate’s ambitions to further extend and roll out a cross-disciplinary, cultural democracy model, but it also served as a potentially important hook for engaging with youth organisations. As described in chapters 3 and 4, institutional visual arts feature

much less prominently in youth work practice than other art forms such as music, performance and street arts, and the power of unlocking or showcasing young people's everyday cultures and creativity holds great value for youth practitioners.

I understood this cross-disciplinary approach to be part of Circuit's strategy to work effectively with youth organisations and young people not already engaged with institutional arts and culture. Circuit's temporary programmatic field aimed to provide a designated space where young people's everyday cultural capital could be legitimated – therefore hopefully providing a more accommodating social and creative field for youth organisations to interact with. It also meant that some Circuit galleries would have to stretch the boundaries of their traditional programming parameters.

I address the take-up of this invitation to work in a cross-disciplinary, culturally democratic way through the site studies in Chapter 6, and I discuss the compatibility of Tate's peer-led programming model with youth organisational models in Chapter 7.

### ***- Circuit as a visual-arts led space***

The final key aspect of Circuit's temporary programmatic field is the way in which it was designed and managed. As highlighted earlier, the programme was conceived by Tate, and the core organisational partners were all galleries selected from Plus Tate – a network of associated visual art institutions. Youth organisations were not enlisted to co-design the programme, nor were they part of the programme's management groups. Instead youth organisations would be engaged at local levels by Circuit galleries (which held and controlled the programme budgets). I wondered whether this hierarchical structure contradicted the funder's aim that Circuit might redress the balance of forces that usually exists within art sector and community partnerships. Tate and the associated Circuit galleries clearly occupied the most powerful position in the

programmatic field. Youth organisations would not have a say in how that field operated so their stake and authority in the field would surely be minimised.

However I also appreciated the possible reasoning for structuring the programme in this way. Bringing disparate organisations from different professional fields together to co-manage a programme is likely to present numerous obstacles. When the same typologies of organisations come together in a temporary programmatic field these challenges are supposedly reduced because these organisations typically have many characteristics in common. The contemporary galleries involved in Circuit were examples of organisations with many homologies, which arguably created a more efficient starting point for the programme to progress. It also meant that the galleries could work with youth organisations in ways that were appropriate and specific to their needs, contexts and locations, without youth organisations having to commit to being part of a national programme.

Nevertheless I asked Tate's Director of Learning why the funding for Circuit was distributed to visual arts organisations, as opposed to a mixture of arts and youth organisations, if one of the key priorities of the programme was to integrate the role and voice of youth sector partners. An extract from her response follows:

*We did have to start somewhere and we did want it to be about visual arts because it was Tate, and we wanted to see whether we could map it out, and I think the sense was also there was very limited work going on in the visual arts for young people, so it did seem like this was something that could introduce it, if it had been a bit lacking. [...] So the money was one bit that did matter to me, and the strand that we gave developmental money to was the youth sector, so we basically said don't do anything with anyone for one year, just make the relationship. But gave the money to build the relationship. And in a way, that was a way of giving money to the youth sector, who don't have any money.*

While Circuit still represented a programme where the arts organisations were the primary budget holders, the logic behind this was to concentrate attention on a sector where Tate could have influence, and to alleviate the usual pressures to spend funding on delivering projects with partners. Instead, as the Director

suggested, that money could be used to facilitate the youth sector's involvement in relationship development and knowledge exchange. In proposals to PHF, Tate staff also made explicit references to the economic plight of the youth sector, and the social responsibility of arts organisations to develop provision for the hardest to reach young people at a time when youth services and organisations were dealing with damaging cuts. These references indicated that the programme design took into account (to some degree) the turbulent political and fiscal environment facing the youth sector. The developmental phase was seemingly implemented as a response to these challenging conditions. A large part of my fieldwork took place during this initial developmental phase, which allowed me to observe how the different galleries made use of the resources and time allocated to build associations with the youth sector and youth organisations.

Later in this thesis (in Chapter 7) I look in greater detail at how youth workers and youth sector knowledge were positioned in Circuit's temporary programmatic field, and at how the professional capital associated with this expertise was valued. However for the rest of this chapter I pay closer attention to Circuit's earliest engagements with the youth sector, as organisations sought to navigate Circuit's proposal to develop and embed cross-sector relationships differently.

### **Developing sector relationships**

The budget allocated to the partnership strand in the first year of Circuit was £80,000, which equated to £10,000 per regional site. During this period gallery partners were expected to be deepening their knowledge of their local youth sector, sharing and observing practice and identifying future strategic partners. In the final two years of Circuit the budget for the partnership strand would be increased to reflect the fact that partners were eventually expected to be producing projects with youth organisations. The initial two years were intended



to give space and time to relationship building with youth organisations, without there being any explicit demands on partners to programme projects and recruit high numbers of young people. This process would supposedly help to shift the tendency for galleries to rush into projects with a top-down offer and encourage practitioners to listen to one another's needs and ideas so collaborations might be co-devised and carefully thought-through. With the resources of time, space and funding, the programme was designed to facilitate cross-field exchange and a more equitable environment for partnership.

Each gallery involved in Circuit faced a unique set of challenges in attempting to cultivate relationships with local youth sector organisations. While the management team deliberately avoided laying down very specific requirements for the developmental phase of Circuit, one of the clear stipulations was that each gallery should seek to generate connections with *new* organisations, rather than continue existing partnerships. For some of the galleries this course of action presented no problems, as they had little history of contact with youth organisations. For others, this meant ending or pausing work with longstanding partners. Similarly, some of galleries began their youth programming work with Circuit almost from scratch, while others entered the programme with already-established groups and connections.

The galleries therefore approached this process of relationship building in quite different ways. Some gallery practitioners chose to conduct multiple one-on-one meetings with representatives of youth organisations and services across their region. Some galleries hosted sharing days, incorporating discussion about the needs of the sector and introductory workshops. One gallery employed a researcher to do a scoping exercise, to gather information on local provision. Some of the larger institutions also initiated discussions with their regional Bridge organisations and bodies responsible for networks of youth organisations. Arts-focused youth organisations such as youth theatres, music colleges and other neighbouring museums and galleries were also invited to be part of early dialogues.

As a researcher I found it difficult to gain access to initial one-to-one meetings. At the start of my pilot fieldwork, I asked gallery staff to keep me informed of any meetings with youth sector workers, and to consider including me in these conversations. I hoped to observe the first moment of contact between prospective partners, to hear what questions were being asked, and to witness the performance of courtship before any concrete partnership work was agreed. I felt it was important to know where those conversations took place, who attended (i.e. their level of seniority), and who directed the conversation. I was also interested in the more general, research-oriented, practice-sharing conversations between gallery staff and external youth sector peers. However I found that I was often only invited to meetings when dialogues were at a more advanced stage, and was rarely included in the earliest conversations. I understood from this that the progression of the cross-organisational relationship hinged upon the development of a professional friendship, which might be hindered or prematurely formalised in the presence of a researcher. While in some cases I believe the gallery practitioners may have simply not thought to invite me to meetings, in other cases I sensed that practitioners felt reluctant to have their actions scrutinised in front of a new associate. I felt I had to accept and respect the necessarily private space of the relationship-building phase, and avoid pushing the issue, in order to preserve positive contact with the gallery partners.

At least three institutions ran an event for a range of youth providers, as a means to introduce Circuit and find out about local need. Staff from one of the highest profile galleries reflected on the experience of organising such an event (which took place before the start of the PhD research). Those attending the event included around 20 professionals involved in work with youth offenders, Gypsy and Romany travellers, LGBT youth and disabled young people. Some were existing contacts but most were new to the gallery. Invited guests were told that the primary aim of the event was to start a dialogue, and to pool their collective knowledge on how to make a difference in the lives of young people. Attendees

apparently communicated that they would like to know more about the institution's work, and hoped to explore potential progression routes and possibilities for collaboration. Minutes from the event show that participants were asked to respond to a series of questions in round-table discussions. One of these focused on the key challenges inhibiting young people from making the journey to be in a position where they might deliver cultural activity for other young people. Participants queried the incentives and benefits for the young people themselves and emphasised the importance of social opportunities. They suggested that staff need to reflect the participant demographic and stressed the impact of class and race divides in engaging young people with cultural environments that may feel unfamiliar. The attendees were also invited to address the question: 'What does a successful partnership between the arts and youth sector look like?' Participants recommended that there should be recognition of youth organisations' structures, processes and pressures, and an acknowledgement of the external influencers shaping the lives of young people, including carers and parents. One of the most repeated comments was that there should be clarity of aims, outcomes, roles and responsibilities, and there should be a strong sense of continuity, rather than tokenistic, one-off engagements [Minutes from Circuit youth partnership event, 24 July 2013].

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I observed two other galleries running these types of discussion-led events, which sought to solicit the views of youth sector practitioners in a group setting. These events served a useful purpose for the galleries as they brought together a network of contacts in a single moment and acted as a research generating exercise. They also revealed a level of scepticism amongst youth practitioners about the nature of gallery programmes' invitation to young people. These practitioners highlighted institutional barriers and argued that galleries need to better familiarise themselves with the daily reality of young people's lives, as well as youth organisations' working conditions. While these events provided a platform for youth practitioners to air their concerns and establish contact with the gallery, they did not however seem to offer room for practices and expertise to be shared. Nor did these meetings

generally lead to further sharing events or the start of a cross-organisational relationship for most of those attending. In the case of the event described above, some participants reportedly had their expectations raised about the depth of their future involvement with the institution, which created some discomfort for the curator, who did not feel able to promise further interactions with everyone who took part [interview, 13 December 2013]. This example ironically seemed to provide an illustration of the problematic behaviour of large-scale art institutions. Youth organisations were asked to contribute their time and ideas to an institutional programme with much greater resources, without the proposition of obvious reciprocal and longer-term benefits.

The persistent concept of the gallery as an elitist, exclusive space also inhibited the initiation of conversations with some youth organisations. One curator reported to me in an interview that she had spent months trying to build up connections with different contacts from the local youth sector, and had encountered a mixed reaction to the gallery and to Circuit. It was pointed out that youth centres tend to work with participants of a younger age range than Circuit's 15-25 remit (i.e. mostly 11-19 year olds). And there had been criticism that the gallery was perceived to not be welcoming enough to black and minority ethnic audiences and visitors with disabilities. The curator explained that racial division was a recognised issue in the city, and there was a history of unrest in one particular area of the region, which was often "demonised" [Interview, 3 July 2014]. Added to this was feedback that cuts to the local authority were putting enormous pressure on youth organisations and most youth workers in the region were losing their jobs. This combination of factors made it seem difficult to start afresh in a new programmatic setting. The Circuit programme in this region would have to take into account the conditions of practice in the local youth sector field and take on board external perceptions of the institution.

Their solution to this set of issues was to commission a mapping of youth provision in the area identified above, through enlisting the help of an education researcher and long-time resident of the neighbourhood. It was implied that this

process would allow the gallery to learn more about the character of existing provision and would enable youth practitioners to speak openly about their feelings towards the gallery. The research resulted in the production of a report, which brought together data on relevant organisations - their age targets, aims, activities, opening hours, funding sources, staffing numbers, partners and willingness to work with the gallery. The organisations were identified through a combination of online research and in-person dialogue. The researcher found that a number of the organisations listed online no longer existed, and some organisations were housed in the same venue, although under different administration. Her data showed that several of the organisations partnered with one another, and that all respondents would like to develop a partnership with the gallery. The report was structured around a series of summaries, featuring key contacts and general information about each organisation, including their local nicknames. Nearly all of the organisations surveyed had some form of arts and crafts provision, and many staff members interviewed spoke of their desire to extend this provision. The researcher reported that funding cuts had restricted the organisations' ability to develop their arts provision, and in several cases she identified a lack of visual and performing arts expertise amongst the existing workforce [Youth sector provider of services report, February 2015].

By contracting out the work of surveying youth provision in the target locality, the gallery was able to gather a strategic overview of youth-focused activity and areas of need. The researcher could also act as a mediator between the gallery and youth organisations, as she had the benefit of experience as a resident of the area and as a freelancer with the gallery. This type of exercise has its obvious drawbacks and limitations. For instance, the gallery staff were developing second-hand knowledge of the youth sector, and their removal from the process may have appeared detached to prospective partners. Nevertheless, the researcher was a trusted representative of the gallery and she was able to conduct the surveying work quickly and comprehensively at a time when the Learning department was under considerable pressure due to staffing and time constraints.

The chief reason for sharing this example is to evidence how the logic of Circuit's temporary programmatic field often proved challenging to adhere to. With youth services experiencing a period of acute crisis in various regions, some gallery practitioners found it difficult to hold open, exploratory conversations about the future with youth practitioners, whose future positions were uncertain. Other institutions fell back into habits of relatively tokenistic engagement with youth organisations. In a large number of cases, Circuit galleries embarked on short-term 'pilot' projects with youth organisations very quickly – usually involving artist-led workshop formats. And in several cases these pilot projects encountered significant problems with the recruitment or retention of young people, and with a lack of investment from youth sector staff. This type of behaviour is to be expected from practitioners who are used to working in particular ways in a particular organisational/field culture. As Bourdieu's theory of fields suggests, practitioners' actions are partly governed by their habitus – i.e. the social conditioning that leads them to adopt certain beliefs, values and attitudes, and that compels them to inhabit a specific professional field. It is no surprise then that practitioners have a tendency to move towards what feels natural for them and their organisation. It is equally important to note that the design of Circuit's temporary programmatic field was also a product of field habits that are characteristic of the visual art sector. The temporary programmatic field made multiple requirements of the associated galleries, some of which apparently conflicted with the aims of Circuit's partnership 'strand'. The final section of this chapter presents a series of reflections on these conflicts.

### **Supporting and negotiating the process of research and development**

Throughout the first 15 months of Circuit, it became apparent to the national team that greater clarity and advice would be required to support the gallery partners through the process of relationship building with the local youth sector. Several coordinators expressed that they found the process of open-ended localised networking difficult to reconcile with organisational pressure to

programme activity. Some reported that youth sector organisations had to see evidence of practical work, because they did not have the luxury of time to build relationships outside of project delivery with young people [interview, 11 August 2015]. I noticed instances of dissent, as the national team urged gallery programmers not to rush into partnership ventures, and some staff contended that they worked best by “doing”, and through actively demonstrating their ability to develop impactful projects with youth organisations [Working group meeting, 3 July 2014]. Some argued that this loose, network-building approach was actually not appropriate for the youth sector, at a time when resources and staff capacity were stretched. In addition, even though the galleries were being encouraged to pause partnership project “delivery” and concentrate on relationship development, they were also expected to be fulfilling other strands of activity, including peer-led programming, youth-led evaluation and festival organising. Each gallery had to build a group of young people who would attend regularly and curate programmes and events for their peers, leading up to a large scale festival at some point during Circuit. So there seemed to be some inherent contradictions within the programmatic design that curtailed the institutions’ ability to focus exclusively on cross-sector dialogue and knowledge exchange.

The national team ran a sharing session specifically on partnership working for the Circuit Working group, which covered the national team’s expectations for the lifecycle of the partnership strand. My notes from this meeting indicate the types of conversations that were taking place amongst the gallery practitioners:

*The programme Lead is giving a presentation about partnership to a group of about 20 gallery practitioners, including assistant curators, artists and critical friends from the galleries. We are sat around a large table in a room at Tate Britain. The programme Lead talks about some of the problematic ways that projects with young people are framed, and how young people involved in partnership projects are sometimes not involved in peer-led work. He wants to see how partners can participate at all levels of the programme. He also poses a number of questions to the group: Why do we want to partner? Do we want to? Is it about access? Is it about numbers? Institutional change? He emphasises that the first two years of the programme are about building trust with local organisations and aligning values and aims, before planning events and pilot projects. He says it’s important that youth sector partners are supported to*

*understand the institutions, and that gallery programmers offer partners the opportunity to use the institutions' spaces. Circuit's Manager asks the group if these expectations relate to what they're doing, and whether they feel the design of the partnership strand is working for them.*

*One programmer reports that funding cuts and instability in the youth sector are presenting barriers to relationship development. She is also concerned that the stranding of the programme has the potential to divide up the partnership and peer-led work, to the point where two separate groups of young people might emerge. Another programmer explains that his gallery has taken a different approach, and they have chosen to recruit young people into their peer group through visiting local youth organisations. He doesn't know if those young people will stay, but he feels it's important to have those young people there from the start. The Manager asks if practitioners have had strategic conversations with partners, rather than just ask whether they have access to young people. Have partners been sharing their values and their evaluation frameworks? Some practitioners report that their collaborators have embraced the framework, while others have encountered "confused faces" when introducing the Circuit evaluation methodology to youth partners.*

*[Working group meeting, 3 July 2014].*

This session represented a moment of reflection for the programme staff, just after the end of Circuit's first year. The management team sought to reinforce the programme's vision, while practitioners gave an account of the challenges to implementation. From my perspective, I could see how the management team were working to encourage good partnership practice in the development phase, and I could tell that some of the galleries' approaches were closer to their vision than others. However I could also appreciate that the expectation for galleries to eventually support young people's "transition" into the peer groups shaped their desire to get projects off the ground at an earlier stage. The practitioners understandably evolved different ideas about their institutional aims, and about the appropriate ways to invite young people from partner organisations to engage with the galleries.

In the partnership sharing session, I asked the national team representatives if all roads in the programme were intended to lead to "peer-led". In other words, I wondered whether the ultimate aim of their partnership work was to engage a more diverse set of young people in the galleries' peer-led groups. The



programme Lead confirmed that the direction of travel in Circuit was always towards peer-led, but he suggested that the galleries might need to rethink the structure and ethos of existing peer groups, if they were to be inclusive to all young people. This proposition was to form a continued area of negotiation for the programme partners, some of whom were setting up relationships with groups of young people who faced significant barriers to participation in the peer group setting. Later in the thesis (in Chapter 7) I develop a more extended discussion about the efficacy of the peer-led model within the context of work with vulnerable or marginalised young people.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates how the creation of a temporary programmatic field is not a neutral activity, but a process that is deeply influenced by the 'doxa' or conventions of the instigating field and the (often unconscious) dispositions of the lead practitioners. While Circuit was established with the intention of evening out the relationship between galleries and youth organisations, and changing problematic organisational conduct, fundamental aspects of its design inadvertently encouraged the replication of traditional hierarchies and divisions. With control of the funding and management of Circuit, art institutions were endowed with the greatest share of power and agency in the programme. Circuit's multiple agendas were also symptomatic of the persistent compulsion to produce, to programme and to be visible in the contemporary gallery. While the funder may have sounded less fixated on numbers and more focused on learning, the programme did still operate with target numbers, and practitioners were expected to report on these. However it is undoubtedly also true that ring-fenced funding and specific programmatic conditions can afford the opportunity to change patterns of behaviour over time and can force shifts in the parameters of professional fields. Importantly, scaffolding and guidance need to be in place to support and enable this process of collaborative behavioural change. One of the challenges Circuit faced was that while the wider programmatic field was

national in reach, the partnership work was carried out locally, and therefore at a relative distance from the managerial centre of Circuit.

The following three chapters present accounts of ethnographic fieldwork in three of the localised Circuit sites, which illustrate the diversity of approaches that organisations took in developing partnerships with one another.

## Chapter 6: Experiments in collaboration

The following three sections provide insights into the ways in which Circuit's programmatic offer was taken up in different regional sites through a series of temporary collaborative fields. They show how, despite the challenges of Circuit's early relationship-building phase, the programme allowed organisations and services to connect and collaborate through context-specific approaches to partnership. The first two site studies are examples of initiatives that represent movements away from typical models of partnership between galleries and youth organisations. Oriented around young people's own social fields and arranged in response to the loss or restructuring of open-access youth provision, these examples of collaboration reveal the consequences of bringing together youth work, arts pedagogies and young people's cultures in alternative, hybrid settings. I seek to examine how practitioners and young people from different professional and social fields negotiated and co-established the logics of practice of a new collaborative space. The third site study follows a more traditional format for partnership working (involving artist-led workshops over a series of months) within an education programme that was part of the government's Youth Contract scheme. This more formal environment enabled me to analyse the relative compatibility of gallery education practice with new forms of state-supported youth sector provision. I explore how differences in cultural and educational capital present particular challenges to the creation of a genuinely collaborative temporary field. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to reflect on what these initiatives tell us about potential options and future possibilities for partnership working between gallery education and youth work in a changing political and financial climate.

## Site One

### Context for collaboration

The location I discuss first is a larger-sized town, with a population of around 200,000 people, based within a county populated by over 1.3m inhabitants. The town is an area of historical interest with several arts venues, including the gallery, which opened to the public within the last decade. While many areas of the town are home to affluent residents, there are pockets of deprivation, and (based on the last records from the indices of multiple deprivation, 2010), two areas near the town were deemed to be within the top 10% most deprived areas in England. I became particularly interested in using this site as a focus for my fieldwork when I heard about tensions brewing between young people, the gallery and the local council over the tendency for young people to use the gallery and its surrounding public realm area as a hangout space. These tensions had escalated to the extent that in November 2013, the local paper reported that 'round-the-clock security measures' had been installed to tackle the 'yob menace' at the gallery. The article cited complaints by visitors, staff and neighbouring residents about young people's anti-social behaviour and experiences of intimidation as reasons for deploying street wardens and police community support officers to dissuade young people from populating the site in large groups. These occurrences helped to motivate collaboration between the gallery's youth programme and the local authority youth service, which was in the process of restructuring at the time of my fieldwork. In 2010 the county cut its youth service budget from £12m to £5m, and in early 2014 the council agreed to reduce its spending on youth services from £5m to £2.4m by 2016/17. Seemingly most at risk was the area's open-access provision (i.e. drop-in spaces for young people to socialise and interact informally with peers and youth workers). I was intrigued to learn how the youth service, gallery and young people were collectively responding to these difficult circumstances, and

whether their partnership model provided answers to the conflicts over civic space in the town.

In February 2014 I arranged to meet members of the gallery's Learning team to interview the co-ordinator and head of department about the situation. On the day I arrived at the gallery I saw three teenage boys enter the main foyer space, and get escorted out by a gallery assistant who later told me they had been "caught smoking weed" on a previous occasion and were advised to stay away from the gallery for a while. I was struck by the incongruity of this action within the context of Circuit, and was keen to understand how these conflicts were affecting relations with local young people and prospective partners.

The Co-ordinator and Head of Learning explained how, over a succession of years (mainly in winter), the gallery had witnessed growing numbers of young people using the external space for skating and BMX-ing, and the gallery and foyer spaces for "hanging out". "Hanging out" apparently meant anything from attending a film screening, to playing cards, using phones and chatting. Sometimes young people would plug their hair straighteners or mobile phones into available sockets, leave rubbish and take legal highs outside, however a large majority just came to socialise with friends. On weekends, the gallery would see up to 40 young people congregate in its large central space [interview, 12 February 2014].

It is worth noting that the gallery is run as an independent charity but it is housed within a council owned building designed by high profile international architect. The institution is located on the site of the former bus station and some of the bus station buildings still remained at the time. The council therefore own the space surrounding the gallery (although this may not be apparent to an uninformed visitor). The gallery's looming façade is surrounded by a wide paved area, which has low surrounding walls and stone benches. Steps stretch out to the side of the gallery, which at first glance look like ideal spaces for

skateboarding. Around the other side of the gallery are grassy lawns. So these are inviting and attractive areas for public use.

In our initial interview, the Co-ordinator and Head of Learning recalled how young people presented behaviour that the gallery staff were unaccustomed to dealing with, and that this prompted the gallery to initiate staff training and expanded programming for young people, and the borough council to install litter bins, seating and skate-deterrents. The gallery and council did receive reports from some visitors of disruptive behaviour and intimidation, so other approaches were taken, including the recruitment of a former youth worker from the youth service to act as a critical friend, and the engagement of a mobile youth bus and other youth workers on site to work with the young people. I was introduced to the former youth worker, who explained that the young people's behaviour stemmed from them not knowing how to use the spaces (particularly because this was previously the location of the bus station). This practitioner had a long history of work in the youth service and was a recognisable and respected figure amongst local young people. She recalled how she and an associate artist from the gallery surveyed the young people's opinions and fed these back to the institution. Through conversation and questionnaires, the young people expressed their many reasons for using the gallery and its grounds. They suggested that they used the gallery as a place to shelter, that they liked the staff, the art, activities and the toilets, and they wanted somewhere to meet friends. During some of the time the young people were hanging out, the local youth centre was shut for a period of restructuring, so it was evident that there were few other places for young people to go in the winter months.

Nevertheless, after further complaints to the council of incidents of vandalism and drug-taking, as well as commercial pressures on the gallery, the council intervened by appointing street wardens and police community support officers in late 2013 to monitor the exterior spaces and move groups of young people on. The gallery's (then) Director also introduced a visitor charter detailing a list of rules and expectations for visitors, which was visible in the main foyer. Some of

the issues persisted, including increased drug taking in the grassy space next to the gallery, which drove the council to inhibit access by installing a large metal fence around the area. Inevitably this combination of actions led to strained relationships between the gallery, young people and the local authorities. Some young people were under the impression that they were not welcome in the gallery, and so stayed away, while others hung out in other nearby spaces and resisted engaging with the gallery's youth programmes. The local press were also quick to report on any incidents relating to the situation, which helped to magnify the incidents and contribute to young people's sense of feeling demonised.

When I spoke to the practitioners in early 2014, these issues were still unfolding. At this point the staff were in the process of developing conversations with the local youth service about working together more intensively and co-running a regular youth night in a new creative enterprise and social space housed in one of the disused bus station buildings near to the gallery. We decided that it would be valuable for me to observe the progress of this initiative, which would test out a new way of engaging young people from the locality. I asked to attend meetings and events connected to partnership working with the youth service, and to act as a participant observer at the youth nights, once these got underway. The Learning staff at the gallery were very receptive to my involvement and happy to facilitate my visits.

### **Observing spatial relations**

A number of things were happening in this site that were important for my research. For various reasons, young people in the town were choosing to designate the area around the gallery as their social space. While they were not attempting to intimidate others in the process, their presence in large numbers and sometimes transgressive activity meant they were displaying forms of symbolic power over the space which were deemed to be threatening. So as a consequence these young people came into contact with 'adult constructed

‘fields of practice’ such as community policing and gallery youth programmes, which strove in different ways to regulate their behaviour (France, et al., 2013, p.601). This generated a loss of trust and feelings of resentment towards the council and the gallery for many young people. However these young people did seem willing to talk to detached youth workers and to artists, who might have appeared to be independent from any regulatory authority, and who expressed an interest in young people’s views. The gallery’s youth team subsequently commissioned an artist to work with the young people to create films about their experiences of exclusion and discrimination in the area. These films would also feature footage of young people’s risky creative acts and subcultures in and around the gallery. This formed one of the starting points of a new type of relationship between the youth service, young people and the gallery, as practitioners recognised the merits of engaging *with* the culture of young people’s complex social fields in partnership.

One of my first observations took place at a late night event hosted by the gallery’s peer group on its premises in April 2014. This was to be the launch screening of the two films, which directly explored the different viewpoints of young people and security guards occupying the area. The gallery staff held the event in an attempt to re-engage some of the young people who felt excluded from the site, and to present the film to the wider community (including council workers), as a means to give voice to the young people’s discontent:

*As I walk towards the gallery I see staff setting up a large screen outside the entrance. In the foyer I see lots of young people, mainly aged over 15, milling about. I recognise some of the members of the peer group. We walk into the gallery’s central space where tables have been set up for badge making. The tables are covered with printed images, some of which I recognise as screen grabs from the film. There are even copies of the newspaper article about combating the gallery’s ‘yob menace’. Young visitors congregate around the table, chatting and cutting out the images. I talk to one girl who looks about 16. She says it’s “ridiculous” that young people are being moved on – “for what purpose?” Another girl says to me sarcastically: “I’m one of the hooligans”. She tells me that the gallery call the police sometimes: “we respect this place and don’t take it for granted, it’s just a small minority that don’t”. It’s clear from the girls’ comments that many of the local young people feel misjudged. The gallery’s Learning team*



*is also evidently making an effort to welcome those who used to hang out in the area, and to dispel perceptions that young people can't participate. I notice that a few of the adults present have jumpers with the words YOUTH WORKER on them. They have been recruited to attend the night. Just before we head into the auditorium to watch the official screening of the films, guests are served goat's cheese donuts and deep fried squirrel canapés, which cause shrieks of laughter.*

*Everyone makes their way into the auditorium, and many of the young people scramble to the back row. Some of the group at the back create deliberate noise. Perhaps they don't want to be seen to totally comply with the gallery's event. One of the films features a range of footage - including CCTV shots of figures performing parkour-like movements in the dark around the gallery. The film's voiceover asks repetitively: 'Are we good? Are we really good? Other people, they look at other people, they look at us, they look at me'. As members of the audience recognise themselves on screen, giggling starts to ripple out. There are moments of silence however, when the film depicts conversations with security guards about private and public space, and shows a map where young people's ability to hang out in groups is restricted. When we all exit the auditorium there is a palpable sense of excited frustration amongst many of the attendees. Some of them are talking animatedly together about the films and about how unfair it is that they get moved on from the area. I start talking to a youth worker, who indicates that there are a few young people who are known to cause issues, and they are here at the event. She and colleagues are there to support the gallery and the young people. They clearly have a good rapport with some of the attendees.*

*Two young male dancers then rush past the crowd at what feels like a dangerous speed, both dressed in white boiler suits. They dart about the foyer, around a sculpture, on the floor, through the door and eventually outside into the external grounds, where the films are being projected. The assembled crowd moves outside too, and many of us sit on the walls and chat. I tell the youth worker about my research and she mentions the youth nights being held at the community/social space next to the gallery. The youth service has started to run these on Tuesday nights – young people come, hang out, and even play scrabble! The youth worker hopes that they can get the older ones to volunteer and act as role models so they can eventually run it on its own.*  
[Field notes, 12 April 2014].

This event enabled me to glimpse the relationship dynamic between local young people, youth workers and gallery staff. The youth workers seemed to be present to provide subtle reassurance to the young people, since the apparent breakdown of trust between the groups of young people and the gallery. The Learning staff and peer group had devised an event that did not retreat from confronting the problematic circumstances of the relationship, but that also

incorporated elements of surprise. They wanted to demonstrate that the gallery positioned itself on the side of the young people, and hoped to raise the profile of the debate about young people's exclusion from civic space amongst the key stakeholders. Members of the gallery's peer group were also friends with the young people who had been excluded from the area so they had a stake in improving relations between the gallery and these groups. The youth workers were familiar with the gallery and its public realm area due to the fact that this had become a popular hub for the town's teenagers. Some of these young people were also affected by the reduced youth provision in the town, and some had stopped visiting the youth centre because they didn't like the changes taking place there (as I will discuss later). So the temporary collaborative field between the youth service and gallery came out of a mutual mission to reconnect with young people and tackle negative attitudes. The youth workers had specialist insight into young people's social fields but their own professional field was in a period of major flux. For the remainder of this chapter I aim to talk about what was learnt and observed from the coming together of these various social and institutional fields in the alternative space of the former bus shelter. To understand the dynamics of this collaborative space it is first necessary to reflect further on the characteristics and resources of centre-based youth provision in the town.

### **The youth service**

At an early stage in my fieldwork I made two visits to the youth service's main youth centre in the town, to talk to the youth workers involved, and to explain my intent as a researcher. One of these visits was made with the Learning Co-ordinator from the gallery, who walked me around the town, stopping off at the premises of partner organisations. The youth workers at the centre were happy for us to look around and chat casually to staff. The Co-ordinator knew the space well as she was a former youth worker herself, and had been developing the gallery's connection with the youth service prior to Circuit. I recall thinking that

the interior of the youth centre fitted my image of what many traditional youth centres look like:

*Housed in a large 1960s concrete building, the centre occupies multiple levels, with a reception space opening out to seating areas, a sports hall visible below through a glass window, and a staircase leading to a social area on the floor above. The reception rooms have bright blue blinds and red brick walls, which are covered with posters - some of them obviously designed in-house or by hand. A luminous orange board in the entrance describes some of the activities and objectives of the centre: HEALTHY LIVING SUPPORT; DRUG AWARENESS; ART AWARDS; SPORT AWARDS; TEEN PARENTS WELCOME; GAIN CERTIFICATES; SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS; MUSIC; EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT. There is also information about the service's NCS programme. Another large information board gives a breakdown of the programmed activities for each weekday, from Monday-Saturday. There are mental health and self-esteem sessions on Thursdays and there's a big quiz night on Fridays. Other weeknights involve advice and discussion sessions, and Tuesdays feature music, arts and dance. On the upper floor, pool and football tables dominate the space, alongside leather sofas and a few round tables. The walls are painted with bright murals and cartoon-like imagery, with graffiti-style words and symbols.*  
[Field notes, 16 September 2014].

This youth centre had the hallmarks of typical open-access, drop-in provision. But the timetable of activities showed that sessions might also incorporate certain objectives related to young people's personal and social wellbeing and progression. During my fieldwork I spoke to young people who used to visit the youth centre to gather their perceptions of this space.

One young person (who I will call 'Jack') became very pivotal to the partnership between the gallery and the youth service, as a former user of the youth centre and as a peer group member at the gallery. Jack was also a well-known and well-liked figure amongst some of the groups who hung out near the gallery. Jack said of the youth centre and its workers:

*I used to go to the [youth centre] and they're the nicest people ever. You can talk to them, they give you advice and help you out a lot. They're just generally super nice.*

He claimed to have been a regular until changes were made to the staffing and content of the drop-in sessions. An extract from our interview communicates Jack's opinion on the increasingly formalised character of the youth centre:

**Jack:** *They changed loads about the [youth centre]. They got loads of really boring crap in. Like you had to do 20 minutes of talking. And you were like, I could just not be here.*

**Me:** *And you said you had to do a stress test?*

**Jack:** *Yeah, that was awful. It made me stressed. I'm not a stressy person and it was so generally annoying. I just stopped going [after that]. Playing pool for free – not worth it!*

[Interview, 20 January 2015].

A group of girls also told me that they stopped going to the town's youth centre because they kept being asked to sign forms [field notes, 16 December, 2014]. These anecdotes seemed to indicate that there had been a shift in culture at the youth centre towards increased monitoring and outcome-focused work, which turned some young people off, even though they enjoyed their relationship with the youth workers. Some of the young people had also noticed the number of youth workers had been reduced.

On my visits to the centre I met several different youth workers. In September 2014 I informally interviewed one junior practitioner and one senior youth practitioner (who I will call 'Tim' and 'Caroline') at the youth centre about current conditions in the youth service, and about their relationship with the gallery. They explained how the focus of the county's youth service was due to change following a period of consultation and local authority budget cuts. The service was going to be concentrating on enabling capacity and offering support and infrastructure to projects rather than delivering provision directly. This would involve a greater emphasis on recruiting and training volunteers and facilitating programmes to be volunteer-led. Caroline and Tim said they believed they were actually in a fortunate position compared to other local authorities across the country, where youth services had been cut completely. But they also recognised

the challenges of funnelling resources towards training volunteers who might only be available in the short term [interview, 16 September 2014].

They explained that the youth nights at the former bus station building near the gallery reflected this changing service offer. A local community organiser and a committee of artists and makers had set up the space, and they were keen to encourage young people to use it. This made sense to the youth service because, as Caroline and Tim suggested, the area was a place where young people naturally wanted to be. The inclusion of the gallery staff and young people in the partnership would mean that the project had the potential to eventually be self-sufficient. So the joint initiative sought to fulfil a need both for the youth service and the gallery, and it provided a means to road test the youth service's new commissioning model. The anecdotes from some young people suggested that the youth centre had been an important part of their social field in the past, but underfunding, reduced hours/staff and a shift in culture had deterred or prevented some from hanging out there. The changing offer at the youth centre (towards outcome-driven activity) indicated the changing nature of 'the game' of youth work in the county. The former bus station had the potential to act as a new type of social field for young people to congregate, where the game of engagement might be redefined once again.

### **The bus station space**

The former bus station space was located metres away from the gallery in a set of small buildings including one large room, painted white and bright green. Long tables made with reclaimed wood were spaced out around the room alongside industrial-style old school chairs. Bare light bulbs hung from the tall ceilings on yellow looping cables, also in a deliberately industrial style. Paraphernalia could be found around the edges of the space and on makeshift shelves – a music player, clip boards, signage, beer barrels, prints etc. Together these objects indicated the multiple uses of the building, which was conceived as a DIY events venue, kitchen/bar and creative space. On one side of the room was a bar and

kitchen service area over which hung an enormous bright green sign with the words: YOUR SPACE, CULTURE & OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY. Blackboard signs were attached in various places, outlining the different programmes running each day, from making and hacking workshops to DJ sets and a games club. Outside around the front of the building were positioned five wooden picnic tables. They faced a large disused building with an alcove in its wall, which I came to learn was a common hangout for people taking drugs or urinating. The back of the space looked out onto the back of the gallery.

The main organiser of the space had agreed that the gallery and youth service could run their joint Tuesday nights from the venue, and that he would drop in during the sessions to help with the set-up. Initially, the idea of the sessions was to have an arts focus every alternate week, and to employ an associate artist from the gallery to facilitate the arts activity. One or two youth workers would also be present at each night, as part of their work with the youth service. The gallery recruited two young men in their early 20s (who were part of the peer group) to help out by running a tuck shop/non-alcoholic bar at the nights. One of these young people was Jack (mentioned earlier), and the other was a young person I will refer to as 'Alistair'. The plan was for Alistair and Jack to gradually increase their responsibilities so the youth workers may eventually not be needed on site. The gallery Co-ordinator (who I'll call 'Cathy') would come to the sessions occasionally, and would support Alistair and Jack if required. An artist who worked regularly with the gallery and who was part of the founding committee of the bus station space was appointed to take part in the alternate arts nights. The doors would be open from 6-9pm and the sessions would be aimed at 16-19 year olds, but open to younger and older people attending, as long as they were over 13 and under 25.

As a hub for the town's creative communities, the venue was designed to be an open, co-operative enterprise, which embraced its temporariness by maintaining a culture of self-organisation. The space also possessed an obvious grown-up, cool-factor in its DIY, vaguely hipster appearance, so appeared to offer a

significant contrast to the more dated youth centre and the more formal gallery sites. I was curious to see whether this space might offer the opportunity to create a fusion of practice between the youth work and gallery education fields, and to generate a new way to run open-access youth provision in the locality.

I attended 11 of the Tuesday youth nights over six months between late 2014 and early 2015. I also attended meetings of the different partners involved in the sessions and conducted informal interviews with Alistair, Jack, Cathy and Tim (who was the main youth worker involved) as well as some of the young people who came regularly. In addition to these visits, I attended selected events organised by the gallery, to understand how the offsite work interacted with the onsite programming and youth audience.

### **Negotiating roles and pedagogies in the temporary field**

During the first session I observed, in August 2014, the artist and two youth workers were present. Alistair and Jack had not yet set up their bar/tuck shop concept, although this was in the pipeline for future nights. The youth workers stationed themselves at a table near the door. When I arrived there was a discussion going on about the use of board games. One of the youth workers was keen to get these out on the tables so young people could play on them if they wanted, however the artist disagreed as she wanted to encourage their creative participation. It was apparent that this was a conversation that had happened before and there was some veiled frustration on both sides. The artist decided to rearrange the space and set up a series of playful provocations, which might ignite the curiosity of potential visitors. We pushed the furniture to the side of the room, and the artist secured a long roll of paper to a chair. She then placed a customised roller skate with pencils attached on the sheet, so people could draw with their feet. She also strew toilet paper around benches and across to the disused building opposite. I saw this action as an attempt to capture the attention of young people hanging out in the area, and to make a connection with the exterior sites, which had been the focus of dispute. Only a handful of

visits were made by young people that evening, and those who came were largely members of the peer group and their close friends. They were happy to interact with the materials, and we spent time wrapping chairs in cling film, creating floor sculptures out of plasticine and covering Jack in hazard tape. The youth workers took a record of who was present at the session and chatted to any young person who came in. They didn't get involved directly in the activities as they made it clear they felt it was "the artist's session". They also had paperwork to complete so they got on with this [field notes, 26 August 2014].

The youth workers' self-separation from the action showed that there was a clear or presumed delineation of roles on this night. The small instance of disagreement about whether or not to put out board games seemed to signal the disparity between the youth worker's approach and the artist's approach. The youth worker believed there should be a choice of activities (based on what she knew was popular with young people), and that it would be better to have them stay and play a board game than not come at all. The artist meanwhile, wanted to subvert the space and she implied that board games would detract attention and discourage young people from playing with the materials. In other words, the artist's instinct was to create disorder, while the youth worker's instinct was to create a place of sanctuary and consistency, which seemed to me to represent characteristics of the logics of art practice and youth work (Grenfell and Hardy, 2003; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). The relative quietness of the session was apparently typical of expected numbers in the summer months. But there is also the possibility that some young people saw the interventions and did not want to join in, because their seating spaces had been removed and their presence in the space would appear to be somewhat directed. Nevertheless, the peer group members' willingness to participate helped to create a space of encouragement. It meant that their friends who attended also felt comfortable enough to experiment with the objects and materials, and that there was a shift from the artist-as-initiator to a peer-led dynamic.



I also attended nights in the space when artists were not present, and where youth workers took a more prominent role in the sessions. This allowed me to closely observe youth work pedagogies in action. Groups of young people would often turn up early to the sessions for a chat with the youth workers. Relaxed conversations about how their friend had got in trouble or what was going on at school revealed the history of the relationship between the practitioners and young people in the area. I came to realise that this relationship was held very delicately, and that trust could be quickly damaged if a youth worker reported an incident, or was overly didactic. They had to perform a complicated dual status as friendly, relatable adult and responsible professional. This negotiation seemed to be more apparent in the context of an open access setting where issues would occur and different people would turn up unexpectedly. On a couple of occasions young people would run in from outside for help with calling an ambulance because their friend was ill or had been drinking too much. A police officer arrived one night due to possible drug dealing in the area. On several nights there was concern about the influence of an older boy who was known to be grooming other young people and was supposedly banned from the vicinity. The youth workers were ready to respond to all of these situations, and some of the practitioners had quite in-depth knowledge of the young people's circumstances. The youth workers' visibility as uniformed, recognisable adults also seemed to be important for individuals who arrived on their own. Some visitors would come regularly to the sessions, and engage much more with the youth workers than other people their age. One boy would come to almost every session and talk about issues with his college course and his foster carer, and sometimes play about with objects in the space. The boy seemed to have quite low self-belief and he liked to tell us about how he had acted up in college. It was evident that he saw youth worker Tim as an unofficial mentor figure.

On the nights where there was no artist present I noticed that game playing was a key mode of engagement for the youth workers. It was surprising to see streetwise teenagers getting engrossed in scrabble or a game of cards. But it became apparent throughout the fieldwork that game playing was a central

feature of the town's youth culture. Jack in particular would regularly refer to Magic: the gathering, a trading card game that was very popular in his friendship group. A lot of his spare time was also taken up with "RP", or role-playing Dungeons & Dragons [interview, 20 January 2015]. Many of the young people who hung out near the gallery and came to the youth nights also identified with alternative cultural traditions. Alistair and Jack were able to reel off the types of groupings they had grown up knowing: the emos, metalheads, goths, steampunks and so on. They also pointed out the divisions amongst social groups in the town and tendency for drinking and drug taking amongst some groups of teenagers. I noticed that in some of the sessions at the former bus station, members of these disparate groups would come together over a card game of "shithead" or similar. Importantly, the youth workers, Jack and Alistair displayed knowledge of the types of cultural capital that were deemed relevant and valuable to young communities in the locality. 'Knowing the game' literally and metaphorically was vital for engaging other young people within the space and avoiding the domination of adult-led agendas (France et al., 2013, p.600).

The differences between the sessions involving an artist and the nights facilitated by youth workers seemed to indicate a lack of genuine collaboration between practitioners from the gallery and youth work fields. The practitioners had not devised a shared logic of practice in their temporary field – rather they had coexisted in a shared space and alternated responsibility from week to week. In recognition of this, the practitioners sought to make a conscious effort to increase dialogue and integrate their ways of working. They decided to attempt to strike a balance between giving people what they knew and wanted, and challenging them to try different things.

### **Redefining the offer**

In October 2014 the gallery staff, peer group members and youth service staff decided to launch a new format for the nights in the bus station space. The nights were billed as 'an alternative social scene' and were to include hot drinks,

snacks, music, open mic and performance opportunities, games, art and making in a 'super laid back atmosphere' [facebook, 21 October 2014]. The staff also decided that it would be beneficial for the artist to attend youth service planning sessions and to contribute to the evaluation at the end of each night. Both partners also sought to ensure that the events were well promoted on their respective facebook pages. The emphasis on fostering a relaxed, multi-use space was designed to appeal both to young people who wanted to hang out, and others who wanted a more participatory experience. In this way, the voluntary principle of youth work was being preserved and the gallery would continue to incorporate an informal interdisciplinary arts offer, unencumbered by any expectations for specific artistic outputs.

On the first session launching the new format, the youth workers brought music equipment from the youth centre for open mic, while the artist brought a range of magazines, printed images and letraset transfers for collaging. My notes from the session convey some observations about the shift in atmosphere in the sessions:

*It's a particularly cold day and it darkens quickly from 6pm when I arrive. A number of young people and adults are already there, setting up the space. The founder of the venue is training up Alistair and Jack to serve hot drinks from the bar. Candles in jars are also lit on the tables. Some of the boys are sound-checking the electric drums, keyboard, guitar and microphones set up in the corner. The artist arranges materials across one of the tables for people to use. Many of the images laid out feature popular black celebrities and iconic cultural figures, in recognition of Black History Month, which the youth service is celebrating. As the session begins and more people arrive, some individuals start to use the materials. One of the attendees sits down quietly and says he doesn't want to do any collaging. He fills in a Circuit questionnaire and when he reaches the question about age, tells me it's his birthday today. He leaves the venue for a while then later returns to create a collage.*

*The majority of attendees are boys, and there are always around 15-20 people in the room, although this fluctuates as people come and go. Throughout the early part of the evening people casually play on the drums and keyboard and bring in chips to eat from outside. One of the boys wants to play scrabble but the youth worker encourages him to use the art materials first. He starts using the letraset and becomes absorbed. I chat to some of the attendees about what they get up to outside of the youth nights. Several are doing apprenticeships and a few work*

*in care homes. More young people from the gallery's peer group turn up to watch the performances. Alistair and two friends perform three songs – including a cover of The Darkness. A member of the peer group also does some impromptu breakdancing. Throughout the session I notice that the artist and youth worker are exchanging thoughts about how the session is going, and they talk about safeguarding concerns when a group of people in their twenties come in.*

[Field notes, 21 October, 2014]

The different opportunities to participate (or not), and efforts made to improve the atmosphere of the space helped to attract young people who would usually hang out in the areas outside. The format also enabled visitors to stage their own creative practices and make small creative decisions, such as selecting a song to play on the laptop – nicknamed the “jukebox”. There was a more communicative relationship between the youth workers and the artist, and a range of other people from the partner organisations came together to support the renewed format. The gallery's recently recruited digital creative practitioner made a short film of the night and posted this on social media, while other youth workers and peer group members dropped in to informally contribute to the session.

This revised format continued to create a positive momentum and committed audience for the youth nights (although weekly numbers fluctuated). The tendency to attract more male than female attendees was a feature that followed through most of the youth nights that I observed. However the profile of young people attending was relatively diverse. One young person who came regularly to the nights was a 20-year-old transgender woman. She volunteered to be interviewed during one of my visits, to talk about her experiences of the youth nights. She had started coming to the nights because she was friends with Jack (who she had met through hanging out near the gallery). She talked candidly about being the target of violence and intimidation near her home, and she described the youth nights as inclusive and welcoming:

*I come here because everyone here is equal. It doesn't matter what you are, what you've done, you are here and you are equal. You are treated one as the same. Like with me, no-one here calls me by my male name. [...] Everyone's very*

*respectful, it's quite a nice atmosphere, even with not that many people here it's still calm and nice, you know.*

I asked the young woman about her attitude towards the role of youth workers:

*I think they're very strong. The social youth workers play such a great part in making places feel welcoming and helping to think outside the box. And they help out with making sure that people are comfortable. [...] I think at the end of the day, without an adult presence it wouldn't feel as open to everyone. You wouldn't feel the calm, respectful feeling you get in these events.*

[Interview, 6 January 2015]

Jack also made comments about the importance of having youth workers such as Tim present:

**Jack:** *[Tim's] a really great guy to work with – it's nice to have him there so if anyone needs any help with anything that we can't help them with - say their CV – he's just a really nice safety net. He's always there. I like the fact that that it's not just run by us, that it's also the youth service, but then I always like working with the youth service.*

[Interview, 20 January 2015]

As these interview extracts demonstrate, youth workers were seen as playing a crucial role in helping to maintain a safe, democratic space. Their presence ensured the preservation of the intended logic of the nights, and they possessed specific capitals that were recognised by the young people as valuable.

While the youth service did have clear outcomes they wanted to achieve from the venture, the youth worker ensured these did not infringe on the relaxed character of the nights. Jack was also reluctant to implement Circuit's profiling questionnaires in the sessions (which the programme used to collect data on participant numbers). These were sometimes used, but sparingly, as Jack and Alistair wanted to sustain a non-intrusive ethos.

I also had to keep this ambition to preserve a relaxed environment in mind while acting as an ethnographer in the space. In most of the sessions I attended as a participant observer, I tried to reflect the behaviour of the youth worker(s)

present. I would frequently sit at the bar and chat to whoever was there, or at a table with a youth worker. If young people came in and sat in a group on a table we would not interfere in their conversations once they had signed in, unless they seemed to want to talk. When there were arts activities or games being played I would often join in. A few individuals also used the space to do homework, and some young couples came in and sat in the corner, clearly anticipating a level of privacy. I became very conscious of the challenges of conducting fieldwork transparently in an open access youth setting. I was aware that most young people attending would assume I was a volunteer, so when I did have extended conversations with anyone I would explain that I was a researcher. I was wary of distributing information sheets and consent forms to new visitors, because this had the potential to undermine the relaxed atmosphere and put attendees off future engagement. The youth worker also advised that it would be unrealistic to expect everyone under 16 to take the sheet home, to ask a parent or carer to give their consent and to bring this back the following week. So instead I gave the youth worker an opt out information and consent document, which he distributed on a night when I wasn't present, so young people could say if they didn't want anything to do with the research. For those older young people who I talked to regularly or interviewed, I secured signed consent.

Considering these types of issues helped me to reflect on the trials of creating an idealised environment for youth engagement, whilst also developing ways to unobtrusively capture and evaluate their progress. This is a key concern facing the youth sector, amid fears that the voluntary, open tradition of youth work is being eroded by external agendas, the imposition of bureaucratic relationships and prescribed targets (Taylor, 2014a). The exercise of fieldwork enabled me to better understand the conflict felt by the youth workers, who had to reconcile the pressures of fulfilling 'institutionalised normative practices' (associated with the doxa of the local and national authority), with their own desire to 'care' and work directly with young people (Hughes et al., 2014, p.4)

### **Was this model sustainable?**

A condition that was common to all partners throughout the fieldwork was precarity.

The youth workers had been open about the fact that the aim of the service was to build capacity within the community to run programmes on a voluntary and self-sustainable basis, so they would eventually have to withdraw from direct involvement in the youth nights. During my observations the youth workers I met also referred to job cuts and restructuring taking place within the youth service. Almost all youth workers were required to reapply to work for the service under the new structure, and adopt new job titles as community capacity developers. Simultaneously, the gallery underwent a period of major instability with its finances, which eventually resulted in the board initiating organisational restructuring, so the jobs of the entire Learning team became threatened as department staffing was significantly reduced. In addition to these circumstances, the former bus station was a temporary venue, destined for redevelopment, so the organisers of the space faced the possibility of imminent closure. The founder of the space and other organisers also had to juggle paid jobs with their voluntary roles, so their ability to dedicate time to the project was restricted. The final partners caught in a state of precarity were the young people. Some of the young people I met were in education or working in social care, but several disclosed that they had only temporary, part time work, and difficult home lives, which prevented them from living with their families. I was interested in what it meant (for the sustainability and quality of the work) if all agents were forced to bear and negotiate instability as a constant condition of their alliance.

Hilgers and Mangez (2015) argue that agents occupying homologous positions, or experiencing similar levels of insecurity in different fields can better identify with one another and foster solidarity and momentum for action. This seemed to be the case here, as the circumstances motivated practitioners to work more strategically together. For instance the gallery began hosting meetings with local

youth sector contacts and councillors. This started with a meeting in November 2014, featuring the Circuit national team, the gallery's director, two councillors responsible for youth strategy, and representatives from the youth service and the gallery's peer group. The gallery staff hoped to bring the county and borough arts initiatives together, to make connections with policy and address the absence of a strategy for arts and young people in the town [field notes, 20 November, 2014]. The meeting provided a platform for participants to identify useful networks and initiatives, and to discuss solutions to shared areas of concern, such as the lack of "hangout" spaces for young people, and the underuse of the local youth centre. The meeting also brought to light how some of the previous tensions between the local authority, gallery and young people were exacerbated by misunderstanding and communication issues. One councillor commented:

*We heard that young people trashed [the gallery] and when we asked about this it emerged that in reality it just involved two toilet rolls. The zone wardens are sometimes deployed because it is thought that the gallery wants them, and then we hear that this isn't the case.*  
[Field notes, 20 November, 2014].

Attendees acknowledged that improved communication had been brought about by the partnership, and that it would be beneficial for the gallery to contribute to the town's youth strategy group.

The founder of the bus station space also suggested that the possible closure of the venue felt like a healthy provocation to have as a stimulus to generate new ideas. There were discussions amongst the partners for instance about running the collaborative youth night concept as a mobile offer. In meetings, the partners would challenge one another to reassert why the context for the partnership was important. In this extract of notes from an end of year meeting, I name the artist 'Eve' and the founder of the bus station space 'Finlay':

*Finlay asks that everyone define what the bus station space offers that the youth centre doesn't. Tim says: "it's not a youth centre". Alistair says: "it's an open*



*space". Jack mentions that he used to work at the youth centre bar, and it's "different". Finlay agrees that there's a subtle reason that the bus station works – "it's a blank canvas". Eve comments: "there's a question of why not [the gallery]"? She suggests the answer might be the lack of red tape at the bus station space.*

[Field notes, 16 December 2014].

Finlay advocated that the group consider lobbying and building a support network and evidence base around a campaign if they identified a need to retain the space. He also mooted an alternative idea to lobby for the town's main youth centre to change. All partners acknowledged that the youth centre used to be thriving and popular, but funding cuts and targeted activities put many people off attending. Another issue identified was that the youth centre caters for a younger age group, and that the over 18s are underserved in the town, as they are still in need of support and safe spaces to congregate for free. So the partnership helped to highlight some of the fundamental shortcomings of youth provision in the town, and the effects of wider changes to centre-based youth work.

Over the period of time that I observed the youth nights, there were clear indications that Alistair and Jack were growing in confidence as hosts and taking ownership of the programme, which the gallery viewed as a form of social enterprise. They developed a "mocktail" menu and ran quizzes for peers, and became increasingly vocal about what did and didn't work in the environment. Alistair and Jack felt that more people actually attended the nights when there was no arts offer. They suggested that attendees preferred not to be guided to do designated activities, and that an emphasis had to be placed on fun. The Coordinator suggested that different artists could be invited to participate in alternate sessions [field notes, 9 December, 2014]. Alistair and Jack's involvement as employee/volunteers for the youth nights was important on several levels. Both had been part of the crowds of young people who regularly hung out near the gallery, before their contact with the peer group. They therefore had a deep understanding of young people's motivations for spending

time in the area, and the divisions that existed between groups. Jack in particular acted as an influencer, and drew many people to the youth nights from his extended social circle. In this way, there was a natural dialogue between the peer group and the partnership work and little sense of separation or institutional siloing.

Towards the latter stages of my fieldwork with the site, I observed how the youth service sought to gradually hand over further control to Alistair and Jack, by offering youth work training, sharing their curriculum template and outcomes paperwork, and encouraging them to handle the signing-in and evaluation administration. Aims were regularly reviewed amongst the partners, and Alistair and Jack reinforced their desire to keep the nights pressure-free and inclusive of different groups that don't usually come together. The main youth worker (Tim) deliberately did less and less in the sessions, often sitting in the corner completing paperwork, so Alistair and Jack could run the sessions independently [observation, 16 December, 2014]. Interestingly though, Alistair and Jack resisted the idea of running the nights completely autonomously and Jack in particular communicated that he thought the youth service's new commissioning model wouldn't work in the long-term. I prompted him to explain why:

*Because [youth workers] are going to be setting up these projects where the people who are part of the projects are going to become closer to them, and find it easy to talk to them, and the moment they leave no one is going to want to go. When [the youth centre] lost its staff, people just stopped going.* [Interview, 20 January 2015].

It was evident that these young men understood the significance of the youth workers' presence and valued the support and guidance of adult practitioners. They were specifically concerned that on some nights only small groups of young people (who were part of fairly closed social cliques) would attend, and they did not feel it was appropriate for them to act as proxy youth workers, particularly amongst peers.

So this example of partnership illustrated a number of things. Circuit had enabled the gallery, youth service and young people to experiment with developing a temporary collaborative field in the form of a creative, open-access setting at a time of great uncertainty for all organisations and individuals involved. For youth workers, the space provided an environment where the traditional practice of open-access youth work could be upheld. They also expressed gratitude that the gallery had been “extremely supportive” and understanding over the course of their restructure [interview, 27 May, 2015]. The youth nights had the knock-on effect of encouraging young people back into the gallery and its grounds during big youth events and reducing tension between the different communities and services in the area. The practice of privileging young people’s existing cultural and social fields was also a crucial element of this partnership’s success (although this did sometimes mean side-lining the intervention of artists). However the idea that these types of initiatives might be sustained through community volunteerism arguably undermines the distinctive capitals of the youth worker. In the future galleries and their staff may be called upon to either emulate these roles or employ youth practitioners independently if local authorities continue to withdraw from direct delivery of services. If the motivation is there, galleries and youth practitioners can work together to invent new forms of regular creative youth provision in areas of mutual need.

## Site Two

In the previous site, I observed that the role of artist facilitated creative practice was deliberately underplayed, as a means to prioritise young people's everyday social (sub)cultures and a space for voluntary 'hanging out'. Organised arts activity was sometimes looked upon as a potential hindrance to attracting groups of young people, and a hands-off youth work-style practice took precedence. This section focuses on an initiative with many similar characteristics, but which involved a much greater focus on contemporary art practice and the direct facilitation of artists and youth workers. In doing so this section looks closely at the tensions and advantages associated with integrating the logics of arts practice and youth work in a temporary collaborative field. This particular project merged influences from a studio-style pedagogy with open-access and detached youth work, and operated as a short-term experiment that would allow practitioners to step beyond the usual parameters of their organisational fields and co-develop longer-term learning about alternative ways for the gallery and youth sector to work together. The project centred upon a two-week occupation of a former café in a small coastal town nine miles from one of the Circuit galleries, led by an artist who had several years of experience working in a youth centre. I argue that while this space offered valuable freedoms from institutional jurisdiction, the practitioners' field habits still played an important role in the (amicable) struggles for authority in the temporary collaborative field. I also seek to illustrate how artists and informal arts practice *can* offer a dynamic route to engaging with young people who may otherwise never visit cultural institutions, and who may be dealing with complex life circumstances.

In total between January 2014 and October 2015 I spent just over eight days in the region where this project was located. In that time I observed two gallery staff training workshops, a youth sector locality day, a large-scale youth event, a peer group meeting and two days of the initiative I discuss here. I choose to focus on this project because it represented a non-traditional partnership

structure, enabled by the exploratory space opened up through Circuit. In a similar way to the first example, the backdrop to this experiment was the decreasing investment in youth services and the need to examine new models of collaborative, transdisciplinary practice for a changed professional landscape.

### **Context for collaboration**

The gallery's Learning team were keen to test out an offsite project in this nearby town in recognition of some of the barriers young people faced in accessing their venue. These barriers were fairly common to the rural Circuit sites. Travel costs, poor transport links and the dispersal of populations were regularly cited as obstacles preventing the development of independent youth audiences. But there were other, more specific institutional barriers identified, such as the fact that the gallery usually charged an entry fee, and it occupied an imposing building that was not a natural hub for young people to gather. The Learning team also found that there was a lot of "bureaucracy" associated with using the gallery's social media accounts to communicate to and with young people [interview, 9 January 2014]. The potential to be reactive and responsive to the locality and young people's needs was therefore minimised.

There was also relatively little recent history of prior contact with the regional youth sector at the gallery. Most significantly, the Learning team identified a general lack of confidence amongst youth practitioners and young people in their engagements with the gallery's resources. From conversations with local youth workers, the Learning Curator discovered that young people had "vanished" from the youth centre nearest to the gallery, and due to low take-up and staffing issues, this centre had closed. Cuts to the council's budget had seen up to 50% of youth workers in the region lose their jobs, and further changes were anticipated [interview, 29 November 2013]. So the challenges encountered by young people (and young people's support services) in the immediate and surrounding areas were multiple, and the service's capacity to collaborate seemed limited.

In January 2014 I participated in a locality day organised by the gallery, alongside the council's Early Help Team, which brought together over 30 practitioners in children and youth services in order to build goodwill and confidence around visiting the gallery. During this session I learned more about the economic and social deprivation of the region, which has "hard pockets of rurality", where it takes a particularly long time to build trust between young people and services. The youth workers pointed to some of the contradictory messages directed at young people, who were being discouraged by the police from hanging around at night, and therefore not accessing evening youth clubs. They also commented on attitudes to the locality in the summer months, at the height of the tourist season, when young people were said to feel alienated in their own hometowns. The prospect of imminent restructuring in the youth service was having an impact on staff morale, and the council's strategic vision to focus on targeted youth work was moving investment away from universal provision. Several of the youth workers I met were already working less in youth centres and more in schools and colleges, on sexual health and cyber bullying advice programmes [field notes, 10 January 2014].

The declining use of open-access youth centres is one of the issues that cuts across both this site and the previous site discussed. In both cases, a number of contributing factors were acknowledged, but it was apparent to me that these centres suffered from a cycle of low investment, low staff resourcing and low use. The reduction of the youth service's universal offer (i.e. provision based on young people's voluntary participation) was indicative of wider change in the sector (Norris and Pugh, 2015). In this site then, as with the previous site, the gallery staff were drawn towards piloting an initiative that would add something to existing gaps in provision, while drawing on the principles and practices of open-access youth work.

## **Establishing the pilot: breaking away from field conventions**

The pilot work I focus on here grew out of conversations between the gallery's Learning Curator and a locally based, self-described 'community artist' who the gallery had employed to lead training for staff members. This artist, who I'll name 'Sarah', had worked for a youth centre in the town for 13 years, running creative projects for young people 'at risk of social exclusion'. As part of this work, Sarah had established a residency model influenced by the studio ethos of Room 13 - a participant-led movement that revolves around the creative freedom of young people and the recruitment of artists in residence in a dedicated, drop-in studio environment (Room 13 International, 2017). Initially there were discussions about the gallery partnering together with the youth centre, but as Sarah's position within the centre came to an end, the Learning team decided to continue the relationship with her and another youth worker from the centre (who I'll name 'Jenny'), on a freelance basis. They also decided to involve an artist who had previously been in residence at the gallery, to work on the project. I will refer to him as 'Patrick'. This arrangement would allow the gallery to test a new framework for collaboration between youth and cultural practitioners, and contribute to the invention of a new type of space for young people in the town. While the project did not represent a formal organisation-to-organisation partnership, the gallery utilised (and paid for) organisational expertise and retained a light-touch relationship with the local youth centre, which had a positive reputation in the town.

Sarah and the Learning Curator (who I'll refer to as 'Katy') identified a former tearoom on the town's main high street as the venue for a pop-up space, following lengthy negotiations with estate agents and an organisation that helps community projects to make use of empty retail units. This aspect of the venture was particularly new to the gallery, which typically runs partnership activity at the gallery itself, or at the premises of a partner organisation. Katy's ambition was to facilitate a pressure-free space that could enable young people to encounter art in a relaxed, welcoming environment and encourage visitors to

perceive the gallery in a different light. Katy also saw this project as an opportunity to gather ideas for “breaking down the formality” at the gallery and for trialling a mode of working that consciously moved away from standard workshop structures predicated on outcomes and achievements [interview, 14 February 2015]. The space was to be open on eight days from 1-9pm over a two-week period, which partially coincided with half term.

On the opening day, Katy described how the initiative represented a shift from the gallery’s typical approach to partnership work:

*A lot of the work we’ve been doing at the moment has been absolutely great, but as much as it’s led by the young people, you still sort of have a project or a workshop in a way, even if it’s quite subtle. You’ve got an artist, there’s probably an end result they’ve discussed they want to get to [...] there’s an artist going in and they want an achievement each session. And that’s great and they’re choosing what they’re doing and they’re going to do this event, but it’s quite a standard model of working. And I think that works really well sometimes, but it’s almost like you have to find the group to do that, or be working with a group who are used to each other. And what I really wanted to try was completely chucking that model out of the window. And we really honestly haven’t got an outcome this time. We haven’t even decided a materials list. It’s just almost like, what have we got that we could put in here that people might want to play with? And keeping it open for long enough, so you don’t feel like – oh god, we’ve only got three afternoons and two hours each, and we have to achieve something at the end of it. So opening up long enough to be able to see what happens. And it’ll be those moments when somebody comes in and says - I want to make a chair! That’ll be what we get out of this. So there’s bits of engagement that happen on all sorts of different levels, but behind that it doesn’t matter if somebody does come in and make a chair - they will have popped in, engaged, had a moment, met [Sarah], maybe they’ll think about [the gallery] in a different way, and even if that’s just a little fleeting moment, that’s fine. Or somebody might come back in a few times over the week, which would be amazing.*  
[Conversation, 14 February 2015].

Katy’s statement described how partnership working between galleries and youth organisations is usually characterised by an established set of structures, processes and expectations, which bring about habitual, relatively predetermined ways of working. Galleries and their partners often set up projects as regular, scheduled sessions in controlled, non-public environments, which are ‘safer for institutions’ (Sekules, 2010, p.33). The pilot project would



push the practitioners and the institution to work outside of these typical field boundaries and relinquish certain expectations for there to be a clear outcome. This freedom was afforded by the funding and Circuit's encouragement, and also by the fact that the gallery was funding the positions of the youth worker and artists (and not partnering directly with a youth organisation) so the staff were accountable to the objectives agreed amongst the practitioners, who shared the Curator's vision for openness and un-prescribed, voluntary experimentation. Katy also acknowledged that the gallery endorsed this model because of the management's trust in the artist's work and in the Learning staff. Patrick's playful, multi-media approach to making, and interest in everyday materials seemed entirely compatible with the ethos of the space, and as a previous artist in residence at the gallery, his practice was essentially already validated by the institution. By recruiting trusted practitioners, the Learning staff were effectively creating the conditions for the institution to feel safe about the project.

Sarah too, communicated how her experience of developing a 'studio-based pedagogy' in a youth centre had led her to consider the benefits of creating a stand-alone studio environment, away from the typical expectations of the organisation. She reflected on the challenges of shifting practitioners' habitual behaviour in the youth centre in relation to arts practice:

*Even after years of establishing this way of working I was still asked 'permission' to get the paints out or being asked by youth workers "what are you going to make with them today?"*  
[Report, 2015].

Sarah was convinced that the 'unexpected learnings' of the studio setting were a powerful means of engaging young people with the visual arts. She indicated that even over a long period of time, this approach had felt strange to her centre-based youth worker colleagues. Sarah felt strongly that this mode of practice was 'a way of instilling independence, co-learning, thinking and behaving in a different way, which often meant being challenged' [Report, 2015]. It also allowed young people to see artists at work. Sarah noted that Jenny was one of

the only youth workers at the centre who understood and fully supported this model of practice. One of the reasons for this may have been Jenny's own background and practice in design. She was therefore identified as an important ally for the project, and recruited to develop her own work in the space alongside Sarah and Patrick.

It also struck me that this way of working provided an attractive set of conditions for the artist, Patrick. The studio pedagogy was designed to offer him as much freedom and agency as the young people. I asked Patrick whether he saw his involvement as a residency, and as an extension of his practice:

*Yeah, I'm just going to have fun. I can practice things. It's nice because also there's no pressure because no one's looking at it thinking - that's work. It's quite a safe place for me to try things out.*  
[Conversation, 15 February 2015].

So the pop-up initiative also represented a welcome change in circumstances for the artist.

Members of staff from the Learning team at the gallery, including facilitators and a few members of the peer group, would also populate the space. They would be responsible for supporting the practitioners and capturing participants' data via the Circuit profiling questionnaire. So the pop-up was established with significant staff resources, and roles were clearly defined. However Sarah's role was multifaceted, and her insights were of particular value because she inhabited and articulated many of the complexities involved in bringing the practices of youth work and the visual arts together under one environment.

The next section reflects upon my brief time spent as a participant observer on the opening weekend of the pop-up, and subsequent online contact with the project.

## **Observations: what happened?**

In mid February 2015 I journeyed to the coastal town where the pop-up was due to be held. Despite the cold, the sun shone for most of the weekend, but there was little evidence of the tourism that would be present in the summer. The owner of the B&B I stayed in told me that business is very quiet in winter, and while there is a lot of work in the summer season, many businesses let their staff go afterwards. He explained that many people who live in the town are from other areas of the country, and they have only ever experienced the town in their youth as a holidaymaker. He noted that several of these people get into positions of authority in the council and therefore the perception is that they only make changes for tourists, not for locals. He told me that there is little for young people to do and cultural provision can be patchy (for instance the theatre mainly schedules matinees, to cater to tourists). Those young people who go to university tend to move away.

I had heard about similar experiences of British coastal towns in another Circuit site. Locals talked of high levels of deprivation, and the tendency for young people who are not able to access university to be left behind with limited job prospects. In this particular town I was told about a large estate not far from the high street, which housed many low-income families and young people facing difficult personal circumstances. A lot of the young people who attended the local youth centre apparently came from this estate.

The pop-up venue was a few minutes walk from the train station, sandwiched next to a hair salon and opposite the clothes store Peacocks. Outside the entrance, large signs branded with the gallery's logo indicated that this was 'an open studio space for 15-25 year olds'. On the ground floor of the space, the café walls had been covered with sheets of newspaper. Two tables and a few chairs were positioned near the front window and a shelving unit near the rear acted as storage for magazines, books, pens and other paraphernalia. The kitchen area was stocked with fruit and tea and coffee-making facilities and a radio provided

background music. Upstairs was left relatively untouched, with café chairs and tables still arranged across the space and a sofa facing out towards the window above the street. A computer was set up near the stairs and films played on the monitor. The windows had been covered in white emulsion so people could doodle into this. Sarah and Patrick explained their intention not to over-direct what happens in the space, but to support young visitors to take creative control and try things out. Patrick was particularly intrigued by the “layering opportunities” made possible through the durational nature of the project [conversation, 14 February 2015]. Their sole occupation of the space made it conceivable that young people could adapt and add to key elements of the rooms.

Rather than prepare different activities, the practitioners brought in objects and technology (such as an overhead projector and large sheets of paper) as propositions for play. An important principle of the space was the promotion of a scavenger mentality. On the lower window the words SOFA WANTED were painted in white (an elderly lady later came in to offer her floral couch). Scraps of fabric and clothes were sourced from charity shops and visiting participants were encouraged to bring in their own materials and devices, as well as make use of what was lying around. I saw the sofa message as a deliberate effort to deformatise the space, and as an invitational gesture. This simple note put the project in the position of need rather than its participants.

Below is an extract from my notes on the first day of observation (a Saturday).

*Sarah and Patrick are in the downstairs room of the café, chatting to a girl (aged around 18) who is seated at a table, cutting out body parts from magazines. Patrick shows her how to photograph her collage and use the overhead projector to project printed images from acetate onto a large roll of brown paper suspended from the ceiling. We all chat together about a range of topics – from getting jobs in McDonald’s to sheltered housing for young people in the area. Katy drops by with her family and stays to talk for a while. An older woman who is a volunteer also drops in to help source materials. Other people, including members of staff from the youth centre, come in to see what’s happening. Sarah’s dog roams around the space too and attracts attention from passers by.*

*The girl is with us all day. She says she meant to leave earlier but she has been enjoying it so much that she wants to stay. She prefers hanging out with adults and feels intimidated by other young people. She knows a lot of groups in the town who are rude.*

*As it gets darker, Sarah notices a group of 16-year-old boys skateboarding down the street and suggests they come in. The group enter on the promise of hot drinks, so Sarah and I start making and handing out hot chocolates with mini marshmallows while most of the group head upstairs. Patrick is chatting to the boys about their interests – he is particularly intrigued by skate communities and proposes that they could make skating films. A few of the group are doing GCSEs, and one is doing photography. I ask the group what they'll get up to in half term – the response is "nothing". One member of the group asks if the pop-up is for profit. Patrick and Sarah explain the premise of the project and invite them to start painting on a large piece of tracing paper hung in front of the windows. They all seem excited by the offer and they clamber around the windows, reaching for the red paint and making large-scale drawings. We discover that these drawings are also visible from the pavement below. Sarah takes everyone's names down on the wall and they agree to be photographed (Sarah wants to put images up on the studio's facebook page). When they leave after an hour or so, they say they'll come back another day with other friends. The girl who has been with us for most of the day mentions her surprise at the group's friendly behaviour.*

[Field notes, 14 February 2015].

During my observations I noted how quickly young people disclosed aspects about their lives to the practitioners. Some of the participants knew of Sarah from the youth centre and Patrick also had a good understanding of the area, and was aware of teachers' names, where the skate park was and so on. As a self-confessed "chatterbox", Patrick was deeply interested in people and was keen to demonstrate that artists were part of young people's worlds and vice versa. This created an easy intimacy and sense of familiarity between practitioners and participants. Patrick would sometimes ask young people who came in: "are you artists?", which provoked a range of responses – "I like tagging a lot", "I like some art but I'm more into music and filmmaking" – to which he'd always offer an encouraging idea. As suggested in the extract above, the pop-up also drew together a community of support staff and generated curiosity locally. The presence of different groups of young people highlighted the (sometimes)

negative perceptions young people held of each other, and helped to shift some of these opinions.

Throughout the first two days I witnessed the practitioners, young people and volunteers gradually interact with and change the space. Some of these interventions were very small (defacing and collaging figures in newspapers for instance), while others were big and involved papering and painting over walls, creating performances in the windows and setting up temporary projection surfaces on the ceiling and on the shop opposite at night. The space began to take on the disordered, lively appearance of a studio, which seemed to appeal to participants. One young person remarked:

*Downstairs is chaos – that’s what I like about it though. I like it that there’s all the art stuff everywhere. Because if you went to a gallery it wouldn’t be like that would it?* [Conversation, 14 February 2015].

The creative interventions often sparked conversation about different works of art – from observational films by John Smith to Martin Creed’s famous balloon installation. Sarah supported this dialogue by uploading images and videos on the studio’s facebook page of various visually arresting sculptures and installations, which garnered likes from participants. Sarah would also post (with permission) images of young people making and talking in the space, to incite curiosity and document the progress of the pop-up.

On the second day of the pop-up I made some further observations. A snapshot of my field notes is below:

*As soon as the space is due to open in the early afternoon, two friends, a boy and girl aged around 15, are waiting at the door to come in. They seem cautious at first but Sarah welcomes them enthusiastically and introduces them to Patrick and the dog. One tells us she has been boxing that morning, and is also into football and youth politics. Sarah starts to figure out how she knows the friends – they have already started following the studio’s facebook page and have a cousin who came yesterday. The pair head upstairs with Patrick where they start to paint over some intricate skull stencil designs onto the wall. Jenny is upstairs too, starting to develop a design for the window on the ground floor, which will*

*become a logo for the space. One of the friends talks with us about an incident of racism that their family experienced. This prompts a conversation about protest and equality, and Patrick suggests she could use the example of racism to tell a visual story on the wall: “we just need to experiment, it doesn’t need to be right. Just doing it will point us in the right direction”.*

*While we’re there, a woman and a teenager come in to look around. The teenage girl mentions that she plays the violin in a gypsy jazz band. Sarah points out that Jenny plays the guitar and another visitor plays the ukulele. She proposes that they could do something together. A small family group of three young women and one older lady also come in to explore the pop-up. They seem to be in the area for a holiday and are taken aback by the space and the opportunity it presents for young people.*

*Back downstairs, the girl who was with us yesterday returns and brings a pile of celebrity gossip magazines. We laugh at some of the sensationalist headlines and talk about body image before she diligently cuts out images of Kim Kardashian and designer brand names. Patrick also gets me to play a drawing game with a facilitator from the gallery. We have to sit back to back and describe our bedrooms to one another, while drawing from the descriptions. We stick these up on the wall. One of the volunteers brings in garish curtains from a charity shop and hangs tops and jackets from the ceiling.*

*Jenny spends much of the afternoon by the downstairs window, where she can also see people walk by. Sarah and Jenny regularly head outside to chat to young people they recognise. At one point they walk over to an area of the town that is known to be a popular hangout. Apparently the groups they spoke to debated whether to come in but they were already headed to the rec or the skate park so they decided to visit another time. They managed to generate interest and some young people seemed impressed by the association with the gallery.*  
[Field notes, 15 February 2015].

As suggested by this extract, some visits to the pop-up were fleeting, while others were more sustained over several days. Out of the 97 different young people who entered the space over eight days, 41 made return visits. There was also a combination of young people who were already known to the practitioners (26 in total), and visitors who were not previously known. While many participants lived in the town, some travelled in by bus from surrounding villages specifically for the pop-up. Several of the individuals who were approached by Sarah and Jenny on their walkabouts came to visit the space on subsequent evenings [Report, 2015]. The public, visible location of the pop-up in a shopping environment seemed to reduce visitors’ anxiety about wandering in, and the

large windows made it possible to observe activity and have an immediate exchange with the practitioners. The two-floor layout of the space enabled participants to work together with, or separately from, other groups of young people. The extract also indicates how social, political and personal issues were readily discussed in the space, and framed as ideas for pieces of work. Game playing was similarly encouraged as a route into making, and as a means to facilitate dialogue between participants. Jenny noted that young people often address difficult issues at a remove through creative practice, and feel able to speak about these when they are busy doing something else.

I continued to follow the pop-up after the initial weekend via social media and through email and phone contact with the practitioners involved. The space was populated every day with different groups of teenagers. The activity also became increasingly performative and collaborative, with young people creating masks out of art magazines, playing instruments and creating “living sculptures” out of found materials. It became apparent that filmmaking and photography were important mechanisms for engagement, and young people regularly picked up the camera to film one another. Participants also seemed to enjoy watching this footage back, and on the last night of the pop-up, different groups gathered together to eat popcorn and watch an edited film (mainly shot by young people) projected on the building opposite. It was evident from following the initiative that the proposition of an informal, creative drop-in studio environment proved to be a major draw for local teenagers.

### **Negotiating the rules of the game**

The observations indicate how the practitioners sought to position making and experimentation at the centre of the activity. And by involving practitioners who were experienced in youth work, the project also benefited from organisational knowledge and association, whilst retaining autonomy as an initiative. Jenny and Sarah’s presence ensured that a diverse range of young people accessed the space, and together they were able to utilise youth work practices, such as



detached, street based methods, which are rarely used in gallery education.

Sarah reflected on the value of their youth work training in developing relationships through the project:

*Feeling confident in detached youth work methods was essential to be able to engage with young people on the street in a non-intimidating way. It allowed us to engage with young people we already knew and many we didn't and inform them of what was going on.*

[Report, 2015].

Detached youth work is a form of youth work that focuses on developing relationships with young people where they choose to be. The Federation for detached youth work (FDYW) states that this practice is 'underpinned by mutual trust and respect and responds to the needs of young people'. The practice is characterised in terms of its 'democratic credentials', and the desire to shift the balance of power in the favour of young people, particularly those who disengage from spaces of perceived control (FDYW, 2016).

Even though this initiative did revolve around a building, the principles of detached youth work were loosely applied both inside and beyond the space, because the initiative did not rely upon the participation of a fixed group. Instead it relied upon the expertise of the practitioners, and their sensitivity to the context and its population. For instance, Jenny explained that she only approached young people she knew on the street if they acknowledged her first. Many of these young people had contact with her due to being referred for issues such as homelessness and drug abuse, so she was sensitive to the fact that they may not wish their friends to know about the association. Equally, Jenny's knowledge of many of the local young people's personal circumstances and interests enabled her to build upon existing relationships, to establish young people's trust in the project quickly, and to pre-empt any challenging behaviour. Learning Curator Katy noticed that Jenny was aware of some of the existing conflicts between groups of young people, so was able to encourage different groups to make use of the studio's two levels. Katy felt that young people relaxed

when they saw Jenny, and that having a youth worker present meant that Patrick could concentrate on his role as an artist [phone call, 16 March 2015]. While degrees of uncertainty and unpredictability were built-in social and artistic features of the project, the enshrinement of youth work 'values' within the temporary collaborative field helped to shape the nature of the approaches and conversations that took place around the pop-up. The introduction of these principles of practice nevertheless generated intense debate between the project leaders on some occasions.

Negotiations around boundary setting occurred as a result of the blurred distinctions between youth work and art practice within the project. Due to the pop-up's public location, adults regularly entered the space out of curiosity, or for a chat. During the first evening (while we only had one young person in the space) an elderly man came in and became engaged in friendly conversation with us over coffee. He told us about how there was not much for him to do in the evenings and that he doesn't feel safe. The 18-year-old girl pointed out that his experience was like that of teenagers. After he left, this interaction provoked a discussion between Sarah and Patrick about the appropriateness of unknown adults being in the space, and being associated with the safety of the project. Sarah suggested this might have consequences for the safeguarding of vulnerable young people who may see these adults in an external context and feel obliged to engage with them. As it happened, the young person who was in the space at the time did encounter the man later that night and he asked for her help with his bags.

This debate continued between Sarah and Patrick on the following day, and I made some notes on the conversation:

*I arrive at the shop where Sarah and Patrick are in full flow. Apparently they both thought about the episode with the elderly man overnight and had come to different conclusions about whether unknown adults should be permitted in the space. Patrick believes it's important not to close down the real world and run hermetically sealed projects. Sarah feels this is a young person's space and the*

*safety of the young people takes priority over the art. Patrick asks: "So it's youth work then?"*

[Field notes, 15 February 2015].

The artist's desire for the space to be open and inclusive - a realm of unexpected encounters between people from different backgrounds - and for young people to be entrusted with equipment, sometimes sat uneasily with Sarah, who was aware of the personal risks faced by some of the different individuals, and had been accustomed to "fixing really firm boundaries" in youth work contexts. There were also discussions about the appropriateness of some of the conversations initiated by members of the peer group and adult volunteers, who came to support the project intermittently throughout the two weeks. Well-intentioned questions such as – "what do your parents do?" And "have you seen this play at the theatre?" were highlighted as examples of conversations of privilege. Sarah appeared torn between wanting to adhere to the policies of the youth centre, and wanting to avoid restricting people's behaviour:

*"I've got to let go a little bit of my indoctrination at [the youth centre] because it's real youth work, it's full on. But a lot of those boundaries and a lot of those beliefs about how to be around young people I hold really dear".*

[Conversation, 15 February 2015].

Sarah was aware that the pop-up space gave her the opportunity to re-set some of the boundaries that frustrated her about the youth centre environment, and yet she was conscious of the different backgrounds of the staff members and volunteers, and the need to be "mindful of somebody's circumstances" in the space. The idea that Sarah's "indoctrination" into the youth work field led her to behave in particular ways is consistent with Bourdieu's notion that a person's habitus is shaped by their habitat and vice versa (Bourdieu, 1999). Even if an agent seeks to rebel against the conditions of their primary occupational field, the rules of the game are typically ingrained or naturalised within their practice. Sarah's understanding of the class habitus of young people in the locality was also a significant dimension of her practitioner identity. It was clear that voluntary staff and members of the peer group could have benefited from some

basic training in the lead-up to the project, and Learning Curator Katy acknowledged that she would implement this if the project happened again. However even this may not have been adequate to bridge the obvious social gap between members of the peer group, volunteers and visitors to the pop-up. Equally, the notion of “real youth work” being in tension with arts practice was an issue that continued to weigh on the minds of the practitioners. The logics of practice from youth work and arts practice could not be easily combined in this temporary space.

One area where Sarah was able to extend some of these boundaries was through her use of facebook. Sarah’s prior connection with local young people through the youth centre meant she already had access to a broad community of potential participants and could make contact with them on social media. Around 17 young people came to the space as a direct result of seeing Sarah’s posts on the page. These frequent, chatty and personalised exchanges were unlike posts that would usually feature on the pages of the youth centre and gallery, so rather than performing the institution, they reinforced the de-institutionalised identity of the pop-up. I found this aspect of the project intriguing because in most of my encounters with Circuit partnership projects, facebook was perceived to be problematic as a tool for everyday communication with participants. Some galleries reported that their ability to utilise facebook was limited by their communications team, while practitioners from youth organisations referred to their organisations’ lack of capacity to consistently update their pages. While practitioners could see that facebook offered great potential for sustaining connections with young people, there was also some anxiety and confusion about the ethical protocol involved in ‘friending’ young people through this platform. In the pop-up context however, Sarah sought to allay concerns by writing up a facebook safeguarding policy in advance and sharing the page’s admin details with youth worker Jenny, and the youth and communities manager at the youth centre, who were both knowledgeable about child protection. In her report, Sarah commented on the use of facebook in the

project, both as a forum for creative intervention and as a practical tool for maintaining communication:

*I began posting up a variety of different creative images initially with no comment, simply images of interesting street art, guerrilla art, unusual installations, things that might 'impress' them or make them look twice. Being familiar with many young people's facebook habits and the pattern of 'selfies' and statuses I soon realised that potentially what I was posting was quite noticeably making an obvious 'break' in their facebook feeds.*

*[...] Being present on facebook allowed us to keep in contact when we weren't open and post up photos of the day. Several young people also posted up photos of their time in the studio space. It was a great tool for interaction – to seek permission to use photographs, to remind them of what had been happening in the space and for them to enquire about opening times.*

[Report, 2015]

The gallery's Learning Curator was particularly pleased to be able to trial this mode of working, as it demonstrated to her that the youth programme needed its own facebook page that could be instantly reactive. The project also highlighted to Katy that the gallery needed to "loosen up" and find ways for young people to feel a sense of ownership in the institution's spaces.

In some respects, the external status of the initiative meant that the practitioners were able to develop a form of temporary counter-organisation, where the rules of the game could be reimaged and improvised from scratch. But in other respects these rules were inevitably influenced by the field doxa of the associated organisations, and the habitus of staff, whose approach to practice was heavily informed by their social and professional backgrounds.

### **The risky politics of popping up**

In setting up and developing this two-week initiative (which engaged between 20-30 young visitors per day), the programme managed to conceive of a different, experimental basis for partnership. It could be argued that the temporary collaborative field represented a 'risk culture' of 'non-institutional and

anti-institutional sociations' (Lash, 2000, p.47). Risk cultures are defined by Lash (2000, p.47) as collectively organised, loose and changeable groupings that have a 'fluid quasi-membership' and that exist willingly amongst risk, often in spaces of marginality, with the ambition to *de*-structure and *dis*-order institutional norms. The pilot pop-up trialled the concept of a 'hybrid zone' by creating a space which did not belong to one 'expert discipline' or one targeted group of young people, but rather strove to produce an ethos of 'shared ownership' and shared uncertainty (Huybrechts, 2013, p.166). These types of conditions have the potential to produce a generative, innovative environment for collaboration. However it was also the case that the pilot produced a range of other less generative risks that are worth considering.

For me, and for some of the practitioners, the project raised a huge set of questions around institutional responsibilities and the risks involved in the gallery popping up as a temporary form of youth provision. There was the risk that this project set up expectations that couldn't be sustained, or that couldn't be met in the context of the gallery itself; the possibility of encroaching upon other youth organisations' provision or cohort; and the prospect of young people disclosing aspects of themselves to staff who were not trained youth workers. There was also the danger that a pop-up initiative might be seen as tokenistic, short-term and marketing-driven (Cochrane, 2010). The practitioners, particularly Patrick, were aware of the complexities involved in working together with young participants in a semi-institutional context and were interested in critiquing institutional claims around co-creation and the authenticity of participatory invitations. Yet, as freelancers, the core pop-up practitioners were limited in their ability to bring change to the associated organisations themselves, or to continue the project independently of Circuit funding and support.

The pilot did nevertheless result in valuable learning for those involved. The assembly of different practitioners with different experiences and knowledge capitals, and the configuration of the project as a social youth space/café/studio productively complicated the project's identity, which proved attractive to young

people. Galleries and youth centres are both regulated spaces that require forms of induction and are affiliated with particular codes of practice. Young people seemed to adapt well to an alternative, open-access site, and to a built environment that was offbeat and transitory and physically accessible within their own social fields. The scale of the locality meant that the youth population was small enough for word of mouth to be effective. And by including multiple voices and positioning the project in a space of ambiguity, traditional power hierarchies between partners and participants became unsettled. These types of settings also have the potential to provide creatively challenging contexts for artists, and therefore to inspire high quality practice. The Circuit gallery took this learning on board and apparently utilised it through their occupation of a studio site nearer the institution while the gallery was undergoing redevelopment work.

Pop-up initiatives have taken place across other Circuit sites through collaborations between galleries and grass roots youth organisations, council-run youth services and alternative education providers. Temporary shop and café spaces have hosted projects that have lasted from one day, to several months. In most cases, young people have been free to drop in and out of these projects, and practitioners have had to work together to define the ambitions and boundaries of their new, public host space. The fringe, undetermined status of these spaces seems to have contributed to their appeal for all involved. The work of Doreen Massey on space and place (2005) is useful for describing this phenomenon. Massey talks about the 'event of place' as a 'coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing'. In Massey's conception of place, 'there can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation' (Massey, 2005, p.141). While these temporary sites *are* throwntogether and unfolding, this site study has shown that partnership in any alternative scenario is also heavily personality-driven, and laden with tacit institutional framings.

In many ways, cultural institutions invest heavily in attachment to territory. Youth organisations and youth workers are arguably less attached to territories in this way, and many youth work practitioners are accustomed to working off-site, in detached, street-based scenarios. This pop-up represented an institutional effort to step outside of the gallery and engage with a form of youth work that is not only committed to the safety and support of young people, but to improvisation, critical and democratic exchange, and to voluntary relationships between practitioners and young people. Through developing the pop-up, those involved were able to mobilise the art institution and youth work as vehicles of trust, and lift conventional barriers to young people's voluntary engagement. Securing the involvement of a lead practitioner who had 'authority' and 'symbolic capital' across both fields was also essential to this happening (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004, p.376). Questions remain however as to whether this type of work actually creates any lasting change in youth organisations or galleries, or whether a temporary collaborative field exists in a bubble of interesting practice that has little influence on more established organisational fields.

The broader picture of reduced universal or open-access youth provision suggests that there is an appetite in local youth sectors for co-production and co-operation. Partnerships with communities, voluntary services and institutions are recognised as offering 'the potential to re-carve new spaces on terms that are more conducive to youth work's core values', i.e. 'terms that are not constricted by local and national policy diktats' (Norris and Pugh, 2015, p.95). Initiatives such as those tested in sites one and two show how galleries can play a role in helping to maintain creative spaces for youth work, in a climate that appears relatively hostile to work that doesn't have explicit, pre-defined outcomes. However, acclimatising to a miniature new field on different, collaborative terms evidently requires 'prolonged occupation' of the field site and 'sustained association' between members (Bourdieu, 1999, p.128). The legitimacy of these fields can therefore only be secured if there is willingness to meet these requirements. This calls into question the priority responsibilities of gallery education departments,



which have to balance their obligations to democratising access to galleries with efforts to promote cultural democracy and contribute to wider social initiatives.

## **Site Three**

The previous site studies presented examples of partnership work that brought together arts practice and forms of open-access youth work in unorthodox environments, away from the affiliated youth organisation or gallery. This final site study explores a partnership construct with a more typical project structure. It features a project established between a Circuit gallery and a further education programme for young people who had disengaged from formal education. This site offered the opportunity to observe a partnership initiative in a closed, targeted setting, as opposed to an open-access environment. The programme also represented an example of the government's Youth Contract scheme, which launched in 2012 to support the most disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds to achieve vocational qualifications, and to offer businesses financial incentives to provide work experience and apprenticeship placements (Education Funding Agency, 2016). The programme therefore offered an illustration of the more formal (semi-privatised) section of the youth sector, which is an area that youth workers are increasingly transitioning into, as local authority youth services are facing cuts and closures. I sought to understand whether the youth contract programme would prove to be a compatible partner with the gallery, as this partnership arrangement mirrored patterns of work in other Circuit sites, where partnerships had been forged with alternative education providers. A 'temporary collaborative field' is not such an appropriate descriptor of this partnership. Rather the following study explores the relationship between agents from two organisational fields, and the consequences of bringing a gallery project into the field of a youth partner.

### **Context for collaboration**

The youth partner in this research site was a company that delivers employability and skills development for the private and public sectors. In 2012 the company won a multi-million pound contract to work with young people not in education

or employment, and those with low levels of GCSE attainment. As part of this work, the company ran a course enabling participants to complete an NVQ in Retail and to retake their GCSEs in Maths and English. The programme ultimately aimed to guide young people into employment, further education or training. The main gallery partner in this project was a city-based, mid-scale institution, which presented exhibitions of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century art, and housed its own collection. The gallery had a history of working with local youth organisations but did not have a prior relationship with this youth partner. The gallery staff invited me to engage with this partnership programme on a regular basis over the course of six months.

The youth partner's Programme Manager (who I will call 'Linda') was the first to initiate contact between the two organisations when she inquired about the possibility of the programme working together with the gallery. Linda was keen to bring a creative dimension to the course and the Learning team at the gallery recognised that the young people on the course fitted the profile of Circuit's target participant base. The gallery ran pilot workshops at the youth partner's premises before they agreed to devise a formal partnership project proposal. The aims articulated in this proposal focused on the personal development of the participants (who were referred to as 'learners'). The project would seek to enable the learners to develop their 'creative, functional and autonomous learning skills', to increase confidence and highlight their 'creative voice' through cultural opportunities [Project Summary, 2014].

The project was structured around 16 three hour workshops, held weekly during term time on Wednesday mornings at the youth partner's base – a business park in the south east area of the city. The sessions would be offered as a compulsory part of the retail course, although the project was not attached to any form of assessment. Group trips to partner galleries and other cultural venues were to feature as part of the workshops. The gallery recruited an artist (who I'll call 'Joanne') to lead the sessions, and it was agreed that the programme's Youth Support Worker (who I'll refer to as 'Michelle') would also accompany every

session. Programme Manager Linda was the 'Project Lead' for the youth partner, and the Learning Officer (who I'll call 'Amy') was the Project Lead for the gallery.

Linda and Michelle were responsible for recruiting cohorts of young people onto the course and deciding who would take part in the project. The group were selected to participate because it was felt they might engage and benefit the most from the experience. While most of the selected participants were aged 16 and 17, some were 18 and 19.

The youth partner's base was located off a long residential road lined with amenities that were suggestive of the area's relative affluence, such as a wine merchants, delicatessen and specialist dry cleaner. The area was well connected to the centre of the city although most of the learners did not live locally. Other occupants of the business park included engineering services, electrical distributors, a laundry business, manufacturing companies and a church. There was a buzzer system to access the building, and by this was a porch area where some of the young people smoked (although they were asked to move away from the entrance when smoking). Located on the first floor of the building, the programme utilized one large room and two smaller teaching spaces. They had internal windows that looked out into a corridor and the staff office. Around the spaces were motivational quotes: "Failure is only the opportunity to begin again"; "Believe in yourself – anything is possible"; "The first step is you have to say that you can". In a small common area in the corridor where the learners ate lunch there was a wall of achievement, featuring images of young people who had secured jobs. Aside from these visual indicators of the programme's presence, the spaces were quite corporate and blank, and no other young people's programmes appeared to exist in the building.

## **My role**

The project started in October 2014 and ran until March 2015. I acted as a participant observer at nine of the sessions, which also included a gallery trip,

and observed three meetings: one planning meeting between the artist and Learning Officer towards the beginning of the project; a mid-point review meeting between Linda, Michelle, Amy and Joanne, and a summative meeting at the end of the series of workshops. I also attended the two-day install and launch of the group's pop-up shop towards the end of the project and interviewed practitioners and young people.

I started to attend sessions in the third week. I introduced myself to staff and the learners as a researcher who was interested in how organisations work together and brought along basic information sheets for people to take away. After some discussion during the following weeks about seeking official consent from parents it was decided that I should give the participants an information sheet to give to their parents, which included an invitation to opt out if they did not want their child to be involved. One girl requested to opt out of being part of the research so I did not interview her at any stage. I acted as an assistant throughout the project, taking part in activity alongside participants and supporting the artist where appropriate. I also followed the dialogue between the practitioners over email and in person during sessions. On most weeks I sent my observation notes to the staff team.

### **Symbolic arrangements of power**

In advance of my first encounter with the project, Amy had informed me that the two previous sessions had been challenging for a number of reasons. Half of the group were apparently "eager and committed" while the other half were not. The young people who were reluctant to engage presented some volatile behaviour, which angered other members of the group. I learned from the artist that some participants had absconded to another site on the business park, while others had refused to take part. Joanne had dealt with this by stopping activity and sitting down with the participants to ask them to describe what they wanted to do instead. She noted that this was difficult for the group because they didn't have the resources and confidence to identify ideas. They ended up agreeing on

always having two activities in the future, so there were options to choose from. The artist explained to me that she hadn't felt adequately supported in the sessions and had expected the Youth Support Worker to be present at all times, which was not the case. Joanne felt strongly that it was important to have someone with social work experience present. New learners also seemed to be joining the group each week, so the group was far from a static cohort. So from the outset of the project, there were fundamental misunderstandings about the level of staff support and the needs and nature of the group involved.

During the first session I attended, Joanne decided to split the groups up into two rooms, in order to lessen the potential for conflict. I was asked to support one room, while Joanne would mainly be based in the other room. I discovered quickly that there were deep differences in the backgrounds of the group members. While all classed as having previously been 'NEETS', the group had diverse life experiences. I heard about these experiences through conversation with the young people and practitioners over the course of the workshops. Two girls talked about abuse and bullying affecting their education progress. A few of the learners dealt with mental health issues. One member was a refugee who had been caught up in gangs. Nearly all of the learners had negative experiences of formal education, and for most, their only contact with art had been through school. During this first session (with the group split in two) the participants in my room were asked to create a collage about London using paints, leaflets and scraps of material. Their interest was sustained, despite initial reluctance, and there was no overt conflict. The artist commented that my presence had contributed to the improved running of the session, but I also recognised that my being there had affected the negotiation around staffing levels as I was perceived to be a supporting staff member, and in Linda's eyes this reduced the need for the programme's staff to be present.

Even though it had been agreed that the Youth Support Worker would accompany every session, Amy and Linda had interpreted this agreement differently. Linda felt it was sufficient for Michelle to be nearby and reachable

rather than constantly in the room, as she was busy with the recruitment, inductions and administration. It was evident that the artist felt otherwise due to the challenging behaviour of the learners. Some participants would show their resistance in different ways: by vocalising their boredom, playing with their phones, declining to take part or sitting outside the room. As these issues manifested themselves, the artist tested various modes of working, and different members of staff from both organisations became more actively engaged in the project. When Michelle was present, she engaged the group in relaxed, humorous chat and gently supported their participation by asking questions, making references to her own creative interests and offering praise. During break times, Michelle would also explain some of the reasons behind individuals' behaviour that day. Joanne saw her presence as having a hugely positive impact, however Michelle was rarely able to attend sessions. Amy also participated in many of the sessions in response to Joanne's call for more support.

This experience led me to reflect upon the constitution and definition of an organisational partnership. It struck me that if the permanent staff had not participated in the sessions, then the partnership activity would have predominantly existed between the artist and young people, which would limit the ability of the organisational staff to reap knowledge from (and offer expertise in) the project. The question of who was and was not in the room became important in all of my Circuit observations. I regularly saw workshops take place across different Circuit sites where the permanent gallery staff member or youth partner were not constantly present. Depending on where workshops regularly took place, the host practitioners (either the gallery programmer or youth worker) would often get on with office work while the sessions were in progress, and check in and out as necessary. An enormous amount of responsibility for the success of the partnership projects therefore rested on the shoulders of the artist(s) and young people. In a number of cases, junior members of the galleries' staff were delegated the responsibility of supporting or co-ordinating workshops. In the case of this site, permanent staff presence fluctuated, which led to the gallery staff playing a larger role in delivery than the youth partner. Amy would

later comment on this experience: “[Linda] saw it at times like she’s contracted us, rather than it [being] a supportive partnership” [interview, 27 April 2015]. Amy had not intended for the gallery to act as a service provider, and yet the manager’s requests for lesson plans, and her reluctance to afford the Youth Support Worker’s time, made Amy feel increasingly as if they were. This positioning seemed particularly inequitable as the gallery was paying for the project and the artist’s time.

Ambiguity also surrounded the needs and abilities of the different participants. No formal details about the participants’ circumstances or diagnoses were shared with the artist or Learning Officer, on the basis of data protection rules. The artist felt that this would have been acceptable had the Youth Support Worker been consistently in the room during sessions, but given that she and the Learning Officer were often left unaccompanied with the group, they needed to have a much greater level of awareness of individuals’ personal circumstances. In this site, the young people’s issues revealed themselves over time, but the artist indicated that her lack of background knowledge about the young people sometimes undermined her ability to fully understand their responses and behaviour. This situation taps into wider considerations about the role of the artist in a partnership between a gallery and youth organisation. I regularly heard gallery practitioners endorse the idea that artists should be allowed to concentrate on their role as artists, and should not be expected to double up as social workers. However, on the ground, it was apparent that the artists involved in Circuit’s partnership work did have to undertake multiple roles, depending on the availability of the youth worker(s), and their willingness or ability to play an active, collaborative role in the partnership activity.

This combination of experiences seemed to signal a very particular arrangement of power in the project. As the workshops predominantly took place on the site of the youth partner, the artist had to adapt to the conditions of this field. The youth practitioners’ withdrawal of facilitation support and withholding of background knowledge about the young people had the effect of further



disempowering the artist. The young people also seemed to derive power from the fact that the artist was a visiting practitioner, and not a permanent member of staff who might discipline them. All of these elements appeared to reinforce the contractor-contracted dynamic of the organisational relationship. The Youth Support Worker wanted to spend more time in the project, but her manager did not conceive of the partnership as a space for cross-field exchange, but rather as a means to add creative value to the existing course. I saw the Youth Support Worker's conflict as a symptom of the broader 'bind' in the youth sector, where the dominant doxa that upholds the pressures of performance management also undermines practitioners' ability to spend time with young people and disempowers them in the process (Hughes et al., 2014, p.7). The situation in this context seemed to lead to a less positive experience for the young people (who enjoyed direct contact with the Youth Support Worker) and the artist, who lacked legitimacy in the youth programme's field.

### **Engagements and disengagements**

In this site, the artist and Learning Officer managed quite delicate relationships between different characters in the group, whilst also introducing creative ideas and skills. While a few young people took to the activities enthusiastically, some individuals dominated the sessions, and others retreated into various states of creative paralysis. An extract from my field notes below (taken in a session where the learners were creating paper cuts) gives some insight into the nature of the dialogue in the workshops. The young people mentioned all have pseudonyms.

*Joanne presents a series of powerpoint slides and talks to the group about the day's activities. The images feature work by the artist Peter Callesen, who cuts and folds paper to create tiny, static scenes, such as a boat floating down a river, or a spider crawling. Joanne explains how this technique is realised and suggests we use a pencil, a cutting blade and a board to develop some form of paper cut of our own. Once materials are gathered we arrange the tables into two blocks. Amy and I float between the tables.*

*Michael (who tells me he is an amateur tattoo artist) starts quickly by cutting an intricate rose design. Other participants clearly feel a bit intimidated by the*

*exercise and don't know how to how to start. Jason says he's surprised that they are being trusted with blades. Ollie and Aasif claim they can't draw, but Amy and Joanne encourage them to try. Knowing that Aasif likes cars, Joanne proposes that he try to cut something car-related. He ends up cutting out several cars, a road and numbers.*

*On the other table, Ed cuts out stars, Fiona draws a large necklace and Vicky cuts abstract lines into stacks of coloured paper. Vicky's paper cuts are confident, and she carves with enough care and skill to ensure the bottom of the paper is still attached, but despite our praise she seems to lose patience and won't extend the work. Later Vicky draws and cuts out an image of flashing lights and the word 'POLICE!' She tells us that her dad had been caught without a driving licence and was jailed recently. Amy later points out that this piece showed that Vicky was revealing something about her life. At one point Vicky announces: "I got an F in art!" She seems to enjoy sometimes branding herself as bad or unskilled, and she can't accept praise very easily. When everyone is asked to write down what they thought of the session at the end, Vicky says: "Everyone just write shit and put it in the box".*

[Field notes, 5 November 2014].

Confidence levels and peer-pressure had a significant bearing on the participants' willingness to engage with the project. In recognition of some individuals' short attention spans and appetite for variety, the artist largely chose to present different activities each week, rather than continue work over several sessions. These included playful drawing exercises, printmaking and collaging. In some sessions, Joanne attempted to incorporate the learners' laptops and the centre's printers but these were usually slow and complex to operate. The rooms at the youth partner's premises were not messy spaces and so paint or any wet material had to be used with caution.

The environmental conditions of the workshops were a significant factor in the partnership's development. While several of the learners didn't turn up for the trips, we discovered that taking the group off the premises was beneficial for collective working and group morale. The youth partner base was not a youth campus, and the learners did not demonstrate particular attachments to the space or its facilities, which were very office-like. Trips to galleries temporarily changed the energy of the group and led to new encounters with artists and contemporary art, as well as more nuanced discussion about practice. Trips also

brought about further interaction between the Youth Support Worker and the project, because her attention was not divided. Below is an extract from my field notes from one trip to a rurally located arts centre and studio complex.

*The morning has been quite tense because the youth partner staff suspect that someone has been smoking cannabis, and the whole group are warned about the programme's strict zero tolerance drugs policy. Six young people have shown up in total – over half of the group are not present, which is unusual. One girl is new – she tells us she likes art and photography, and wants to work in health and social care.*

*We eventually all pile on to a coach – with most of the group sitting excitedly at the back. During the journey Linda and I talk about why more learners haven't come on the trip. She mentions that many members of the group have been quite vocal about their reluctance to go on trips. She says their responses can be unpredictable and many learners are frequent non-attenders.*

*When we arrive at the arts centre, two members of the gallery's peer group are there to greet us in the reception, where refreshments have been laid out. One of the peer group members has put a cigarette bin outside the main building so the smokers have somewhere to go, which they seem to appreciate. The group are already asking questions about sculptures they see in the grounds. Amy hands out iPads and asks the group to work in pairs to document their visit.*

*The two peer group members then lead us around the site, pointing out different buildings and studios where artists work and eat. Everyone is struck by the centre's cat, which is eating the remains of a mouse on the pathway. The learners enjoy taking photos of this and other small details, noticing puddles in the grass and spiders' webs in the fences. We stop at a building that has been designed and built by an artist using salvaged wood and glass. Michelle comments that her house is a bit like this, with lots of reclaimed materials assembled together.*

*The rest of the morning is spent visiting the studios of two artists, who have prepared their spaces with installations to show the group. One artist has set up a series of props under bright lighting, including a marble table and large swathes of shiny fabric with a huge mound of white substance. Michelle recognises that it looks like washing up powder. The artist confirms that it is and invites us to touch it. The young people take photos of the space and pick up objects on the artist's invitation. Michelle points out how useful it is to hear an artist talk about their work, because sometimes in galleries it's difficult to interpret meaning or spend a long time looking at text.*

[Field notes, 26 November 2014]

This episode revealed some of the rewarding and challenging consequences of

the partnership activity being uprooted and situated temporarily away from the physical field of the youth partner. The concept of a trip provoked anxiety for a number of participants, and their absence during these occasions demonstrated the level of support and preparation required to enable these young people to feel safe about leaving the familiar premises of the programme. Meanwhile some of the other participants expressed that they felt more comfortable when working off-site, because the natural cliques that formed in the centre were interrupted and they experienced more freedom [group interviews, 26 February 2015]. The artist felt better able to communicate her role in the gallery spaces for a number of reasons. She found the partner organisation's classroom spaces creatively limiting, and felt that she was sometimes being reprimanded for not reinforcing the centre's rules. She also recalled feeling like a "disposable tutor" at times, with the perceived lack of reciprocity between the centre's management staff and the project [interview, 4 March 2015]. Amy also recognised the probable benefits of having strategic and reflective conversations away from the youth organisation. Most of the meetings between practitioners took place at the youth partner's centre, and Amy recognised that this exacerbated an imbalanced power dynamic and lack of familiarity with the gallery and associated arts spaces [interview, 27 April 2015]. The gallery visits also led to brief encounters between the project participants and members of the peer group, as well as other practicing artists. These encounters appeared to be equally stimulating for the Youth Support Worker, who encouraged the learners to look closely and ask questions.

In the arts venue, the artist clearly felt a much greater sense of belonging and authority than she did in the youth organisation. The artist's cultural capital (i.e. familiarity with galleries, artists and studio practice) enabled her to perform her role most effectively in the arts venue. The Youth Support Worker also felt able to connect her creative tastes to the works on display at the arts centre, and many of the young people enjoyed the new and unusual environment. However the absence of half of the group illustrated that certain types of cultural and social capital were required for the learners to even entertain the prospect of

travelling to a different area of the city, let alone visiting an arts centre. While the youth partner's venue was seen as a relatively undesirable space, this was a space where some of the young people held dominant positions, or where they experienced feelings of safety that couldn't be guaranteed elsewhere (Bourdieu, 1999). These events highlighted the need to both increase opportunities for exchange between the organisational fields, and to recognise the complex challenges of visiting different sites or fields where the visitor appears to possess little relevant capital or agency (Bourdieu, 1999).

### **Shifting creative focus**

Despite the mixed reaction to offsite visits, over the series of workshops, Joanne and Amy incorporated a more substantial offsite dimension to the project. It was decided that the group would work towards staging a pop-up shop in the city centre to display and sell their creations. The practitioners did this in order to more explicitly align the work with craft, product design and social enterprise, so the learners would be able to make connections between the arts project and their retail qualification. Michelle and Linda were very supportive of this move, and the public, ambitious nature of the initiative helped to galvanise the involvement of staff across the centre. Michelle and Linda also invited their daughters (who worked in creative direction and retail jobs) to act as guest practitioners during sessions leading up to the installation of the shop. These sessions involved creating mood boards for the shop layout and designing products such as mobile phone cases, jewellery, tattoo transfers and postcards. Participants were also encouraged to co-design the branding for the shop (which would be based in a unit made available to hire for creative projects and exhibitions).

The young people responded well to the focused direction of the activities, although there was a collective sense of trepidation that their works would not be good enough to sell to the public. As had been the case at the start of the project, new learners were to join sessions even towards its final stages. This was

challenging for the artist, who had to explain the premise of the project for each new participant who had not been part of the beginning stages. Some of the regular participants also left the programme for various personal reasons, which was disheartening for the artist. This pattern of attendance made continuous project work additionally difficult, and meant that most of the learners did not experience the project in its totality, as they would often miss key visits or planning moments.

The installation day of the shop was a major high point for those who took part. An edited version of my notes from this day illustrates the shift in attitudes brought about by the change in context and the creative challenge involved in presenting a public display:

*Today is the installation day for the shop. The space is a unit just off a main road in the city centre, on a street lined with other shops and cafes. There are large glass windows framed by a bright red exterior, leading to two big rooms with rough wooden floors and white walls. When I arrive, Amy and Joanne are there, alongside a technician. Michelle arrives with some of the learners and a colleague. Other learners arrive independently, although some of the group are missing.*

*Joanne gathers the group and suggests they start to think about where the works should be placed. Most of the works are laid out in groups around the two spaces. There are printed mugs, mounted photographs, collages, temporary tattoos, handmade cards and original art works, alongside jewellery and phone covers. Joanne has also taken a teardrop design (drawn by one of the learners) and blown this up onto gels for hanging. The group is quiet and it is proposed that they split into smaller groups to start curating the display. Later other group members arrive, as well as Michelle's daughters, who are there to support the install.*

*Two of the learners bring along their own sketchbooks from home, which they are keen to include in the shop. Spray paint is used over stencils and vinyl is mounted to add make features of the bare walls, while decorations are hung in the window. As the works start to be fixed to surfaces, the volume of discussion and level of activity builds. Participants who are usually quiet are enthusiastically applying vinyl and deciding how to present works. Many of them comment on the professional appearance of the shop and their unexpected sense of achievement as the space takes shape. They all volunteer to invigilate the space later in the week.*

[Field notes, 25 February 2015].

As indicated in this extract, the reaction of the participants and youth partner staff to the installation of the pop up shop was overwhelmingly positive. Young people who never usually talked to one another were working together and different tutors from the centre came in to praise their progress and contribute to the install. Many visitors commented on the professional finish of the products and the shop branding. Members of staff from the gallery's Learning team also came to visit and to buy works when the shop opened. Amy commented that one staff member noted that the work was quite "youth arts" – presumably meaning that the work on display fitted a community arts aesthetic rather than a contemporary gallery aesthetic. This was an interesting observation because it signalled the distinct cultural value judgements between the two organisational partners. The artist had evolved the project to align as much as possible with the retail-oriented focus of the youth programme, so she had consciously departed from her own artistic practice in an effort to meet the needs of the youth partner and to take on board the young people's suggestions. In the display moment, where staff from both organisations were brought together, these different conceptualisations of artistic quality came more sharply into view.

### **Reflections on art and pedagogy**

Negotiations around artistic outputs occurred in many of the Circuit sites I observed. A tendency for participants to work individually on the making of discrete objects rather than a joint initiative was common in some of the partnership projects that involved fixed, targeted groups. In these scenarios the artist would often facilitate the development of a more collective pedagogy towards the end of a project, in the lead-up to a public presentation. Several projects also focused upon crafts and the creation of saleable or distributable works. The impetus for doing this often came from the youth partners, who

wanted to demonstrate to their young people the link between arts practice and creative industry careers. While some artists resisted this approach, others embraced it.

Throughout my engagement with the different Circuit sites, I reflected regularly on the nature of the artistic content and the pedagogical direction of partnership workshops. I wondered whether partnership work with formal youth organisations necessitated a certain type of practice, which was less exploratory and more individualised than projects that existed across the peer groups. Or whether gallery staff and artists framed projects in this way through predetermined expectations about the capacities of different groups. In this site, there was a combination of factors that influenced the creative direction of the project. The spatial limitations of the youth partner's base made storing work difficult and compromised the artist's ability to utilise different media. The lack of effective technical equipment also shut down the possibility to work digitally. The irregular attendance of some individuals and introduction of new participants in every session also made group work a challenging prospect, and meant that each workshop had to be relatively self-contained. In planning and reflection meetings the youth partner Manager expressed her desire for the work to have more connection with social enterprise, and to feel less "siloed" from the rest of the programme, which the artist responded to. The artist also had to navigate the young people's different degrees of willingness to work within a particular pedagogical framework. Some young people reacted well to sessions that were more open, while others wanted to be given clear demonstrations and to learn specific skills. My interview with Aasif, an 18-year-old refugee from Afghanistan, revealed his frustration with the process, and quite entrenched ideas about arts and learning:

*I was excited but after I see what was in the project I didn't like it. No one's showing me something they've made. All they're saying is go and make it yourself. So if you show me something to do, I can concentrate on how you've made it, and I can make it. But if you show me some picture I don't got no idea, I don't know about art, nothing. You tell me to go and make this, go and make that, I don't like it. I like art to be honest, but not this type of art. I like drawing*



*and learning. Everyone can do this, you don't need teacher for this. What's the point – and you look stupid as well making that. In Afghanistan people first draw something, how they make it, they explain. I don't know nothing, if you don't teach me something I'm not going to learn.* [Interview, 11 March 2015].

Aasif's comments exposed interesting cultural differences that impacted upon his attitude to the sessions. He felt self-conscious about making works that (in his eyes) didn't have a clear "point", and he sought a banking-style pedagogy (Freire, 1970) that would be seen as incongruous to accepted models of peer-led practice in contemporary gallery education (Sinker, 2008). Other learners made similar arguments to the Manager, about not understanding the relevance of the sessions to their retail course. Linda reported that "they felt art for art's sake was pointless – they couldn't see how it came together until the shop, and then the shop really gelled for them" [summative meeting, 20 March 2015]. So these types of attitudes did inevitably help to drive the movement away from more experimental approaches in the project towards more tangible outcomes. The Youth Support Worker Michelle regularly pointed out the group's collective perception of galleries as "very middle class", and highlighted how alien these visual arts practices felt to the learners, who had limited experience of arts-based pedagogies [mid-point meeting, 12 January 2015]. In the final meeting between practitioners, Amy acknowledged some of the tensions between the gallery's open-ended approach, and the type of learning that the group members were accustomed to:

*I think that was quite challenging to start with [...] because a lot of what we were doing was very process-led to start with and it didn't necessarily mean that there was going to be a beautiful outcome at the end, it was more about experimenting. And as we were saying, some of them really enjoyed that but it is [...] a totally different way of working and something that we're more comfortable with because what we do isn't so directed and it is about process and experimentation.* [Summative meeting, 20 March 2015].

The exploratory gallery education approach evidently contained assumptions about participants' cultural and educational capital. The concept of pursuing an artistic idea without there being an obvious outcome or function is also imbued

with privilege, or the sense of ‘a life of ease – that tends to induce an active distance from necessity’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p.xxviii). The connections between class, taste and experience of dominant cultural practices are well known (Bourdieu, 1984; Silva, 2008) but they were not fully articulated until the end of the project. The ‘deep rooted expectation of the student and teacher relationship’ is bound up with internalised conceptions of one’s social position and perceptions of a lack of ability (Sayers, 2015). So Aasif’s reaction to the project was connected to his own low self-belief and culturally engrained understanding of education from his experience growing up in Afghanistan. In some cases, participants discovered through the project a previously untapped creative confidence. One learner commented:

*[Joanne] has taught me, well not taught me but made me find out about art aspects that I never really knew before. I found out, or realised that I am half decent at photography.*

[Interview, 11 March 2015].

Nevertheless there were clear indications that more time could have been spent on group facilitation and on testing modes of interaction. It may have also been useful to draw upon the group’s different cultural experiences and attitudes, and to use and challenge these as a basis for mutually informed dialogue. The youth practitioners could also have spent time visiting the gallery sites in advance, so they might have developed more in-depth understanding of gallery-based pedagogies, and engaged in discussion about shared and different understandings of artistic quality. The fact that these more practice-oriented processes and questions were not analysed at length at the beginning of the project is not unusual in partnership projects between arts and youth organisations (Matarasso, 2013b). Contracts often focus on delivery structures, timelines, responsibilities, resources and objectives. And yet as we discovered towards the end of this project, the participants and staff all held distinctive ideas about art and pedagogy (resulting from differences in habitus), which could have produced healthy debate at the onset of the collaboration.

## **Expectations for ‘transition’**

One of the implicit goals of partnership activity in Circuit was to support young people to sustain their relationship with the gallery beyond a partnership project, and to enable them to join the gallery’s peer group. In doing this, the Circuit galleries had a concrete set of opportunities to offer participants who showed interest in continuing their engagement with the institution. Each gallery site adopted different ways of supporting this journey of transition. As described in site one, some galleries employed members of their “core” groups to work as assistants, evaluators or volunteers on partnership projects. In the case of another gallery, young artists were employed to run partnership projects and also take part as members of the core groups. Youth organisations involved in partnership work were often invited to attend events programmed by the core groups, and in most cases, members of the core groups made presentations to the partnership groups about their peer-led programme, in order to promote the opportunity to join.

In this site, members of the peer group had little interaction with the partnership initiative until the gallery visits and the pop-up shop, where two members were employed to help invigilate the space. One member also attended the final evaluation session at the youth partner base, to give a PowerPoint presentation about the activities of the peer group. This meant that the level of awareness and contact between the two groups was relatively low. When the peer group member gave her talk to the partnership group, one of the learners interrupted her to ask: “I don’t mean to be rude, but what has this got to do with us?” [field notes, 11 March 2015]. For this participant there was no evident connection between the project and the peer-led offer at the gallery. This separation was likely to have been exacerbated by the fact that this girl had missed trips to the galleries, so had not previously met any peer group members. On feeding back to the youth partner’s Manager, the learners reportedly referred to the gallery’s peer group as “culty”, and to some of the members they had met as “hipsters” and “posh” [summative meeting, 20 March 2015]. In the final evaluation meeting

between practitioners, Amy conceded that there was a perception that the gallery and its audiences were “posh”. Michelle responded (referring to me, Amy and Joanne): “You all are! You need roughing up! We need to find some rough ones!” [Summative meeting, 20 March 2015]. This frank conversation about the class divide between the two groups of young people, and between the practitioners made visible some of the main barriers obstructing the possibility of transition and exchange.

Alongside my observation of this partnership, I also attended occasional meetings and events hosted by the gallery’s peer group, in order to gather my own thoughts on the differences between the groups and their capacity to connect. The young people in the gallery’s group were welcoming, friendly and polite. Most members of the group seemed to be in their early twenties or late teens and many were current students and graduates. When I observed planning sessions the group members demonstrated confident critical thinking in project curation, which felt a long way from the dynamic in the partnership project.

The gallery staff decided to programme an evening taster workshop to introduce potential new recruits to the peer group, and members of the youth partner organisation were invited to attend. Two boys from the partnership project (aged 16 and 19) agreed to come along following the official end to the project, so I decided to accompany them. An extract from my notes from the evening is below:

*I arrive at the meeting point just after 5pm. Two girls are waiting - I ask if they are part of Circuit - one says she’s a first year university student and it’s her first time being part of the group. The other girl joined the group three years ago. A few more people arrive, including Chris and Dylan from the partnership project, and we pile into a taxi with the other new girl and a couple of the peer group members. Sitting in the front of the taxi, I’m conscious that everyone is silent so I encourage them to introduce themselves, which they do. Dylan asks if we’re coming back to the youth programme and I reiterate that the project has ended now but they can continue having contact with the galleries through Circuit. They tell me they miss the art.*

*When we arrive at the gallery after about 25 minutes we meet the artist leading the workshop. Other people take a while to arrive so for some time we are all in the room chatting. One boy is dropped off by his mother while two young people have come as a result of a connection with a local youth worker. After some warm up activities, we are asked to collaborate on creating a sculptural universe, starting with adapting the chairs we are sat on using available materials – card, string, wire, coloured cellophane etc. After working on our own chairs we all have to move on to the next chair and make an addition to this, and so on. Dylan, Chris and I are working next to one another, and we chat and joke as we make. On a couple of occasions Chris helps me with my structures. He keeps calling me “Miss” and I remind him I’m not a teacher. They seem to enjoy the exercise, although they do not interact much with other participants. Dylan is quite tired and hungry – he hasn’t had much sleep. Chris also sits on the edge of the room at times. The artist notices and comes over to chat to him. At the end of the exercise we join the individual structures together in the centre of the room to create a giant sculpture.*

*It strikes me that the young people have had to make a significant effort to be there that evening. Dylan tells me it will take him over an hour to get home – Chris’s dad will pick him up from the meeting point and he will go to Chris’s house before getting picked up by his own parent. Chris says his dad is annoyed because they had told him that the session finishes at 7.30pm but they didn’t explain it would take longer to get back to the city centre. When the session ends I take a taxi with Chris, Dylan and another young person who apparently attends a local boarding school and who found out about the session via his art teacher. As they talk more, Dylan and the boy realise they are both into DJ-ing and they end up leaving the taxi shaking hands and promising to meet up. As they get out, Chris realises he has accidentally left his bag at the gallery.*

*[Field notes, 11 March 2015].*

This session was not a typical peer group meeting as it involved an artist-led practical activity and a number of new recruits, but it still provided some insight into two participants’ efforts to form a more independent relationship with the gallery. I noted that out of all the participants in the project, Chris and Dylan were identified as having relatively supportive family networks, so their decision to attend the evening session would have been endorsed and facilitated by their parents. Michelle commented:

*Most of the young people who come here – they’re not believed in at home, nobody actually really listens to what they’ve done today. Maybe there’s two – [Dylan] would be one whose parent would be interested, and [Chris’s] dad who came in, and nan. But most of the parents couldn’t give a wotsit to be honest with you, which is sad. [Summative meeting, 20 March 2015].*

Despite the fact that taxis were provided to reach the gallery, the journey itself (in an intimate space with strangers) was quite socially demanding, and Chris and Dylan seemed to welcome my interventions. The location of the arts centre and timing of the session also presented logistical challenges for the young men. Most of the partnership project participants would not have had the parental help or encouragement to access the trial evening, let alone future peer group meetings. I wondered whether having a familiar youth worker present at these initial sessions may have aided integration and provided some continuity for the participants. After this session, Dylan and Chris did not return to any further peer group workshops or meetings. Amy tried to organise an evening session for all of the learners at the gallery (to be accompanied by Michelle) but this was delayed due to capacity issues with the youth partner. She also offered participants the opportunity to apply for paid internships with the gallery but no one took this up. In the final evaluation meeting Linda announced that she was retiring, and not long afterwards, the programme was subject to an Ofsted inspection, which increased workload for the staff. The organisation was also coming towards the end of its Youth Contract funding, so staff changes and external pressures further limited the opportunity for future contact between the partners. So in this scenario, a number of factors conspired to inhibit the possibility of the learners joining the gallery's peer-led programme.

### **Compatibility**

As described at the beginning of this section, my central motivation for conducting fieldwork with this partnership project was to generate an understanding of the particular nature of partnership working between a gallery and a targeted alternative education setting. The definition of a 'youth sector organisation' was deliberately fluid within Circuit, and several galleries chose to work with these types of programmes, where young people were being supported to complete their GCSEs, having had difficult experiences of school-based education. Unlike sites one and two, where the projects featured were

experimenting with new structures of provision and adopting the cultures of open-access youth work, in this site the arts project was designed to fit into (and enhance) existing, formalised provision.

For the Learning Officer, one of the most noticeably challenging aspects of collaborating with this type of partner was the clash of cultures between the organisations. The youth partner was a private business (as opposed to a youth charity) and the wider company was primarily focused on training adults and young people for roles in the private sector, and in the case of this programme, retail. The company also operated with ambitious targets, and was under pressure to recruit young people to the programme, which took up a considerable amount of the practitioners' time. The directors of the company took some convincing that the partnership with the gallery was a worthwhile endeavour so senior level investment was mixed, despite the enthusiasm of tutors and support workers. While the partnership project began with a fairly open brief, as time progressed Amy commented on the "goal posts shifting" under the Manager's direction, and feeling that the informal learning approach and experimental model was not given a chance [interview, 27 April 2015]

For the youth partner staff it was clear that the pop-up shop represented a turning point in the organisation's understanding of the value of the programme, and that it also marked a high point for participants, who experienced a sense of accomplishment. However because this came at the end of the project, there was little opportunity to capitalise on this moment and to consider how the young people might form a new type of relationship with the gallery and other arts venues. Michelle felt that there needed to be more time and resources afforded to the transition stage, following the ending of the workshops, so the participants might be supported to feel more familiar with the culture of the gallery, and the art world in general:

*It's about giving them choices isn't it – the nice thing is that you've opened the gates to them, to the art world, to what you're doing, and they know it's there. I*

*think there has to be more input personally into encouraging now [...] that's why it's sad it has just stopped...we should be now focusing on [going to] to the [local] museum and looking at other things. To me, five, six months in, they're just getting that feeling and it needs pushing a little bit more forward and tying it in with other things. It can't just stop can it?*

[Summative meeting, 20 March 2015].

Due to the combination of circumstances mentioned earlier, the project did arrive at a relatively abrupt conclusion. Alongside Linda, Michelle also left the programme soon after the end of the project, which lessened the potential for future exchanges between the organisations. The process had also been emotionally taxing for the artist and Learning Officer, who sometimes felt undermined by the Manager, who often relayed unconstructive criticism from the participants without witnessing the sessions herself. So there was little appetite (from the gallery's perspective) to agree to programme another project with the organisation, although attempts were made to keep a dialogue going.

The issues that troubled this partnership are telling of wider constraints, external effects and structural factors that can impact on relationships between galleries and youth organisations. This fieldwork offered insights into a partnership with a category of youth organisation that is representative of the turn towards privatisation in the youth sector. Under the Coalition government, large charities and private companies such as this were encouraged to compete for contracts to deliver education provision to targeted groups of young people. This project presented an opportunity to examine the potentiality of these types of providers to act as viable partners for galleries. The partners in this case undoubtedly found allies in some of the practitioners involved across both organisations, yet there were fundamental differences in organisational values and practices, which made genuine collaboration problematic. The mentality of feeling like a contracted service sat uncomfortably with the Learning staff and artist. References to the company's understanding of young people as the "client group" and as the "cash cow" of the organisation further reinforced the commercial (rather than young person-centred) culture of the programme. This



environment did not appear adaptable to the pedagogic and creative instincts of the gallery and its associated practitioners, so there were clear doxic conflicts associated with the alliance.

The cultural and class differences between participants also demonstrated the lack of correlation between the habitus of participants and the habitus of the gallery representatives (myself included). This social distance impeded agents' ability to fully perceive the symbolic capital necessary for participation in certain elements of the project. However, the staff and several participants at the youth partner came away wanting more time from the relationship. The project-based framework of the partnership focused attention on the sequence of workshops and evaluative meetings and a presentation moment, but in retrospect it became apparent that the space around, before and after this project required equal attention for the partnership to thrive. Discussion about creativity, joint recruitment of artists, skills sharing, regular reflection and familiarisation visits may have all helped to embed the cross-field relationships beyond the confines of the project itself.

Whether or not the programmes were entirely compatible, the reality exists that many disadvantaged young people are channelled into this form of youth provision, and if galleries seek to work with these young people, they need to find ways to have conversations and form reciprocal relationships with both the public and private, open-access and targeted spaces of the youth sector.

As was the case in this site, many of the Circuit practitioners had acquired a substantial level of knowledge about effective partnership working across the youth and cultural sectors by the time they had reached year three of the Circuit programme. Many curators and co-ordinators were able to reflect on how they might have approached partnership work differently, were they to begin the programme again. With the benefit of hindsight, those in Circuit's national team were also in a position to critique the structure of the programme as a framework for partnership. The following chapter focuses on the reflection and

learning about partnership captured through the experience of the programme,  
and on the changes and actions taken as a result of this learning.

## Chapter 7: Circuit's field of practice

This chapter continues the work of exploring the compatibility of galleries and youth organisations through the filter of Circuit's programme design, and the reflections of participating practitioners. It explores the doxic differences between the temporary programmatic field created by Circuit and the fields of practice inhabited by youth sector partners, and it identifies the consequences of movement and interaction between these fields. In particular, this chapter highlights how these interactions have the potential to exert forms of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1977) on young participants associated with youth organisations or services. Ways of working and conversing that seem natural to gallery practitioners and already-engaged peer group members are characterised as sources of alienation by some youth workers. Various accounts from different Circuit sites reveal how doxic parameters and barriers are sometimes misrecognised throughout the programme, to the detriment of successful outcomes in partnership working. Symbolic violence is therefore a useful descriptor of the potential hidden damage that can occur when young people are persuaded into situations that illuminate their lack of social privilege, and where their particular forms of social or cultural capital are undervalued (Bourdieu, 1999). This chapter also examines how the programme endeavoured to incite change by rethinking traditional interpretations of valuable professional capital within its defined field. This process of analysis requires looking beyond the activity of discrete partnership projects, and towards the organisation of labour and influence in the wider Circuit programme.

My intention is to determine how Circuit's field of practice included and positioned certain types of agents, particularly those who possessed different forms of (what I call) 'youth worker habitus'. In doing so I seek to assess how these agents helped to implement change in the field, and identify what learning can be taken away from their struggles and interventions.

## **Circuit's 'doxa'**

As previously indicated, Circuit's 'doxa' - or accepted mode of practice - revolved around the concept of 'peer-led' programming. Derived from Tate's history of work in this area, Circuit's 'peer-led' methodology subscribed to the notion that young people should be given long-term opportunities to form a deeper relationship with the institution, and be directly involved in co-producing high-visibility programmes such as festivals and exhibitions. At Tate, the peer-led pedagogy adheres to a common structure, which typically involves regular meetings of young people on weekday evenings, where group members plan events and projects aimed at other young people. At the different Tate sites, peer-led programming has advanced at different rates, but their collective orientation has been towards young people initiating and curating programmes, supported by adult facilitators (Sinker, 2008). This model of independent youth engagement can be found in major public galleries (and some museums) across the UK, and the phrase 'peer-led' has currency amongst gallery educators and within the visual arts sector more broadly (Rosso, 2010). The received wisdom behind this model is that it creates opportunities for young people's voices and ideas to be heard and realised in the institution, and for participants to gain practical insights into the inner workings of cultural organisations. By working closely with gallery staff and artists, these groups are able to expand their knowledge of visual arts and exhibition practice. And by working in a peer-led way, young people are encouraged to cooperate and take shared responsibility and ownership of projects by adopting various roles – from event organisation and marketing to evaluation. This offers members professional work experience and training, as well as the chance to direct the content of programmes. For institutions looking to attract greater numbers of young people, peer-led groups also provide expertise on current youth cultures, and they have the potential to draw in wider audiences of young people through their programming. There is an overt dual purpose to peer-led programming because it serves the needs of the institution and its extended publics, as well as those of a specific cohort.

The 'peer-led' methodology is significant to this study because it both influenced the format of partnership projects, and served as the main progression opportunity for young people engaged through youth organisations. As described in the previous chapter, a consistent directive of Circuit's was that young people from partner organisations be supported to sustain their engagement with the gallery through membership of the institution's peer group. These groups were intended to be as socially diverse as possible, in order to represent underrepresented communities and provide a space for young people with least access to the arts to express their creative agency and enhance their skills. Peer led groups were frequently referred to as "core groups", so there was an underlying implication that by "transitioning" from a partnership project to the peer group, young people would be brought closer to the centre of the institution, and their status as a participant would be elevated. It is important therefore to distinguish between the doxa of Circuit, and that of the youth partners involved in the programme. Their compatibility arguably determined the likelihood of a young person moving from one field to the other.

It is not possible however to compare Circuit's doxa with a doxa that represents all of the participating youth organisations, because the variety of services and organisations in the programme was so diverse. This is one of the structural issues that limits (and potentially expands) learning from the programme. Each of the youth partner organisations can be thought of as individual fields, with distinctive ways of doing things. Had Circuit focused on particular types of services across all sites (e.g. leaving care, or mental health) it might have been possible to characterise their logic of practice in more universal terms. Instead, interviews and observations revealed that youth organisations had different approaches that were conventional to their contexts. Nevertheless, the concern that seemed to unite most youth practitioners was their prioritisation of young people's personal and social development (whether or not they had to work against a dominant managerialist doxa in the process). Similarly, these youth organisations often formed their understanding of arts-based pedagogy around the personal needs of their young people. The concept of peer-led curatorial

programming on a public, institutional platform was not intrinsic to their way of working. For the purposes of the analysis, I will offer two illustrations of youth organisations involved in Circuit where the logic of practice was distinct from a gallery peer-led methodology.

### **Youth organisation doxa 1: rural youth club**

This small-scale, volunteer-run organisation was based in one of Circuit's coastal sites, and led by a local couple who were also long-term foster carers. During my fieldwork I observed a group from their youth club visit the gallery for the first time, and I interviewed the two group leaders about their approach to working with young people. Extracts from this interview are cited below. The couple had set up their organisation having encountered vulnerable young people in their locality who were disengaged with school and experiencing issues at home. Based in a space provided by a church, their evening youth club offered meals and a place to talk, socialise and participate in creative activities. Historically, the young people who had taken part in the club have been stigmatised due to their behaviour:

*The people we work with isolate themselves from the rest of the community. They work in the dark, they do things that are not socially acceptable. And their associates at school know them for that and they avoid them.*

The club leaders talked about the central importance of food in their work, as a basic gesture of care for young people who were otherwise hungry. They also saw communal eating (with cutlery and serviettes) as a catalyst to enable young people to open up about their lives. The relationship between the group members and group leaders was that of an extended family. The club leaders said of their group members:

*They call it their home when they come down, which I think is lovely. And they also know where [we] live, and there have been several knocks on the door where they know they can come at any time and we can help out if there's anything we can do.*

The enormous personal investment of the voluntary practitioners was reflected in their deep concern for the young people's welfare and the parental character of their connection with individuals. The male practitioner spoke of how his own personal background shaped his sensibility as a youth worker:

*I think it goes back to my issues as a young person. If I'd stayed in my social category I'd have been ok, but [...] because I came out of that and came into another world, I was constantly challenged. The food I ate I had never seen before - a menu, multiple knives and forks. The fear really of not knowing procedure and protocol, the whole thing was overwhelming.*

Music and visual art also featured prominently in the offer at the club, although importantly, art practice was framed in a "therapeutic" context:

*We've always worked with art because it's a good way of them telling you how they feel at that moment without actually speaking. So we had some lovely boxes that they made up, and it was your own personal box with your own secrets inside. And they used to cut out pictures. Some of them would be stuck on and they'd be really sad. And then they could put them aside and that was their own box about how they felt. And they're still sitting on the wall in [the club] now.*

As referenced earlier in the thesis, this type of therapeutic framing was common in many of the youth organisations I researched during Circuit. While hands-on creative activities were key facets of these organisations' programmes, their connection to institutional arts and culture was limited. This was also partly due to the practitioners' own preconceptions of these spaces. The male practitioner interviewed reflected on his previous ideas about cultural venues, and of the partner gallery they worked with through Circuit:

*You see I'd have trouble walking in that building because I wouldn't know what's in it. It's alien to me, and unless you've got a lot of confidence, or a reason to go in it, I don't think I would. And you know what, I've missed out.*

These comments build a picture of an organisational doxa tied to the development of young people, and to giving young people a sense of family. The lead practitioners' emotional sensitivity, generosity and personal affinity towards

their cohort was a signature pillar of their work. Their attitude to practice – or habitus - was formed through a combination of a working class childhood experience, and exposure to the front line of foster care - with all the challenges this entails. While it is true that elements of their approach reflected tropes in peer-led practice, there were subtle but significant disparities that marked these practices out as different. For instance, pizza and sweet snacks often featured in peer-led meetings in galleries, but in this youth organisation the food cooked was homemade and healthy, because the young people attending were not receiving this type of food (nor experiencing a sit-down meal) at home. Another key attribute of peer-led work is the concept of young people attaching to the gallery over several years to produce programmes that can take months to plan. In the youth club setting, projects had to have a finite beginning and end, and they needed to have in-built flexibility to respond to the pattern of engagement (and disengagement) of young people:

*We work with something called attachment disorder. [...] We're fully trained in it. And it is what it says. There are certain families that don't get a baby born and attached to its mother. And the consequences of that you see in our young people. They don't attach to projects, they don't attach to school, and there are reasons why they don't do that and we know why that is. And so knowing it we can be very understanding of it. And if you're not understanding of it, then your project is self-driven - it's not driven by them.*  
[Interview, 20 October 2015].

Unlike most of the gallery practitioners I met, these youth workers were trained to recognise the conditions that affected the behaviour of individuals. This heightened state of empathy was an aspect of the practitioners' habitus that informed their pedagogical inclinations and enabled them to identify structural barriers. This idea that there are unconscious, often seemingly innocent practices and forces that prevent certain young people from participating in gallery youth programmes can be magnified when looking at the comparable practices of youth organisations such as this. The second example I will offer focuses on a mental health programme in a music education charity, and observations from a youth practitioner about the differences between her programme's ethos, and that of peer-led programmes in galleries.



## Youth organisation doxa 2: mental health programme

This city-based, small-scale youth organisation catered for young people and adults with mental health needs. The practitioner who led its youth programme spoke to me about their methods of recruitment, which were largely concentrated around formal referrals through mental health services, care coordinators, occupational therapists and support workers. The programme also ran workshops in hospitals to identify and engage potential participants. Once engaged, users were able to join weekly workshops across three terms where they would develop their music skills (e.g. in rap and hip hop) in a supportive environment amongst experienced staff. The practitioner explained that the referral process involved a detailed risk assessment of participants' needs – including any history of violence or aggressive behaviour, relapse indicators and triggers. A typical session at the youth centre would host 15 young people and seven staff and a high proportion of the users were young black men.

Having formed a connection with the local Circuit gallery, the practitioner had agreed to members of staff from the gallery visiting the organisation and encouraging young people to join the gallery's peer group. To her surprise, a large number of young people pledged to take part in a taster session for the peer group. This led the youth practitioner to reflect on her concerns about the distinctions between the two organisations' ways of working, and the gallery's capacity to support vulnerable young people in a peer led context:

*[The gallery coordinator] turned up and she is so charming and charismatic and suddenly all these young people crowded round and all wanted to join [the peer group], which I was completely blown away by. She did such a great job at recruitment that I hadn't really bargained for. [...] I was concerned about how the young people were going to integrate in the group. [...] I know that a lot of [the gallery peer group] are university graduates, [...] they are from a very different background to our young people. And I know not all of them in [the peer group] are, but a lot of them are. [...] My judgement is these middle class kids are not going to integrate well with my [young people] - that's not going to happen. Because I see the arts as still being quite a difficult to reach thing.*

Class difference was the most often-cited reason for disparities between the cultures of youth organisations and those of peer groups. This practitioner was also anxious that the additional needs of her young people might not be fully accommodated in the peer group setting. The youth organisation staff were trained in mental health first aid, and were used to working with young people who heard voices, or who behaved in sexually inappropriate ways, or who were argumentative and difficult to engage:

*Is [the gallery] equipped to work with young people who are literally still living in a hospital? One of the names that they took down was a boy who was still suffering from quite intense psychosis. How on earth would [the gallery] deal with that? They don't have any training or systems in place.*

As this practitioner indicated, without appropriate expertise, institutions have the potential to put young people at risk, and to jeopardise relationships between youth organisations and their participants. As well as understanding protocol for working with vulnerable young people, the practitioner communicated that her organisation invested considerable time and energy into sustaining the motivation of young people:

*At the back of my mind was the amount of work that I put into getting our young people to attend a session down the road where they get studio time, which is their main interest. You know, I was taking young people to a music festival once and it took so many calls, so many presentations, so many reminders - it's a huge job. It's not two text messages - it's a huge amount of support work.*

She argued that peer groups in galleries tend to rely on young people being independently motivated. While peer group members may receive reminders and messages of encouragement, gallery staff are not generally able to provide the same level of one-on-one support as would be found in a targeted youth organisation. The practitioner also highlighted that the tendency to do a single initiation moment every year in peer groups was at odds with their way of working:

*Our young people are ready for progression at all different stages, the same as they come to us when they're ready from the hospital. We've always done drop-in*

*because it's not possible to do it any other way. Young people are ready when they're ready, not at the particular point when we say they're ready, or we're ready for them.*

The implication here is that the youth organisation's practices are structured to put the interests and needs of young people before organisational processes and schedules. By offering a relatively inflexible point of entry, the gallery was apparently limiting its ability to reach more vulnerable young people.

The practitioner and the gallery in question found that only two young people followed up the invitation to join the peer group. The youth practitioner pointed out that these were the most self-motivated of her cohort:

*These young people have come to our programme pretty much every week for four years, and as a result of that we've then pointed them towards progression route opportunities, we've helped them to apply for education. One of them has now done a degree and the other one's working full time. So neither of them are NEET, neither of them access mental health services really any more. They come to us more to support the other young people that we have, in a peer mentoring role. So they are not the kind of people that Circuit is trying to reach I think. [Interview, 7 September 2015].*

This account reflects the reality of 'transition' cases in several of the sites I observed. Those young people who did join peer groups from youth organisations were often exceptions to the rule, and the most confident members of their youth organisation's group. The peer-led offer seemed to attract a limited demographic of young people from youth organisations, who were closest in social position to the existing members of the peer group.

The gallery-based peer-led format has been increasingly critiqued in recent years for this reason, most prominently by Esther Sayers (2014; 2015), formerly Curator for Young People's Programmes at Tate Modern. Sayers posits that this way of working creates a form of social closure that perpetuates a lack of cultural and ethnic diversity, because it attracts young people who are already 'culturally literate', and who are privileged enough to have had exposure to the arts:

*I'm concerned that partly it's the peer-led format that discourages some young people from taking part, because it creates a kind of social group, which by its sociable nature attracts similar types of people – people who are similar to each other.*

(Sayers, 2015).

Sayers counts amongst these “similar types of people” gallery educators and facilitators who are typically white, female and middle class. Sayers also questions whether the institutional compulsion to give power to young people is more to the benefit of the institution, than it is to participants:

*When staff are stretched to do more and more projects, peer-led programmes sometimes provide a cheap workforce.*

(Sayers, 2015).

Throughout my fieldwork these types of difficult questions entered my head, as I witnessed interactions between Circuit's partnership activity and its wider model. I was aware that majority of the gallery practitioners in Circuit were, like me, white, female, middle class and educated in the arts (even though some did come from diverse backgrounds). Despite its evident benefits, I wondered whether 'peer-led' programming was a middle-class construct that served to institutionalise relatively homogenous groups of young people rather than welcome the 'harder to reach' young people it claimed to want to engage. I also wondered whether this professionalised way of working reflected the broader turn towards New Public Management thinking and performativity in arts institutions (Dewdney, et al., 2013). Bourdieu (1985) suggests that groups tend to attract and reward people with homologous characteristics who occupy similar social positions, so on an unconscious level this cycle of attraction ostracises those who are *dissimilar* and who possess different accumulations of capital.

In order to examine my findings, I describe the different elements of peer-led practice in Circuit and identify ways in which the model enhanced or obstructed partnership efforts, and efforts to sustain the engagement of marginalised young people.

### **Circuit's 'peer-led' approach**

To understand Circuit's logic of practice in more detail, I regularly conversed with the programme's Lead practitioner, and interviewed him about the intentions behind the programme's methods and design. He spoke about the peer-led offer as a means to democratise culture, and to promote the idea that cultural spaces are for everyone. He felt strongly that there should be one "central core group" in each institution, and that these groups should be open to young people from diverse backgrounds, so they could learn from one another. His hope was that young people from partnerships could be supported to engage in the peer-led process, which could lead on to some young people joining the groups on an independent basis. In circumstances where the established peer group was not diverse, Circuit's Lead advocated that the group should aim to "shift" and change. He emphasised that peer-led practice was "not about finding motivated young people who can deliver programmes" [interview, 16 July 2015].

Supported by the national team then, each Circuit gallery rolled out their own version of a peer-led programme. All adhered to the 15-25 age range and followed a similar format, whereby a group of around 15-20 young people would meet on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis to socialise, take part in creative workshops and plan events and exhibitions. Six of the galleries had pre-existing peer-led groups before Circuit started, while four did not. In most cases participants were expected to attend voluntarily, but there were prospects for paid work at events. Peer group members would also have the opportunity to attend national Circuit sharing sessions across the country and be part of Circulate – the programme's young evaluators group.

The setting up of these peer groups took different guises at different institutions. Staff from the Circuit galleries were conscious of the ambition to diversify the peer groups as much as possible, but they were also mindful of the need to create youth-led projects and events, and for a group to be in place to initiate

these. This was one of the key paradoxes of the programme. Many participants joined following recruitment drives in schools, colleges and universities, or through attending taster sessions. Some joined after contacting the gallery about work experience or through discovering the opportunity on social media. One of the Circuit galleries without an established group ran workshops at local youth organisations and recruited young people as a result. And as explored in the earlier site studies, efforts were made to encourage connections between the partnership projects and the peer groups. Even if the potential for transitioning was low, Circuit gallery staff sought to involve youth partners in the wider peer-led aspects of their programme, by inviting them to events, or showcasing work produced in a partnership project in the festivals. A large chunk of my fieldwork therefore involved attending Circuit's national gatherings (sharing and Circulate meetings) in various parts of the country and visiting the galleries' peer-led activities. I attended taster sessions and training for two peer groups, as well as peer group meetings at six out of the eight sites. I also participated in six festivals and observed numerous events, workshops and exhibition openings across the sites. During these observations I looked out for signs of youth partner inclusion or exclusion, and met some young people who had joined the peer groups as a consequence of a partnership initiative. I also listened to discussion during Steering group, Working group and board meetings about the challenges of integrating young people from youth organisations into the gallery peer groups.

In the next part of the analysis, I use Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to explore the ways in which the programme sometimes misrecognised the cultural barriers and systems of inequality that were invested in peer-led practice and programmes. Symbolic violence results from concealed and manipulative forces of symbolic power and control that exist in institutions across contemporary society (Bourdieu, 1999; Cooper, 2012). These forces are particularly active in fields that are endowed with high levels of authority or dominance as a consequence of their cultural status (Bourdieu, 1984). Museums and galleries are obvious examples of institutions with considerable symbolic power, and while their associated education programmes seek to offer inclusive pathways towards

engaged participation, the implication of these programmes in reproducing institutional power and social injustice has to be assessed (Sayers, 2014). The next section covers instances where forms of symbolic violence can be identified in peer-led programming. Following this I look at how Circuit staff developed recognition of these forces and worked to counter them.

### **Symbolic violence in gallery youth programmes**

Since interning with Tate Britain's peer-led programme Tate Forum in 2007 and researching the impact of the programme through interviewing past and current members in 2008, I have seen Tate's peer-led work as a model of best practice for the sector. For those involved, the peer-led process was an antidote to school-based art and a platform for critical debate and experimentation. Young people's sense of belonging and familiarity with the gallery and their group was palpable, and the level of access to high profile artists, staff, budgets and programming was unlike anything I had seen or heard of elsewhere. The young people I interviewed in 2008 spoke of multiple personal gains, including improved confidence and grades, and feelings of immense pride and achievement when they realised large-scale events.

I carried this respect for the practice into my Circuit research. I appreciated that the actual dynamics of managing peer-led work was always a process of negotiation in Circuit between practitioners and young people. Some groups required more or less intensive adult guidance, depending on the personalities and confidence levels of participants. And fostering space for democratic dialogue and communal decision-making also required skilled facilitation. Each Circuit group defined for itself what 'peer-led' meant in their context, but the game at play was oriented towards young people being supported to have control and agency in the gallery - which was both ambitious and challenging, particularly for galleries without a prior history of peer-led work (Hall, 2014). The profile of these groups also varied across different regions. Groups in large cities

such as London and Manchester had a much greater ethnic mix than groups in St Ives or Cambridge for instance.

However it was noticeable from an early stage that Circuit's logic of practice was not always conducive to supporting the inclusion of young people from partnership groups. The one gallery that recruited members to its peer group from running workshops in youth organisations found that while lots of young people initially joined, the dropout rate was quick. Several other galleries also found it challenging – at least initially – to sustain the involvement of young people from partnership groups in a peer-led context. Data collected on the young people involved in Circuit's peer groups consistently showed that there was a high proportion who visited galleries regularly and therefore already had access to the arts. Only a small minority of galleries attracted a cohort of young people who could be classed as previously unengaged in institutional arts and culture. Over the course of my fieldwork I explored the reasons for this.

During my visits to peer group meetings, I observed that the common format of young people being seated around a large table and engaging in discussion required a level of maturity, self-management and confidence from its participants that was quite unlike the dynamic in most youth organisations I visited. While some of these sessions did include practical activities, many of the sessions featured discursive group planning, ideas sharing and debate - often about current affairs or cultural tastes within a boardroom-style setting. One of the gallery programmers told me she felt the professional nature of the meetings was good because it helped to prepare the young people for their working lives [conversation, 7 August, 2015]. This programmer's gallery also staged a weeklong training/initiation programme for new recruits, which struck me as a significant commitment for those involved. A key logic of peer-led practice in the gallery field seemed to be to instil the disposition to be professional, and for many recruits opportunities for CV enhancement and employment were major incentives. Most of the young people recruited through the galleries' website or through schools and colleges understood the ways in which their engagement



with galleries might benefit their careers and enable them to accumulate elite social and cultural capital.

Many of the national meetings also involved large numbers of adults and young people (around 40 in total) sitting around tables in groups - listening to presentations or taking part in discussions. In one of the first of these I attended, three practitioners (who were all former youth workers employed in critical friend or programmer roles in Circuit) raised concerns about the formality of the session, and the advanced nature of language used. They pointed out to me that this situation was intimidating for some of their young people because it assumed a certain level of knowledge and didn't account for the fact that some people would feel anxious about speaking out loud in a room full of strangers. One practitioner said:

*In the beginning, it was a bit too professional, and it was about talking to other professionals. It was too heavy for sharing and being honest - to the exclusion of the young people who were supposed to be the main theme of it all. [...] And all I was focusing on was what my young people were saying to me - they were saying: "I'm bored, I don't want to write, I'm feeling a bit out of my depth". In the bit at the end I said [to the organiser] - "excuse me, I don't know what you're talking about". And there was a gasp! But it was really important for somebody to say that because my young people felt they were being left out. You've got university young people, you'd got young people who were not coming from the same kind of backgrounds that our young people were coming from, with some of the barriers that they had. And they were feeling different, isolated; they didn't know what was going on.*  
[Interview, 30 October 2015]

So there appeared to be apprehension amongst practitioners who had a background in youth work, and who were more accustomed to working in very informal ways with young people. The format of these national meetings seemed to better accommodate the older young people from the peer groups who were more self-assured and comfortable in an adult environment.

Many of the gallery practitioners felt there were contradictory messages and competing aims within the programme. While the national team and funder

emphasised the focus on working with 'harder to reach' young people, practitioners on the ground found that they needed a motivated group to fulfil other Circuit strands, such as the festival production. As one practitioner put it - the programming model set up parameters that sometimes worked in conflict with the partnership aims [interview, 17 August, 2015].

The Circuit festivals were a central component of the peer-led programme. Each gallery committed to running a large-scale event over a series of days during the period of funding, and they ran other ambitious events in the lead up to their festivals. Several of the galleries also staged exhibitions curated by their peer group members as part of their activity. Alongside the festivals, these projects took up considerable time and involved intensive work. The festivals and exhibitions were also very visible, costly initiatives situated in the galleries' main spaces, so they were regarded as high stakes opportunities. From my observations it was apparent that these opportunities predominantly attracted the most committed and engaged peer group members.

Organisational pressure also created anxieties and exhaustion that affected young people in several sites. At many different points in Circuit, gallery staff highlighted the challenges of sustaining enjoyment and fun alongside production. The focus on preparing for a large-scale event meant that the nature of the peer groups changed, and this often resulted in a section of young people reducing or ending their involvement in the group, and another section of young people increasing their influence and participation. One young person claimed they had to have a hierarchy within their peer group in order to progress with programming, but she admitted she was not sure if this was healthy [Working group meeting, 9 April, 2015]. Gallery practitioners also noted that it was difficult to build in time for relationship building with external organisations alongside their programming workload (most of the coordinators were part time). So in some sites the festival planning process had a detrimental effect on the gallery's ability to develop their partnership strand [interview, 17 August, 2015].

In an effort to combine peer-led programming and partnership work, some galleries collaborated with youth organisations and their young people to coproduce large-scale events and festivals. I followed one of these initiatives during my fieldwork. One of the major points of feedback from a youth partner involved was that collaborating on a multi-art form festival took up a large amount of time and resources, which was beyond the capacity of her small organisation [interview, 7 September 2015]. While other youth practitioners spoke more positively about their organisations' inclusion in peer-led programming, the festival model did illuminate a series of misrecognitions that sometimes had adverse consequences for youth partners and their young people.

From my observations I deduced that galleries' allegiance to the event, or 'experience economy', bred a type of light-touch, low investment practice that discouraged more intensive, organic relationships with young people and partners (Dewdney, et al., 2013, p.41). This type of practice worked well for more autonomous, self-sufficient agents who were socially mobile and well resourced, but this practice couldn't easily accommodate agents who did not fit within this category. The following account outlines some of the effects of this approach on partners and young people. I aim to illustrate how misrecognition in gallery youth programming frequently occurs because there are often degrees of short-term (or exceptional) engagement that can disguise deeper issues with the doxic order of the programmatic field (Bourdieu, 1977).

#### ***- Contact between youth partners and peer-led programming***

There were occasions where young people joined peer groups even as a result of light-touch engagement between galleries and youth organisations. The idea of light-touch work with partners emerged in Circuit as galleries began to experiment with different ways of building relationships with youth organisations that didn't rely on committing to a long-term project. This was partly a response

to practitioners' limited capacities, and partly aimed at developing so-called 'harder to reach' audiences for late night events and festivals.

During the festival at one of the mid-scale galleries in Circuit, I interviewed an outreach worker who had helped to enable this type of relationship, and who had been paid by the gallery to bring groups of young people along to experience the festival. I will call her 'Abbie'. Abbie was able to give an account of the benefits and challenges of navigating the peer-led programme, on behalf of the young people she worked with.

The youth organisation that Abbie worked for ran targeted and universal provision in youth centre facilities located near to the Circuit gallery. As part of her remit to build partnerships, Abbie followed up on an invitation from the gallery for her young people to take part in a focus group, where participants would be asked for their feedback and perceptions about the gallery for marketing purposes. Abbie recalled that she recruited a group of eight young people from the youth centre. Two of the participants were gay, one of them was street homeless that night, one was a transgender individual and three were part of the organisation's self harm group. According to Abbie, none had visited the gallery before, and they were not young people who readily connected to the arts and "enrichment activities". In return for their participation, each young person was given £10 cash, which Abbie said was extremely well received:

*For all of the individuals involved, money is a real issue. We have food banks where we are and we have a free laundry service [...] So £10 is a lot of money for them. So they were reserved about the idea - the fact that I was there with them as a friendly face, and another member of staff went as well, and the money, made sure that we got enough young people through the door. Once they went, they really really enjoyed it and they said we would have come without the money anyway.*

While the gallery's offer of money in exchange for the young people's views was seen as a very positive trade, it could be argued that the gallery chose to replace the work involved in earning the young people's trust relationally, with a

monetary transaction. Nevertheless, the gallery staff did succeed in winning the approval and changing the perceptions of the young people to the extent that two members of the group continued to maintain a relationship with the gallery. Abbie described how these young people benefitted from becoming involved in the peer-led programming and the gallery's festival:

*So the first one is a young gentleman that's downstairs at the moment, very involved in the music side of things, is very interested in urban culture. There was an exhibit on that was quite urban, it was about identity and being a black man. It was also about being a gay black man, which this young person didn't identify with, but he definitely identified with the racial issues. So there was a lot of stuff about Malcolm X and he discussed his concerns with the actual artist, and then was mentioned in the guardian newspaper. So he felt really really empowered by that. He felt like he was important. What happened after that focus group is one of the facilitators invited them to come to a gallery opening. [...] And when they came they saw that it was a VIP event and they were on the guest list, they got free drinks, there was a lot of what they felt was important people from the press there, and they really felt that they were valued. On the night one of the young people did leave because they had anxiety and they felt that they were being judged, however most of the people gained a lot from that.*

This young person had connected to the gallery on issues that resonated with his own personal identity, and the gallery had responded by extending its hospitality to the young people. As Abbie recounted however, the experience of attending a private view produced a mixture of positive and negative emotions, which led some individuals to withdraw, and led others to reinforce their association with the gallery. I saw many instances of attrition throughout my fieldwork, where participants would disengage from activity for various reasons. But these reasons were rarely followed up, because other young people continued to sustain their engagement. Abbie went on to discuss for instance how the gallery's peer group had provided a safe, nurturing space for another member of her youth centre:

*The other one is now working here, which he's really really proud of. That young person really struggled with social skills when they were in a youth work setting, they really struggled with their identity, and as a result of that their behaviour was quite challenging. And since he's been at the gallery, he's been made to feel like his opinion matters. So they've got a really good way of being able to listen to the young people, and to make those changes. So we've had some really positive case studies come out of it, and the young people can get different things from it.*

*They can come in, they can enjoy the day, because we've done different workshops [at the festival], which is great. And then some of them have gone deeper, and one of the young people who is with us today, one of our younger ones who's 15, has asked if she can join the group.*

Nevertheless, despite her optimistic report, Abbie made a number of important points about the experience of visiting a gallery festival with marginalised young people and interacting with the peer group. Across the festival Abbie accompanied two different sets of young people. This experience allowed her to reflect on the disparities between gallery groups and groups from targeted organisations:

*I do feel though if it wasn't for me being with them, I'm not sure how strong that link would feel, because for example, yesterday I brought a group of young people that were from an alternative education provision, and they were very difficult to engage. And we went into this room, which is a very intimidating space [...] and there were a lot of confident younger people there from the [peer group]. And I think they felt very intimidated so their behaviour started to act up. And there was a table of crafts - and they all enjoy doing art and crafts - I do an art workshop with them every week, like art therapy, adult colouring, adult dot-to-dot, things like that. So I knew it was something that they could participate in, but no one kind of spoke to them and asked if they wanted to get involved. And no one moved from the table. So I had to kind of act as a bridge and say - "I'm sure you guys would make some space if we came over wouldn't you?" And then they were like "oh yeah", and then they prompted and they helped. Once they got involved the staff were really engaged with them. Their behaviour - they did try and challenge - they were using phallic symbols and stuff, trying to test the waters. But the staff embraced it rather than challenged it. And they responded really well to that. So when you do communicate with those young people, the young people get a lot from it. Sometimes I feel though that it's about that initial meet and greet - if they've never been in the building before - they need someone to tell them this is ok, and you can take part in this.*

Abbie's account highlighted particular taken-for-granted expectations about people's ability to enter a space and adopt the position of participant, which illustrated the social distance between groups of young people:

*The issue is I think that a lot of the [peer group] and a lot of the young people that participate at this gallery are very confident young people. Young people that have come from backgrounds probably where they've had a lot of support, and have the confidence if they want to do something to walk up to a table. [...]*

*The young people that we are working with would not do that. So they need to be told that it's ok for them to participate, and they need that positive reinforcement constantly, more than usual. So it's about the approach, and I think possibly gallery workers and artists aren't used to working with young people that are so challenging. They are used to people being confident, being forthcoming with their skills, and being like - I'm quite confident, I like music, I want to get involved with this. Even things like down to equipment, like they were using a Mac yesterday. You could tell there were so many young people that knew about Macs and who possibly had iPads at home, and there were some of our young people who were very tetchy - they felt like there was language being used that they didn't understand.*

Through these comments, the practitioner was making assertions about the habitus of young people in the gallery's peer group. She argued that these young people were predisposed to feel at ease in the gallery environment by virtue of their upbringing and social advantages, and that her young people were conversely conditioned to feel out of place there. Clear differences in material and cultural capital had the effect of causing discomfort and feelings of inadequacy for the young people from the youth organisation. The peer group *had* sought to tap into popular and sub-youth cultures in their programming for the festival (for instance in their film selections), but Abbie noted that even these were aimed at young adults who had "access to cultural experiences":

*They played This is England - and I was trying to discuss it with one of my young people who's got autism, who's transgender. He saw that it was an 18 and he was like - "oh wow, an 18! I get to watch an 18!" And he was telling me that he'd be ok if he watched it because he'd seen The Human Centipede. And it was very difficult trying to explain to him that actually This is England is a more realistic, gritty portrayal. And he watched it for a bit and then I could see that he wasn't engaged with it. So even the choice of films...earlier on there was a film called Frank that is very difficult watch. It's an intellectual watch, it's an indie film. What the young people want are things like Fast and Furious, and they want kind of bright, flashing lights and entertainment that they get. And sometimes there's a middle road between indie culture and that. So for example, Kidulthood, or Adulthood might have been a more appropriate film to show later at night that reaches out to young people. And it reaches out to a cross section. It deals with issues similar to This is England, but it's also more relatable for young people that are working class or - I hate to say the phrase - on the streets - or take part in street based activity and gang culture.*

From the practitioner's perspective, the festival represented the peer group's performance of their own cultural capital, in a way that unintentionally alienated members of her group. I asked whether it helped that a member of their youth organisation was visibly part of the peer-led programming team, but Abbie identified that this young person actually displayed a form of overconfidence and an enhanced sense of his own cultural capital as a result of his exposure to the peer group:

*For example there's an exhibit on in the main galleries, and he was talking to the young people about [an alternative jazz musician], and because we hadn't heard of [him], he was flabbergasted! But I know that that young person six months ago wouldn't have heard of Bob Dylan for example. [...] Obviously his cultural norms have shifted - which is great to see because he would have never been given that opportunity to listen to that kind of music and engage in these things. But I do think to myself, it's great that we can get to that space, but where are we starting? Because if we're starting with [alternative jazz musicians], and Frank, and This is England, then you're going to alienate a lot of people. But if you're starting from where they're at like I said, and taking them on that journey, so they can appreciate an [alternative jazz musician] in maybe a couple of years time, then that's great, but it needs to come from where they are.*

This instance shows how it is possible for marginalised young people to misrecognise their own journey, and the barriers faced by their contemporaries, particularly if they want to establish their allegiance to a (seemingly culturally wealthy) new group. As I also saw in other galleries, individual cases of transition from a partnership group to a peer group were more likely to result in the young person being initiated into the gallery's way of doing things, rather than them shifting the culture of the youth programme. Bourdieu says: 'At the risk of feeling themselves out of place, individuals who move into a new space must fulfil the conditions that that space tacitly requires of its occupants' (1999, p.128). The institutional contemporary art world embeds in its workers the ability to recognise and select out so-called legitimate avant-garde culture, as well as the ability to play the game of at least appearing to understand these practices (Bourdieu, 1984). Abbie's ability to identify subtle forms of symbolic violence in the interaction between her group and the peer-led programme was partly due



to her experience as a senior youth practitioner, but it may also have been to do with her own relationship to arts and culture:

*I never even did art GCSE. I am probably the least arty person you will ever meet, but I am really fortunate enough that I can go to London and I've been to places like the Saatchi Gallery, and I am interested in - and have been from an early age - I'm interested in theatre, in art, particularly in contemporary art. I've always found it quite interesting, like what Tracey Emin does, and am interested in different exhibits. So I'm quite fortunate, and even though I'm working class myself, from a young age I wanted to be in theatre, so I was used to going into theatres which are quite grand, intimidating, arty spaces. So I'm used to - I don't feel intimidated when I go into art galleries, which is really lucky.*  
[Interview, 7 November, 2015].

Abbie understood that her own cultural references – “Emin”, “Banksy” and so on – did not necessarily correlate with the key cultural reference points of the gallery, but she also stressed the inherent tensions involved in seeking to engage working class young people through more esoteric forms of middle class ‘high’ culture. She understood that this way of working had the potential to inflict damage on a young person’s sense of self-worth and to intensify an atmosphere of inequality. Simultaneously, despite her claim to be the “least arty person”, Abbie spoke with clear authority about the cultural and political concerns of the young people she worked with. She did not consider them culturally bereft – rather she saw them as possessing alternative forms of “street”-based cultural capital. The idea of ‘starting where young people are at’ is a recurrent theme of youth work practice, and it implies that good youth work seeks to be ‘respectful of and actively responsive to young people’s wider community and cultural identities’ (Davies, 2005, p.7). This type of approach correlates with arguments advanced by critics of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, some of who promote an alternative concept of ‘community cultural wealth’ (Yosso, 2005, p.70). Community cultural wealth rejects the normalisation of ‘white, middle class culture as the standard’ by which all other forms of cultural knowledge are assessed (Yosso, 2005, p.76). Rather it locates value in the diverse talents, networks and abilities of socially marginalised groups that are frequently misjudged or underappreciated. Derived from lived experience of marginality,

these knowledges are sometimes transgressive and oppositional, or related to an understanding of street life and neighbourhood relationships (France, et al., 2013; Yosso, 2005). There is a misconception contained within Yosso's reading of Bourdieu that he also perpetuated the normalisation of privileged forms of cultural capital as the aspirational standard. On the contrary, Bourdieu argued that the concept of 'culture' was a narrowly defined social construct, organised around the judgement systems of the dominant classes (Bourdieu, 1984). He understood that working class cultural capital was not valued according to the logics of this construct. Nevertheless, the ideas associated with community cultural wealth are useful for contemplating the diverse cultural literacies of marginalised populations and the ways in which subcultural capitals are ignored or selectively exploited by arts organisations.

One could argue that the youth worker's habitus (shaped in part by a working class background and regular exposure to marginalised young people and cultural experiences) supported them to view these types of cultural literacies as legitimate. Abbie's sophisticated understanding of the power relationships the young people were subjected to demonstrated her ability to articulate a form of 'vernacular theory' – i.e. a considered critique rooted in everyday lived experience (McLaughlin, 1996). Arts institutions would arguably benefit from listening to the 'street-smart' theorisations of youth practitioners (as well as young people from marginalised backgrounds) throughout their programming, to increase the chances of all young people being able to connect with their own identities and express creative agency within events and projects (McLaughlin, 1996, p.12).

My argument is not to suggest however that the cultural agenda of art institutions is inherently limited and the cultural literacies of marginalised communities are inherently open and diverse. Both are potentially rich and both are also inseparable from the homogenising forces of elite or mass markets (Graw, 2010; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Hoggart, 1957). The idea that contemporary art is intrinsically alienating is itself reductive and restrictive. In one Circuit gallery

for instance, animosity was generated between a youth practitioner and an artist, who felt that the practitioner obstructed any discussion about contemporary art and wasn't open to building a dialogue around challenging ideas and practices. Forms of symbolic violence can also occur when creative projects reinforce particular identities upon participants and limit the scope of their creative potential based on assumptions about young people's interests. Throughout my fieldwork I made a number of observations about the creative direction of projects and their tendency to relate to the identity attachments of particular organisations. I noticed that a group of young mothers had undertaken a series of workshops with one gallery where they made bibs, cloths, plates, mobiles and paintings. I questioned the artist about the project's focus on domestic life, femininity and motherhood, and whether this was the choice of the participants or organisational partners. This sparked a long dialogue about the challenges of balancing the interests and tastes of different agents in a partnership, and knowing when to push or conform to cultural boundaries [interview, 30 April 2015]. Practitioners such as this one were extremely reflective and open to critique, as were many members of staff in Circuit. The following section focuses further on the reflective self-criticality of programmers, as they worked to recognise and counter forces of symbolic violence in Circuit's temporary programmatic field.

### **Countering symbolic violence**

Bourdieu's theorisation suggests that there *are* ways to create change in a system that is perpetually rigged in favour of populations with narrowly defined levels of social, economic and cultural capital. For instance, agents are at liberty to resist the doxic order assumed by their field, and they are endowed with the ability to be reflexive and analytical about systems of inequality and fundamental misrecognitions in the design of programmes (Grenfell, 2012; Thomson, 2017). As I discovered through my fieldwork however, agents' ability to effect change in their field is dependent on a number of conditions, and sometimes it is possible for agents to misrecognise where change needs to be targeted. Fortunately, as

an action research learning programme, Circuit encouraged practitioners to engage in a process of critical self-reflexivity and to adopt evaluative rituals associated with reflective practice. So reflection formed an integral part of Circuit's doxa, and therefore the programme generated a receptive space in which to host open debate about practice.

There was widespread recognition amongst Circuit practitioners for example, that the lack of class diversity in peer groups was thwarting efforts to secure the independent engagement of young people from partnership initiatives, and to shift the culture of these groups. Circuit's Steering group meetings provided forums for senior practitioners to discuss the challenges they faced in supporting the diversification of peer groups. The Circuit Evaluator would offer findings on the diversity profile of the peer groups, which revealed that the majority of peer group members were generally not in the 'hard to reach' bracket defined by Circuit. The Steering group acknowledged that career development was a prime motivator for many of the young people they worked with. They talked about the dangers of there being two tiers of peer group in Circuit and raised concerns that the programme was not reaching its desired target groups [meeting, 10 February, 2015]. Two years into the programme in April 2015, the board and national team decided to ask each gallery to set their own diversity targets, as a means to focus attention on the demographic profile of young people engaging with programmes, and as a tool to advocate for greater diversity. These diversity targets were based upon knowledge of local demographics. Many gallery practitioners did however call Circuit's focus on profiling into question, as they felt the processes of data collection (involving surveys with a range of personal questions about young people's backgrounds) were counterproductive and harmful to trust building [interview, 20 October, 2015]. There was active resistance amongst some practitioners to utilise Circuit's profiling tools if they felt they had a negative effect on young people's experience.

The programme explored other avenues for more holistic organisational change. As members of Plus Tate, galleries from Circuit were invited to a Plus Tate

Surgey session on inclusion and diversity [20 May 2015], led by Tate's Diversity Manager. This workshop provided a space for critical reflection on the shortcomings of Tate's own practices, and ways in which the institution and its partners were implementing strategic change. The Diversity Manager pointed out that while Tate has a number of programmes related to diverse audiences, these were still often siloed and they did not influence the centre of the organisation. She said she wanted Tate to be less risk averse and more political in its attitude to inclusivity. Rather than pursuing particular demographics to meet an institutional target or quota, this approach focused on the cultural and moral benefits of greater diversity, and the social justice agenda behind these efforts. It was suggested that the social model of disability could be applied across categories of diversity in order to put the onus on organisations to change and create a meaningful, two-way dialogue about the barriers facing people that are often created by institutions. In most cases, the galleries involved in Circuit strove to initiate forms of organisational change. This included training staff members across departments and within Learning teams. One training session I attended focused on building awareness of young people's circumstances, and reasons behind different behaviour in the gallery. Another focused on professional boundaries and protocol for working with vulnerable audiences. So 'diversity' became a new condition of the game, and organisations were expected to have a successful diversity strategy in place in order to maintain their positions in the temporary programmatic field.

The programmatic and financial scale of Circuit inevitably brought directorial staff (i.e. agents with dominant positions) into closer contact with its activities, which increased the potential for change at a senior level. In their annual meeting, Circuit's gallery directors showed their growing awareness of the issues that lay behind expectations for transition between partnership and peer groups. One director felt it was naïve to expect vulnerable young people to transition into core membership. A senior Tate staff member said: "you have to start where people are now and not fantasise about where they could be". Another director took issue with the idea of expecting heterogeneous groups of young people to

come together. The directors also demonstrated some awareness of what it takes to work with vulnerable young people, and they argued that some participants felt over-evaluated. They also fed back that anxiety from the centre of the programme was being passed on to young people [Directors' meeting, 5 October 2015].

The discontinuity between so-called "core" groups and "partnership" groups was highlighted frequently in meetings. In several reflection moments during Circuit, practitioners commented on the disadvantages of stranding (i.e. dividing up 'partnership' and 'peer led' into separate strands of activity). Some galleries found that this delineation exacerbated a lack of integration between areas of programming and groups of young people [sharing session, 7-8 October, 2014]. Two of the Circuit galleries implemented major restructures of their peer-groups due to staff concern that the groups lacked diversity and were becoming too inward looking. The changes to some of the peer groups did create tension. Many group members were not necessarily motivated by the idea of working with others who didn't have access, although some individuals were heavily involved in supporting partnership activity [interview, 17 August, 2015]. There was also recognition that Circuit's peer groups needed to emphasise "the social". The national evaluation of the peer groups showed that the place of creativity and fun was sometimes being overlooked [national evaluation meeting, 3 June, 2015]. Some of the gallery practitioners recognised that their peer group meetings were becoming too institutionalised and not inclusive.

The Working Group meetings were often sites of discussion about the challenges of adapting to Circuit's model. Some practitioners talked about wanting to incorporate people's individual pathways rather than "coercing them into a group" [meeting, 6 March, 2014]. Several galleries offered diverse opportunities for young people to engage with their programme, beyond the idea of transitioning into the peer group. Two galleries established internship placements and an inclusive/targeted recruitment process that supported young people from youth partners to apply. Some galleries also put in place informal

mentoring for young people. Towards the latter half of the programme, several programmers claimed that they had moved away from thinking about transition from partnership to peer-led, to thinking about all of the groups they worked with as part of Circuit [sharing session, 3 December 2015]. So Circuit enabled critical cross-site discussion about the merits and drawbacks of different approaches to partnership practice. Over time, practitioners developed the confidence and learning to shape their own programme model and challenge expectations if they were not appropriate for their contexts. There was growing recognition that the concept of young people's assimilation into gallery programmes was fraught with assumptions about the primacy of the gallery field.

These negotiations, debates and shifts in approach also seemed to point towards a much more fundamental set of tensions related to the nature and purpose of gallery youth programmes. These tensions manifested in Circuit's design, which was structured to achieve a collection of aims that often appeared to work in conflict. Having been established in the wake of the response to the 2011 riots, Circuit explicitly sought to engage 'harder to reach' young people through partnerships, but it also sought to deploy a youth-led programming model featuring high profile events aimed at drawing in thousands of young visitors. While some practitioners found points of association between these aims, others found them incompatible. One of Circuit's Managers openly reflected on the predicaments that lay at the centre of the programme:

*It's about being clear about what the programme is trying to achieve - are we trying to diversify audiences for the gallery, or are we addressing social needs? [...] The practice is entirely different, I think. If you're trying to address youth crime in a certain area, and a gallery is a partner in that, then who you partner with, how you put resources to it, how you work with young people, all of that is entirely different. If your aim is to diversify your audiences, [this] is also a social responsibility, but it's an entirely different one. [...] I'm sure there are overlaps - because ultimately you're working towards a positive outcome for young people. But I think there's an entirely different practice around it. And I think being honest about that is really important, and that being your vision. Is our aim to support young people through the arts to have positive benefits on their lives, or is it to ensure that there are different voices that are heard within and shape the organisation?*

[Interview, 28 July, 2015].

The Manager recognised that the split agenda of the programme affected the partners' ability to perform to either objective effectively. From the Manager's perspective, these different strands of ambition necessitated particular types of action and behaviour that served the needs of different communities. She suggested for instance, that Circuit's festival programming highlighted the challenges involved in attempting to merge multiple interests:

*When we were talking about the festival strand in the set-up years, one of the questions that I had was around it needing to be in the gallery - which was a non-negotiable. And it's something that I want to interrogate a bit more. Because if your aim is to do the first thing, i.e. think about how you can bring positive benefit to young people in difficult situations, then you choose whatever means necessary in order to achieve that, which may be a festival in lots of different places, or online, or who knows. Because you design it in order to achieve that. Whereas if your aim is to have some different young people within the organisation, and that was the thinking, therefore you have to have it in the building, because you want to create that impact. So therefore it is about forefronting the needs of the organisation before the needs of the young people. And then you result in this almost mishmash of stuff where you're going - great we had a festival in the building, but you know, did we really have people from the partnership strand?*

[Interview, 28 July, 2015].

These thoughts were echoed by 'Abbie' - the youth worker who I interviewed at one of the Circuit festivals. She argued:

*I think they need to decide really on what they want. What target group do they want? Because I think it's very difficult to have everything, and I think that if they want to have middle class, engaged young people that are already into the arts, or maybe that are already into dance but they want to listen to new music, then that's great, and that's a space for them. But I think it's very, very challenging trying to mix that with hard to reach groups of young people. And I think if they are going to be committed to working with more challenging young people from difficult backgrounds that aren't used to art, then they need to have a different approach from what they've got at the moment.*

[Interview, 6 November, 2015].

The implication here is that to avoid imposing forms of symbolic violence on



young people, programmes and organisations need to clearly demarcate their values and priority aspirations and shape their practice around these. By trying to achieve too many goals, institutions risk undermining them.

The paradoxical conditions represented in Circuit's design are arguably characteristic of gallery youth programmes and characteristic of the doxic differences between gallery education and youth work. While the chief focus of youth work is young people's personal and social development and relationship building with communities, gallery education is defined by its association with visual art institutions. Gallery education pedagogy invests in a core belief around the power of public interaction with artists and exhibitions - and its logic of practice is framed with this in mind. Some gallery educators have also argued that (partly as a result of austerity) the 'hierarchy of values' in arts institutions have shifted away from the 'educational turn' and towards the 'corporate turn' (Stewart, 2015, p.61). The generation of audience numbers, consumerism and performativity in the gallery space have become key to the survival of cultural organisations, and youth programming models (such as Circuit) have come to reflect this to some degree.

The following section explores further how Circuit's order of priorities were manifested in the symbolic or literal positioning of different agents and strands of activity. This level of analysis demonstrates the value systems at play in the programme, and the ways in which understandings of valuable capital changed through engagement with the youth sector and young people. This section also breaks down the various arrangements of power in Circuit, and the impact of these on the practice of partnership.

### **Positions and capitals**

Understanding the positions of fields and the positions of agents within those fields is an essential component of a Bourdieusian analysis (Bourdieu, 1977; 1985; 1999). An interrogation of positioning also reveals the types of capitals that

are deemed to be worthy in a given social/programmatic space. In earlier chapters about the policy contexts and relationship between the youth and art sectors, I discussed how youth organisations often tend to be framed as the beneficiaries, and art organisations as the benefactors in cross sector partnership. I also detailed how the historic imbalance of assets has reinforced a particular power dynamic, which typically locates authority and agency in the hands of the arts partner and leads to the youth partner feeling dominated. As shown in Site Study 3, it can also have the reverse effect of creating a service contractor-type relationship between organisations. This section reflects on positioning and structures of power in Circuit's temporary programmatic field and the extent to which this affected the character of partnerships.

In relation to the wider field of power, the cultural field is itself in a dominated position (Grenfell and Hardy, 2003). It is dependent on and accountable to funders, and influenced by the political and economic climate. However, as described in previous chapters, the visual arts field does at least have access to various sources of funding - and the cultural and architectural assets of galleries provide these institutions with a significant public platform. While other fields in the public sector are tightly regulated and monitored according to government directives, galleries are by comparison 'permissive spaces', with critical, even radical potential (Ashman, p.94). This dimension of the visual arts field affords galleries a unique set of freedoms, and non-government funding (such as that granted by PHF) provides institutions with a high level of autonomy.

Within the cultural field in the UK, organisations are positioned in obvious hierarchies of significance. A gallery's status is determined by the nature of their reputation, their scale and their proximity to spaces of power (usually metropolitan urban centres). Most of the organisations in Circuit enjoyed prominence both in the art scene and in their respective localities. However, there was a clear division of authority in Circuit, due to the fact that Tate had originally secured the funding from PHF, had designed the programme and had selected gallery partners. Tate (and specifically the national team at Tate London)

occupied the dominant position in Circuit because they controlled the budget, managed the programme and acted as the key conduit to the funder. The size and capacity of Tate's galleries also dwarfed some of the smaller galleries in Circuit, so there were inherent differences that afforded Tate the largest proportion of agency in the programme. This distribution of power affected partnerships in various ways. Those in the national team were acutely aware of the potential for Tate to be perceived as the parent gallery. It was also observed that Tate was a very "confident organisation" in comparison to other galleries, where youth programmes were less developed [national evaluation meeting, 2 December, 2013]. In recent years wider concerns have been raised about the cultural missionary model of London-managed, national programmes, and the inequality that tends to exist between lead partners and regional partners (Pritchard, 2017). These types of issues ironically motivated Circuit's national Lead to retreat from giving direct instruction to gallery partners about how to conduct their partnership activity. He sought to retain an open, advisory approach to leadership and encouraged organisations to interpret the Circuit framework in their own ways. So while there was a nationally defined structure, Circuit revolved around a desire to be locally responsive.

Several practitioners across Circuit subsequently expressed that greater levels of clarity and guidance were required from the national team. A member of the national team reflected on learning from the partners' responses:

*There wasn't a period of time when understanding of what we mean by partnership, the way that those partnerships may be managed, where any of that was really debated or agreed. So even if it was a set model that was being put on the table that partners were being asked to follow, making sure everyone was on the same page, with that and other aspects, wasn't part of the design.* [Interview, 28 July, 2015].

Having not initiated a more extensive set of debates around the meaning of partnership, and what was meant by the 'youth sector', the national team found that partnership working across the programme was less strategic than it could have been. They also found that it potentially resulted in some galleries working

with inappropriate partners, and adopting habits of practice that were known to be ineffective. The national Lead practitioner recognised that it would have been helpful to collectively break down what a partnership could be, and to have advised gallery staff to conduct feasibility work before advancing relationships [interview, 16 January, 2015]. The programme's focus on enabling galleries to build their own relationships with local youth sector partners of their choosing, rather than partners with a national profile, also meant that there was limited opportunity to converse with the youth sector at a national strategic level. Circuit staff did not make connections with national youth agencies until the end of the programme. This also narrowed the scale of possible change to a local (rather than a national) level.

This dimension meant that youth sector partners had little visibility in the strategic centre of the programme. With very few exceptions, representatives from youth organisations did not have a presence in sharing sessions or the Steering and Working groups. They were not part of the programme's online communications platform and they did not post on Circuit's public blog. Gallery practitioners presided over all of these spaces. Relationships with youth partners were contained locally, and they were developed after the programme was designed, so there was little opportunity for youth sector organisations to influence the direction of the temporary programmatic field. To some extent then, the voice of the youth sector and the impact of youth work (as a field of practice) was relatively marginal in Circuit's structure of power. As Bourdieu (1999) would suggest, the spatial distance between youth organisations involved in Circuit, and the programme's locus of power, reinforced the social distance between galleries and youth organisations and reaffirmed the power relationship inscribed in the programme.

Throughout my fieldwork however I did look out for the ways in which youth work knowledge and experience was utilised and positioned in the programme through the recruitment of individual agents with a youth sector background. The feedback from these agents is revealing of the difficulties and benefits of

accommodating practitioners whose habitus and professional capitals align with an external field.

**- *Youth work agents and capitals in Circuit's temporary programmatic field***

There were three key approaches to incorporating youth sector expertise within Circuit. Firstly, two practitioners were appointed to Circuit's Board who had experience of working with marginalised young people. One practitioner had worked in a local authority Leaving Care team for many years, while the other practitioner had worked in a senior role in Widening Participation for an arts university. Secondly, some of the Circuit galleries made the decision to employ coordinators to the programme who had a strong youth work background. In two cases, practitioners employed were recent former youth workers, while in other cases, practitioners had at least some past experience of working in youth sector contexts. These appointees would have a presence in Circuit's Working group. Thirdly, four Circuit galleries chose to work with youth work practitioners, academics and students as critical friends, facilitators, volunteers and researchers. On several occasions these individuals would attend sharing sessions and Circulate meetings. The inclusion of these various figures at different tiers of Circuit helped to bring the agenda and pedagogies of youth work closer to the managerial centre of the programme. It was often implied by the national team that the occupational capital associated with youth work was valuable in the context of Circuit.

The positioning of youth practitioners as the critical "eyes" of the programme demonstrated a willingness amongst many Circuit arts practitioners to learn from the advice of youth sector peers, and to be held accountable for actions by agents from another field. In my observation of one of Circuit's board meetings, I noticed that the two youth practitioners were particularly active in questioning whether Circuit was reaching the "right" young people. One practitioner was specifically concerned about the number of young people in Circuit with University degrees for instance [board meeting, 5 October, 2015]. They adopted

the stance of advocates for disadvantaged young people in these meetings, and highlighted when the programme appeared to be falling short of its ambitions. One of these board members explained in an interview that he put regular pressure on Circuit to give an accurate picture of the numbers of 'harder to reach' young people engaged through the programme. Drawing on his own experience, he tried to stress the additional work involved in supporting marginalised young people to access projects:

*You can tell which are the middle class kids. I suppose the thing is it's easier to work with nice kids who behave themselves well, who get there themselves and you don't have to ring them up and you don't have to hassle them out of bed and say – "I'm really sorry you didn't come last week, please keep trying". They're the extra things you need on projects with hard to reach young people to make them feel wanted and needed to get there - or they're not going to get there.*  
[Interview, 26 May 2015].

As was the case with many youth work agents in Circuit, this practitioner appeared to possess a heightened perception of the structural disadvantages facing young people involved in youth and social care services. He understood the emotional and physical labour associated with engaging these young people and he was willing to speak frankly about class difference. These traits and attitudes were commonly found amongst many youth practitioners I spoke to in the programme. Nevertheless, I took note of the fact that these board members were long-standing associates of Tate London, who did not represent national youth agencies, so they were generally supportive of Tate's way of doing things – and they were not equipped to speak on behalf of youth organisations around the country. Tate therefore located youth sector knowledge and critique at the highest tier of authority in the programme, but it did so in a way that was safe and familiar for the institution.

The appointment of former youth practitioners to programming/coordinator roles had a more direct effect on the programme, and the consequences of these appointments revealed important learning about the challenges of integrating youth sector approaches and gallery education approaches in a single

organisation. I interviewed one of these practitioners towards the conclusion of my fieldwork, and asked him to reflect on his experiences. I will refer to this practitioner through the pseudonym 'Marcus'. Marcus had previously worked with social services in the care sector, and for a youth and information service. Of the care sector role, Marcus said he was "made to feel valued", that "communication was easy, everybody worked really hard, everybody cared". He was also accustomed to every project having a steering group, where various stakeholders worked as a team to collectively manage initiatives and partnerships. However when Marcus left his youth worker role and joined one of the Circuit galleries as a coordinator, he felt that his youth sector knowledge was not taken on board:

*When I first came here, the reason they gave for offering me the job is that I have experience that they don't currently. So I thought that's really positive that they recognise that and they want to make changes and benefit from what I've got to say. But I'd been trying to set up a steering group for the first six months and nobody else backing the idea or seeing the value in it. [...] It's like, well, one person can't steer a project that involves a whole organisation. I've not worked on a project that hasn't had a steering group. It makes sense. It should have been just gallery staff initially, but somebody from each of the teams, and that fosters the sense of shared vision.*

This youth worker insinuated that both he, and methods derived from youth work practice were undervalued in the gallery workplace. He recognised that individual staff at the gallery were extremely busy, and that he and colleagues had little contact time, but he also felt that his ideas (e.g. for artists) were sometimes not listened to, and that he and his manager did not work well together. Marcus acknowledged his role in contributing to tensions: "part of it does lie with me". But he also indicated that there were aspects of the gallery's culture and the programme's design that were at odds with his values:

*The first six months of my time here was identifying our shortcomings already and what we need to get in place and making suggestions for what we should do. And they were all ignored. If [my colleagues] were included in this discussion right now they'd say – "oh you say that now but you didn't say anything" - but I feel*

*strongly about working with young people, always have done. And to me it was stuff that was obvious, but they just weren't willing to implement those changes.*

Marcus felt that some of the outcomes of peer-led practice in the gallery were not in the young people's best interests. In particular he found that exhibition curating with young people produced inauthentic experiences for participants:

*I don't think either of the exhibitions should really have happened. I think we should have failed and looked at why we failed. Again we're stuck in that trap of mopping up for the young people because there has to be an opening date because it's advertised.*

The impossibility of failure in the gallery space was a characteristic identified by workers in other institutions. A practitioner once commented that their gallery's ethos was: "take risks but don't screw up" [meeting, 3 June 2015]. Marcus saw this approach to programming as a form of symbolic violence:

*I think learners should be able to develop their own curriculum - their own programme. Otherwise how is it going to be relevant to them? It goes back to Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. If we're not including them and [we're] steering their programme, we're the oppressors. And it makes retention and engagement really difficult.*

The very concept of a predetermined programme structure was judged to be at odds with this practitioner's preferred pedagogical approach. His reference to Freire situated Marcus within the youth work school of thought associated with anti-oppressive practice. Marcus' belief that contemporary galleries and gallery education pedagogies were fundamentally unsuited to doing work with 'harder to reach' young people meant he self-positioned as an outsider or antagonist within his own workplace. Marcus explained that he found comfort in talking to a fellow former youth worker at another Circuit gallery, who parted ways with his institution at an early stage in Circuit:

*Talking through to somebody else who can recognise some of these issues helps - makes me think - maybe I'm not going mad after all. [...] And [the other practitioner] felt like he didn't fit in that organisation. He didn't fit - it wasn't that*



*he just felt that way. And I don't. I've never felt like I fit - almost straight away that was apparent.*

[Interview, 15 December 2015].

Bourdieu's concept of fields offers an explanation for these practitioners' experience of not fitting in (Thomson, 2017). While Marcus had a background in arts-based engagement, his professional practice was rooted in the field of youth work. He had built up social, educational and professional capital that was deemed relevant in that field. It could also be argued that he had developed a critical youth worker habitus – a set of sensibilities that compelled him to dedicate his energy towards the welfare of young people and that led him to feel sceptical about signs of institutional coercion. The field of youth work has become a difficult environment for the critical youth worker because of its own submission to market forces and government targets. Marcus claimed that he left youth work after growing “disheartened” by his local authority's increasing prioritisation of attendance numbers over working with young people most in need. The gallery role appeared to offer him an opportunity to creatively engage marginalised young people, but in different ways this environment also proved incompatible with his personal principles.

From the gallery's point of view, their youth programme was situated in the field of gallery education, and within the wider field of the visual art sector. Efforts were made to recruit practitioners with types of capital not usually privileged in the visual art sector. However as demonstrated in this example, the idea of agents entering and inhabiting a field that is not their own is full of complexity. On speaking to Marcus' colleague, it was made clear that they also felt the impact of a “clash of cultures” between the field of youth work and the field of gallery education. This was referred to in reports as an ‘internal schism between youth work ‘pedagogy’ and a perceived gallery ‘pedagogy’ or agenda’ [interim report, 2014]. His manager identified a resistance in the youth worker to accept the logic of gallery education and skills and methods associated with peer-led practice. The manager felt strongly that young people could gain enormous benefits from exposure to the “core business of galleries – exhibitions”, and that

gallery educators frequently demonstrate a deep commitment to ensuring that young people are “allowed into the citadel” in a democratic, imaginative way [interview, 27 February, 2017]. So in this sense, both practitioners apparently experienced the sensation of having their areas of expertise undervalued by agents in external fields.

The positioning of youth workers as critical friends in Circuit appeared to accommodate a more harmonious relationship between youth and arts practitioners. Perhaps because these freelancers were not embroiled in institutional politics they were able to maintain a measure of distance and objectivity. In the gallery described above, an external youth practitioner was recruited to work as a freelance facilitator and unofficial critical friend, whose main focus was to concentrate on youth development in partnership work. The purpose of her role was to conduct a “needs analysis” of the young people and youth organisation, so the work was made meaningful and relevant to all agents. When interviewed, this practitioner said:

*My brief was very much - they need to develop the facilitation side, they need that personal growth element exploring. The artist will take care of the art - we need to focus on building that relationship because youth workers know how to work with young people, this is the job [they do] every day - looking after them, trying to draw out the learning. So it was how could I reinforce that, bring a different voice to it, but make sure it tied in.*  
[Interview, 9 September 2015].

With the endorsement of the youth organisation, this practitioner sought to focus on young people’s communication, teamwork and listening skills, and their capacity for taking ownership of projects. This clear division of labour within the partnership seemed to smoothen out the potential for friction between the arts and youth practitioners. Despite not having any prior contact with the arts sector, this practitioner was able to easily move between both the gallery field and the youth work field, because she was not being asked to perform a role that was outside her professional comfort zone. She said of her experience:

*From a personal point of view I feel quite valued within the organisation because people listen to your opinion and they understand and let you take ownership and ask for your opinion and know where your strengths lie. So I will be asked to do things that they know are within my remit.*

She had a good working relationship with Marcus “because we sing from the same sheet”, but she also appreciated the ability of Marcus’ gallery colleagues to inspire and engage young people to explore their interests in and through art:

*The artists can bring things the youth workers can't, the youth workers can bring things that the artist can't. And I think it's not necessarily even a case of how would you approach young people, it's a case of what do you know as an adult, because I'd like to know it and I think it can only enhance my practice.*  
[Interview, 9 September 2015].

It would be problematic to extrapolate too much from this one example of a gallery’s positioning of expertise, but the account indicates how galleries in Circuit trialled different ways of inviting knowledge from the field of youth work into their respective fields of practice. This particular practitioner was not required to play the game of gallery-based youth programming, but rather her youth development skills and ability to speak the language of youth work were recognised on their own merit.

The external status of the programme’s critical friends seemed to mean that they were less interested in advancing their own position in the field, and they were potentially perceived as less of a threat to galleries’ fundamental logic of practice. In another Circuit gallery for instance, their critical friend (a retired youth worker) saw it as her goal to instil confidence in young people and provoke moments of disruption, so young people could elevate their power and influence within Circuit. I will call this practitioner “Jane”. Jane said that she sometimes played the role of “the daft one” in wider Circuit sessions – asking adult staff to clarify their language in order to “give permission for other people to stop pretending that they know what they are doing”. Jane said about her position in Circuit:

*I never made a relationship with anybody [in the wider Circuit programme] - I was in and out. So it didn't matter to me about my ego at all - and I could say some things and see what went on, see how people would react to that. So that's quite liberating for me, and I think it's quite good if people do say what they mean. [Interview, 30 October 2015].*

Jane was confident of her professional identity and uninterested in conforming to the tacit rules of the game in the gallery programming field if these did not serve the needs of young people. She was able to identify instances of misrecognition and highlight these without causing young people embarrassment. This also happened in other sites. One gallery worked with a volunteer who was studying youth work as a mature student. This volunteer helped to support peer group meetings and events. She told me that she had noticed that some young people were “not getting a word in” in meetings, so she made it her role to “ask the stupid questions” and deformatise the conversations, in order to make others feel more comfortable [interview, 14 November, 2014]. She implied that “knowing nothing about art” was useful in carrying out this role. In this sense, the volunteer’s presumed lack of institutional cultural capital was used to the group’s advantage.

As the programme progressed, Jane sought to encourage the staff at her local gallery to be self-reflective about their own behaviour towards young people, and to listen thoroughly to young people’s concerns. She said in conversation with her gallery colleagues:

*Young people can give you feedback now, you don't need me – you have your critical friends sitting outside having a fag. [Interview, 30 October, 2015].*

These types of interventions were warmly received by the young people and staff at the gallery in question. The youth practitioner was able to play a part in creating a more democratic environment between young people and staff. And the gallery workers recognised the value of employing a youth practitioner in a

critical, advisory capacity. By positioning the youth practitioner in this consultative, mediating role, the gallery was equally able to help enhance the position and voice of young people in the programme and change the way that staff communicated with young people.

In summary, the positioning of agents within the temporary programmatic field established by Circuit demonstrated the challenges and rewards of bringing together field expertise that was specific to the visual arts and the youth sector. The accounts also illustrate how the programme sought to disrupt the status quo, or conventional 'doxa' of the gallery field, by adapting its understanding of legitimate occupational capital. These changes exposed differences in cultural values and sometimes resulted in tension, but in most cases this tension illuminated systemic, structural barriers and produced important learning for staff members and institutions about the potential for cross-sector collaboration beyond the scope of partnership projects. Youth organisations undoubtedly resided in a position of marginality within Circuit, and one of the reasons for this lay in the original design and funding structure of the programme. The distribution of funding to Tate, and subsequently to arts organisations ensured that these institutions held the share of the power afforded by financial capital. Without prominent national representation of youth organisations and agencies, there was also minimal scope for advocating for change in the broader youth sector field, or for speaking out as allies on a national platform against cuts to youth provision for instance. While gallery practitioners appreciated the ability to focus on local need, some saw the lack of work with national partners as a missed opportunity to wield the power of institutions to influence change on a more ambitious level. The final chapter of this thesis addresses the potential for drawing out learning from Circuit on a wider scale, and using this to inform and support future action.

## **Chapter 8: Implications for practice and research**

Having discussed the temporary programmatic and collaborative fields conjured by Circuit, this final section of the thesis asks whether a permanent collaborative or cooperative field between youth organisations and galleries is possible. With the benefit of learning from Circuit, I suggest ways forward for sustained cross-sector partnership and propose concrete actions in the context of a new social and political landscape. I also reflect on my own attempts at contributing to the development of a shared research field around creative informal education, as part of the public extension of the PhD work. This concluding set of movements tries to imagine change in the field of gallery education (as Bourdieu would infer is plausible) but it also takes account of some of the entrenched conditions in the field that are most challenging to overcome. The idea of a permanent collaborative field envisions a lasting, equitable state of allegiance between youth organisations and galleries, and between the youth and gallery education sectors, beyond the confines of a short-term funded project. I advocate that this could function in multiple places - at regional levels as well as at a national level, but also acknowledge the profound organisational and strategic shifts this would demand to be realised in a meaningful way.

### **Understanding partner fields and cross-field effects**

One of the major points of learning gleaned both from the fieldwork and engagement with literature was the recognition that practitioners from the youth and gallery education sectors have a relatively surface-level understanding of one another's fields. Bourdieu's theory of fields helps us comprehend the reasons for this. Despite the fact that both youth work and gallery education involve working with young people, the habitus of those populating these fields and the capitals required to operate within them are markedly distinct (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Grenfell and Hardy, 2003). Circuit allocated a two-year period for relationship building, where it was hoped that practitioners might

build networks, initiate skill sharing and align visions and values with prospective partners before entering into project work. However, evidence from the fieldwork demonstrated that these types of practice-based exchanges were difficult to enact. There seemed to be little discussion of precedents for doing this work of practice exchange between the fields. And there is not an established history of overlap between the fields of youth work and the institutional visual arts in the same way that there *is* a tradition of coalescence between youth work and the performing arts.

In witnessing tensions unfold between some youth and arts practitioners within Circuit it became increasingly apparent that a mutual respect for practice was needed for practitioners to work effectively together. Generating a mutual respect for practice would require workers to consciously build a 'feel for the game' in one another's professional worlds (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004, p.366). Throughout my engagement with the fields of youth work and gallery education during the PhD I grew convinced that this understanding needed to be built at a sector level rather than simply at an institutional level. It was apparent (from attending sector events and talking to practitioners) that there was no shared research and practice community that encompassed workers and academics from across youth work and the visual arts. I recognised that my PhD context presented an opportunity to explore the possibility for a network or platform to bring together these communities around common concerns. As previously described, I organised a seminar and two meetings in Nottingham, Manchester and London, with a view to extending dialogue around these concerns. The meetings in particular (each attended by 7-8 invited researchers and practitioners) acted as useful forums through which to float this argument for a shared research and practice community. In these meetings we discussed the underrepresentation of the arts in youth and community work training and education, as well as in conferences and other events. A representative from an Arts Council Bridge organisation claimed they found it difficult to get messages out to the youth sector, or to speak on youth work platforms. We also discussed problematic or reductive conceptions of 'youth work' from the perspective of

visual arts organisations. There was a consensus that more rigorous and coordinated efforts needed to be made to embed research and practice exchange across the sectors [meetings, 27 November 2015; 27 May 2016]. The dialogue and learning from these events fed into a successful bid for AHRC network funding, which will allow a network to form in 2017-18 (led by Manchester Metropolitan University).

### ***- Sharing knowledge capitals***

In the future, this type of research and practice exchange could be organised in a number of different ways. For example, galleries could become involved in youth work degree courses and training programmes, and gallery visits and arts-based pedagogies could be built into the curriculum of modules. During my research I met several youth work lecturers from universities and colleges across England who felt that there were untapped opportunities for partnership between their institutions and local art institutions. One lecturer had drafted a proposal for a module that would focus on critical and theoretical engagements with art as a means of encouraging reflective, dialectic youth work practice. Another lecturer was keen to work with their local gallery in order to support youth work students to understand the potential for political engagement with young people, and the possibilities for using visual art practice and gallery spaces to express and deal with controversial issues. A third youth work lecturer I spoke to said she had noticed that her youth work students (who were predominantly from working class backgrounds) felt very apprehensive about entering museums, so her experience indicated that alliances with galleries would need to involve more than one-off visits. It could be useful for instance for galleries to offer space or resources for youth work tutors to run regular seminars or workshops, and for arts practitioners to act as guest speakers. These types of alliances could also help youth work courses to increase their profile - both within their institutions and externally - at a time when student intake is in decline and some courses are being shut down (Hayes, 2017).



While there are fewer vocational courses for gallery education professionals, it would be possible for youth practitioners and organisations to be paid to deliver continuing professional development for gallery workers, and for these workers to do job shadowing in youth settings. There are also numerous sector support organisations in the visual arts field that could provide platforms for youth sector leaders to take a more prominent role in communicating needs and ideas to the gallery education community. Some gallery practitioners in Circuit articulated that they would like to have heard from senior practitioners in the youth sector, who could have given an overview of the status of the sector and current working practices [interview, 13 August 2015]. It was acknowledged by one board member that Circuit was designed around a dated understanding of a youth sector that no longer existed [interview, 26 May 2015]. Interactions with youth practitioners and youth organisations demonstrated that the youth sector was undergoing a period of significant change, where youth workers were less likely to have a direct line to young people, and they were less able to afford the time to collaborate on external projects. Funding cuts brought about by austerity have meant that youth workers are increasingly working beyond typical youth work settings (Lepper, 2017), and the ‘quasi-marketisation’ of the sector has dismantled and recast traditional statutory service delivery models (McGimpsey, 2017). Circuit practitioners discovered (through the course of the programme) the need to acquire a more up-to-date comprehension of contemporary circumstances for youth organisations and services. Most gallery practitioners were very unfamiliar with the language and protocols associated with commissioning for instance.

This level of unfamiliarity is not unusual in galleries, where partnerships are frequently formed with a diverse range of organisations and services, all dealing with different challenges. On rare occasions some galleries and youth organisations involved in Circuit devised away days, where teams from both organisations could escape from their typical routines and create room for harnessing one another’s skills, expertise and knowledge. I attended one such away day, where there was significant in-depth discussion around the status of

youth services and issues facing young people in the locality. A broad range of topics were covered - from the lack of provision for LGBT young people, to concerns over regeneration initiatives breeding hostility towards working class communities. Practitioners were also invited to talk much more personally about their professional motivations, and to bring in objects that reflected these [Away day, 9 September 2015]. Combined with there being time allocated for walking, eating and games, this type of away day format encouraged peers from different fields to develop professional intimacy, friendship and awareness of individual dispositions. In future programmes like Circuit, structured residential trips and away days might help to advance capacity for co-learning and sharing. Replicating the 'monastic tradition of spending time together' (Davies, 2017) could compel workers to explore one another's fields, capitals and habitus in a less didactic, more collegiate environment.

Two Circuit sites also demonstrated the value of creating cross-field networks of practitioners, which could run as long-term initiatives, bringing together regional communities of practitioners around a common interest in working with young people. One gallery hosted a youth network that convened every couple of months, chaired by the dynamic local Bishop, who had good links with the faith and secular youth sectors in the area. I attended three of these meetings, and noted the inclusive chairing style of the Bishop, who welcomed representatives from diverse corners of youth work – from sailing clubs and girl guides, to the YMCA and Children's Society. In this space, practitioners were encouraged to talk openly about their needs, as well as the resources and opportunities they could offer. While all meetings were held at the gallery (at the request of attendees), the gallery staff held back from taking a managerial role in the group. Having an external chair not directly employed by a youth organisation appeared to support democratic, non-hierarchical exchange. These informal local network meetings were inexpensive to run, and they offered a platform for practitioners to describe the nature of their work, and the issues they were trying to address. The meetings also provided opportunities for agents to connect with potential partners they may never have previously considered working with. In my

experience, the gallery field and fields of practicing religion rarely come into contact, however as the youth sector has a strong tradition of working through faith based organisations, networks such as these help to forge unexpected relationships and break down preconceptions.

Another Circuit gallery chose to initiate a local network oriented exclusively around working with learning disabled young people. In this scenario, the gallery *did* take on a lead/hosting role, and they invited representatives of organisations from both the youth and cultural sectors whose core work involved programming for and with learning disabled people. During these meetings, participants were invited to take turns in presenting aspects of their practice through case studies and through distributing resources. Time was also allocated for long conversational lunches and attendees were given free membership to the gallery. I attended one of these meetings and interviewed a practitioner from a dance organisation to gather feedback on her experiences. This practitioner claimed the network meetings were “invaluable” for making face-to-face contact with new and existing peers. She also believed the focus on learning disability ensured that the network was “specific” and had “integrity” [interview, September 2015]. The meetings were also attended by members of staff from other gallery departments (such as visitor services) which demonstrated the host organisation’s commitment to inclusive engagement and recruitment. This is an example of a more targeted approach to practice exchange, where an institution decides to direct its energies towards building organisational expertise in a particular area, and making cross-field connections around this body of knowledge and experience. From a gallery perspective, developing an organisational specialism over several years can help institutions to establish legitimacy within the corresponding youth sector, and enable them to build credible capital within that field. The concept of developing general or specialist local networks across the youth and visual art sectors is one that could be duplicated widely, and could increase understanding between the fields.

### ***- Recognising challenges and opportunities***

The fieldwork has also shown however that it is necessary to look closely at why the work of practice exchange between these two sectors is particularly challenging. In many respects, the social structures of 'industrial segmentation' and contemporary working practices operate to keep partners apart (Davies, 2017). Limited time is an often-repeated grievance of practitioners. Workers in the youth sector have considerable constraints on their capacity due to workload and stretched staff teams. Agents in these sectors also typically have quite different life and education experiences, they speak different professional languages and they are inclined to prioritise different things in their work – reflecting their distinct habitus. These less visible factors impact on practitioners' ability to talk to one another. A gallery practitioner may feel just as intimidated in a youth setting, speaking to a group of caseworkers, as a youth practitioner may feel in a gallery setting, speaking to a group of arts workers. Additionally, one of the key issues arguably affecting both fields is that they habitually struggle to reach a collective definition of their logic of practice. The field of youth work is a highly contested space, with practitioners at odds about the future direction of a sector that has experienced various waves of decline (Jeffs, 2011). There is no singular vision for the sector that can easily be translated for another field. In the case of gallery education, it is commonly asserted that the practice is often described in terms of other related disciplines rather than as a distinct field in its own right (Cutler, 2013). Equally, discourse around gallery education is often largely familiar only to those who work directly within the field. The body of scholarship that surrounds gallery education is limited in comparison to other education-based disciplines and the practice has had to fight to achieve recognition even within the wider museum and gallery sector (Charman, 2005). These factors mean that many practitioners adopt their professional persona from engaging with a mixture of critical theory, cultural studies, art history and sociology, as well as through practical experience. Practitioners are not generally accustomed to sharing a set of established principles of practice with agents from other fields.

This type of open, 'permeable' professionalism (Charman, 2005) – which is a feature of the disciplinary boundaries both in gallery education and youth work – *can* be viewed as a vital advantage in the creation of a collaborative professional field. The porousness and ambiguity of these occupational fields arguably makes them more receptive to outsider ideas, and to practice-based knowledge. Many practitioners in informal education celebrate the flexible and responsive grassroots sensibility of 'open' forms of youth work, and they try to resist efforts to reduce these knowledges to an easily packaged orthodoxy (de St Croix, 2016).

Graham (2012a, p.59) says the following about gallery education:

*I think the self-education side of things is really, really important. In some ways in this field, at the cross-section of so many other fields, it's been necessary to invent forms of knowing about it. Those forms of knowing are partially through intuition and trying things out in the field, partially through the histories we unearth to find inspiration and also in the moments we reflect with other people.*

It would be a mistake to read these claims as indicating that the field lacks purpose or direction. Rather there is a determination to take a creative and exploratory approach to building occupational identity. While this sensibility does perhaps contribute to the sector's disinclination to learn from past experience, I discovered in Circuit that many gallery education workers (several of whom were artists) felt passionately about learning through doing. Similarly in youth work, while there are elements of the practice that may appear 'chaotic', this area of work has evolved over many decades and has been the subject of strong discourse and debate (de St Croix, 2016, p.4). Engagement with critical, often radical pedagogy forms part of the common ground that these fields and their inhabitants share. Alternative and experimental models and histories of socially engaged practice – through play, activism and other dialogic interaction - continue to influence these fields. These points of commonality could be utilised to a much greater extent in the process of creating a collaborative intellectual space and language.

I would also argue that it is necessary to identify ‘cross-field effects’ – in other words specific events, or changes to systems and structures that have an impact across multiple social fields (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004). This activity can help to pinpoint other connections and common causes between fields, and support agents to appreciate the challenges being experienced by partners. This is something I attempted to do in the organisation of Circuit’s end of programme conference. This conference asked delegates to consider ‘how the two sectors can work together effectively in turbulent social and political times, to challenge inequalities and champion young people’s cultural participation’. We posited that speakers would discuss ‘how to collaborate meaningfully while cuts and policy changes are altering the landscape of national youth provision’ (Tate, 2017). These types of statements were drafted in order to clearly articulate the cross-field effects of current symptoms of social division (brought about by racial, generational and class inequality) as well as the effects of cuts or threats to youth provision. Panel speakers were briefed to cover issues that linked with major galvanising events – from the 2011 riots and ‘Brexit’ to the election of Donald Trump. We intended to build a context for provocative discussion around the shared social urgencies that held important implications for young people, and that touched all practitioners working across the youth and gallery education sectors.

In summary, the difficult context in which this work takes place demands that these partner fields examine their homologies and differences, as well as their potential to act as allies around a common commitment to young people. In generating space for mutual understanding and exchange, it is possible to highlight how the broader effects of power impact similarly across distinct fields. Both sectors have been influenced by the infiltration of market forces, and in more recent years both have experienced cuts that have advanced concerns about the future of informal provision. Growing levels of inequality have raised alarm about the disenfranchisement of the most marginalised communities, and have refocused attention on ways of engaging those with least access to

provision. Youth services and galleries experience similar difficulties in their pursuit of so-called 'harder to reach' young people, and overall they are both negatively impacted by the wider devaluing of informal education in public policy. However, importantly, the visual arts sector can offer a platform for 'resistance' and hope in a civic environment that is relatively hostile to open-ended, creatively risky or overtly political forms of engagement with young people (McQuay, 2012, p.208). For this opportunity to be recognised and taken up, the fields of youth work and gallery education need to communicate their practices effectively and afford structured time to educate and initiate agents from corresponding fields. Art organisations also need to consider their social responsibilities by moving away from the inclination to sound apolitical and 'dispassionate', and harnessing their ability to foster public debate around social justice (Fleming, 2014). Relationships between organisations ideally need to be established on a more permanent footing and those in dominant leadership positions could think strategically about how to create spaces for the fusion of skills, tools and ideas from both fields. In doing so, it may be possible in the longer term for these fields to renegotiate the types of capitals that count within them, and for senior staff to confidently employ and support practitioners from either field within their organisations.

### **Reaching a common understanding of good partnership practice**

As intimated in the previous section, the work of cross-field exchange does not come naturally to agents whose practices and dispositions are firmly rooted in a particular social or professional field. This has not only got to do with the social structures that determine agents' field occupations, and the 'collective rhythms' that govern field activity (Bourdieu, 1977, p.163). My findings have shown that it also has to do with people's conceptions of partnership, and specifically, the problem of there being a lack of critical consensus-building around the meaning and implications of partnership. There is a taken-for-granted expectation within programmes that practitioners know *how* to partner. The rhetoric of partnership is so pervasively present across organisational and policy cultures that the term

has achieved a ubiquitous status, and as such it is seldom deconstructed (Ellison, 2015). In Circuit there was relatively minimal discussion about the terms and practice of partnership – rather, while support was offered, practitioners were encouraged to develop relationships themselves, based on their instincts or existing knowledge about how to conduct a good collaborative relationship. This is not an unusual phenomenon in the arts sector, where there is a lack of research into the practice of partnership and where practitioners are accustomed to developing relationships independently (Ellison, 2015).

### **- *Conceptualising partnership***

In thinking about how the fields of youth work and gallery education might work together on a more sustained and embedded level, it is essential to give more rigorous thought and clarity to conceptualisations of partnership. In this research, the term ‘partnership’ was not always a sufficient descriptor for the types of connections and relationships made between organisations in Circuit. The fact that few organisations in Circuit drafted written agreements to define the status of their relationships seemed to signify this absence of clarity. And there were multiple instances in the programme where this looseness of definition allowed agents to adopt their own understandings of the relationships they had entered into, even if these differed from the understanding of the corresponding organisation. In several cases this situation caused some frustration – for instance when gallery workers felt they were being treated as service deliverers in a youth setting, or when youth workers felt that they were being used as suppliers of young people for the gallery groups and projects.

Concerns about the wider ambiguities around partnership have reverberated across the youth and art sectors, partially because the concept has been so heavily deployed by recent governments and funders. This has led to an emergence of research exploring how these sectors can better articulate the nuances of practice associated with working together. Davies (2015), who writes from a youth work perspective, argues that there are various ways of



categorising how organisations work together, and suggests that organisations should devise and agree on a conceptual framework or design for partnership based on a deeper comprehension of these separate categories. Davies makes a distinction for instance between coordinated, cooperative and collaborative relationships, and he reasons that the type of alliance is determined by the shared dimensions of a union – in other words whether or not the organisations have shared obligations, shared intentions or shared activity. His argument is that while ‘collaboration’ is often held up as the highest form of partnership, well-coordinated or cooperative relationships can be equally effective if the partners’ goals and actions are not the same. Davies suggests that the nature of a partnership has to be agreed at all levels of an organisation, so there is little discrepancy between the understanding of those in senior positions (who may have negotiated the relationship) and those who may have been delegated the work on the ground. In bringing greater coherence and collective comprehension to the partnership design, it may be possible to mitigate the problems that often arise when vague or inconsistent conceptions of partnership are communicated.

Similar efforts are being made in the arts, where an enquiry into *The art of partnering* (Ellison, 2015) commissioned by King’s College London has sought to collate and present a new taxonomy of terms for use by the cultural sector in discourse around partnership. The taxonomy details 16 different types of relationships and lists their orientation and characteristics. A sample from this list follows:

Type of relationship		Characteristics
Project/programme delivery	Goal-oriented	Set up by two organisations to deliver jointly a one-off project or programme
Multi-stakeholder project	Goal-oriented	Several organisations join together to deliver a one-off project or programme
Operational/resource building	Resource-based	Focused on each organisation providing the other(s) with ongoing resource/capacity

(Ellison, 2015)

The full list of categories by itself is not comprehensive enough to cover all possible permutations, but it represents an attempt to apply distinctions to different types of alliances. In this study it is acknowledged that there is often reticence amongst cultural workers to fix down relationship models rather than to allow partnerships to evolve organically, however it also demonstrates an appetite for greater critical scrutiny around the logic and principles of practice in the sector. These types of inventories could act as useful tools for youth and art organisations in early discussions about expectations, motivations and ways to work together, and in the drawing up of partnership agreements. If organisations are transparent and precise with their vocabulary, there is also heightened potential for partners to hold one another to account if a relationship diverges dramatically from its original status.

There is inevitably danger that the incorporation of predetermined models and tools in partnership work might overly formalise relationships and come close to resembling methods derived from the corporate sector. Because of this it is preferable that any tools used are co-designed by practitioners in the fields of youth work and the arts. This is happening in the case of individual initiatives such as the East London Cultural Education Partnership, where researchers from

informal education and the arts are coming together to test a fit-for-purpose tool using a series of relevant descriptors and a framework for developing meanings and measurements around partnership. Evidence is collected at four month intervals so there are opportunities to modify or change the framework where needed (Cunningham, 2016). Large scale programmes such as this and Circuit have the resources and the incentive to invest time in developing suitable frameworks for use by practitioners and organisations.

### **- *Tracking and evaluating partnership***

I also discovered during my fieldwork that (beyond my PhD) the *quality* of partnerships was rarely the subject of evaluation and assessment in Circuit. While gallery practitioners often reported on the progress of projects and the outcomes of partnerships, the complexities of developing and managing relationships were much less frequently reflected upon in evaluation and reporting documents. There was a tendency to focus on the experience and journey of young people in youth engagement projects, but the journey of partnership and the experience of partners were less likely to be formally tracked. One of the possible reasons for this is that it wasn't an explicit requirement of the reporting structure that organisations feed back on the nature of their partnerships. My CDP was also considered part of the programme's efforts to cover partnership working. But had a comprehensive methodology been in place to analyse and monitor the evolution of relationships, it may have been possible to build this practice into partnership working itself. It is worth acknowledging that in an already evaluation-heavy programme, the prospect of implementing another set of evaluative processes may have proved too demanding. But it is also conceivable that this approach may have helped partners to develop a joint reflective routine, and to communicate issues through a supported framework.

Throughout my research I encountered a number of projects (outside of Circuit) that employed different tools for mapping the partnership process. A Leeds-

based Connected Communities project called *How should heritage decisions be made?* tested creative ways of collaboratively tracking decision making between different community and organisational stakeholders. Influenced by Systemic action research, this initiative mapped relationships and contributions to create a 'working picture' of the connections between people and organisations (Graham, 2015, p.11). The project employed an illustrator to draw visualisations of these relationships, which plotted processes, problems and key issues and debates in graphic form. According to those involved, this approach enabled participants to notice the 'challenges of working together across boundaries', and to work through these collectively (Heritage decisions, p.17). This type of method showed how in implementing shared reflective mechanisms and taking time to represent the workings of a partnership, different agents could potentially capture, interpret and digest the complex journey of partnership working.

In 2014 the Towner art gallery in Eastbourne also developed a partnership toolkit for youth and cultural partners to adopt. Through this toolkit they encourage the creation of 'relationship maps' for every partner, which can act as visual representations of each stakeholder's social and professional networks and support systems and can help practitioners to understand one another's obligations and dependencies (Currie, 2014). One of the key dimensions of this resource is the emphasis it places on articulating who the partners are, and on distinguishing young people themselves as partners, rather than characterising them as affiliates of an organisational partner. The toolkit proposes that each partner (including young people) should outline their priorities for the partnership, and their understanding of what constitutes good practice in a joint project. The partners would also collectively discuss how they would measure the value of their collaboration. While I have no data on the effectiveness of this tool, my experience in the field suggests that organisational partners could benefit from the introduction of established exercises to build mutual agreement around aims, indicators of success and evaluation processes. In Circuit some of these conversations did happen informally, and meetings between practitioners did provide opportunities for reflection, but there was little evidence of partners

coordinating formally on their methods.

If the youth and visual art sectors *are* to develop a longer-term, more integrated collaborative field, it will also be necessary for the visual art sector to involve itself in current dialogue around evidence and impact in the youth sector. From my engagement with youth sector events, I noticed the growing prevalence and intensity of debates around impact and outcomes amongst practitioners, researchers, policy makers and managers in the field. During my fieldwork I attended two events led by The Centre for Youth Impact, which was initially launched in 2014 and funded by the Cabinet Office to bring together expertise and build capacity and skills around impact measurement in youth work. These events revealed that a major concern in the sector is the perception of there being a weak body of evidence with which to advocate for youth work. It is felt that the poor funding settlement for youth work in 2010 came about as a result of the youth sector making an unconvincing case for its work to government (Feinstein, 2015). Consequently there has been considerable attention directed towards the development of learning tools for capturing the value of youth work and services. For instance, The Centre for Youth Impact promotes the use of theory of change models and outcomes frameworks, and its website hosts a wide variety of evaluation toolkits. Outside of privately funded programmes such as Circuit, it is likely that projects and partnerships are going to be utilising these models to an even greater extent in the future. So it is incumbent on agents from fields who seek to work with the youth sector to enhance their awareness of these tools.

Importantly however, the visual art sector can also play a role in supporting rigorous critique around outcomes-led practice and in helping to develop creative, open-ended and reflective models of work. A large faction of youth practitioners believe that the focus on outcomes undermines the distinct nature of youth work and inserts a culture of performance management and formality into a practice that should be underpinned by young person-centred, informal relationships (Taylor, 2015). The dominance of the outcomes agenda is thought

by some to be heavily tied up with market driven imperatives, and there is concern that this pressured professional environment leads to deceit and the fabrication of results (de St Croix, 2015b; Taylor, 2015). Proponents of the In Defence of Youth Work Campaign argue that discursive, critical approaches to evaluation (for instance through story-telling methods) provide an alternative form of accountability that serves the needs of practitioners and young people (de St Croix, 2015b). The visual art sector potentially has a lot to offer in this debate, but its voice appears to be comparatively muted. There are examples of arts-based youth organisations being involved in pilot studies around evaluation methodologies, such as The Arts Cohort for the Project Oracle Children and Youth Evidence Hub. However while this project did include the participation of an Arts Council Bridge organisation and music and theatre companies, it did not include galleries and museums (Project Oracle, 2016).

By contributing to this wider dialogue around evaluation and evidence, the visual art sector also potentially builds its ability to define the legitimacy of the arts in fields connected with the youth sector (such as health, social care, crime etc.), which can support youth practitioners to justify their work with arts organisations. The combined challenge for the youth and visual art sectors is to convince external fields of power that their body of evidence should be valued. There are inherent and ongoing tensions involved in finding methods that are appropriate for the fields of youth work and gallery education, and that also suit the demands of authorities and funders. In seminars I attended around impact measurement in the arts it was acknowledged that there is a general hesitancy towards impact measurement in the cultural sector and a lack of cultural policy measurement tools [A New Direction Seminar: How do we measure the impact of arts and culture for young Londoners? Toynbee Hall, 20 November 2013]. It was suggested that arts organisations need to get better at utilising existing information from their partners (such as statutory data) and at closing the separation between evaluation of artistic quality and evaluation of social impact [Creating Links workshop: AESOP Arts enterprise with a social purpose, Ovalhouse, 3 December 2014]. However it was also emphasised that while

practitioners in the cultural sector often resist assessment, they are known to relish reflection. Evidence hubs such as Project Oracle are exploring systematic solutions to the issue of cross-sector evaluation, and there is undoubtedly room for visual art institutions to feed into these conversations.

Circuit for instance developed a wide range of participatory and youth-led evaluation techniques, which could be shared with these hubs to expand the pool of ideas for assessing creative and social effects. I am also conscious that the CDP supporting this PhD represented a determination by Circuit to rigorously examine partnership, and to create a package of research that might be useful to the youth and gallery education fields. In recruiting researchers to co-investigate partnership initiatives, organisations can expose themselves to different research methods and facilitate critical analysis that may help practitioners to reflect on what they do. The growing body of work exploring ways to value collaborative research is undoubtedly of use here (Facer and Pahl, 2017). As suggested earlier, the key to experience and knowledge being effectively shared is the furtherance of infrastructure to enable cross-field learning. Bridge organisations, funders and membership organisations are well placed to bring together youth and art organisations and to help build ‘communities of practice’ around evaluation and research (Project Oracle, 2016, p.13).

#### ***- Embedding organisational memory of good and bad partnership practice***

One of the key benefits to developing a permanent collaborative or cooperative field across the youth and gallery education sectors is the potential it offers to avert the cycle of bad practice that often emerges in temporary, one-off partnership programming. The establishment of a localised collaborative field also increases the possibility of learning and experience around partnership being embedded across organisations. Interviews with gallery practitioners in Circuit highlighted that there was a lack of inherited practice across galleries, and a tendency for institutions to have a short-term memory if the staff turnover was high. Circuit’s recruitment of largely early career (or less established) staff

members in roles connected to partnership working meant that many practitioners were new to their organisations and less likely to come equipped with years of practice-based expertise. The “delivery” of partnership working was rarely the duty of heads of learning, who were usually more established in their roles. Circuit’s recruitment model mirrored typical employment models in gallery education, where modest levels of pay are allocated, which often attract more junior workers. While this serves the purpose of enabling younger practitioners to gain entry into a competitive sector, it also means that practice has to be learnt (sometimes from scratch) each time a new worker assumes their role, and the potential for repeating the errors of previous generations increases.

Senior staff members from the Circuit galleries and the funder suggested that in order to hold on to knowledge, programmes needed to have a clear legacy and dissemination strategy for passing on experience to future colleagues and peers. The Director, Grants and Programmes at PHF asked at an earlier stage in the programme:

*Are there lessons, recipes, tips that can be shared, that show what is more likely to work in developing new relationships with youth organisations? [...] Can we make of these various experiments, something that has clarity? That would be helpful. Is it ten questions to ask yourself when you want to work in that way? Is it as practical as a mapping exercise that enables you to understand who is your local partner?*

[Interview, 1 September 2015].

Sharing learning with the sector was a key tenet of Circuit’s blog and its subsequent legacy activity. I also worked to share my own learning through these channels.

The various partnerships discussed within this thesis displayed aspects of practice that worked well, and aspects of practice that have not been effective in generating sustainable, equitable relationships between youth organisations and galleries. Many features of the problematic practice were recognisable habits and tendencies that arise frequently in this type of work. The repetition of



problematic practice was an issue I attempted to emphasise whenever presenting papers or organising events involving practitioners from the youth and art sector. It was suggested on one occasion that by acknowledging and consolidating the *worst* practice that occurs when youth and arts organisations work together, it would be possible to better identify the principles of *good* practice (Thomson, 2015). Throughout my research then, I kept account of behaviour that was deemed to be troubling or conditions that were cited as obstructive, and have shared these findings at different opportunities, including in a chapter written for Circuit's legacy publications. For the purposes of this thesis, I will list below some of the features of relationships between arts and youth organisations that are often highlighted as barriers to successful partnership:

- Arts organisations being positioned as the default leaders in a partnership due to the distribution of funding
- The tendency for projects to be planned *for* rather than *with* youth partners, and for creative agency to lie with the arts partner
- Lack of time allocated for planning, knowledge sharing, relationship-building, training and reflection
- The expectation for youth organisations to act as providers of groups of young people rather than as equal collaborators
- Vulnerable young people being set up to fail in arts projects with significant expectations and pressures, and a lack of awareness around safeguarding, which can lead to a breakdown of trust between practitioners and young people
- A culture of competition rather than collaboration in the current funding climate, which breeds 'gatekeeping' practices, where organisations are protective of their own cohort and reluctant to refer/signpost on to other opportunities
- Practitioners (both youth workers and artists) being put into situations where they are unprepared, out of their professional comfort zone and

under-supported

Circuit represented an effort to break a range of organisational habits around partnership working that were known to be ineffectual. However, the fieldwork revealed that many of these habits and structures were so engrained, that they were destined to be replicated through the programme. For instance the way that Circuit was initiated and funded meant that the galleries (and Tate in particular) maintained control over the budgets and authority over the way the programme was designed and managed. The programming rhythms and working patterns of galleries and youth organisations could also not be easily disrupted, and so creating space for unfettered relationship building seemed virtually impossible in many cases. The commodification of so-called 'harder to reach' young people in public organisations is also a symptom of much broader pressures shaped by public policy or funding targets. So any consideration of 'bad practice' needs to keep abreast of the structural forces and external fields of power that often contribute to the maintenance of habitual behaviour.

Nevertheless there *are* arguably ways to shift organisational conduct and to root new traditions of practice into institutions to reinforce long-term change.

Funders such as PHF now ask potential grantees to apply alongside partners to encourage a parity of dialogue and power between peers from different sectors [interview, 1 September 2015]. Large-scale programmes such as Circuit also have the scope and leverage to involve gallery directors, as well as senior staff members in the steering and management of activity, and as a result they are more likely to recognise what needs to change in their organisations. Perhaps as evidence of this, Maria Balshaw, (formerly Director of The Whitworth during Circuit, recently appointed Director of Tate) assumed her role with the chief vision to diversify audiences and pursue culturally inclusive programming (Gompertz, 2017). But the idea of a permanent or long-term local collaborative field proposes that whole organisations invest in a specific arena of practice to the extent that it becomes a naturalised part of the organisational 'doxa'. I have witnessed this type of approach take hold at South London Gallery, where the

organisation's decade-long engagement with playwork and its relationship with the local Tenants and Residents Association has led to the construction of a permanent play venue being installed on the neighbouring estate, run and staffed by playworkers and artists recruited by the gallery. The dialogue between play and contemporary art permeates different facets of the organisation's work, and the institution has also committed to running daily play provision, and adopting expertise from playwork professionals. As a consequence there is an established relationship between the gallery and local parents and children, and the professional playwork sector.

This type of model is rare amongst galleries in the UK – the reason being that it involves a reimagining of the role of the gallery staff, or the overturning of several accepted norms in the gallery field. And even this type of model retains a relatively mainstream contemporary exhibition practice, with a typical art audience for its main spaces. The final section of this chapter is dedicated to examining the pillars of the gallery field, and to discussing how they might be shifted in order to create openings for more porous, reciprocal and sustained engagement with the field of youth work.

### **The challenge of change in galleries and museums**

Bourdieu (1999, p.124) suggests that 'Part of the *inertia* of the structures of social space results from the fact that they are inscribed in physical space and cannot be modified except by a *work of transplantation*, a moving of things and an uprooting or deporting of people, which itself presupposes extremely difficult and costly social transformations'. This characterisation of the immovability of social fields is highly relevant for a discussion of gallery and museum practice, which is inherently tied to the gallery space and its contents, and the communities these spaces tend to attract. Middle class taste and behaviours are so entrenched in many of these venues that to resist them requires significant change to the thresholds and social spaces that middle class publics are familiar with (Cousins, 2014). The exclusivity of gallery architecture is linked to the mixed

economy model that enables these institutions to function – in other words, the need to earn corporate funding, or to maintain a sense of prestige for exhibiting artists, lenders and supporting philanthropists. As explored in the previous chapter, power and authority is therefore located and performed in high profile arts venues, where there is a clear and uneven concentration of resources (Gregson and Rose, 2000). The conditions that are known to alienate some communities are the very conditions that validate and invite the participation of other communities. The capacity for change is therefore hamstrung by the dominant doxa of the field, the social game this produces and the dispositions of inhabitants.

The persistence of inequality in the museum and gallery sector is borne out in participation statistics, which show that the gap between the highest and lowest socio-economic groups engaging with museums in England has remained the same for the past 10 years, despite general increases in attendance (Atkinson, 2017). In addition, recent research has shown that the majority of cultural workers tend not to acknowledge the role played by structural advantages and privileges in shaping the cultural sector workforce (Taylor and O'Brien, 2016). While practitioners might recognise the disproportionately white, middle-class make-up of the cultural sector workforce, they are reluctant to admit that their presence and position in the field is a result of anything other than hard work (Taylor and O'Brien, 2016). These types of findings demonstrate the internal challenges of tackling the underlying causes of a lack of diversity in the sector. Transforming the demographic of a gallery's workforce presupposes that existing workers might need to relinquish their positions. However, as was revealed in several of the partnerships discussed in this thesis, the demographic of peer groups and gallery staffing *did* have an impact on young people's propensity to connect with the gallery and its opportunities on a longer-term basis. There is no escaping the reality that some practitioners and participants from youth organisations felt socially distant from agents in the gallery field. Perhaps if we in the gallery sector more openly utilise Bourdieu's language of 'violence' to describe these issues, it would be possible to shift practitioners' understandings

of these conditions from being benign, normalised features of the arts sector, to understanding them as potentially harmful and stultifying.

Another feature of the museum and gallery field is its relatively conservative attitude to collaboration, or networked culture. While the rhetoric of collaboration touches all aspects of the sector, these spaces are historically known to revolve around 'broadcast' models of transmission, typified by the division between expert and audience (Walsh, et al., 2014, p.2). While in education departments the instinct to work collaboratively is much more developed, the convention is still for the gallery to play host, and therefore for the gallery to hold the balance of power in partnership work (Fusi, 2012). The cultural agency of the gallery is also fundamental to its brand identity. So concepts of cultural democracy in youth programming are undermined by dominant modes of practice in the wider gallery field, which value established knowledge and controlled narratives and hold on to notions of democratising culture. My perception is that it is rare for institutions to fully embrace and explore the diverse, messy spectrum of young people's own cultural and subcultural fields. A balance has to be constantly struck between retaining a commitment towards increasing access to art and artists, and pledging to forefront young people's cultural productions. These goals can be difficult to marry, but they are not incompatible or always divisible.

In many ways young people perceive things that adults often overlook. For instance I discovered in programming the end of Circuit conference that young people were particularly sceptical of how galleries sometimes profiled underrepresented communities and sampled their cultures because it suited a temporary institutional agenda. This was seen as especially problematic when dealing with sensitive political or social issues (such as racial discrimination, or leaving care) that affected some young people's everyday lives. Tokenism in programming and staffing is another vehicle for symbolic violence, and arguably programmes working with marginalised young people have to be given room to explore cultures and issues sensitively and in depth beyond the typical fast-paced

patterns of institutional programming. Galleries have a responsibility to consider how to use their substantial institutional leverage to benefit these communities and raise the profile of their cultural practices in the longer term. These institutions have a unique ability to legitimate and consecrate culture, and to reinvent what is traditionally ascribed to be valuable cultural knowledge. Grenfell and Hardy (2003) note though that the art world establishment – by virtue of its relationship to power (e.g. funders and government) - has a tendency to subsume counter-cultural productions and to filter their transgressive or ‘oppositional’ potency (p.27). I suggest therefore that youth and gallery organisations have to experiment collaboratively and boldly alongside young people and learn how to be politically active together if their work is to have veracity for marginalised young people whose lived oppressions or social justice concerns may be pressing and urgent.

Cutler (2013) argues that *all* agents in an institution must recognise their complicity in upholding power structures and oppressive practices, and that every individual should take responsibility to change the dominant ‘refrain’. While staff in Learning teams across UK galleries might position themselves as the socially conscious, critical voice of their institutions, they too are guilty of preserving the status quo unless they provide ‘structural alternatives’ as opposed to just moments of subversion through one-off events and projects for instance (Cutler, 2013). The pervasiveness of neoliberal values and market forces across the public sector is such that it infiltrates these teams and affects programming to the extent that one’s complicity in perpetuating systems of inequality or symbolic violence can be misrecognised. Peer-led youth programmes are inevitably implicated in this process, and young participants are also just as likely to absorb and replicate institutionalised behaviour if this goes unchallenged. The production of festivals and late night events as core parts of youth programming fit the entrepreneurial, commercialised character of so-called ‘second wave’ cultural activity, which echoes club culture and promotes the idea of the precarious freelance creative and a lifestyle of ‘middle class ‘ducking and diving’’ as something to aspire towards (McRobbie, 2002, p.517, p.525). The conundrum

for the gallery education worker is to reconcile the 'Janus-faced' nature of their occupation, which requires an investment in both institutional programming and social action (Charman, 2005). In trying to reconcile these objectives I have observed a tendency for cultural workers to attempt too much, for too wide an audience, which can result in tokenism and the unintended marginalisation of certain (already excluded) populations.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, sections of the youth and community work field can offer insight into more inclusive ways of working and can potentially help gallery practitioners to reset their understanding of their accountabilities (Graham, 2012b). Galleries and museums need to learn to operate with uncharacteristic institutional humility in order to avoid the scenario where (in the language of a youth work practitioner) youth work expertise exists as a "sideshow" to gallery expertise. The site studies in Chapter 6 hopefully demonstrate how youth workers frequently exercise knowledge of young people's hyperlocal social fields, and cultivate an ability to connect with young people within these fields. These are traits that few art institutions naturally possess, but which are essential for developing meaningful and supportive relationships with young people. Two of the studies described how some practitioners are looking beyond the physical sites of galleries and youth organisations to test out the creation of hybrid, experimental, throwntogether spaces, where the logic and rules of a temporary collaborative field can be negotiated. To do this type of work requires organisations to have a high degree of compatibility, or (if is outside of an organisation's capacity) it requires practitioners to be recruited and paid for specifically. In the longer term this type of work has the potential to reimagine the parameters of gallery-based informal youth provision and to reassert the position of creative, open-access and democratic youth work in civic space. But these small-scale, temporary examples of collaboration will only be able to gain traction as replicable and sustainable models of practice if they are supported by a much wider and more integrated collaborative field – at both regional and national levels.

## Concluding thoughts

This thesis asked: what does a multi-sited gallery youth programme reveal about the nature of partnerships between visual art institutions and youth organisations? I hope the research with Circuit has shown that relationships between these organisations are affected by a much broader and more complex combination of social, cultural and historical factors than is superficially apparent. By mapping the geographies of partnership as sectoral, programmatic and organisational fields, it is possible to extend one's reading of particular behaviour and to situate it in context. Bourdieu's framework shines a light on constructions of practice that go unquestioned or unchanged because they have become a naturalised part of a field's culture. The creation of a temporary programmatic field offers the opportunity to reorganise traditional positions, capitals and logics of practice, but these movements are always working against the gravitational forces of practitioners' home fields.

Nevertheless as the thesis has illustrated, fields are full of tensions, shifts and power contests, which have the effect of creating fissures where opportunities for allegiance with other fields open up. A major thread that runs through this thesis is the story of extreme instability and volatility in the field of youth work. These conditions produced urgent opportunities for experimental collaboration and magnified the need for evidence-based research into the possibilities and challenges of partnership in this area. Inevitably there were limits to the scope of this research, and another piece of work might look more extensively at the value and long-term effects of these cross-field partnerships on organisations and localities. Or it could be worthwhile following a programme that is either youth-sector led or jointly designed and led by youth and visual art organisations.

I know that having conducted this research I have pushed myself to examine more closely the origins and impact of the assumptions, unconscious prejudices and habits that contribute to my own professional conduct. And I have learnt to recognise where and why my own attempts to be a good partner have



sometimes fallen short. I hope that this research supports practitioners and academics to make similar reflections, and to consider how to make change in the fields of practice where they have, or could have, influence.

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## Appendix

### Events I organised during the PhD:

Event	Details
Test, risk, change: exploring democratic practice between young people, youth organisations and galleries  Nottingham Contemporary, 10/3/17	<a href="https://circuit.tate.org.uk/conference/">https://circuit.tate.org.uk/conference/</a>
Youth arts research network meetings at Manchester Metropolitan University 27/11/15 and Tate Britain 27/5/16	Led to a successful bid to secure AHRC network funding
Geographies of collaboration: decoding the hyperlocal  Project Ability, 20/11/15	<a href="https://circuit.tate.org.uk/2015/11/geographies-of-collaboration-decoding-the-hyperlocal/">https://circuit.tate.org.uk/2015/11/geographies-of-collaboration-decoding-the-hyperlocal/</a>
Youth work, informal learning and the arts: exploring the research and practice agenda  The University of Nottingham, 18/4/15	<a href="https://circuit.tate.org.uk/2015/06/event-report-youth-work-informal-learning-and-the-arts/">https://circuit.tate.org.uk/2015/06/event-report-youth-work-informal-learning-and-the-arts/</a>