



MSc Social Development Practice  
Student Report

Housing and Learning:  
Views from young  
Citizens in London, UK

Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Milimer Morgado  
Mendoza and Beatriz Mella Lira, Editors



Students' Union  
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY



DPU Social Development Practice

<http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/programmes/postgraduate/msc-social-development-practice>

If a hard copy is required, please contact the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at the address at the bottom of the page.

Institutions, organisations and booksellers should supply a Purchase Order when ordering a copy of this report. Where multiple copies are ordered, and the cost of postage and package is significant, the DPU may make a charge to cover costs.

Copyright of this report lies with the authors and there are no restrictions on it being published elsewhere in any version or form.

Graphics and layout: Luz Navarro

Cover photograph: by Participatory Photography participant



Development Planning Unit | The Bartlett | University College London  
34 Tavistock Square - London - WC1H 9EZ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 1111 - Fax: +44 (0)20 7679 1112 - [www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu](http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu)

## MSc Social Development Practice Student Report

# Housing and Learning: Views from young Citizens in London, UK

Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Milimer Morgado  
Mendoza and Beatriz Mella Lira, Editors

April 2017

**Acknowledgements.** This report is the result of an action learning research emerging from a partnership between the MSc Social Development Practice, Citizens UK and ten schools located in different London neighbourhoods—City and Islington College, Hendon School, St Mary’s Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School, The Willow Primary School, Greenwich Free School, City of Westminster College, Corelli College, St. Paul’s Academy, Ark Academy and Cardinal Pole Catholic School.

We are very grateful to Citizens UK, who have partnered with the MSc Social Development Practice for the past four years, and in particular to Stephanie Leonard who has been a key contact supporting us in all our work. Also from Citizens UK, we would like to extend gratitude to Tamara Joseph, Michael Pugh, Charlotte Fischer,

Amanda Walters and Froilan Legaspi for organising and supporting students with fieldwork activities.

The research presented in this report could not have been carried out without the generous support of our primary contacts in each of the schools that took part in the study. We would, therefore, like to express our gratitude to Noelle Doona at Hendon School, Linda Tomliwson at The Willow Primary School, Maritsa Georgiou at St Mary’s Priory, Mike Baxter at Greenwich Free School, Alex Jones at City and Islington College, Caitlin Burbridge at Cardinal Pole Catholic and Paul Amuzie organiser for Ark Academy, for providing support that enabled students to develop research activities with the school students and gather valuable data. Your patience and kind assistance throughout the process was much appreciated.

Finally, we are grateful to all those who participated in this research, especially to the pupils who shared their stories with our students with openness and trust

### Cardinale Pole Catholic School

Janelle Frimpong  
 Tobi Afolabi  
 Orobosa Imade  
 Nnenna Egbuonu  
 Benny Diallu  
 Sinaio Brown  
 Darlene Opong  
 Tippet Omar-Phoaroad  
 Laila Karadag  
 Wenamo Mpandi  
 Emmauella Berchie  
 Maurice Prendergast  
 Anna Alvelin  
 Dennis Acheampong  
 Lait Lamontagne  
 Michael Olofe  
 Kiyanni Okonta-Romulus  
 Jelani Monrose  
 Ololade Shotayo  
 Kevin Lau  
 Rachael Nwankwo  
 Alan Xue  
 Faith Adu-Gyamfi  
 Denzel Alamutu  
 Sannimo Yeboah  
 Prince Amponsah  
 Oliver Nowak  
 Susan Ugori  
 Ahmed Jalloh  
 Elisha Williams  
 Leslie Morales Perreira  
 Jason Zapata Caiceido  
 Dylan Tchuaga Nematcha  
 Elif Yildirim  
 Tane Amachie Siah  
 Elizabeth Tulu  
 Edward Badege  
 Onielia Francis  
 Nikita Salazar  
 Marcus Maddatu  
 Jennifer Modaku  
 Meiji Danh

Chyna Grey  
 Brodie Namanga  
 Serena Ndamba  
 Marcus Maddatu  
 Nikita Salazar  
 Phillip Webb  
 Bellmani Takuena  
 Taio Cadby  
 Mary Sangobolawe  
 Jeremiah Sampong  
 Grace Bellerose  
 Gbemisola Fadaini  
 Jude Ofoegbu

### St Mary's Priory Infant and Junior School

Alexa-Blu Swinhoe  
 Amelie Grace Foy  
 Aya Johannah Narkwa  
 Bianca Marhwe  
 Calum Graham  
 Elohim Mbenzu-Mgamboni  
 Feza Nyota Kanyimbo  
 Hanna Wiercinska  
 Jakub Daniel Krasuwski  
 Kasper Szymczak  
 Leonie Le  
 Lia Kamil  
 Lyzie Nahbila Caspa  
 Magdalena Zuzan Zaluska  
 Malachy Conboy  
 Milena-Jeyda Taylan  
 Nyla Wilson  
 Ramona Emilia Sienkiewicz  
 Shellheem Montaque  
 Sofia Laura Kamil  
 Thandie Nnayelugo Akaeke  
 Thilini Bundhoo  
 Toirese Sarah Karayel  
 Victor Choromanski  
 Danielle Gomez  
 Kacper Kubis

### Hendon School

Eurona Shala  
 Sarah Kent  
 Mariam Ashrafi  
 Zainab Rasul  
 Noreen Latif  
 Chantel Kaur  
 Nawal Ali  
 Sada Li Christie  
 Angel Hemmings  
 Rachelle Wieks  
 Nadia Boukhari-Jilali  
 Tabitha Hoare

### Willow Primary

Selena Charalombous  
 Oliver Jackson  
 Noah Oluseye  
 Jeanae Stirling  
 Nansara Diarra  
 Otis Bamber  
 Amy Athwal-Kirby  
 Sofiane Boufenneche  
 Freddy Oulds  
 Edith Arthur  
 Jasmine Bibi  
 Pharrell Jarman-Jackson

### Corelli College

Inanc Erbas  
 Todd Smith  
 Abdistar Mohamed Guled

### Greenwich Free School

Bronte Murphy  
 Katelyn Wright  
 Emily Guy

Miah Juman  
 Ahmad Mohammed  
 Enis Gutaj  
 Michael Noble  
 Nico Herelle  
 Tori Eicembesmith  
 Miah Agbo-chin

### St Paul's Academy

Kendell Finnikin  
 Pheobe Hutley  
 Callum Simmonds  
 Jayson Edwards  
 Rhys Thorpe

### City and Islington

Anshika Soogroo  
 Aran Doyuker Bakirci  
 Daniel Lawrence  
 Keir Lawson-Ball  
 Malini Gupta-Archer

### Ark Academy

Anish Chauhan  
 Laurentiu Vancea  
 Bano Ahmed  
 Sammie Ahmed  
 Rares Maglan  
 Jasmin Stephens  
 Samiah Ahmed  
 Leny Rubin  
 Zaynab Ahmed  
 Chioma Maduekwe  
 Jasmine Stoneman  
 Swapnil Mukherjee  
 Munira Khalif  
 Najib Warsame  
 Yathuman Ragunath

---

## About the editors

---

**Dr Alexandre Apsan Frediani** is a lecturer in community-led development in the global south and co-director of the masters programme in Social Development Practice at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London (UCL). His research interests include the application of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach in development practice, participatory planning and design and squatter settlement upgrading. His work has appeared in journals such as *Environment & Urbanization*, *Development in Practice* and *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*.

**Milimer Morgado Mendoza** provides administrative and teaching support to the masters programme in Social Development Practice. Her main research interests include exploring how engineering knowledge can be utilised in public decision-making and policy processes for urban development and social wellbeing and how humanitarian responses operate in urban settings. She has previously worked in Venezuela, Sierra Leone and Peru. Her most recent paper, published by ALNAP/Overseas Development Institute, entitled 'Learning from the Ebola Response in cities: Responding in the context of quarantine', identifies the key messages to take forward into future public health crises in urban environments.

**Beatriz Mella Lira** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Bartlett School of Planning, at University College London about the relationship between transportation projects and social equity through a critical appraisal of the factors allowing achieving better standards of social equity. Her primary research interests are in transport planning, mobility, social equity and the application of capability approach. Beatriz has recently worked as a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Westminster, and as a research assistant at UCL for the British Council Newton Fund research project 'Sustainable Cities and Resilient Transport'. Earlier in Chile, she performed as a lecturer, researcher and private consultant, leading projects related to urban infrastructure, participatory urban design and sustainable development.

## Contents

<b>Forewords</b> .....	9	6.2. Methodology.....	48
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	10	6.3. Analytical Framework.....	49
1.1. Aim of the project.....	10	6.4. Key Findings.....	50
1.2. Theoretical Framework.....	10	6.5. Ways Forward.....	53
1.3. Methodology.....	13	6.6. Conclusion.....	53
1.4. Structure of the report.....	15	6.7. Works cited.....	53
1.5. Works cited.....	15	<b>7. Ark Academy</b> .....	55
<b>2. St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School</b> .....	16	7.1. Introduction.....	55
2.1. Introduction.....	16	7.2. Methodology.....	55
2.2. Methodology.....	16	7.3. Key Findings.....	56
2.3. Analytical Framework.....	17	7.4. Ways Forward.....	58
2.4. Key Findings.....	17	7.5. Conclusion.....	58
2.5. Ways forward.....	21	7.6. Works cited.....	59
2.6. Conclusion.....	22	<b>8. Cardinal Pole Catholic School</b> .....	60
2.7. Works cited.....	22	8.1. Introduction.....	60
<b>3. Hendon School</b> .....	24	8.2. Methodology.....	61
3.1. Introduction.....	24	8.3. Findings.....	62
3.2. Methodology.....	24	8.4. Conclusion.....	64
3.3. Analytical Framework.....	25	8.5. Works cited.....	65
3.4. Key Findings.....	26	<b>9. City and Islington College</b> .....	66
3.5. Ways Forward.....	28	9.1. Introduction.....	66
3.6. Conclusion.....	29	9.2. Methodology.....	67
3.7. Works cited.....	30	9.3. Analytical framework.....	67
<b>4. Greenwich Free School, Corelli School and St Paul's Academy</b> .....	31	9.4. Key findings.....	69
4.1. Introduction.....	31	9.5. Ways Forward.....	73
4.2. Methodology.....	32	9.6. Conclusions.....	73
4.3. Analytical Framework.....	33	9.7. Works cited.....	73
4.4. Key findings.....	34	<b>10. Conclusions</b> .....	75
4.5. Ways Forward.....	38	10.1. Housing conditions and learning environments.....	75
4.6. Conclusions.....	38	10.2. Housing affordability and social learning assets.....	77
4.7. Works cited.....	39	10.3. Housing costs and aspirations.....	78
<b>5. The Willow Primary School</b> .....	40	10.4. Taking action and next steps.....	79
5.1. Introduction.....	40	10.5. Further Research.....	80
5.2. Methodology.....	40	<b>11. Appendix:</b>	
5.3. Quantitative Method.....	41	Report Briefing "Exploring the potential of relationships between university and civil so- ciety for meaningful learning and collective action".....	81
5.4. Analytical Framework.....	41		
5.5. Key findings.....	42		
5.6. Ways Forward.....	45		
5.7. Conclusion.....	45		
5.8. Works cited.....	46		
<b>6. City of Westminster College</b> .....	47		
6.1. Introduction.....	47		

## List of figures

- 1.1. Partners considered in the research. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira
- 1.2. Map with the locations of participant schools. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira based on Google Earth (2016)
- 1.3. Capability Map on Learning Aspirations. Source: Alexandre Apsan Frediani (2017)
- 1.4. Some pictures of the process of collaborative meetings between DPU students and pupils from schools. Source: UCL Students
- 2.1. St. Mary's students' learning aspirations. Source: Survey data
- 2.2. 2. St. Mary's students housing profile. Source: Survey data
- 2.3. Map of how students' access to assets helps or hinders their learning. Source: Chapter Authors
- 2.4. Mother helping her child study, they feel happy because they are learning together. Source: Female Student, photograph discussion, 10th November 2016
- 2.5. Things that help students to learn. Source: Survey data
- 2.6. Things that hinder students to learn. Source: Survey data
- 2.7. Everyone is noisy at my home and I cannot study, then my mum grounds me, because my grades are bad. Source: Male Participant, narrative storytelling, 24th November 2016
- 2.8. "That is a teardrop on the back of my hand. Playing alone makes me sad." Source: Female Participant, narrative storytelling, 24th November 2016
- 3.1. Getting a good job, earn money and getting into a good university is in the top of students aspirations. Sources: Survey Data
- 3.2. What learning to me is. Sources: Survey Data
- 3.3. Commuting times to school results extracted from survey. Source: Survey Data
- 3.4. Option for first action. Sources: Chapter Authors
- 3.5. Option for first action. Source: Chapter Authors
- 4.1. Location of schools in Greenwich. Source: Chapter Authors based on Google Maps
- 4.2. Timeline of activities. Source: Chapter Authors
- 4.3. Left to right: Final exhibition (Froilan L., the Citizens UK community organiser, DPU students and two pupils), first workshop, and fourth workshop. Source: Chapter Authors
- 4.4. Main findings. Source: Modify by the Authors based on Jenkins, Abiko, Frediani and Moraes (2010)
- 4.5. Concerns about affordability. Source: Survey data
- 4.6. Letting agent's boards: Affordability. Source: Participatory Photography participant
- 4.7. Learning aspirations. Source: Survey data
- 4.8. Learning aspirations and affordability. Source: Narrative task participant
- 4.9. Noisy and crowded environment. Source: Participatory Photography participant
- 4.10. Housing negative and positive aspects. Source: Chapter Authors
- 4.11. Assets that help students to learn. Source: Survey data
- 4.12. Housing conditions that make it harder for students to learn. Source: Survey data
- 4.13. Participatory action: Outdoor house party. Source: Chapter Authors
- 4.14. Participatory action: Outdoor house party. Source: Chapter Authors
- 5.1. Ethnic breakdown of Haringey compared to London – Census 2011
- 5.2. Example from the Timeline activity which illustrates a student's daily after school activities and shows the responsibilities young children are burdened with due to their parents work requirements. Source: Narrative Storytelling participants
- 5.3. An example comic strip of a student in year 4 at The Willow highlighting overcrowding issues. Source: Narrative task participant
- 5.4. An example comic strip of a student in year 4 at The Willow highlighting overcrowding issues. Source: Narrative task participant
- 5.5. Graph showing a trend towards students learning being negatively impacted by overcrowding with more people sharing a room causing more difficulty in learning. Source: Chapter Authors
- 6.1. Number of housing completions from 1919 to 2013. Source: Department for Communities and Local Government
- 6.2. House Price Index of City of Westminster compared to Greater London. Source: Wessex Economics, 2014
- 6.3. Participatory Research Methods. Source: Chapter Authors
- 6.4. Capability Approach Framework. Source: Chapter Authors
- 6.5. Percentage of students who pay for, or contribute to paying rent/mortgage/bills. Source: Survey data
- 6.6. Thinking about the place you live, three things that MAKES IT HARDER for you to learn. Source: Survey data
- 6.7. What Makes it Harder for Students to Learn? Source: Survey data
- 6.8. Why do you Learn? Students' Learning Aspirations. Source: Survey data
- 6.9. Stack of books on top of a desk. Source: Participatory Photography participant.
- 6.10. A student's room. Source: Participatory Photography participant.
- 7.1. A glance of my neighbourhood from a window. Source: Participatory photography participant
- 7.2. A picture of my room. Source: Participatory Photography participant
- 7.3. Survey results. Source: Chapter Authors
- 8.1. Map of the Borough of Hackney. Source: Chapter Author based on Google Maps (2017)
- 8.2. Opinions expressed by students about the

consequences of bad housing. Source: Chapter Authors

- 9.1. Ethnic Diversity in Islington. Source: Islington Council (2015)
- 9.2. (Right) A light full of water where a leak had caused damage. (Left) The family used pans to catch the drips. Source: Participatory Photography participants
- 9.3. From your front door to the school gate, how long is your trip to school? Source: Survey data
- 9.4. Thinking about the place you live, what are the top 3 things that makes it harder for you to learn? Source: Survey data
- 9.5. Thinking about the place you live, what are the top 3 things that help you to learn? Source: Survey data
- 9.6. Having a quiet space to study was important to the students, but many local Libraries are closing. This temporary library was established because the old one was demolished. Source: Participatory Photography participant
- 9.7. How often do you share a room? Source: Survey data
- 9.8. Two multipurpose tables in different homes, it's hard to study on the table on the left, while the entire family shares the one on the right
- 9.9. Construction works in residential areas. Source: Participatory Photography participant
- 10.1. Main areas for research's findings. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira
- 10.2. Commuting times for pupils. Source: Survey data
- 10.3. Aspirations on learning, general results differentiated by gender. Female in blue and Male in red and Other in green colours. Source: Survey data

## List of acronyms

<b>CA</b>	Capability Approach
<b>CANDI</b>	City and Islington Sixth Form College
<b>CoWC</b>	City of Westminster College
<b>CTL</b>	Community Land Trusts
<b>DPU</b>	Development Planning Unit
<b>EAT</b>	Estate Agent Today
<b>GLA</b>	Greater London Authority
<b>HAVCO</b>	Haringey Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NUT</b>	National Union of Teachers
<b>OFSTED</b>	Office for Standards in Education
<b>UCL</b>	University College London
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	The United Nations Human Settlements Programme

## List of tables

- 1.1. Learning assets. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira
- 1.2. Social Survey. Number of respondents per school. Source: Survey results
- 3.1. Research methodology. Source: Chapter Authors
- 5.1. Qualitative research methods employed as part of the current research
- 8.1. Interpretation of narrative task: factors of housing condition that adversely affects learning capabilities. Source: Chapter Authors
- 9.1. Comparison between facilitators and impediments for learning process. This information was collected through the general survey. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira



---

## Forewords

---

### **Dr. Alejandra Boni**

*Associate Professor at the Department of Engineering Projects at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia and Deputy Director of Ingenio (CSIC-UPV).*

It is an honour and a pleasure to write this foreword. During five months, between October 2016 and February 2017, I was able to share and analyse the work done by the MSC Social Development in Practice with Citizens UK. I believe that this is, honestly, one of the best examples of the relationships that can be built between the university and civil society, and a very good example of university engagement.

In the appendix of this publication is the research briefing that I developed together with Dr Frediani; it summarises the analysis of this experience that I was able to carry out during my research stay. There one can find the evaluation of the experience of the different actors involved (teaching staff, master students, Citizens UK and schools) and the enablers and disablers, which constitute strengths and obstacles of this relation.

From my perspective, if our universities consider relevant public engagement, as UCL is affirming in its global strategy, it is paramount that experiences like this, receive the necessary recognition and support, even if this imply institutional changes. Adequate physical space, reasonable limits on the size of the student body, appropriate recognition of the time required from academic staff, etc. If not, this kind of experiences will be always scarce and limited to academics not only ethically and politically committed, which is a one of the essential requisites, but rather quixotic and almost fools that are disposed to sacrifice their academic career.

This kind of engagement embodies current higher education pedagogy in a socially meaningful way and can contribute to develop a collective consciousness as change makers among the people involved. Supporting these processes is very important if the University wants to contribute seriously to a more just, sustainable and democratic society.

# 1. Introduction

The project "Housing and Learning: Views from young citizens" is based on collaboration between Citizens UK, staff and students of the MSc Social Development Practice at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London, students from Middlesex University and teachers and students from 10 London Schools.

The project builds on concerns about the impact of London's housing crisis on the education of children and young people, which was voiced during the listening campaign that informed the Citizens UK Housing Manifesto in 2015-16. Some of these concerns were captured in the 2016 UCL report *Campaigning through Images: Exploring Housing Rights in North London* (Frediani, Monson and Ossul, 2016).

## 1.1 Aim of the project

The action-learning project aimed to produce lessons for all stakeholders about the impact of housing on learning. This focus of the project was suggested by London Citizens, with the objective to feed into their on-going housing campaigns. It also serves as a pilot project upon which future academic research could potentially be built. Drawing on Amartya Sen's idea of capabilities, the project explored the aspects of learning that are relevant to school students, as well as the extent to which pupils can achieve an education they value under current housing conditions. Three research questions guided the work:

- What are the housing profiles and learning aspirations of school pupils?
- How does pupils' housing experience shape their access to learning assets?
- How do policies and institutions respond to the ways in which housing experiences affect the learning environment of pupils?

By addressing these questions, the research focuses on the ways within which housing conditions affect pupils' 'learning capabilities'. The emphasis of this research on learning capabilities is important because it allows the investigation to explore the multiple purposes and aspirations associated with learning, as well as capturing the

complex environment that shapes pupil's abilities and opportunities to learn.

The UCL staff team developed a participatory methodology and analytical framework and assigned six groups of UCL students to work with teachers and pupils London schools. The selection of the schools was defined considering the ties that Citizens UK (through community organisers) had previously made with the schools and teachers that were willing to participate in the research. The community organisers of Citizens UK played a crucial role in facilitating this relationship between UCL students and the groups of pupils at schools, making sure that activities of this initiative related to on-going campaigns in the schools and London boroughs.

Another particularity of the schools' selection was the diversity of places they were located around London. The schools selected were: City and Islington College, Hendon School, St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School, The Willow Primary School, City of Westminster College and Greenwich Free School, Corelli College and St Paul's Academy. Figure 1.1 summarises all partners considered on the research and Figure 2 shows the map with the location of the schools in London.

As part of the wider Citizens UK learning initiative on this topic, two groups of students from Middlesex University used the same methodology to work with an additional two schools—Ark Academy and Cardinal Pole Catholic School—their findings from their work also appear in this report together with the results from the other schools.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

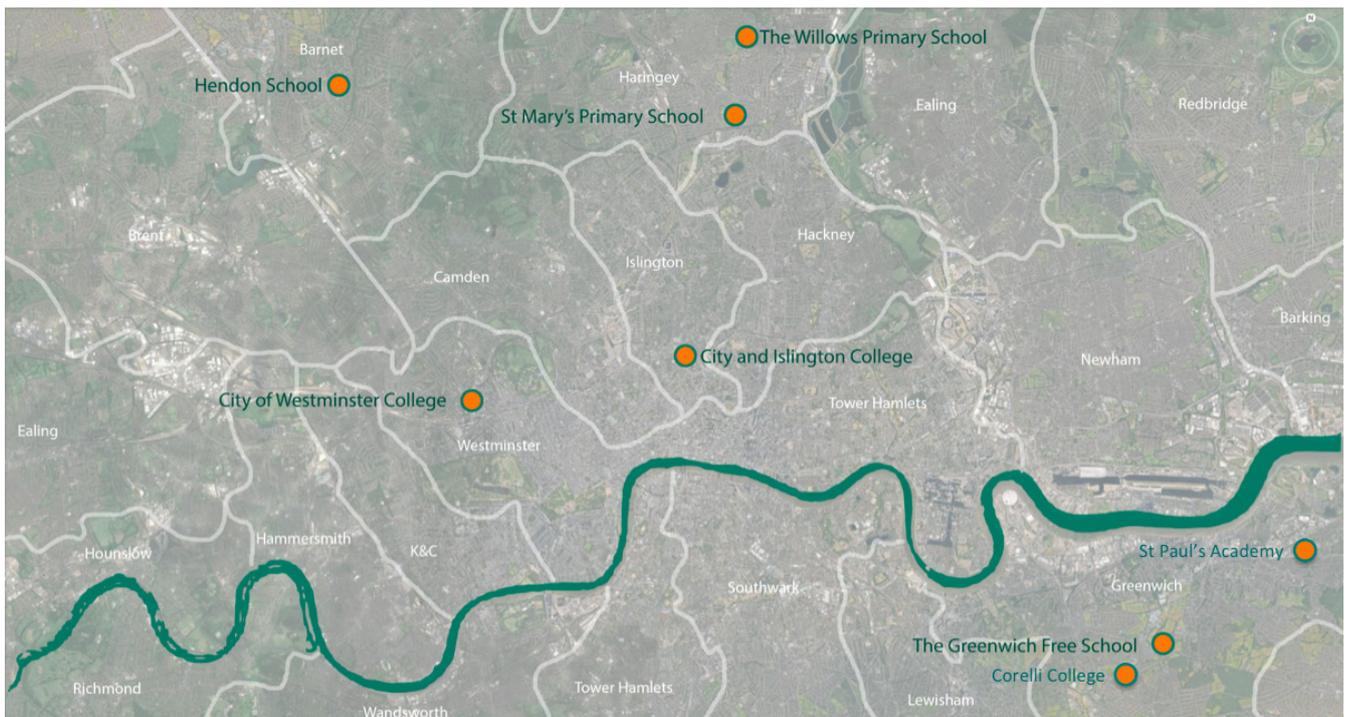
Amartya Sen's Capability Approach was used as a theoretical framework for the research, to better understand the relationship between Housing and Learning. This normative framework helped to assess how housing conditions have affected the pupils' learning aspirations and their capabilities to achieve them.

The Capability Approach has been used for assessing deprivation, well-being and it has been considered for a wide range of scholar in different field and areas of research (Sen, 1985, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011, 1988; Anand, Hunter & Smith, 2005; Martinetti, 2000; Alkire,

Figure 1.1. Partners considered in the research. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira



Figure 1.2. Map with the locations of participant schools. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira based on Google Earth (2016)



2002; Robeyns, 2003). The relevance of this theoretical approach is reflected in the evolution of a broad normative framework for assessing well-being and social arrangements (Frediani, 2007). The focus of this research has been to emphasise the concerns on the learning process that might be affecting the opportunities students have for achieving their expectations and freedoms.

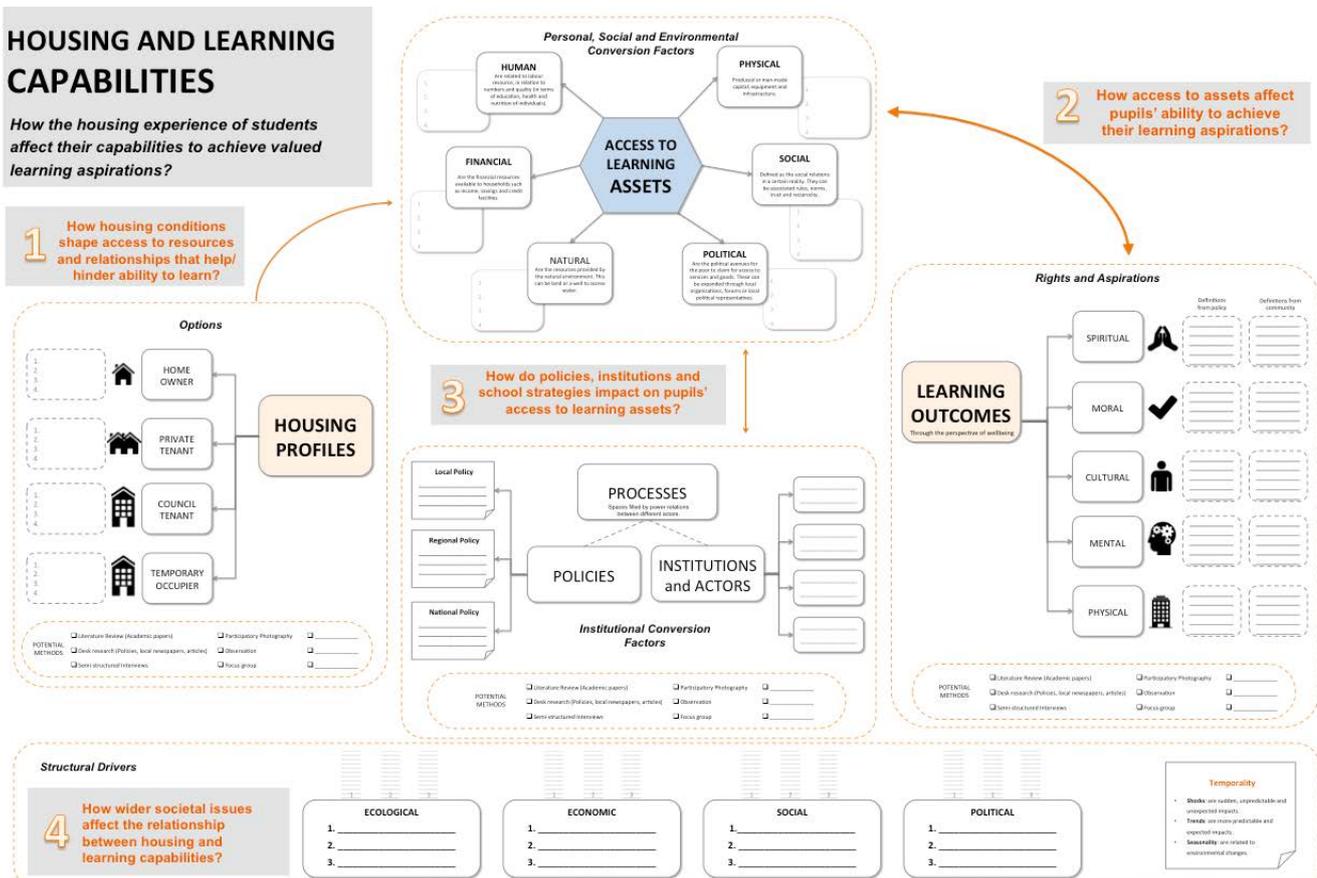
Figure 1.3. shows the Capability Map that led the research, in light of the questions that configure the space of capabilities on learning to be assessed throughout the research. The map has been a collective construction with the students, considering their perceptions on the pupil's contexts, definitions from policy, potential methodologies to be used, among other aspects. The diagram starts by asking about **what are the diverse housing conditions of pupils, and how do they affect their access to resources and relationships that help or hinder their ability to learn.** This first question brings up the current situation of housing conditions that configures the pupil's profiles regarding their built environment. Their space for living, sleeping, doing homework, among others are their intrinsically valuable space that might shape their access to assets or resources for their learning process.

The research suggests an aggrupation based on housing profiles as a mechanism for starting exploring wider issues in terms of housing conditions in pupils' neighbourhoods. This categorization arises from the assumption that learning dimensions (as the spiritual, moral, physical, cultural and mental one) may be affected by conditions related to pupil's homes and the built environment, as well as related to having stable conditions for living in a healthy environment. For instance, having to move frequently to a different accommodation could potentially cause disruptions in their cognitive performance or social behaviour.

Although housing characteristics can be considered as an essential aspect, the transferability of those characteristics into learning assets or resources was also a relevant factor to consider in the research. In this regard, Robeyns (2005) definitions of Conversion Factors were considered for distinguishing the Personal, Social and Environmental assets that can facilitate the access to learning capabilities.

The social conversion factors are determined by a number of societal aspects, such as social institutions (for example, the educational system, the political system, the family, and so on), social norms (including gender norms, religious

Figure 1.3. Capability Map on Learning Aspirations. Source: Alexandre Apsan Frediani



norms, cultural norms, and moral norms), traditions, and the behavior of others in society (for example, stereotyping, prejudiced behavior, racism, sexism, homophobic behavior, and so forth) (Robeyns, 2005; 36).

The consideration of the social conversion factors guided to the second question on the Capability Map: **Which are the pupils' learning aspirations, and how do the access to assets affect pupils' ability to achieve these aspirations?**

The learning assets relate to the degree in which pupil can translate their resources and abilities for achieving their aspirations and learning outcomes (realising their learning capabilities). The set of learning assets shapes pupil's abilities in different dimensions: human, financial, natural, political, social and physical. The assets defined in the research are as follows in Table 1.1 below.

The research also raises the question of **how policies, institutions and school strategies impact on accessing learning assets?** This aspect has led to examining the Processes, Policies and Institutions that help to respond to or hinder pupils' learning assets. This research approaches these issues as institutional conversion factors, unpacking norms, procedures and power relations among relevant stakeholders. Looking after this aspect, the DPU students reviewed the national, regional and local policies that have been implemented in the last years, as well as the normative structure of the schools where they were working. This was an interesting aspect that allowed examining the schools' strategies considered in order to fulfil pupils' learning

outcomes. The revision of the power relations between the different actors was also relevant for exploring the access to the personal, social and environmental conversion factors. As argued by Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones (2002:15), "they embody power and gender relations have a significant impact on the access of the poor to all types of assets and the effective value of those assets". In this regard, policies, processes and institutions were crucial for understanding the context in which the schools and pupils are inserted as well as the possibilities for taking action in the future.

The research reflects as well **how wider societal issues (structural drivers) affect the resources and the relationship between housing and learning.** These drivers (ecological, economic, social and political) can be positive or negative external environment occurrences that expose risks or opportunities to one or more of assets of a household, groups or community.

### 1.3 Methodology

The research was conducted by the UCL students together with the community organisers from Citizens UK using a participatory methodology developed by the UCL teaching team. Each group of UCL students worked with one school in London, in which they worked together with staff and pupils for about three months. The collaborative work between the DPU students and the pupils was a relevant aspect of the methodology used. The DPU students worked with the pupils and teachers from the first moment on the elaboration of the research tools. The

Table 1.1. Learning assets. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira

ASSETS	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
<b>Human</b>	Related to labour resource, concerning numbers and quality (regarding education, health and nutrition of individuals)	Having access to a good breakfast or a good sleeping.
<b>Financial</b>	Financial resources available to households such as income, savings and credit facilities	Having pocket money or access to buy materials
<b>Natural</b>	Resources provided by the natural environment.	Having access to green spaces and nature
<b>Political</b>	Political avenues for the poor to claim for access to services and goods. These can be expanded through local organisations, forums or local political representatives.	Having access to self-organisation or students representatives.
<b>Social</b>	Defined as the social relations in a particular reality. They can be associated rules, norms, trust and reciprocity	Having support from friends and family, teachers and others.
<b>Physical</b>	Produced or human-made capital, as equipment and infrastructure	Having access to classrooms, playground, laboratories, etc.

**Figure 1.4.** Some pictures of the process of collaborative meetings between DPU students and pupils from schools.  
Source: UCL Students



consecutive meetings and communication among the participants of the study enriched the process of design, implementation and the final analysis of obtained data. Figure 1.4 shows UCL students working with pupils.

Diverse methodologies and exercises were explored to discover the main barriers and incentives for students to achieve their learning outcomes. Below the methodologies used due to the course of the project:

**1. Relational Meetings:** The one-to-one methodology was the first activity through which students and school pupils were introduced and got to know one another. This method is the heart of community organising and the most important tool taught on the training. It is the tool Citizens UK uses to understand the interests of another person, to share their own interests and to explore how to build a relationship around a common interest. This is what makes Citizens UK radical – not action, campaigns, and assemblies but the importance placed on the one-to-one conversation. The one-to-one was very helpful to understand the students’ perceptions, fears, what they want to change in their learning processes, among other topics.

**2. Participatory Photography:** Participatory photography is a process that uses images and photography as a way to empower communities. The activity involved providing the school pupils with cameras recording their realities and perspectives. It revealed themes and categories for the action learning process based on the perspective of the students and it facilitated open-ended dialogue to share experiences.

**3. Interviews with pupils, teachers and community:** The interviews were conducted with students and teach-

ers from the partner schools in order to get a sense of their perceptions of the learning processes that might be affected by housing conditions. These interviews were fundamental to the qualitative aspect of the action learning project.

**4. Social Survey:** In total, the groups of DPU students collected 901 surveys from all schools participating in the research. The survey allowed to obtain measurable information from the students. The survey was used to deepen qualitative research, by complementing and helping to quantify and examine the significance of findings. The collaborative analysis between the research group and the school students from schools was essential to

**Table 1.2.** Social Survey. Number of respondents per school. Source: Survey data.

SCHOOLS	RESPONSES	
Ark Academy	12	1.3%
Cardinal Pole	121	13.4%
St Mary’s School Primary	32	3.6%
Hendon School	57	6.3%
City And Islington College	160	17.8%
Greenwich, Corelli College & St Paul’s Academy	264	29.3%
City Of Westminster College	104	11.5%
The Willow Primary School	151	16.8%
	<b>901</b>	<b>100%</b>

assertively interpret the survey results. The conclusions of this activity shaped some of the main answers to the research questions proposed.

**5. Personal Narrative:** Narrative research is an umbrella term for a variety of methods that are used to capture personal representations about lived experiences. These methods focus on personal stories through the narrators' own words. The aim of this research method was to enable students to express creatively their own concerns about real life problems and experiences. A variety of mediums have been used to develop and capture those personal narratives, but in this project, we focused on written text and drawings.

**6. Potential action plan:** This activity aimed to create potential collective actions that the school pupils could potentially take to address the issues highlighted by the action learning process. The ideas and proposals for action come from a perspective that considers the housing crisis and its impacts on pupils' learning.

### 1.4 Structure of the report

The present report shows the main findings per group, considering these areas of interest for fostering further action plans, involving the pupils, teachers, administrative staff at schools and community groups. The following chapters summarise the findings of each group and school. This report hopes to disseminate the findings of the research conducted collaboratively between pupils and students, reflect on participatory action research methodologies to the implementation of the Capability Approach while fostering social change by encouraging pupils' ability to take action and generating evidence that can be used in advocacy activities by schools and civil society groups.

### 1.5 Works cited

ALKIRE, S. Dimensions of human development. *World development*, 30(2), 181-205, 2002.

ANAND, P., HUNTER, G., & SMITH, R. Capabilities and well-being: evidence based on the Sen-Nussbaum approach to welfare. *Social Indicators Research*, 74(1), 9-55, 2005.

FREDIANI, A. A. Amartya Sen, the World Bank, and the redress of urban poverty: A Brazilian case study. *Journal of Human Development*, 8(1), 133-152, 2007.

FREDIANI, A.A., MONSON, T. AND OSSUL, I. (EDS). *Campaigning through Images: Exploring Housing Rights in North London. MSc Social Development Practice Student Report.* The Bartlett Development Planning Unit: London. Retrieved from [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/sites/bartlett/files/sdp\\_london\\_report\\_2016.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/sites/bartlett/files/sdp_london_report_2016.pdf), 2016.

MARTINETTI, E. C. A multidimensional assessment of well-being based on Sen's functioning approach. *Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali*, 207-239, 2000.

NUSSBAUM, M. C. Non-relative virtues: an Aristotelian approach. *Midwest studies in philosophy*, 13(1), 32-53, 1988.

NUSSBAUM, M. Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice. *Feminist Economics*, 9(2-3), 33-59, 2011.

ROBEYNS, I. Sen's capability approach and gender inequality: selecting relevant capabilities. *Feminist economics*, 9(2-3), 61-92, 2003.

SEN, A. *Commodities and capabilities.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985.

SEN, A. *The idea of justice.* London, UK: Penguin, 2009.

Figure 1.5. Examples of the storytelling and drawings made by pupils



## 2. St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School

### *MSc Social Development Practice, UCL students:*

*Cornelia Petrabella Raditya*

*Haja Bilkisu Conteh*

*Maria Victoria Ossandon*

*Sa-Gang Kim*

*Siu-Chieh Tai*

*With thanks to our collaborators Maritsa Georgiou and Michael Pugh*

### 2.1 Introduction

In the past two decades, the gap between the increases in London's housing prices and the wages of its residents has been rapidly increasing. According to the Office for National Statistics, property prices have increased 11 times faster than Londoners' income, thus making housing affordability a central issue (Bloomfield, 2016). Despite the existing housing issues, following the global financial crisis, the UK's Conservative–Liberal coalition government has undertaken major budget deficit reduction schemes in the “social protection afforded by social rented housing and housing benefit” (Stephens & Stephenson, 2016, p.2). As a result, there has been an increase in the number of people living in insecure, temporary and overcrowded housing with limited public spaces (Hodkinson, Watt & Mooney, 2012). This has adversely affected the wellbeing of Londoners, but in particular, those from lower income bracket households.

#### 2.1.1 Housing and Education in the Borough of Haringey

Situated in North London, Haringey has a population of 267,540 in 2014 and ranks fifth in most ethnically diverse in the country (Office for National Statistics, 2014). While its community is exceptionally rich in cultural diversity, it has the highest disparity in income in the UK (Scott, 2016). While the western area contains one of the wealthiest communities, some wards in the eastern side are among the 10% of the most deprived in the country (Haringey Council, 2016). To overcome such inequalities and promote the wellbeing of its locals, the borough council has set in place a plan called “Haringey's Housing Strategy 2015–2020” (Haringey Council, 2015). Its headline proposals are to extend help for those in housing crisis; to ensure that housing delivers a clear social dividend; to improve the quality of housing for all residents, and to increase the number of new homes built. By providing affordable and better homes, the Haringey council seeks to create a positive environment for everyone.

#### 2.1.2 St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School

Many studies have found that poor housing conditions and overcrowding not only affect children's health but also their learning (Harker, 2006). As a response to this growing issue, in 2011 the UK government began implementing pupil premium, a funding scheme to improve the performance of disadvantaged students and narrow the attainment gap by giving additional support inside and outside of school (Pantelli, 2015).

St. Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School (St. Mary's), located in Haringey with 233 students, and is enrolled in this scheme. The pupil premium funding for St Mary's Junior School in the 2015/2016 academic year amounted to £121,440 and is used to fund several initiatives to provide academic, social, and emotional support to enhance learning and behaviour (St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School, 2015a). Among the 22 student participants of this research project, 6 are benefitting from the scheme (St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School, 2015b).

This chapter aims to summarise the findings of the research on the relationship between students' housing conditions and their learning aspirations, which was conducted at St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School. It draws a link between neoliberal ideologies and students' learning aspirations, identifies the physical and social aspects that affect their learning, and finally proposes an action plan to achieve a more positive learning experience.

### 2.2 Methodology

Twenty-two students from St. Mary's took part in the research, consisting of 16 girls and 6 boys from the 4th and 5th grade, aged 8 and 9. The school selected them in particular to represent the wide range of capabilities, as well as ethnical and financial background found in the student body.

During the fieldwork, data was collected through four main activities: 1) participatory photography (43 photos

obtained); 2) survey (32 surveys submitted by the 22 participants and their classmates. Note that some questions allowed students to choose more than one options, therefore the percentage may not add up to a total of 100%); 3) semi-structured interviews with a Senior Leadership Staff and a Support Staff, and 4) narrative storytelling. Participatory photography was used to enable and empower the students by providing them with the opportunity to identify and express specific issues that affect them (Purcell, 2007).

To obtain a more specific understanding, University College London (UCL), Citizens UK, and UCL students designed a survey listing potential key issues surrounding the topic of learning aspirations and housing conditions. Furthermore, two interviews were held to discuss the school's mission, the staff members' awareness of children's housing issues, and what support they offer. The last activity held a narrative storytelling exercise in which students created and drew storyboards portraying potential and existing housing-related issues. The research culminated in an action plan proposed by the students to address the identified issues.

The research faced some obstacles, not all students submitted their photos and surveys, therefore, the results might not represent the views of all participants. The photography guidelines provided to the students before the activity might have limited their creativity, hence a great number of photos look rather similar. In addition, some students expressed that the survey's options were too limited. For instance, the students whose housing conditions are positive felt that the survey did not capture the different aspects of their experience. Finally, as the students completed the survey under the supervision of their parents, the results might not have reflected their own opinions.

### 2.3 Analytical Framework

Proposed by Amartya Sen (1999), the Capability Approach focuses on the values that people hold and the freedom to achieve them. It challenges the assumption that development is only possible through economic achievements and expands the methods through which people can reach wellbeing. The participatory research methods used throughout this research are informed by the Capability Approach to involve students in identifying the connection between their housing conditions and learning aspirations, and then it empowers them to formulate practical solutions to improve their conditions.

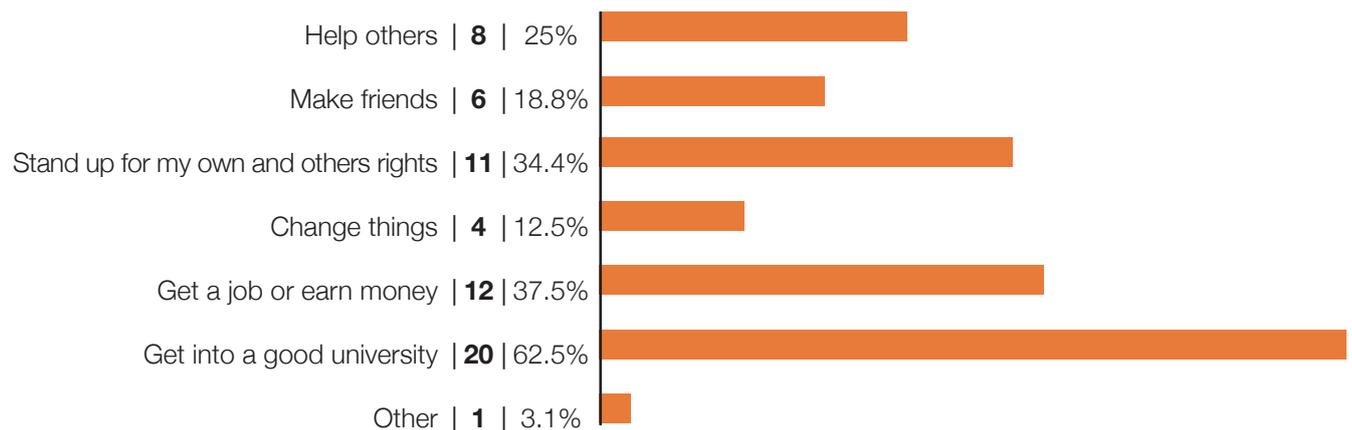
### 2.4 Key Findings

#### 2.4.1 Living in a neoliberal environment influences students' learning aspirations

When looking into how the current housing conditions of the students facilitate or hinder their capabilities to fulfil their learning aspirations, this investigation cannot be analysed outside the framework of neoliberalism. Throughout the research process, it was revealed that St. Mary's students often find themselves oscillating between 'reality' and 'dream', or more specifically, 'reality in the market' and 'the dream to freely aspire'. Students' learning aspirations are largely related to financial objectives. When asked in the first session, "Why do you want to learn?", their answers included, "To get a job and make a lot of money", "To not end up working at McDonald's" and "To be prioritised by prospective employers". When asked in the survey "What do you hope that going to school and

**Figure 2.1.** St. Mary's students' learning aspirations. Source: Survey data.

7. What do you hope that going to school and learning will HELP YOU to do in the future? (please select 2 options)



learning would help you to do in the future?” 37.5% answered, “To get a job or earn money”, and 62.5% stated they want “To get into a good university”. Many students further explained that getting into a good university will help them achieve financial success. Student’s aspirations captured through the survey can be seen in Figure 2.1.

Such mindset may be related to the shift of the education environment in the UK from academic goals to financial management seen in the late 1970s (Radice, 2013). In an increasingly competitive international environment, knowledge is treated as a marketable commodity (Robinson & Tormey, 2003). Essentially, the key function of education came to be about teaching higher-level work skills for future managers, professionals and entrepreneurs. This emphasis on the ‘market’ is strongly related to the ideology of the late 20th century called Neoliberalism. It emphasises the importance of the individual’s ability to participate and compete in the ‘free market’ of education, employment, and consumption (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). This ‘free market’ of competition distinguishes skilled and unskilled positions, which leads young students to desire the former and avoid the latter.

Students are in a dilemma between pursuing financial objectives and aspiring for self-fulfilment and self-actualisation. It is worth noting that students’ learning aspirations are related to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, emphasising the importance of satisfying the very *basic* physiological needs before aiming for *higher* needs (Maslow, 1943). Many students wrote that they learn “To be able to stand up for others against injustice and racism”. Survey results also show that a significant option which gathered 34.4% of students was “To stand up for my own and other’s rights”, and 12.5% chose “To change things”. This clearly illustrates that apart from *conforming* to the neoliberal view of the society, students simultaneously feel the urge

to *challenge* it. Students are torn between aspiring financially and aspiring freely (Appadurai, 2004).

Neoliberalism underscores the role of the private sector and limits the role of the state in providing only residual social services for the ‘genuinely needy’ instead of universal social services to ‘all citizens’ (Mkandawire, 2005). After the global economic crisis, to reduce the state’s deficit, Margaret Thatcher’s administration began implementing neoliberal ideas by introducing the 1980 Housing Act to outsource many public services, including education and housing to the private sector (Harcourt, 2012). For instance, Haringey council housing has been suffering from the unprecedented budget cut (Haringey Council, 2016).

Three decades of neoliberal housing policies created tenancy insecurity (Ministry of Justice, 2012), potentially providing a taste of what students living in Haringey may experience in their homes, neighbourhood, and journey to school. These policies may suggest why only 25% of the surveyed families of St. Mary’s students own their homes, with the majority either renting from a private landlord (37%), or Council or Housing Association (31.3%). In addition, there are 6% of students who live in temporary accommodation, potentially suffering from insecure tenancy and overcrowded housing. Survey results are visually represented in Figure 2.2.

### 2.4.2 Physical and social assets that hinder and facilitate learning

During this research, the students highlighted the relevance of having a good place to study. They recognised that the learning environment can be positively or negatively affected by different external factors. As Sen (1999)

Figure 2.2. St. Mary’s students housing profile. Source: Survey data

5. What type of home do you live in?

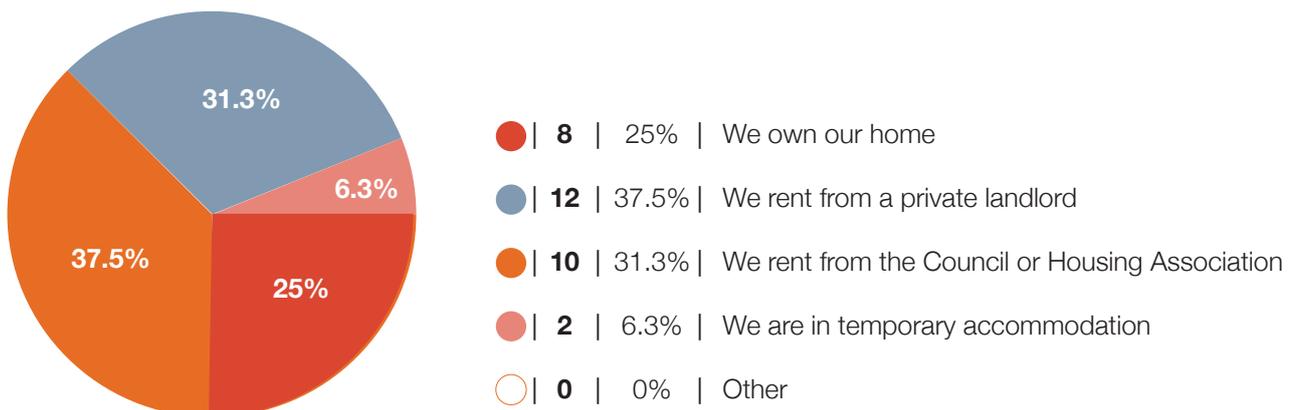
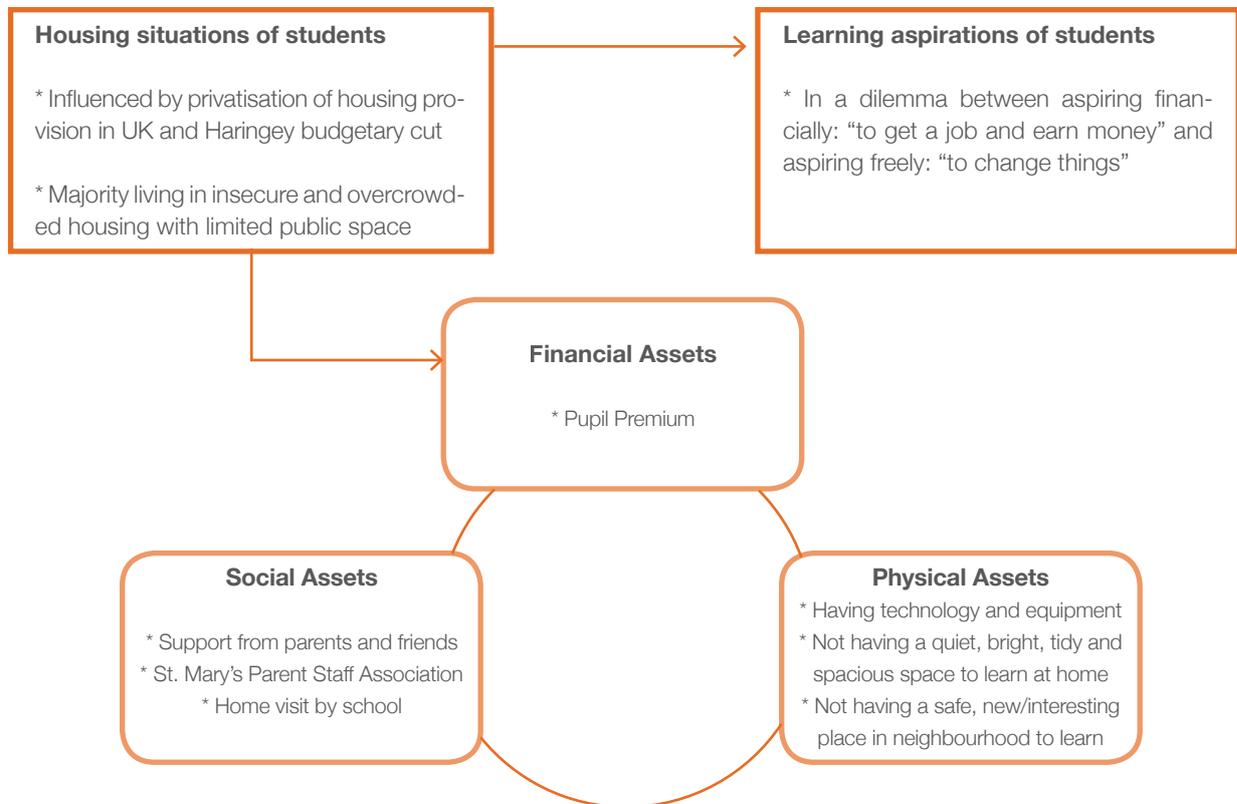


Figure 2.3. Map of how students’ access to assets helps or hinders their learning. Source: Chapter Authors



argued, development should be seen as a process of expanding people’s freedom, which will be affected by social, financial, and physical arrangements. This perspective will be useful to understand the opportunities and constraints identified by the students in achieving their learning aspirations. Figure 2.3 illustrates how students’ access to assets helps or hinders their learning.

To collect data on their learning environment, the students were asked about where they usually study and the most important aspects of this environment. The majority of the group answered they studied in the living room (39%), some in the kitchen (26%), some at their bedroom desk (26%), while the rest (9%) chose others. The students identified that a good learning environment has to be quiet, bright, and tidy.

As for the factors that positively affect learning, the students highlighted the importance of having friends and parental support (See Figure 2.4), as well as having access to technology. The survey results show that 75% of the students chose “Getting assistance from parents or friends” while 53.1% chose “Having access to technology or equipment” as important for their learning. Regarding social support, during the photograph discussion, a student expressed how she likes a picture, which displays parental support. This example shows how social asset helps students to improve their learning. According to Frediani (2010), a social asset is the reciprocity and social relations that enable people to achieve their objectives.

Figure 2.4. Mother helping her child study, they feel happy because they are learning together. Source: Female Student, photograph discussion, 10th November 2016.



Figure 2.5. Things that help students to learn. Source: Survey data.

9. Thinking about the place where you live, what are the top 3 things that HELP you to learn? (only select 3)

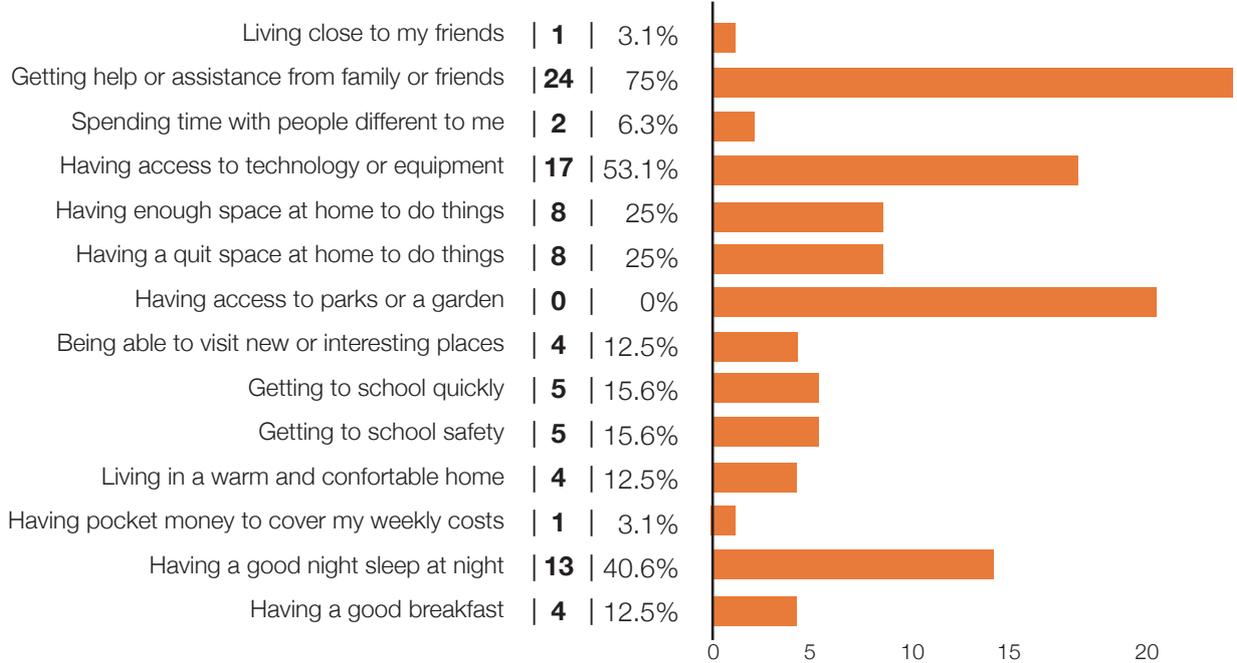
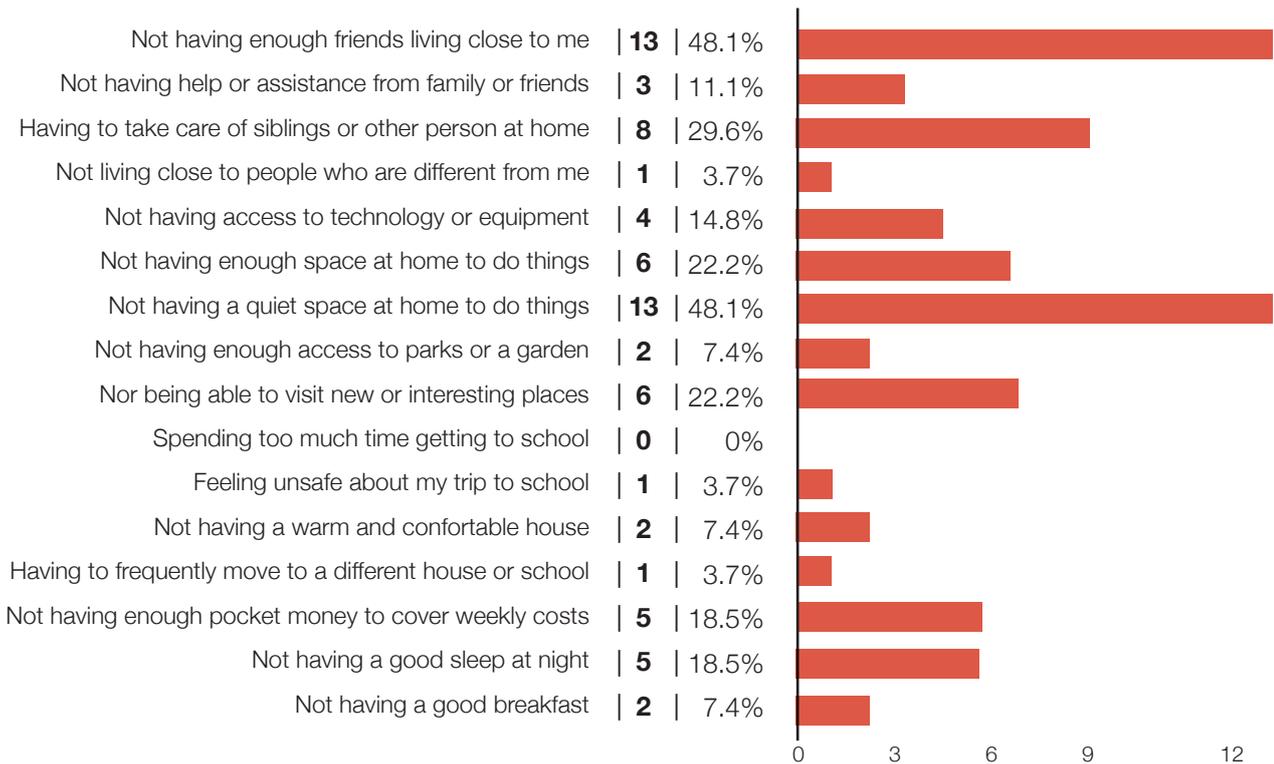


Figure 2.6. Things that hinder students from learning. Source: Survey data.

10. Thinking about the place you live, what are the top 3 things that makes it HARDER for you to learn? (select 3 of them)



Frediani (2010) argues that different assets are fundamental to reach positive outcomes. In this research, it is evidenced how the students value physical assets such as a quiet, bright, and tidy learning space supported by technology and equipment as shown in Figure 2.5. In addition, students also value social assets, such as the company of parents and friends. During the survey analysis session, the students drew English dictionaries, calculators, computers, smartphones and Internet connection as technology and equipment that facilitate their learning. Interestingly, some students also drew a brain, signifying that this is their 'own' system of learning. Thus, it appears that while students understand physical assets can improve their learning, they still value their human assets, which is their ability to think and solve problems.

Regarding the negative factors, the students pointed out noise, not having enough space to study, and not having enough friends living nearby as shown in Figure 2.6. The survey results show that 48.1% of the students selected 'not having a quiet space at home to do things' as one factor that hinders learning.

The noise issue was identified further during the narrative exercise, in which the students' drawings displayed different situations. For instance, noises from other family members make a student unable to sleep. Another example is constant television noises, which distract a student working on her homework as illustrated by a male participant in Figure 2.7. These results show what the students consider as obstacles to concentrate and study well. During the activity, a student described a photo as "Dirty, messy, dark and sad. You feel lonely" (Male Participant, photograph discussion, 10 November 2016). This shows that the physical aspects can affect their mood and lead to emotional distress.

The survey and narrative exercise revealed that a significant number of students value the support from family and friends as an aspect that helps to learn. On the other hand, not having enough friends living nearby is considered as a hindrance as illustrated by a female participant in Figure 2.8. When asked where they meet their friends, for instance, most students drew the school building, with some stating they do not meet their friends outside of class. In the narrative storytelling session, a student drew how she was sad because despite having the physical assets to relax, including a trampoline and dolls, she does not have a friend living nearby to play with.

Moreover, some of them noted that their parents do not let them meet their friends outside their homes due to security concern. This might have to do with Haringey Council's significant budgetary reductions, totalling approximately £100 million since 2011 with projections for additional £70 million cuts by 2017, which leads to a shortage of resources to maintain community safety (HAVCO, 2014). Thus, it is important to offer a practical solution that addresses students' need for a quiet, safe, and accommodating place to study without imposing a major financial burden on the school or council.

## 2.5 Ways forward

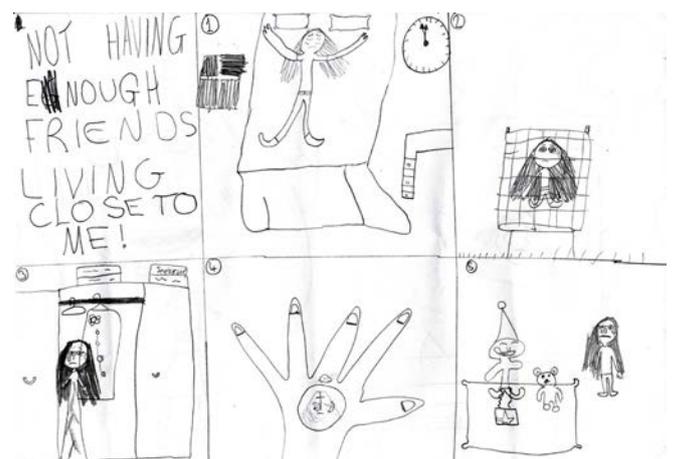
### 2.5.1 Homework Club: the proposal to promote learning and interaction among students

Taking into account the various aspects that help and hinder their learning process, the students collaboratively brain-

**Figure 2.7.** Everyone is noisy at my home and I cannot study, then my mum grounds me because my grades are bad. Source: Male Participant, narrative storytelling, 24th November 2016



**Figure 2.8.** "That is a teardrop on the back of my hand. Playing alone makes me sad." Source: Female Participant, narrative storytelling, 24th November 2016.



stormed solutions and proposed three potential action ideas: a homework club, a website to highlight housing issues and fundraising activities to help disadvantaged students. In order to identify the most feasible solution, this chapter will begin by discussing the assets available to St. Mary's.

The school has expressed its strong commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for children to not only reach, but also exceed their academic, emotional, social, physical, and creative potential through a close relationship between home and school. St. Mary's holds a Parent Staff Association Meeting every half term and runs a Parent/Carer Volunteer scheme to enlist parents' help in school activities such as reading, swimming, and class outing. Furthermore, the school also organises home visits to obtain a better view of the children's performance in relation to their living conditions (Staff, personal interview, 17th November 2016.)

The 2014 report from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) rates St. Mary's overall effectiveness and student achievements as Good, placing the school in the top 100 performing and improving school in England. Furthermore, the achievement gap between the disadvantaged students and the others in different year groups has virtually closed or is rapidly closing.

Since Haringey has the highest income inequality in the UK and is also the 6th most deprived in London, a Free Homework Club could potentially be a good solution to the identified issues. The number of students in the Pupil Premium Funding register stands at 43% (St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School, 2015b), or well above national average, which demonstrates the need for an equal access to the homework club in order for children to study and interact with their friends regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, the school has already been running a paid homework club, so it builds on an existing system instead of creating something entirely new that will require more resources. As a recommendation, the homework club could be funded using the Pupil Premium with additional support from Parent/Carer Volunteers, hence involving parents, students and school as active social subjects.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This participatory research gradually reveals how neoliberal policies can have an impact on primary school students in Haringey, in terms of their learning aspirations and experiences. Existing literature on the UK's housing policies has suggested that social services for citizens rely mainly on the market. Haringey has experienced continuous budget cuts and privatisation of housing provision, re-

sulting in more people living in insecure, temporary, overcrowded housing with limited public spaces (Hodkinson, Watt & Mooney, 2012).

Students from St. Mary's value the learning support from parents, school, peers and technology and equipment. However, there are some issues that adversely affect their learning, including being disturbed by noise, not having enough space to play and study, not having enough friends living nearby and not being able to visit classmates or new and interesting places.

This research is a pilot project, and its proposed homework club is an example of the students taking an active role to bring about positive changes in the environment they are familiar with and encourage other stakeholders to engage further. In other words, as Appadurai (2004) stated, "This would be a politics of 'show and tell' [...] a philosophy of 'do first, talk later.'"(p.75).

This provides the students with an opportunity to negotiate community arrangements with the school and beyond. It aims to inspire future developmental programmes and research, which the students, teachers, parents, activist organisations like Citizens UK, bureaucrats and policymakers can explore new designs for partnership. The findings of this research are to be presented in the Special Junior Assembly at St Mary's on the 20th January 2017 to the Parent Staff Association and the mayor of Haringey, Ali Gul Ozbek, to influence decision-making at the school level and hopefully implement the proposed action plan in the near future.

## 2.7 Works Cited

APPADURAI, A. The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition. In V. Rao and M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and Public Action* (pp. 59–85). Stanford: University Press, 2004.

BLOOMFIELD, R. How London's property market has been transformed in 20 years. *Property news*. Retrieved from <http://www.homesandproperty.co.uk/property-news/how-londons-property-market-has-changed-in-20-years-we-chart-average-house-prices-rental-trends-and-a106401.html>, 2016.

BOAS, T. & GANS-MORSE, J. (2009). Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan. *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 44(2), 137–161, 2009.

FREDIANI, A. A. Sen's Capability Approach as a Framework to the Practice of Development. *Development in Practice*, 20(2), 173–187, 2010.

HARCOURT, B. *The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order*. Harvard: University Press, 2012.

- HARINGEY ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS (HAVCO). *Investing in tomorrow: Summary report*. London: HAVCO. Retrieved from [http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/iiof\\_final\\_summary.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/iiof_final_summary.pdf), 2014.
- HARINGEY COUNCIL. *Haringey's Housing Strategy 2015–2020: Draft for consultation 13 July to 18 October*. London: Haringey Council. Retrieved from [http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/1072.10\\_housing\\_strategy\\_july\\_revised.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/1072.10_housing_strategy_july_revised.pdf), 2015.
- HARINGEY COUNCIL. *What would you do if your salary was cut by 40% but your household bills increased?* Retrieved from <http://www.haringey.gov.uk/news/what-would-you-do-if-your-salary-was-cut-40-your-household-bills-increased> on 15 January 2017, 2016.
- HARKER, L. *Chance of a lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives*. London: Shelter. Retrieved from: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/66364/Lifechancereport.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/66364/Lifechancereport.pdf), 2016.
- HODKINSON, S., WATT, P., & MOONEY, G. (2012). Introduction: Neoliberal housing policy – time for a critical re-appraisal. *Critical Social Policy*, (33)1, 3–16. doi: 10.1177/0261018312457862, 2012.
- MASLOW, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–96, 1943.
- MINISTRY OF JUSTICE. *Statistics on Mortgage and Landlord Possession Actions in the County Courts in England and Wales – First Quarter 2012*. London: Ministry of Justice, 2012.
- MKANDAWIRE, T. (2005). Targeting and Universalism in Poverty Reduction. *Social Policy and Development*. Programme Paper Number 23. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2005.
- OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS (OFSTED). *School report: St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School*. Manchester: OFSTED. Retrieved from [http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/Documents/Ofsted/Junior\\_Ofsted\\_2014.pdf](http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/Documents/Ofsted/Junior_Ofsted_2014.pdf), 2014.
- PANTELLI, L.. *Pupil Premium 2015/2016 review of expenditure*. London: St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School. Available at [http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/Documents/pupil%20premium/2015-16/Review\\_of\\_Expenditure\\_15-16\\_1.pdf](http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/Documents/pupil%20premium/2015-16/Review_of_Expenditure_15-16_1.pdf), 2015.
- PURCELL, R. Images for change: community development, community arts and photography. *Oxford University Press and Community Development journal*, 2007.
- RADICE, H. *How we got here: UK higher education under neoliberalism*. ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies. 12(3), 407–418, 2013.
- ROBINSON, A. & TORMEY, S. New Labour's neoliberal Gleichschaltung: the case of higher education. *The Commoner 7* [online] <http://www.commoner.org.uk/07robinson&tormey.pdf>. (Last accessed 19 August 2012), 2003.
- SEN, A. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: University Press, 1999.
- SCOTT, P. Income inequality mapped: London's boroughs dominate in the league table of haves vs have-nots. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/20/income-inequality-mapped-londons-boroughs-dominate-league-table/> on 3 January 2017, 2016.
- STEPHENS, M. & STEPHENSON, A. Housing policy in the austerity age and beyond. In M. Fenger, J. Hudson, & C. Needham (Eds.). (2016). *Social Policy Review 28: Analysis and Debate in Social Policy* (pp. 63– 85). Bristol: Policy Press, 2016.
- ST MARY'S PRIORY CATHOLIC INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOL. *Pupil Premium aims and expenditure*. London: St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School. Retrieved from <http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/pupil-premium.html>, 2015a.
- ST MARY'S PRIORY CATHOLIC INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOL. *Self evaluation form 2015-2016*. London: St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant and Junior School. Retrieved from [http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/Documents/SEF/SEF\\_15\\_16\\_3.pdf](http://www.stmarysrcn15.ik.org/Documents/SEF/SEF_15_16_3.pdf), 2015b.

## 3. Hendon School

### *MSc Social Development Practice, UCL students:*

*Viviana Gonzalez*

*Dvora Avramzon*

*Hanpei Zhou*

*Renmiao Xie*

*Michael Agyemang*

*Junrui Qin*

*Camila Hermosilla*

*With thanks to our collaborators Noelle Doona and Charlotte Fischer*

### 3.1 Introduction

The city of London faces many housing issues. It is stated that “London is building less than half the number of homes the capital needs to meet both population growth and tackle the backlog caused by decades of undersupply” (Green, 2016, p.4). In 2015, London Citizens’ member institutions investigated how housing affected people (Ibid). Some of the key issues were to do with affordability, unreliable landlords and the lack of citizen’s participation in local developments and regeneration projects (Ibid).

#### 3.1.1 Housing and Education in the Borough of Barnet

The research was situated at Hendon School, located in the London Borough of Barnet. With almost 370,000 residents, the borough has become the most populous in North London (Barnet London Borough, 2015). However, the current situation of council homes in Barnet is unfavourable to residents from low-income sectors. Demands for council homes far outstrips supply. This is perhaps influenced by the fact that Barnet “faces a budget gap of £61.5m between 2017 and 2020 due to continued reductions in Government funding” (Cocker, 2016) and an increased pressure on services because of the growing population.

The cost of living has steadily increased every year as a result, as a consequence, the council decided to invest “781m over the period 2016 – 2020” (Ibid) on housing and transport networks. However, the private sector has taken a lead role in the regeneration process because the council cannot afford to meet the demands of regeneration on their own. This has led to a reduction in the provision of affordable housing when vacant buildings are being brought back into use (Barnet London Borough, 2015). Neighbourhoods have been gentrified as a result of the increasing demand for private

accommodation and luxury developments. The growth of private investments in Hendon has raised concerns about the council limiting its role in providing public needs, such as safe communities and adequate transportation.

Taking into account this context, the research presented in this chapter aims to explore how the housing condition of students affects their capabilities to achieve valued learning aspirations. The following sections present the methodology and analytical framework employed in this research, which enabled us to obtain key findings seen through a capability lens. As an outcome of the research, two potential action plans proposed by students of Hendon School are presented.

### 3.2 Methodology

The research activities were held between October and December 2016. During these three months, activities were held in collaboration with a group of 15 students from secondary and sixth-form school from the Hendon School. Most students lived in the area of Barnet, but a proportion of them also come from different parts of Great London. Students, who voluntarily chose to participate, signed a consent and a confidentiality form, attended six sessions and conducted individual research during the aforementioned period of time.

As Table 3.1 shows, multiple qualitative and quantitative participatory instruments were used, in order to collect primary and secondary data.

Due to the limited amount of sessions, it was not possible to conduct a one to one session with students, which may limit the research from providing an in-depth view of student’s individual perspectives. Furthermore, limited numbers of completed survey questionnaires were received, thus results do not represent all students.

**Table 3.1.** Research methodology. Source: Chapter Authors

Instruments/Activities	Description
Participatory Photography and Focus Groups	The first participatory instruments employed enabled students to record and reflect on how where they live affects their learning aspirations (Purcell, 2009). These research instruments allowed students to take pictures that reflected this situation and later on they analysed the pictures and identified communal housing conditions that may affect what they consider a valued learning.
Survey and Focus Group	In addition to the participatory photography, the research included a survey answered by 57 students from Hendon School. The survey was designed, implemented, and analysed by a group of 15 students. Results were discussed in small groups in order to think collectively about the main issues connecting housing and learning aspirations, and identified a set of questions that were added to the survey. This set of quantitative data provided a range of data that can be classified in categories, supporting the key concerns or issues within the research.
Narrative Storytelling	To go deeper into the main issues that were identified during other activities, students were asked to write a story that related to some of the issues previously raised, from a personal perspective. Nevertheless, in the end, just three students did the exercise, noticing that the participation of some students declined in the final stage of the research.
Literature Review	A literature review was conducted, collecting information related to: 1) housing policies in the UK, Barnet borough and Hendon ward, 2) Hendon and Barnet profile, and 3) Capability approach.

### 3.3 Analytical Framework

This research adopts Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (1985), which develops within the background of a 'people-centred development' as the analytical framework. It focuses on the capabilities of people to choose and achieve what they value rather than just focusing on the achievements as the evaluation guide. Rather than focusing on what people achieves, it is concern with how people can freely choose and how universal are the opportunities available.

The capability approach places human-being development at the centre of development, thus the process of development is seen as a process of expanding the substantive freedom, which are the capabilities enjoyed by people. Thus, this approach creates a bridge between the development, the living conditions, the capability—or substantial freedom—and the functionings (Alkire, 2002). By adopting this approach, this research aimed to identify the key factors of housing that can influence students' learning aspirations, and how 'conversion factors' can be expanded to allow students achieve their learning aspirations.

One of the core concepts of the capability approach is 'functioning', which refers to the achievements that different people value according to their own conditions, such as a good health, high income, sufficient knowledge or a safe environment. The functionings relevant to this research are the learning aspirations of students. The capability refers to the opportunities and the freedoms that people have to achieve the things they value. One important part of freedom is agency, which refers to the freedom a person has to make choices (Frediani, 2010).

There are personal and structural conditions which can be defined as 'conversion factors' that can influence the way people make choices, and ultimately their achievements. For instance, when secondary students choose to go to school to do their homework or study, what influences their capacity to choose? Diverse physical and social factors such as access to learning spaces or good relations between neighbours, teachers, and students (Coates et al, 2009). Ultimately, influencing students' choice of achieving their learning aspirations.

Robeyns (2003) has pointed some factors that can influence the agency and freedom including personal, so-

cial, and environmental factors. Personal factors refer to individual conditions such as literacy, health conditions and the mental well-being, social factors include social institutions, norms, policies, laws and public order, while environmental factors include public spaces and the built environment.

The capability approach requires the existence of individual and structural factors to transform capabilities into functionings. This approach, shapes and expands the understanding of what are the key aspects of the housing conditions that affect students' learning, from the unique view of young social actors. To this extent, different aspects of housing, such as housing characteristics, environmental hindrances, community's or council's housing priorities can act as conversion factors that can expand the substantive freedom of students. According to the capability approach, what should be emphasised in the process of evaluating people's well-being, is their capability instead of their functionings, underscoring people's choices and freedom over their achievements (Ibrahim, 2014).

### 3.4 Key Findings

Through the participatory photography and narrative exercise, the analysis of survey results and focus group discussions conducted with students, allowed the identification of key themes in regards to, how the place where students live affect their learning aspirations. The research enabled us to underline what students valued from their learning experiences and how different assets

such as their physical environment, has a serious impact on students achieving their goals (functionings).

Students learning aspirations were connected to three main issues: having access to a comfortable life, changing their current situation and making their family proud:

#### 3.4.1 Achieving good grades in order to have access to a comfortable life

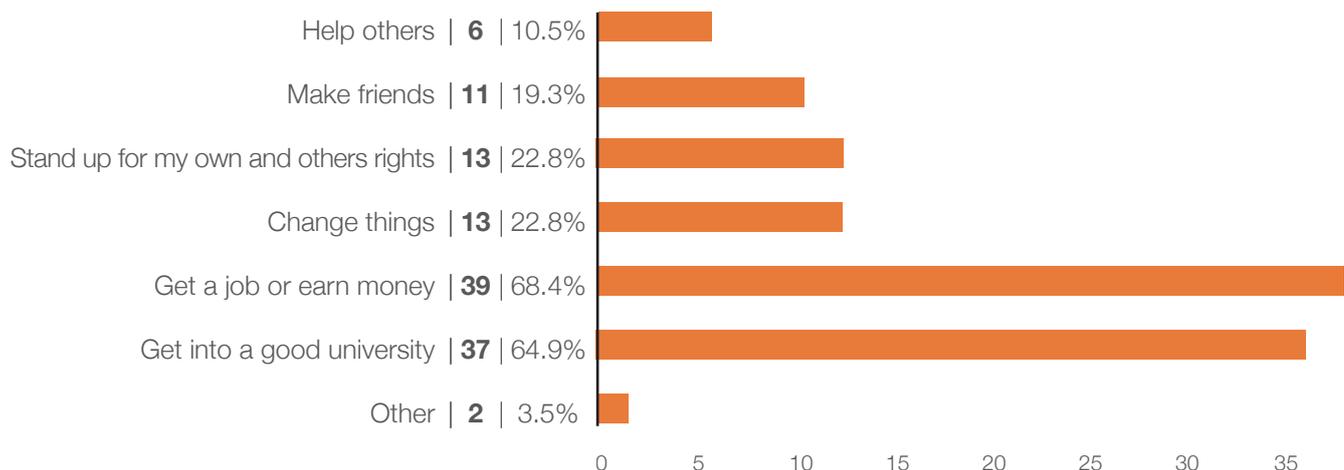
Out of the 57 students surveyed, 68% of them stressed that going to school allows them to get a good job and income (see Figure 3.1). For students, their aspirations were related to having good grades and increasing their opportunity to get into a good university in order to get a good job that allows them to:

- Pay university loans;
- Afford material things such as houses;
- Afford sufficient food and pay for transportation.

It is important to highlight that students consider receiving a good level of education and getting a good job 'as the pathway to become successful in life'. This process was identified by the students as something that was set in stone by the educational system, and also by their parents, and teachers. An example of this can be seen in one of the narrative tasks done by a student, "My parents also decided that I should be staying in my old school because it had a great league table position and reputation".

**Figure 3.1.** Getting a good job, earn money and getting into a good university is at the top of students aspirations. Sources: Survey data.

7. What do you hope that going to school and learning will HELP YOU to do in the future? (please select 2 options)



### 3.4.2 Changing their current situation

For some students, their learning aspirations were related to changing some aspects of the difficult situation they currently face (see Figure 3.2). They considered that “learning can give you power to change things, so the more you learn the more you can achieve”. Living in a deprived borough or community can influence student’s performance in schools. Students identified this as a determinant factor (conversion factor) in their capability of acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to improve their situation.

### 3.4.3 Making their family proud

Some of the students valued learning as something that gave them the opportunity to make their family proud. Learning was seen as an instrument to become clever and educated, something that their family valued. In one of the narrative tasks a student described the following, “One day she thought to herself and said I will not let my brother die knowing that his little angel accomplished nothing in life (...) with this her brother’s ‘little angel’ achieved 4 A\* to A A levdler with a degree”. Learning was not just seen as a personal accomplishment, but also an accomplishment for the whole family.

These three key learning aspirations were affected by primarily three conditions: 1) inadequate spaces to study; 2) unsafe environment, and 3) long transportation distances. Students addressed that these three conditions (conversion factors) were decisive for some of them in being capable of achieving the aforementioned aspirations.

**Figure 3.2.** What learning to me is. Sources: Survey Data.

8. Learning to me is: (57 responses)



### 3.4.4 Lack of adequate learning space

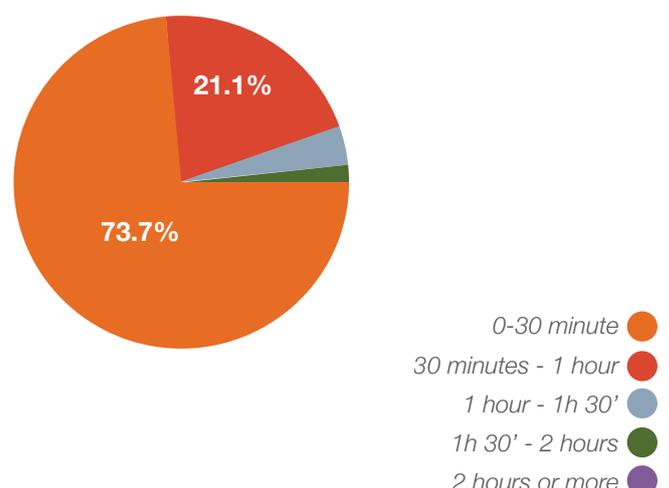
Students identified that an adequate space to learn is as a place with good equipment, with a desk, a bed, good lighting and heating. Nonetheless, they also emphasised the need for that space to be private in order to concentrate; all of these aspects are vital for their learning and creativity. As a student mentioned in one of the focus groups “...having a good space may be related to having a good grade, and having a good grade can help me to be creative”. In a sense, when conditions such as overcrowding, or responsibilities such as taking care of family members exist, students are not motivated neither able to concentrate in doing their homework. Moreover, students emphasised the need for a clean environment as they believe that, “if you have a clean area, you have a clean mind ... this allows you to be more concentrated and calm”. Assuring these conditions in the spaces used for learning by students, is a decisive factor in the achievement of the grades they require to be admitted into a good university, and to make their families proud.

### 3.4.5 Secure Environment

Students identified that the environment around their neighbourhood can either enhance or limit their learning aspirations. For example, the presence of gangs may influence student’s decision of spending less time working at school or with friends. They are concern about their safety if they arrive late at home. As mentioned by Coates et al. (2009) physical assets can have an impact on people’s social opportunities. In one of the focus groups, a student remarked “you do not want to go out

**Figure 3.3.** Commuting times to school results extracted from survey. Source: Survey Data.

4. From your front door to the school gate, how long is your trip to school (57 responses)



in a bad neighbourhood, because you may be bullied by gang members. This may make you stay at home most of the time”.

Barnet Labour has noted that “disastrous handling of estates regeneration is leading to a net loss of 827 social homes for rent and longstanding residents, not qualifying for new homes” (Barnet Labour, 2016). For students, failure in the regeneration processes of council homes can affect their environment and bring the presence of gangs. Furthermore, students identified these issues as a cause of anxiety, which in result affects their ability to socialise and concentrate on their duties. Moreover, students highlighted that their aspirations could be influenced by this contextual environment, as some behaviours were normalised and become a way of life to follow or to reject.

Lastly, students identified the presence of a role model as a decisive factor in their learning process. Even though they live in a complex environment, having someone that can guide them to achieve what they value, can have a positive impact on their learning.

### 3.4.6 Long transportation distance

Although, 73% of the students who participated in the survey responded that their daily commute to school took them between “0 and 30 minutes”, there are still 3.5% of students that commute for over 1 hour (see Figure 3.3). In addition, during the focus groups students mentioned commuting time as an issue that impacted them on the process of gaining valued learning.

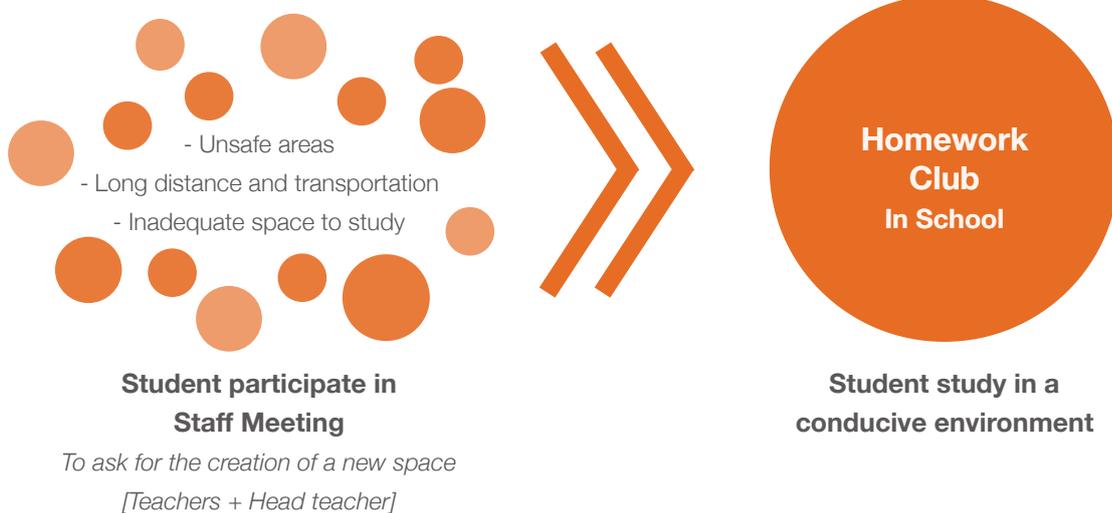
Students mentioned that spending long hours on the road limited their time to sleep, to eat, for socialising and doing homework. This prevented students from fully achieving the kind of learning that they valued because they always have to compensate for issues outside their control. As one of the students mentioned on a narrative task, “Staying in my old school meant I had to take three buses from our flat every weekday to get to school and the trip to school took almost two hours. (...) After a few weeks, I started feeling more and more tired. (...) This started to affect my work in school as I found myself unable to concentrate in lessons and did not feel motivated to do my homework properly. After about two months my grades were noticeably lower than they have been before and this alarmed my parents. I was also struggling to find time and energy I spend time with my friends.”

### 3.5 Ways Forward

The proposed actions presented in this section, are a result of the analysis of the data captured through the research instruments—survey, focus group discussions, and narrative storytelling. They were conceived with the aim of raising awareness about the implications of housing issues and how these affect students’ learning aspirations. In order to build a broader significance of the research students from Hendon school proposed the following actions:

The first action is the Homework Club (see Figure 3.4). Students proposed to participate in one of the regular staff meetings, which are held every Tuesday with the

Figure 3.4. Option for first action. Sources: Chapter Authors.



head teacher and staff members. In this session, they were able to introduce the key housing issues raised by this research and suggested the creation of a ‘Homework Club’ as a conducive environment for them to study. This action addresses the obstacle of not having a safe and adequate place to study.

The second action is delivering a message, which contains the key issues identified in this research to the local council and borough authorities, in the form of written letters, emails, and social media (see Figure 3.5). The main actors of this action will be students while the collaborators will be the staff members from the school, the parents, the community members and Citizen’s UK. This action intends to foster a debate between the local council and the Hendon School, to raise awareness within the community about these critical problems and to contribute to the engagement of different actors in decision-making processes.

These two actions could raise awareness of decision-making at different levels and encourage students’ agency of what is considered a valued learning experience in the context housing. Moreover, students can be recognised as agents with the capability of influencing power relations within a top-down decision-making process. These actions can act as catalysers of change, widening available housing and educational opportunities in the present and the future. The first action can provide to all students, equal access to a conducive learning space,

whether they live close to or far from the school. This can also encourage social justice within society by providing a fair distribution of opportunities.

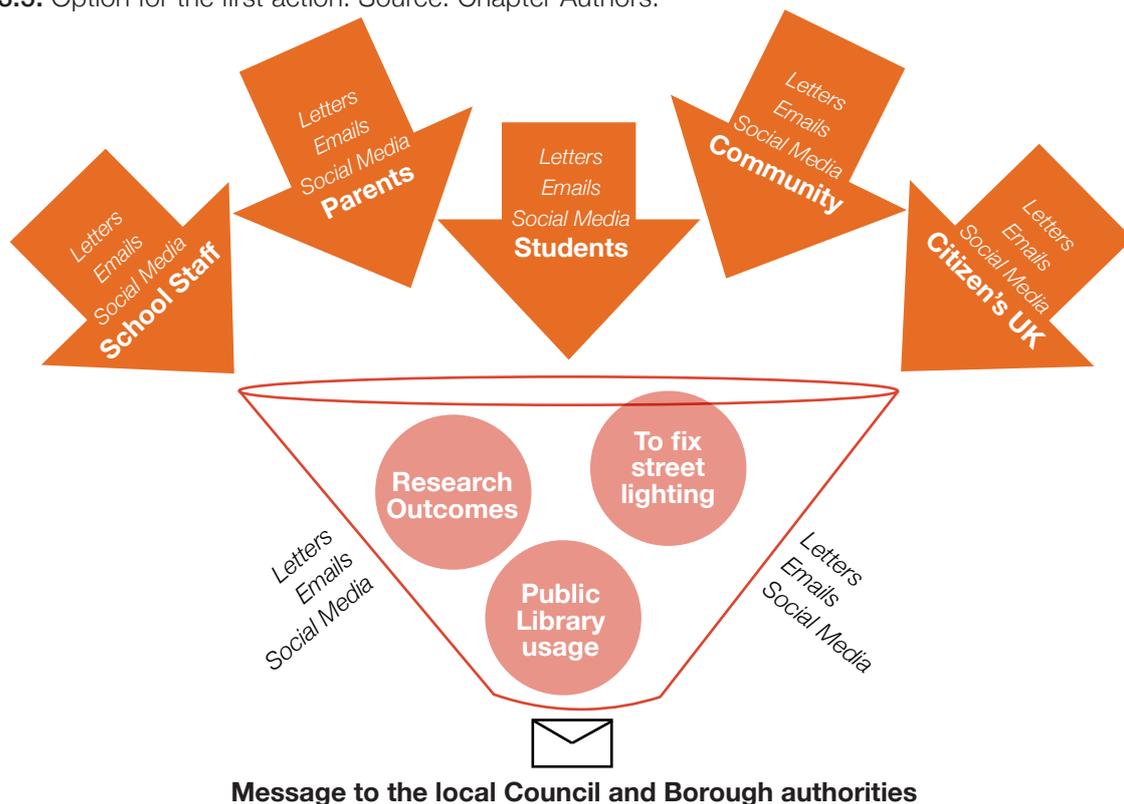
The second action aims to remind local authorities of their responsibility to ensure to students, within their community, a valued learning experience, duty that should not be placed, solely, on the school. This should also challenge them into formulating housing policies to improve safety in the community and take measures to change unfavourable factors such as security issues.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This research explored how key factors such as the lack of adequate learning space, unsafe environments and lengthy commuting time, can influence students’ learning and aspirations for the future. The learning aspirations of students captured by this research, such as achieving good grades in order to have access to a comfortable life, changing their current situation and making their family proud, are motivated by their will to improve their economic situation and to have more opportunities than what is already available to them.

The Citizens UK Housing Manifesto (Green, 2016) highlighted two issues that connect to the findings present-

Figure 3.5. Option for the first action. Source: Chapter Authors.



Message to the local Council and Borough authorities

ed above: the affordability of housing and the “lack of control over local development and regeneration projects”. Affordability relates to student’s aspirations for the future, which are seen as means to achieve a comfortable life that could potentially change their current housing situation. The fact that students live in a complex environment can influence their willingness to change their situation, hence the actions that the students planned are connected to their will to take part in the local development of their neighbourhood and city.

The actions proposed by students will hopefully encourage council members to lead changes in the housing sector, especially those raised by the students through this research. The capability and opportunities students have to change their housing conditions are limited and depend on diverse structural factors. This is why the support from the community in driving change and from the school in answering the students’ needs are fundamental. Certainly, to be able to fully address the overall issue of how housing conditions affect students’ learning aspirations, a deeper exploration is needed, particularly on the priorities of the council and those of the organised community; with emphasis on the views of parents and teachers.

### 3.7 Works Cited

- ALKIRE, S. *Participation and Culture. Valuing freedoms: Sen's capability approach and poverty reduction*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1-18, 2005.
- BARNET COUNCIL. *State of the Borough 2011, Barnet Insight Unit* [Online]. [Accessed 16 December 2016]. Available from: [https://www.barnet.gov.uk/.../barnet\\_borough\\_report\\_2011.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/.../barnet_borough_report_2011.pdf), 2011.
- BARNET COUNCIL. *Profile of Hendon Ward, Barnet Insight Unit* [Online]. [Accessed 16 December 2016]. Available from: [https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:d0a0d9cb-d1d8-4d59-b648-d447a7128587/Hendon\\_ward\\_profile\\_CT\\_March\\_2013\\_v2.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:d0a0d9cb-d1d8-4d59-b648-d447a7128587/Hendon_ward_profile_CT_March_2013_v2.pdf), 2013.
- BARNET COUNCIL. *Summary Report of the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation*. [Online]. [Accessed 16 December 2016]. Available from: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:713908eb-c01e-4f76-973e-d550bfb8a130/Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation-2015-%20Insight-Report.pdf>, 2015.
- BARNET LONDON BOROUGH. *Appendix 1 Annual Regeneration Report, Growth and Regeneration Programme*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 January 2017], 2015.
- BARNET LABOUR. *Home truths for Barnet: Labour's Housing Commission report published*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 January 2017]. Available from: [http://www.barnetlabour.org.uk/home\\_truths\\_for\\_barnet](http://www.barnetlabour.org.uk/home_truths_for_barnet), 2016.
- BARNET LONDON BOROUGH. *Regeneration*. [Online]. [Accessed 16 December 2016]. Available from: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/regeneration.htm>, 2016.
- CITIZENS UK. *Citizens UK Housing Manifesto*. Available from: [http://www.citizensuk.org/housing\\_manifesto\\_2016](http://www.citizensuk.org/housing_manifesto_2016) [Accessed 21 December 2016], 2016.
- COATES, DERMOT, AND PAUL ANAND. *A Capabilities Approach to Housing and Quality of Life: The Evidence from Germany*, 2009.
- COCKER, S. *Views Sought on 2017/18 budget, Barnet London Borough*, [Online]. [Accessed 14 January 2017]. Available from: <https://barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/news/Views-sought-on-2017-18-budget.htm>, 2016.
- FREDIANI, A. A. Sen's Capability Approach as A Framework to the Practice of Development. *Development in Practice*, 20(2), 173-187, 2010.
- HENDON SCHOOL. *Inclusion Policy*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 January 2017]. Available from: <http://www.hendonschool.co.uk/assets/Documents/Policies/feb-2013-inclusion-policy.pdf>, 2013.
- GREEN, C. *Housing Manifesto 2016*, Citizens UK, 2016.
- HENDON SCHOOL. *Community Cohesion Policy*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 January 2017]. Available from: <http://www.hendonschool.co.uk/assets/Documents/Policies/Community-Cohesion-Policy-Jan-2015.pdf>, 2015.
- HENDON SCHOOL. *Special Educational Needs*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 January 2017]. Available from: <http://www.hendonschool.co.uk/assets/Documents/Special-Educational-Needs-PolicyFeb16.pdf>, 2016.
- IBRAHIM, S. Introduction: The Capability Approach: From Theory to Practice— Rationale, Review and Reflections. *The Capability Approach*, 1-28, 2014.
- PURCELL, R. Images for change: Community development, community arts and photography, In: *Community Development Journal*, 44(1), pp. 111–122, 2009.
- ROBEYNS, I. Sen's Capability Approach and Gender Inequality: Selecting Relevant Capabilities. In: *Feminist Economics*, 9(2-3), 61-92, 2003.
- SEN, A. *Commodities and Capabilities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

## 4. Greenwich Free School, Corelli School and St Paul's Academy

### *MSc Social Development Practice, UCL students:*

*Mahdy Alraie*

*Huanxiang Chen*

*Zihan Luo*

*Edith Yolanda Martinez Lopez*

*Maria Isabel Pacheco Aranda*

*Ruxandra Popescu*

*With thanks to our collaborators Mike Baxter and Froilan Legaspi*

### 4.1 Introduction

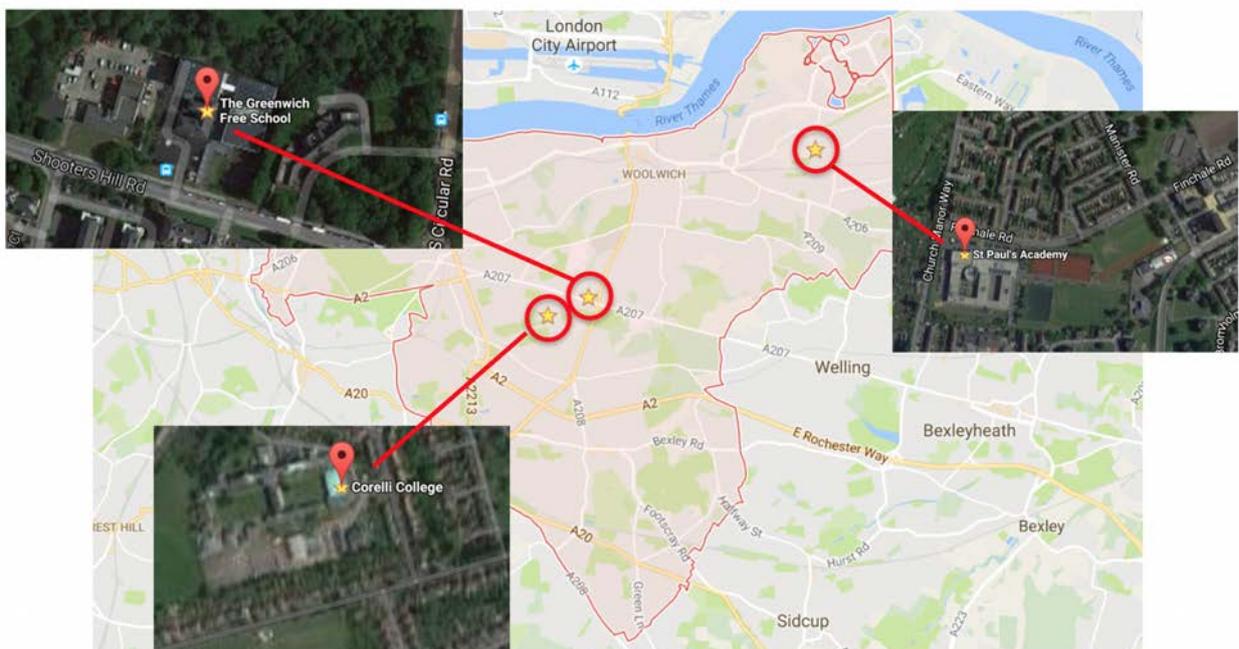
The housing crisis has been affecting London's residents for almost fifteen years (Watt & Minton, 2006). Which has resulted in unaffordable homes and therefore, in the impossibility of securing decent standard housing and wellbeing (London Citizens, 2016). The current policies regarding this issue have not adequately managed the crisis, on the contrary, market-led and privatisation-oriented policies have accentuated the problem, leading to difficulties in accessing social housing and becoming homeowners (Watt & Minton, 2006).

In addition, it has been suggested that students in difficult living conditions such as poor and overcrowded housing, may suffer negative consequences on their health and wellbeing. For example, they are at a higher risk of developing illnesses and mental health problems, which could be long lasting and negatively impact their adulthood. It

has also been pointed out that children living under these conditions, experience lower educational attainment in comparison to those living in better housing conditions (Harker, 2006). The literature states that this is a multidimensional and complex area of research, which is still in its early stages and needs to be developed further (Leventhal, & Newman, 2010).

In this context, the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) at UCL and Citizens UK have started a collaboration to explore how the current housing crisis in London could be affecting students' learning experience and wellbeing, more precisely their learning aspirations. This research was conducted with students from three schools located in the Borough of Greenwich (See Figure 4.1). There are some housing differences between London and Greenwich. For example, while in London 52% of citizens own their house, in Greenwich only 46% do; however, in Greenwich 33% of housing is social rented

**Figure 4.1.** Location of schools in Greenwich. Source: Authors based on Google Maps



accommodation, in contrast with the 23% figure for the entire city of London (Office for National Statistics, 2014). Furthermore, the students’ housing profiles revealed that 46% is owned, 28% rented from the Council or housing associations and 16% rented from a private landlord.

### 4.2 Methodology

This research was conducted along with Citizens UK at Greenwich Free School. Six weekly one-hour sessions were held. The participants were 20 pupils aged 12 to 16, who were currently studying at Greenwich Free School (12 pupils), Corelli College (3 pupils) and St. Paul’s Academy (5 pupils). Teachers and the allocated Citizens UK community organiser supervised every session. 77.4% of students who took part in the research lived in the areas of Abbey Wood, Woolwich, Plumstead, Thamesmead and Charlton. A variety of participatory instruments were utilised in this research, including participatory photography, a survey developed with the pupils and a narrative storytelling task. A timeline of activities is shown in Figure 4.2.

During the first session, participatory photography was utilised to capture participants’ individual experiences and to collectively share and reflect on each other’s housing experiences and how these relate to learning. As a result, 22 pictures were given to us in the following session and then distributed among all participants for group discussions. This method facilitated an open dialogue among participants and revealed pressing issues such as current developments in the area, noise, and lack of space. On the other hand, the task of participatory photography—

taking photographs of their housing experiences—was perceived by some students as intrusive, which may have limited the variety of issues captured.

The survey was presented to and further developed with the pupils, prior to it being distributed to and completed by 264 students, with an even gender split. Pupils suggested that questions relating to social assets and affordability needed to be added to the survey. Online and hard copy questionnaires were distributed to suit all participants’ needs. The survey enabled us to work with clear concepts and variables and to explore how they might relate to each other; it also served as a quantitative complement to qualitative side of the research. They were easy to distribute and fast to complete, which allowed for a relatively large sample over a short period of time.

In the last session, participants were introduced to the narrative task, in which, they were asked to write or draw short stories associated with their housing problems. In the narrative task, participants were able to express themselves and widened the research scope to explore their views and concerns creatively; otherwise, it could cause students to feel uncomfortable about revealing personal concerns in public.

The main limitations of this research have to do with: time constraints—six one-hour sessions were conducted with 20 participants in average, thus, it was not possible to explore issues in depth, as well as to understand participants’ context in more detail; participants’ engagement—not all participants engaged with the research equally, and for this reason it was challenging to include everyone’s views; sample size—because research tasks were conducted with a small number of students from

Figure 4.2. Timeline of activities. Source: Chapter Authors

	October					November					December					January				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1 to 1 meeting School Staff		■																		
Workshop 1 Introduction / Participatory Photography						■														
Participatory Action							■													
Workshop 2 Survey Construction								■												
Workshop 3 Participatory Photography Analysis									■											
Workshop 4 Survey Analysis										■										
Workshop 5 Narrative Task											■									
Exhibition																	■			

the three schools, the findings are limited to the sample employed and it is difficult to extrapolate them.

### 4.3 Analytical Framework

The findings presented in this chapter were analysed through the lens of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. This approach considers that "an individual's capability is determined by the freedom they have to choose to pursue ways of being and doing they have reason to value" (Sen, 1985, 1992 in Sarojini, 2012, p.3). Both the framework and this research take the stance that education and housing are crucial freedoms in achieving valued ways of being.

There are two essential elements in the Capability Approach: capabilities and functionings. Capabilities are understood as the 'opportunity set', while functioning is any achievement of a person; an "umbrella term for the resources and activities and attitudes people spontaneously recognise to be important - such as poise, knowledge, a warm friendship, an educated mind, a good job" (Frediani, 2010, p.5).

Alex Frediani (2010) proposes 'Capability Space', an adaptation of Sen's Capability Approach, which attempts to narrow its level of abstraction and contribute to its appli-

cation in the development field. This approach "is applied by focusing on the capability space that constitutes the transformation of resources into achieved functionings. Among the fundamental components of this approach are agency, power relations, and participation" (Frediani, 2010, p.185). There are two types of resources: tangible, including houses, schools or transport, and intangible, which consist of policies or social relations (Ibid). This research operationalised social and physical assets as belonging to the Capability Space.

In addition, King (2003) suggests an extensive list of universal functional capabilities, such as "life, bodily health and integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one's environment", that would try to cover activities as "relating to affective behaviour, education, a concern for nature, play and education" (King, 2003, p.670). In this context, this paper is presenting education and housing as rights essential to achieving freedom. Thus, housing is more than an economic and material concept; it is a basic right in the freedom that can alter an individual's learning aspiration if it is not a 'dignified house'. Furthermore, regarding the use of the Capability Approach in education, Unterhalter, Vaughan and Walker (2007) state that is relevant to think how the learning aspirations are more than the individual academic outcomes, and relate to wider valued educational functionings in order to achieve wellbeing.

**Figure 4.3.** Left to right: Final exhibition (Froilan L., the Citizens UK community organiser, DPU students and two pupils), first workshop, and fourth workshop. Source: Chapter Authors.



### 4.4 Key findings

This research has found that almost 9% of students feel that their learning is being affected by their current housing situation. Some of the main issues include: noisy and busy homes (16%); not enough space (10%); broken things in the home (10%); the journey to school takes too long (8%); safety issues while commuting to school (4%); their homes are not adequate for sleeping (3%).

In addition, almost half of the pupils have concerns about the affordability of dignified housing—belonging to the Capability Space—in the future, which in turn can affect their learning aspirations—Functionings—and shape them from an economically-oriented perspective (See in Figure 4.4). Appadurai (2004 in Prodonovich, Perry and Taggart, 2014) introduced the term ‘capacity to aspire’ to illustrate that the capacity of people to set future goals could be constrained by their circumstances, thus limiting their future aspirations. Therefore, students could be facing a diminished horizon in terms of what they are allowed to aspire. For example, they aspire to earn enough money and to access further education in order to secure a good job. Also, specific assets such as physical (access to technology, warmth and others) and social (having enough friends living nearby) assets are especially valuable to pupils for their learning capabilities.

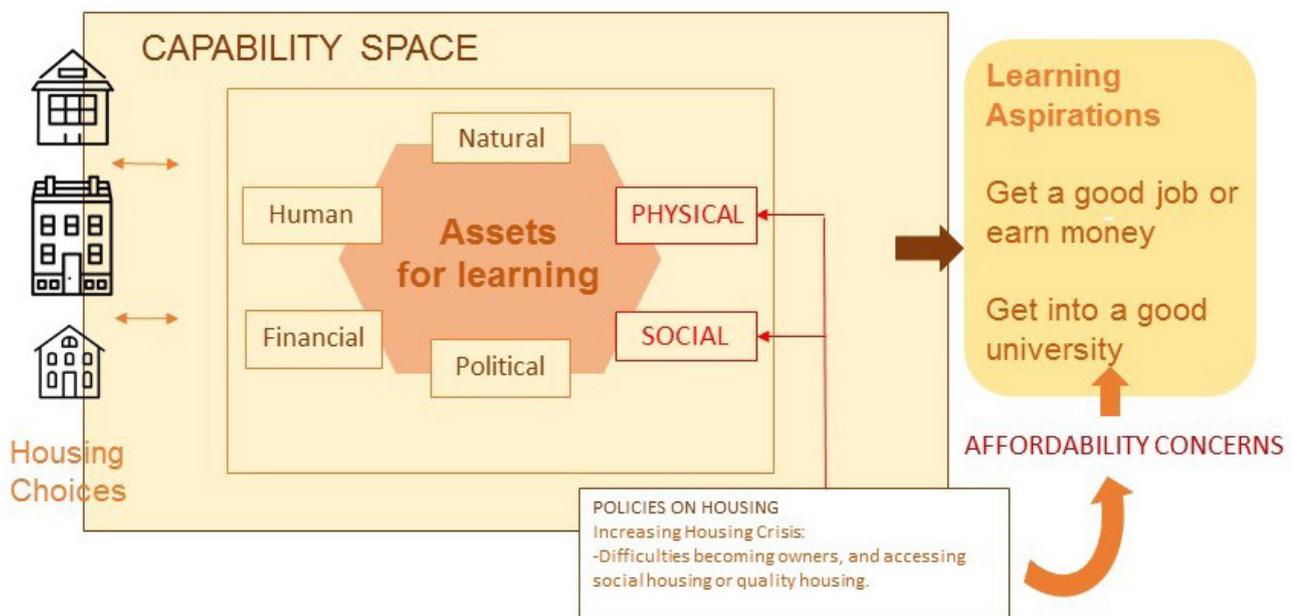
#### 4.4.1 Affordability concerns

According to the survey results, 49% of the pupils are concerned about being able to afford good housing in the future. These concerns were also expressed in their photography task and in the narrative task. These findings are consistent with the fact that in Greenwich, as well as in London, housing prices have been increasing dramatically and wages have not been rising proportionally. While in 1997 the ratio between houses prices and earnings was 3.3, in 2015 the ratio increased up to 10.75 and keeps rising every year (Aldridge, Born, Tinson & MacInnes, 2015). This means that students’ affordability concerns reflected in survey results (See Figure 4.5) have a solid relation to what has been happening in their borough. Moreover, nowadays Greenwich is the borough with the highest percentage of 19-year-olds without Level 3 qualification in London and is also ranked fifth in unemployment rates (Aldridge et.al, 2015), which makes their aspirations of securing a job and further education especially relevant and also challenging.

#### 4.4.2 Learning aspirations

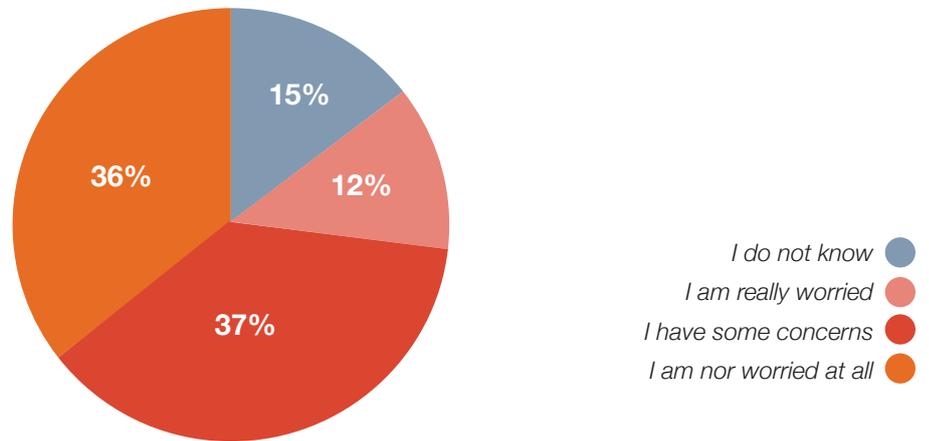
Based on survey results, 72% of the pupils identified getting a job or earning money as their main learning aspiration, followed by 66% who valued getting into a

Figure 4.4. Main findings. Source: Modify by the Authors based on Jenkins, Abiko, Frediani and Moraes (2010)

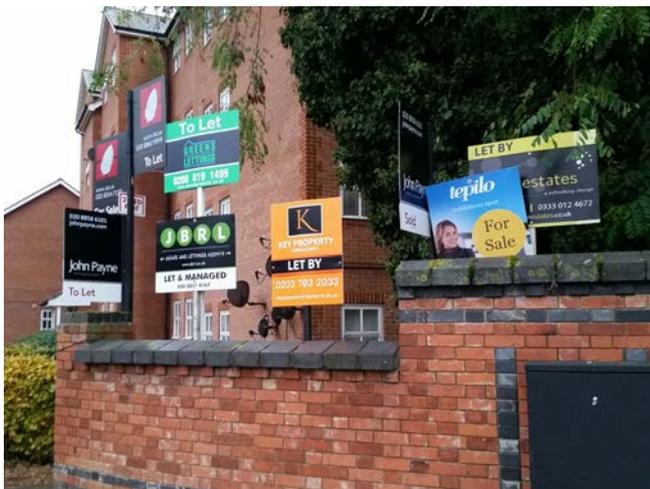


**Figure 4.5.** Concerns about affordability. Source: Survey data

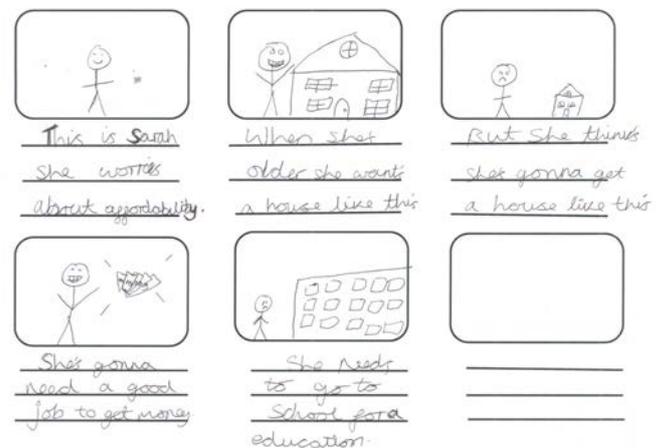
Some students worry about whether they will be able to afford good housing in the future. To what extent do you relate to this concern?



**Figure 4.6.** Letting agent's boards: Affordability. Source: Participatory Photography participant.

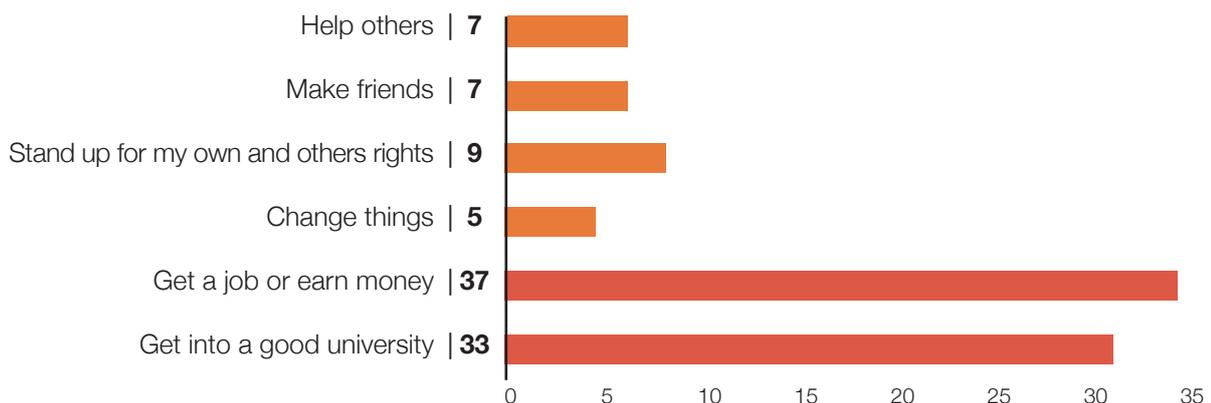


**Figure 4.7.** Learning aspirations and affordability. Source: Narrative task participant



**Figure 4.8.** Learning aspirations. Source: Survey data

What do you hope that going to school and learning will HELP YOU to do in the future? (please select 2 options)



good university. During an activity conducted to explore learning aspirations, 11 out of the 15 pupils expressed that their main reasons to attend school were to secure access to further education, securing a good job, and income afterwards. Further learning aspirations are: changing things (26%), standing up for theirs and others' rights (18%), making friends (15%) and helping others (13%). Survey results about learning aspirations are visually represented in Figure 4.8.

During the fourth workshop, pupils were asked to think about their learning aspirations assuming that they would have a secure income in the future and would not be concerned about housing affordability. An example of a student's illustration of his thoughts is shown in Figure 4.7. Many of them prioritised changing things, standing up for their own and others' rights, and helping others, while some remained strict with getting a job. These responses are consistent with the survey findings mentioned before and raised an important issue of how aspirations can be shaped by immediate constraints. Moreover, when pupils elaborated on getting a job, some answers were about self-esteem while some were about earning money as means to achieve other aspirations and needs.

#### 4.4.3 Relevant learning assets

##### Physical assets

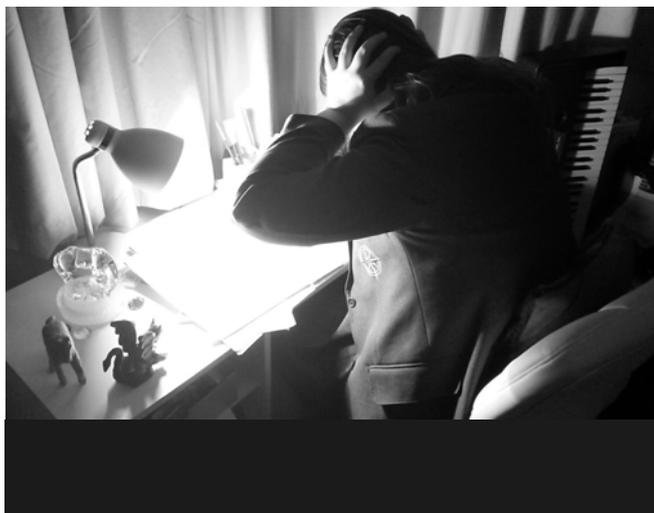
The pupils pointed out that the assets that help them the most to learn are: having access to technology (58%), living in a warm and comfortable home (37%), and having a quiet space to do any duties (27%). This is supported by

qualitative findings from the sessions: "Having your own room gives you space to study" (Student, Workshop 1, 02.11.2016); "Children struggle to work in a noisy, crowded environment" (Student, Workshop 3, 18.11.2016), see Figures 4.9 and 4.10. These findings are consistent with previous research that states that overcrowding is one of the variables that have a major negative impact on children's development (Leventhal & Newman, 2010).

##### Social assets

Almost 40% of students find that getting help or assistance from family or friends is crucial for their learning. Furthermore, in terms of things that make learning more difficult, 63% of pupils chose not having enough friends living nearby; 61% not being able to visit new or interesting places; 60% chose taking care of siblings or another person at home. This highlights the importance students gave to being able to live in a place that allows them to socialise with their peers. In fact, during the second workshop, they stressed the relevance of it, and how living in the same area facilitates this. A further aspect was living close to school, valued by 21% of survey participants, and also emphasised by 4 out of 13 participants, in an activity conducted during the first workshop, about the positive and negative aspects of their housing situation. These findings support what has been stated in previous research regarding the importance that peers have in the learning process during adolescence, and how teenagers reach for others not only for academic but also emotional support (Kiefer & Shim, 2016). Survey results are shown in Figure 4.11 and 4.12.

**Figure 4.9.** Noisy and crowded environment. Source: Participatory Photography participant

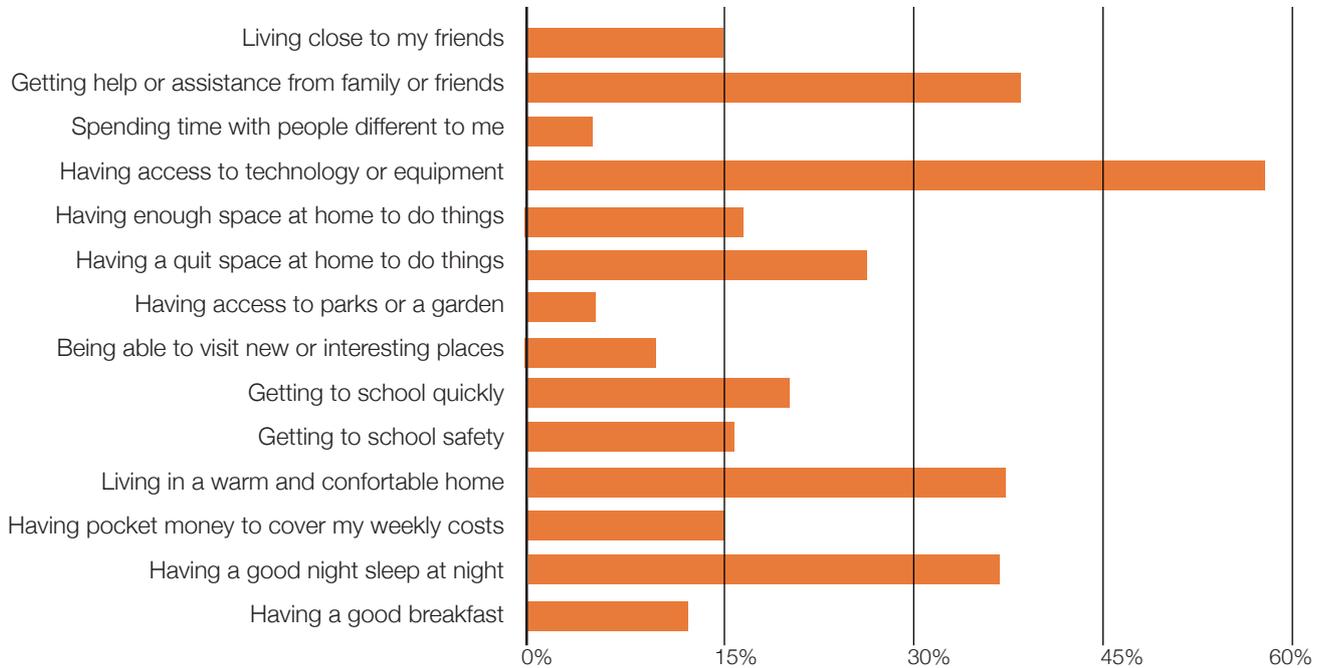


**Figure 4.10.** Housing negative and positive aspects. Source: Chapter Authors



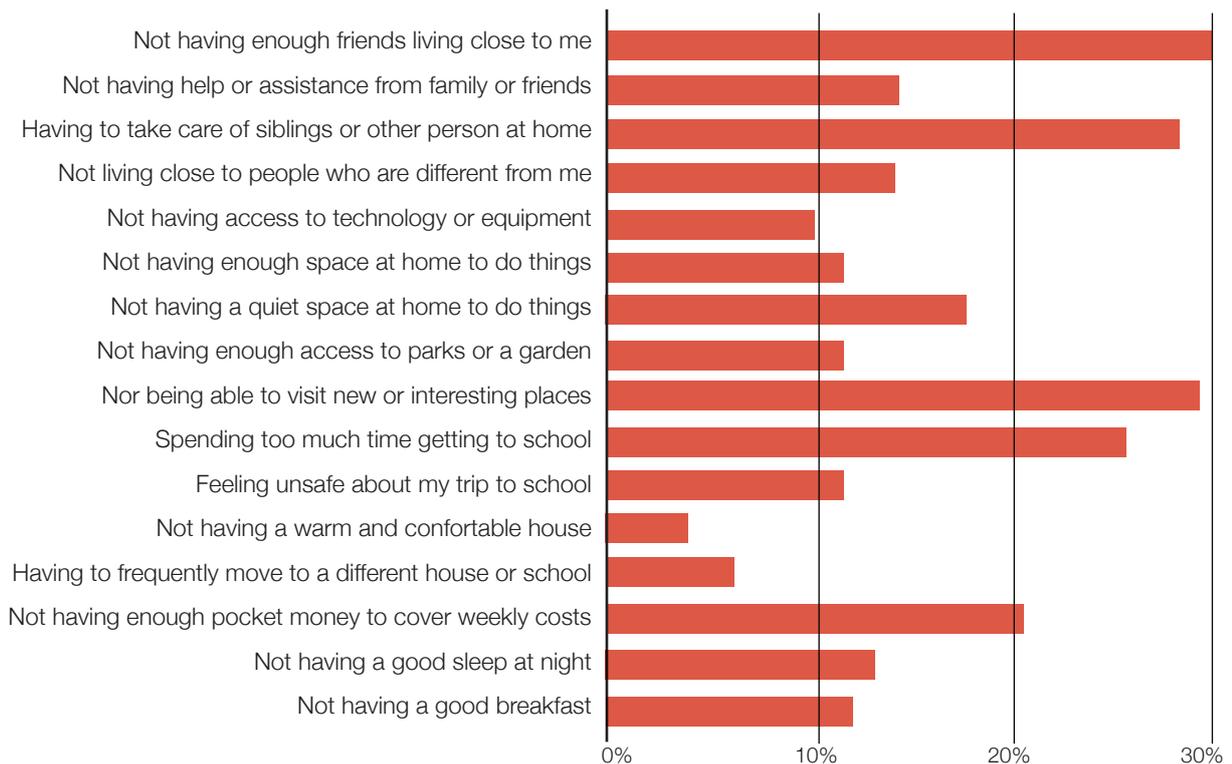
**Figure 4.11.** Assets that help students to learn. Source: Survey data

*Thinking about the place where you live, what are the top 3 things that HELP you to learn? (only select 3)*



**Figure 4.12.** Housing conditions that make it harder for students to learn. Source: Survey data

*Thinking about the place you live, what are the top 3 things that makes it HARDER for you to learn? (select 3 of them)*



## 4.5 Ways Forward

### 4.5.1 Participatory Action

In line with the methodology employed and the aims of the research, pupils conducted a participatory action, in the form of an outdoor house party together with their teachers, Citizens UK community organiser and UCL students (see Figures 4.13 and 4.14). The main purposes of the participatory action were: to raise awareness about the affordability issues that the pupils expect to be facing in the future; promote the students' ability to take action about their concerns and reflections expressed in the sessions; to make visible the need for more political commitment to tackle this issue.

### 4.5.2 Ideas for further research

Throughout the research process, it was evident that students' learning aspirations were articulated around financial objectives. For this reason, there is a need for further research about whether and how the students' current learning aspirations are being constrained and shaped by the current socio-economic situation. More specifically, in light of the findings presented above on pupils' concerns about housing affordability, it would be worth exploring in depth how the housing crisis could be shaping students' learning aspirations in economically focused ways, narrowing their capacity to aspire. Also, it is important to increase the sample number in order to have a more representative number of students. By doing this,

the replicability and validity of research findings could be increased and more representative conclusions could be reached. Lastly, in order to eliminate some of the time constraints, the duration of sessions could be extended in future participatory action research.

## 4.6 Conclusions

Based on the research findings presented in this chapter, it could be inferred that the majority of the students do not feel that their current housing situation is affecting their learning aspirations. Nonetheless, this research highlighted two crucial issues. First, if the current housing crisis continues, it could affect an increasing number of students by threatening the assets they value and need the most in order to achieve their learning aspirations. Second, this crisis might be constraining the students' ability to shape their own aspirations.

The current crisis seems to be getting worse every year. On the one hand, if housing prices in London keep rising, it might be impossible for families to secure their living in the areas where they currently reside. Furthermore, the levels of affordable housing set by London authorities have not been met. In fact, in 2015 they were 40% below the target (Aldridge et al., 2015). This poses a special threat for what students have identified the main assets to achieve their learning aspirations and their concerns about unaffordability. On the other hand, as Londoners face rising prices, the quality of what they can afford diminishes. Additionally, it has been stated that more than

Figure 4.13. Participatory action: Outdoor house party. Source: Chapter Authors

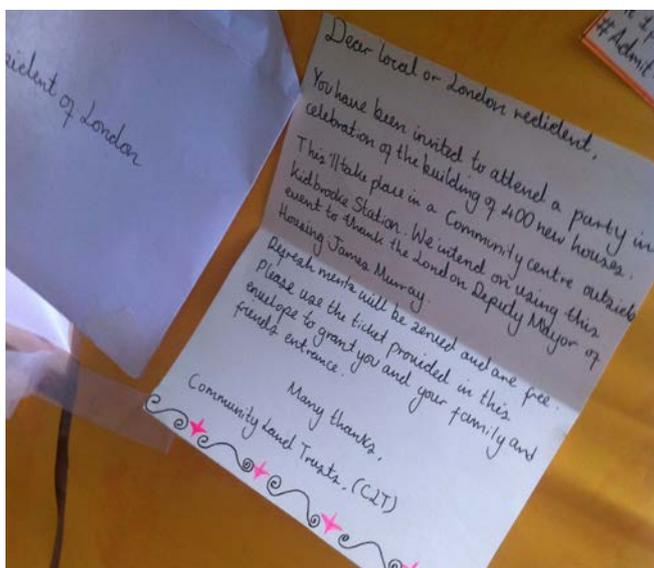


Figure 4.14. Participatory action: Outdoor house party. Source: Chapter Authors



20% of London homes do not meet the decent standard for living (Aldridge et al., 2015). It follows that if no proper measures are taken on London housing crisis, students could face housing challenges that could endanger their learning aspirations for the future—and the possibility to socialise in a secure environment and to receive support from family and friends in the process.

These findings are consistent with those expressed in the Housing Manifesto of Citizens UK, mainly in the aspect of the relevance of addressing the affordability issue, as one of the key ways to overcome the effects of the housing crisis (London Citizens, 2016). It is expected from the London Mayor to devote political efforts to tackle this and other issues related to housing. Furthermore, a strong political commitment is required to reverse previous negative effects of policies on affordable housing.

#### 4.7 Works cited

- ALDRIDGE, H., BORN, T. B., TINSON, A., & MACINNES, T. *London's Poverty Profile 2015*. Trust for London/New Policy Institute, 2015.
- DAVIES, B., & BANSEL, P. Neoliberalism and education. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 20(3), 247-259, 2007.
- FREDIANI, A. A. Sen's Capability Approach as a framework to the practice of development. In: *Development in practice*, 20(2), 173-187, 2010.
- ONS. OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS. *Housing Tenure of Households, Borough*. Extracted from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/housing-tenure-households-borough>, 2014.
- HARKER, L. *Chance of a lifetime: the impact of bad housing on children's lives*. Shelter UK, 2006.
- JENKINS, P., ABIKO, A., FREDIANI, A. A., & MORAES, O. Urban upgrading interventions and engaging residents in fuzzy management: Case studies from Novos Alagados, Salvador, Brazil. *Habitat International*, 34(1), 105-114, 2010.
- RADICE, H. *How We Got Here: UK Higher Education under Neoliberalism School of Politics and International Studies*, University of Leeds, UK, 2007.
- KIEFER, S. M., & SHIM, S. S. Academic help seeking from peers during adolescence: The role of social goals. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 42, 80-88, 2016.
- KING, P. Housing as a Freedom Right, In: *Housing Studies*, 18(5), 661-672, 2003.
- LEVENTHAL, T., & NEWMAN, S. Housing and child development. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(9), 1165-1174, 2010.
- PRODONOVICH, S., PERRY, L. B., & TAGGART, A. Developing conceptual understandings of the capacity to aspire for higher education. *Issues in Educational Research*, 24(2), 174-189, 2014.
- UNTERHALTER, E., VAUGHAN, R., & WALKER, M. The capability approach and education. *PROSPERO-WALLINGFORD*, 13(3), 13, 2007.
- WATT, P., & MINTON, A. London's housing crisis and its activism: Introduction. *City*, 20(2), 204-221, 2016.
- SAROJINI HART, C. The capability approach and education, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 42(3), 275-282, 2012.

## 5. The Willow Primary School

### *MSc Social Development Practice, UCL students:*

*Hannah Collins*

*Yi Huang*

*Aileen Siyoon Lee*

*Paz Mackenna*

*Mateo Rodríguez*

*Poramintorn Vongtrirat*

*With thanks to our collaborators Michael Pugh and Linda Tomliwson*

### 5.1 Introduction

#### 5.1.1 Housing and Education in the London Borough of Haringey

The council of Haringey borough of London states that the ‘demand for permanent housing far outweighs the supply,’ with 10,000 households on the waiting list for secure housing (Haringey London, 2017). Furthermore, it is claimed that around 90% of these households will never be housed in social rented accommodation, therefore, the council suggests for its residents to consider the private rented sector (Haringey London, 2017). The impact of the housing crisis affects us all but is especially felt by those in the lower income bracket, such as the residents of Haringey, the sixth most deprived borough of London (Haringey London, 2017). Teachers, parents and children bear the brunt of this crisis and thus education is one of the sectors most significantly affected by the housing crisis.

Research has highlighted the negative impact of the housing crisis on children’s learning showing that poor housing conditions (such as overcrowding) result in educational underachievement (Friedman, 2010). Children in better quality housing are seen to achieve a higher number of certifications (such as GCSEs and A-levels), which provide them greater earning power (Friedman, 2010).

#### 5.1.2 The Willow Primary School

This research aims to further explore the relationship between the housing crisis and children’s learning aspirations. The participants of this research are students at The Willow Primary School in Haringey. Haringey is the fifth most ethnically diverse population in the UK, with over 100 languages spoken in the borough (Haringey London, 2017). The Willow is representative of this, as highlighted by the school’s most recent OFSTED report; ‘nearly three-quarters of the pupils speak English as sec-

ond language’ and ‘the majority of students come from ethnic minority groups’ (OFSTED, 2012).

The school is located on Broadwater Farm, built in 1967 and one of the only housing estates left in London. The Broadwater Farm Residents’ Association states that the housing estate is one of the most well-served Councils in the UK, regularly attracting visitors from different parts of the world who are interested in seeing a great example of community-led regeneration (Broadwater Farm Residents Association, 2015). The future of The Farm is uncertain and residents fear demolition of their socially rented, affordable housing (ibid). The surrounding areas are becoming hot property due to the proximity to central London. Families are being forced out of the communities that they themselves grew up in due to unaffordability. The research presented in this chapter explores the housing crisis from the student’s perspective and how it impacts on their learning aspirations.

### 5.2 Methodology

This research aims to explore how the current housing crisis in London affects learning aspiration of the students. To progress this, a variety of qualitative methods were employed and as a quantitative instrument, a survey of students at The Willow Primary School.

#### 5.2.1 Qualitative Methods

Five qualitative research activities were employed during workshop sessions between 12 October 2016 and 7 December 2016 with 12 students aged 7-11 years (See Table 5.1).

From the initial meeting with the teacher in charge of the process, it was possible to obtain an overview of pupils, school and community. After each workshop the students repeated the activities school-wide during Pupil Voice, an important platform at The Willow held weekly to gather students together and exchange ideas.

**Table 5.1.** Qualitative research methods employed as part of the current research. Source: Chapter Authors

Qualitative method	Usage purpose	When?	How?	Who participated?	Evidence
<b>Timeline (Participatory action research tool)</b>	To understand how the students interpret their time and lives after school	Workshop 1 19/10/16	Draw out the timeline of after school activities individually	12 pupils	12 completed timelines
<b>Transect walk</b>	To understand the neighbourhood and nearby area around the school	Workshop 1 19/10/16	Walked around the neighbourhood and photographed areas that pupils considered relevant	-12 pupils - teacher - UCL students	41 photos using 5 iPad
<b>Mapping the neighbourhood</b>	Identified key places in the neighbourhood that have significant effects on pupils' lives	Workshop 3 09/11/16	Pupils marked areas of importance in their neighbourhood by drawing maps or using a given map of the estate	12 pupils	9 Maps
<b>Narrative Storytelling 1 - cartoon</b>	Pupils drew comic strips to explain their own personal interpretation of their relationship with their housing situation	Workshop 4 16/11/16	Pupils drew comic strips with free creativity	12 pupils	15 Comic strips
<b>Narrative Storytelling 2 - videos</b>	Pupils provided visual explanation of the comic strip exercise	Workshop 5 07/12/16	Pupils recorded video of each other explaining the comic strips	15 pupils (3 were invited by the teacher)	15 Videos

### 5.3 Quantitative Method

A focus group was held with 12 pupils to construct a total of eight questions students felt would expose the experiences of their classmates in their housing situation. The aim of jointly constructing a survey was to get a broader picture of the neighbourhood and the experiences of the students at 'The Willow'. The final survey was distributed to a total of 151 pupils aged 8-12 years and supported by the involvement of the three main actors of the research: teachers, students and the UCL team.

From survey results, percentages were calculated in order to identify the main housing problems students surveyed are faced with. As well as an exploration of the link between learning aspirations and differing genders, year levels and housing types and made comparisons between them. The quantitative results from the analysis of the survey provided statistical evidence and supplement to the findings of the qualitative research.

### 5.4 Analytical Framework

The 'Capability Approach' was used as the framework of analysis to explore how the London housing crisis affects the valued learning aspirations of students at The Willow Primary School. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach focuses on human wellbeing; understood as people's ability, opportunity and choice to achieve what they have reason to value (Frediani, 2010; Sen, 1999). It shifts the measure of development from one focused on economic growth to a people-centred, providing a more holistic and normative framework which emphasises the individual's freedom to achieve their aspirations (Frediani, 2010; Sen, 1999). This approach defines 'functionings' as what people value doing and being and capabilities as their freedom and ability to achieve these values (Alkire, 2002). Therefore, development work employing this analytical framework focuses on improving wellbeing by enhancing people's capabilities to achieve what they have reason to value.

Frediani (2010) has operationalised the Capability Approach for use in the field. In this research, the capability

map informed the understanding of how the housing profiles of the students may impact their access to learning assets (abilities and opportunities) and learning outcomes (rights and aspirations). It assisted us with the incorporation of the different institutions and policies that relate to the housing issues and learning aspirations of the students into the analysis presented in this chapter. Finally, it encouraged the revelation of the different structural drivers that may be impacting on the students learning assets and outcomes.

## 5.5 Key findings

*“Thus, good practice that values difference and works with diversity in urban social development*

*includes an awareness of power imbalances, a willingness to identify and hear all voices, an acceptance of conflict without confrontation... a desire to learn from our own experience” Jo Beall 1997*

### 5.5.1 Diversity as the base for constructing community and housing policies

The Willow Primary School is a multi-cultural community. This is highlighted by the fact that all of the parents of the 12 students participating in the research were born outside of the UK. The Willow recognises diversity as an intrinsic asset for learning, established in their core values: “Everyone is valued as a unique member of our diverse community” (The Willow Primary School, 2016). This has become a human and social asset for students in spir-

Figure 5.1. Ethnic breakdown of Haringey compared to London: Census 2011.

		Haringey (popn.)		Haringey (%)		London (%)	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
<b>All usual residents</b>		<b>216,507</b>	<b>254,926</b>	<b>216,507</b>	<b>254,926</b>	<b>7,172,091</b>	<b>8,173,941</b>
<b>White</b>	White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	98,028	88,424	45.3	34.7	59.8	44.9
	White: Irish	9,302	6,997	4.3	2.7	3.1	2.2
	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	-	370	-	0.1	-	0.1
	White: Other White	34,742	58,552	16.1	23.0	8.3	12.6
<b>Mixed</b>	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	3,205	44,856	1.5	1.9	1.0	1.5
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	1,551	2,609	0.7	1.0	0.5	0.8
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	2,329	3,738	1.1	1.5	0.8	1.2
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed	2,761	5,345	1.3	2.1	0.9	1.5
<b>Asian</b>	Asian/Asian British: Indian	6,171	5,945	2.9	2.3	6.1	6.6
	Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	2,046	1,920	0.9	0.8	2.0	2.7
	Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	2,961	4,417	1.4	1.7	2.1	2.7
	Asian/Asian British: Chinese	2,444	3,744	1.1	1.5	1.1	1.5
	Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	3,348	8,124	1.5	3.2	1.9	4.9
<b>Black</b>	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	20,570	23,037	9.5	9.0	4.8	7.0
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	19,879	18,087	9.2	7.1	5.3	4.2
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	2,928	7,706	1.4	2.6	0.8	2.1
<b>Other</b>	Other ethnic group: Arab	-	2,229	-	0.9	-	1.3
	Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	4,232	9,826	2.0	3.9	1.6	2.1

itual, cultural and moral learning outcomes by practising respect and interaction within their diverse community.

The Haringey Council has been promoting multiple policies that protect diversity, encouraging multi-cultural communities to migrate towards this area. The Equal Opportunity Policy is one of the main examples; “A council which ensures the provision of services appropriate to local need, valued by all and delivered by staff who reflect the diverse communities we serve” (Haringey Council, 2012). Figure 5.1 presents a table of Haringey population profile, which exposes this reality, reflecting a common trend in London (Figure 5.1).

Housing policies in Haringey need to be aware of the cultural heterogeneity of their community, respecting customs and traditions in housing, to continue the integration of the area. The awareness of their diverse identity is a positive aspect that characterises not only The Willow Primary School but also the whole community. The diverse nature of the community increases the interest of families establishing in the Haringey area, but as one teacher expressed: “Housing problems for the families are exacerbated as they require more space than those living alone or as a couple.”

### 5.5.2 High rent costs put burden on children

Housing prices in Haringey have been increasing steadily; the average house price was £312,443 in 2010, which rose to £498,355 by 2015, a dramatic increase of almost 40% in less than 5 years (Prudence, 2016, Feb 24). Many residents have either been priced out, overstressing themselves or trapped in the unaffordable renting.

The affordability issue has a significant impact on resident’s lives and the wellbeing of their family. Many parents must work in two or more jobs, work double shifts, or

apply for social benefits to cope with high housing prices. As evidenced from the research and in the pupils’ timeline presented below (See Figure 5.2). The problem does not only affect parents but it also has an impact on how well their children perform at school and their learning aspirations. High rent cost further burdens the children giving them responsibilities, which far exceed their age.

Results from the current research project demonstrated that some children take on cooking and caring for their siblings while home alone, as shown in Figure 5.2. Families that face unaffordability problems or are in temporary housing are often forced to move out of their community resulting in the children transferring to other schools. This results in huge disruption to their learning as well as impacting on their social life, as one of the affected pupils stated:

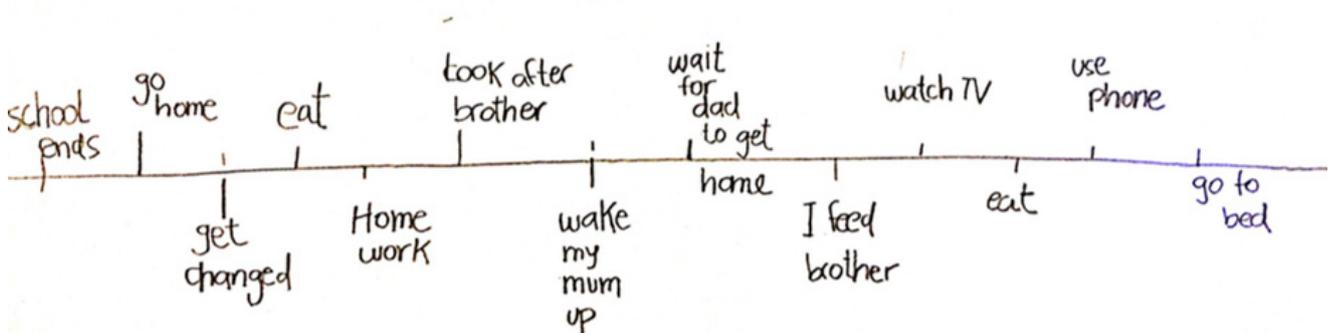
“My friend’s grandmother had a housing crisis causing him to move to his dad’s house. It affects me because my friend got sad, he won’t be in the school with me anymore and we can do nothing to change it.”  
Willow Primary Student. Year 3

Students face problems associated with adapting to the new school environment and leaving behind friends when they are forced to move house. According to the OFSTED report of The Willow, the attendance is below national averages (OFSTED, 2012). These issues play a major role in the student’s school performance and achievement as well as their aspiration for the future.

### 5.5.3 Overcrowding affects learning capabilities at home

“Make it more quiet because the TV is loud when my sister turns it on and there’s no other space to do my homework”  
The Willow Primary student, year 4.

**Figure 5.2.** Example from the Timeline activity which illustrates a student’s daily after school activities and shows the responsibilities young children are burdened with due to their parents work requirements. Source: Narrative Storytelling participants



“It affects me because I don’t get space for doing my homework because I share the room with my sister and she has to play in the bedroom”

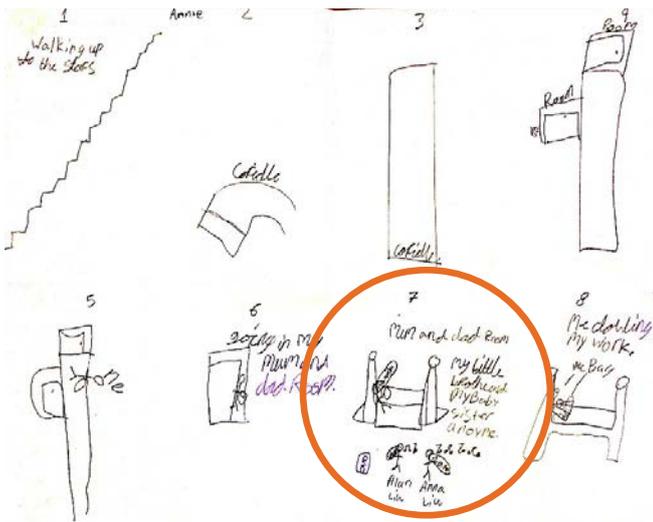
The Willow Primary student, year 3.

Overcrowding has become a common trend in London and The Willow Primary School is not an exception. Results from the multiple research methods used showed that overcrowding makes homework and learning activities difficult for the students, as distractions in their home environment are frequent. During the workshops, a narrative task was developed, and children described their learning environment at home, they presented this hurdle in the cartoon shown in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

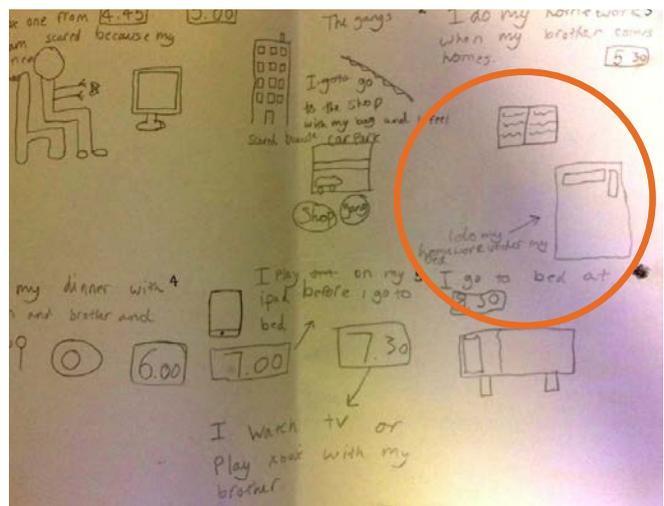
In addition to the qualitative evidence, survey results showed a direct relationship between learning difficulty and the number of people per bedroom. Through data analysis, it is evident that overcrowding is the main problem that students are faced with (see Figure 5.4). A high proportion of pupils share a room with others and their learning capabilities are mainly influenced by ‘having to take care of siblings and another person at home’ (25.8%), ‘not having a good sleep at night’ (19.2%) and ‘not having a quiet place at home to do things’ (16.6%). According to the answers of pupils, the average number of people per room is 2.1.

This has affected three learning assets of the students: physical, human and financial. Human assets are charac-

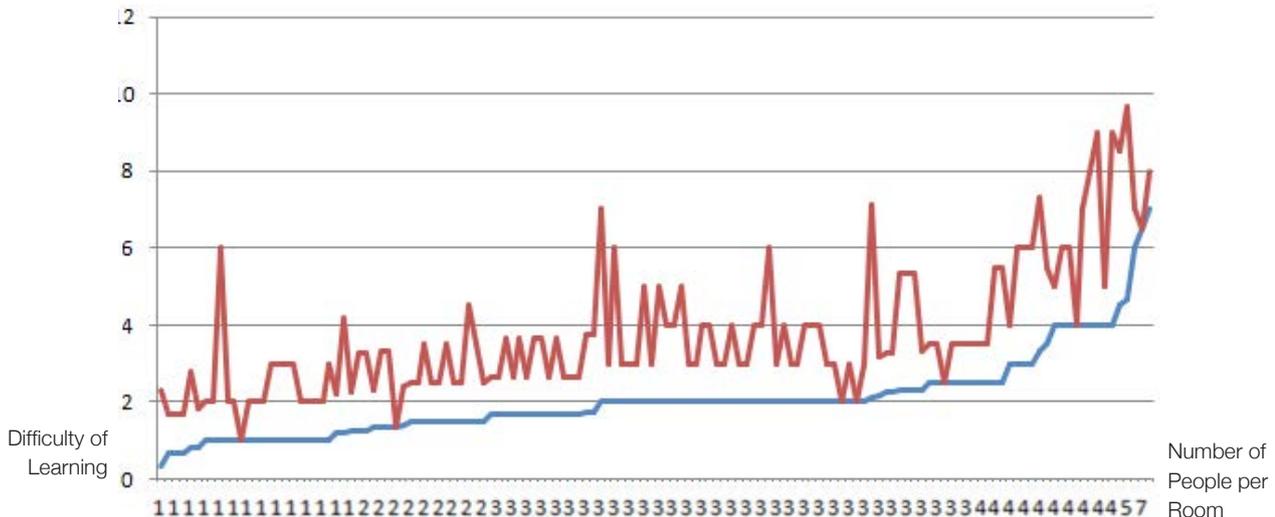
**Figure 5.3.** An example comic strip of a student in year 4 at The Willow highlighting overcrowding issues. Source: Narrative task participant



**Figure 5.4.** An example comic strip of a student in year 4 at The Willow highlighting overcrowding issues. Source: Narrative task participant



**Figure 5.5.** Graph showing a trend towards students learning being negatively impacted by overcrowding with more people sharing a room causing more difficulty in learning. Source: Chapter Authors



terised by the school involvement, creating spaces such as Breakfast and Homework Club to allow students to do the learning they may otherwise not be able to do at home due to overcrowding. The physical assets of the students are limited in terms of space and location for doing homework. This has a clear relationship with unaffordable rents, as families require further financial assets to provide good learning spaces for their children at home.

The 2011 Census states that “over-occupancy is up significantly, with 16.3% of households now over-occupied by at least 1 bedroom. This is much higher than London’s rate of 11.6%” (Haringey Council, 2013). As it has been demonstrated by this research, overcrowding, house prices and diversity have an impact on the students learning capabilities. Although The Willow Primary School has taken positive steps to ensure the students’ learning is protected from their home situation and while the Haringey Council respects the diversity of their community, the London housing crisis is causing a huge burden on the lives of our future generations.

## 5.6 Ways Forward

### 5.6.1 Alternative housing policy through partnerships

The inflated price of housing in Haringey and around London is negatively impacting the wellbeing of the residents and a need for the crisis to be addressed cooperatively and efficiently is more evident than ever. The problem is beyond the coping ability of the council alone, as 10,000 households are on the Haringey waiting list and over 90% will not be housed in social housing (Haringey London, 2017).

Alternative and innovative solutions, such as partnerships, need to be formulated and implemented. An example of this is the Community Land Trusts (CTL), an innovative approach to matching house prices with local wages rather than market rate, ensuring affordability to local residents. The partnership with other stakeholders and agencies are required to provide an alternative policy. A CTL is being proposed for Haringey known as the St Ann’s Redevelopment Trust, which is a positive step in a new direction (Wainwright, 2017, Jan 19).

### 5.6.2 Housing Policies should consider diversity

The Haringey community and The Willow Primary School are a multi-cultural population whose diversity requires suitable housing solutions. Research exploring urban change in Mumbai showed how housing programs faced hurdles, as they were unable to offer suitable housing so-

lutions to specific groups of population, either for gender, disability or cultural differences (Walker et al., 2013).

It is thought that housing policies that don’t consider communities’ diversity may perpetuate exclusion of pre-social conditions. Nonetheless, Housing policies in Haringey recognise the diversity of its population by offering alternative and diverse housing strategies that increase not only housing supply in the area but also respects traditions and customs in the resident’s way of living. The inclusion of this aspect is vital for future regeneration programs in Haringey, as diversity stands as one of its main characteristics.

### 5.6.3 Adaptive tools should be selected for research targeted groups

The research process highlighted the necessity for the tools and methods used in data collection to be adaptable and suitable for young participants. Furthermore, the research presented in this chapter was limited by the researchers’ bias towards the negative aspects of the students housing situations and believe that the way forward should be less guided by the researchers and more by the students themselves. Lastly, feedback from and communication with all actors, including the students, the teachers, Citizen’s UK and UCL could be strengthened in the future to allow clear and strong research and participation..

## 5.7 Conclusion

The current research demonstrates how the learning capabilities of The Willow students are influenced by diversity, high rents and overcrowding.

High rent costs are burdening pupils. Parents are leaving the students with care and household responsibilities while they are forced to work long hours each day, leaving the students little time to focus on their learning. Overcrowding is impacting the students learning aspirations; a high proportion of pupils share a bedroom, which impacts physical, human and financial learning assets of the students. The research findings presented in this chapter highlighted that students find it more difficult to learn at home because of overcrowding.

Diversity appears as a central aspect essential to develop open communities and foster cultural integration. Issues of diversity should be addressed by acknowledging the community’s perspective. The development plan and plans for future regeneration must address the complex entities of the community associated with differing ages, genders, religions, ethnicities and occupations. Therefore, the perspective of the community should be included in the development plan.

The limitations of the current research mean that findings are limited and preliminary. Future research at The Willow Primary School and beyond should employ participatory methods and more rigorous statistics analyses to further extrapolate the housing experience that is impacting future generations.

## 5.8 Works cited

- ALKIRE, S. *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012
- BEALL, J. *A City for All: Valuing Difference and Working with Diversity*. London, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1997.
- BROADWATER FARM RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION. *Haringey Council's Local Plan Consultation: Response by Broadwater Farm Residents' Association*. Haringey Council. Retrieved from: [http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/broadwater\\_farm\\_residents\\_association.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/broadwater_farm_residents_association.pdf), 2015.
- FREDIANI, A. Sen's Capability Approach as a framework to the practice of development. *Development in Practice*, 20(2), pp.173-187, 2010
- FRIEDMAN, D. *Social Impact of Poor Housing*. ECOTEC; London, 2010
- HARINGEY LONDON. *Housing Options*. Retrieved from: <http://www.haringey.gov.uk/housing/housing-options>, 2007.
- HARINGEY LONDON. *Figures about Haringey*. Retrieved from: <http://www.haringey.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/joint-strategic-needs-assessment/figures-about-haringey>, 2017.
- HARINGEY COUNCIL. *Equal opportunities policy*. Retrieved from: [http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/easy\\_read\\_version-2.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/easy_read_version-2.pdf), 2012.
- HARINGEY COUNCIL. *Haringey Briefing on Key Statistics*. Retrieved from: [http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/2011\\_census\\_haringey\\_briefing\\_on\\_key\\_statistics.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/2011_census_haringey_briefing_on_key_statistics.pdf), 2012.
- OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (OFSTED). *School inspection report - The Willow Primary School*. Retrieved from: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/102131>, 2012.
- PRUDENCE, I. *Could you afford to buy your own house now? Hamstead Highgate Express*. Retrieved from: [www.hamhigh.co.uk/property/could\\_you\\_afford\\_to\\_buy\\_your\\_own\\_house\\_now\\_1\\_4431383](http://www.hamhigh.co.uk/property/could_you_afford_to_buy_your_own_house_now_1_4431383), 2016
- SEN, A. *Commodities and capabilities*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999
- SEN, A. Human rights and capabilities. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 6 (2): 151-66, 2005
- WAINWRIGHT, O. The radical model fighting the housing crisis: property prices based on income. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: [https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/16/radical-model-housing-crisis-property-prices-income-community-land-trusts?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/16/radical-model-housing-crisis-property-prices-income-community-land-trusts?CMP=share_btn_tw), 2017.
- WALKER, J. H., FREDIANI, A. A., & TRANI, J. F. Gender, difference and urban change: Implications for the promotion of well-being? *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol 25(1): 111-124, 2013.
- THE WILLOW PRIMARY SCHOOL. *The Willow on Broadwaters Visions and Values*. Available online, URL: <https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/21225/sitedata/files/School%20vision.pdf>, 2016.

## 6. The City of Westminster College

### **MSc Social Development Practice, UCL students:**

*Mikey Blount*

*Isidora Happy Apsari*

*Jingtianyi Ma*

*Xinyi Zhang*

*Jia Li*

*Magdalena Simonetti*

*With thanks to our collaborators Amanda Walters and Alex Jones*

### 6.1 Introduction

For a dwelling to be considered an ‘adequate housing’ it ought to provide more than four walls and a roof; the following conditions must also be met: security of tenure, access to services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy—the right to express cultural traditions and identities (UN Habitat, 2014).

However, the reality is that around a billion people do not have access to an adequate housing (UN Habitat, 2014). Moreover, the violation of this right can also cause the violation of other human rights, for instance, the right to education.

#### 6.1.1 UK National Housing Policy

After WWII, the role of the State was central in delivering housing to its citizens and each borough rented out social housing at an affordable price. In 1979, the National government started to promote private ownership of housing through enabling the private sector to construct and sell new housing, while encouraging boroughs to sell social housing to private owners through the “right to buy” policy.

From 1979 onwards there has been a drastic decrease in the local authorities’ supply of social housing, during which there has been an insufficient increase of housing provided by private enterprises and housing associations. Instead, today’s policies focus on supplying those who cannot access housing through the market with “Affordable Housing”, which is currently set at up to 80% of the local market value, much less “affordable” than housing rented from the borough (Wiles, 2014).

#### 6.1.2 London Housing Crisis

London is currently facing pressing challenges: unaffordable houses to buy or to rent, homelessness, overcrowding and low-quality housing (Great London Authority, 2015).

The growth of speculative housing investment has raised the value of London’s housing stock, which has limited local people’s access to affordable housing. In 2012, 46% of house buyers were people born overseas (Savills, 2013) and many of these houses are deliberately being kept empty (Great London Authority, 2015a). An insufficient housing supply has also contributed to the housing crisis. Fewer new homes were built than in previous years (Great London Authority, 2015) and the council’s housing provision continues to be insufficient (Watt and Minton, 2016).

#### 6.1.3 City of Westminster Borough

Approximately 250,000 people live in the borough of Westminster, and it is estimated that the population will continue to increase. Westminster’s unique geographical location and its good accessibility to other parts of London have led to an increase in its housing prices (Wessex Economics, 2014).

Currently, 12% of the housing stock has no permanent residents; 40% is privately rented and 30% is inhabited by owner-occupiers (Wessex Economics, 2014).

While the mayor has control over the final housing budget, the City of Westminster Council has introduced a “City for All” plan, which will build 1,250 affordable homes over the next five years (Wessex Economics Ltd, 2014). However, this leaves 300 households who will not be able to access an affordable home (Wessex Economics, 2014).

#### 6.1.4 City of Westminster College

City of Westminster College (CoWC) is a vocational school located in the borough of Westminster. CoWC provides education to nearly 8000 students, primarily between the ages of 16 to 18, but also to many mature students (City of Westminster College, 2017). The students come from Westminster and many other boroughs, such as Ealing, Brent, Barnet, Hounslow, Lambeth and Croydon.

The mission of the college is to provide outstanding education and training to help students achieve their full potential. This is achieved through the promotion of three central values: ambition, responsibility and respect. The college offers practical help and advice on issues such as accommodation, leaving home and emergency housing (City of Westminster College, 2017).

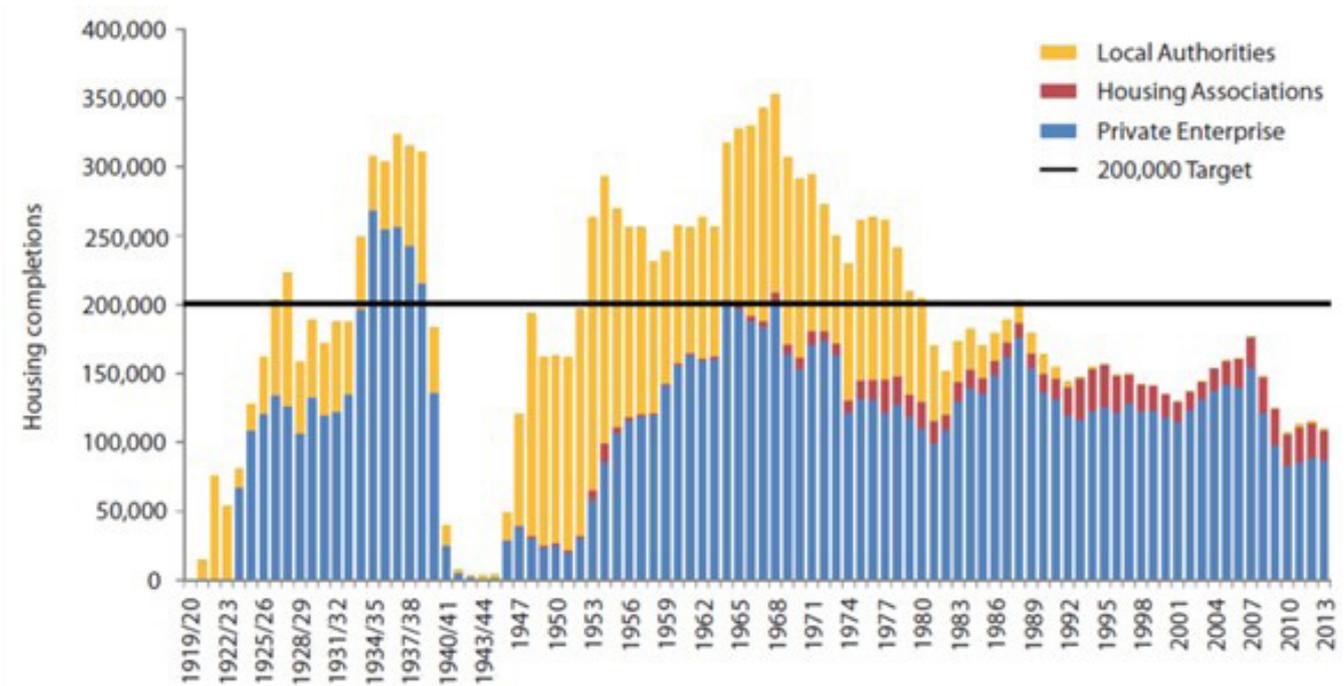
## 6.2 Methodology

This research was conducted alongside UCL students' partners, Citizens UK and the City of Westminster Col-

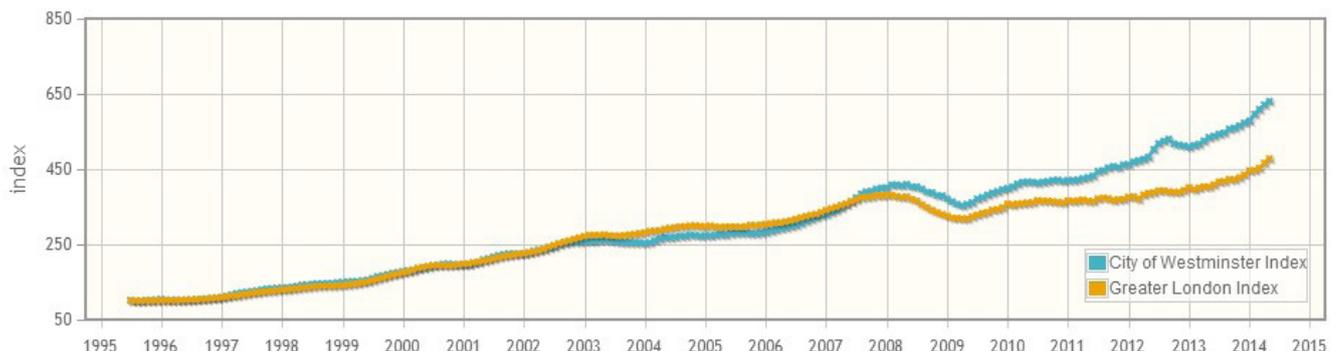
lege to illustrate how the housing crisis in London affects students' learning experiences. The study consisted of six hourly sessions at the college in the space of a three-month period. Data was collected using primary and secondary data collection methods. Figure 6.3 illustrates the participatory methods utilised in the research.

Primary data was collected at the college employing participatory research methods, such as participatory photography, participatory survey development, a narrative task, a one-to-one interview and action planning. Participants in the research process included 17 students and one teacher—who served as an interviewee—and 104 students who completed an online survey on Google

**Figure 6.1.** Number of housing completions from 1919 to 2013. Source: Department for Communities and Local Government



**Figure 6.2.** House Price Index of City of Westminster compared to Greater London. Source: Wessex Economics, 2014



Forms. Secondary data collection instruments consisted of a literature review and policy analysis, provided researchers a general understanding of the housing context in the UK, as well as an overview of how students' learning aspirations are shaped.

The methodology was composed of diverse participatory activities to allow students to express their concerns on housing issues and how these may affect their learning aspirations. Activities started with a one to one interview with the teacher with the aim to obtain general information about the college and students. This was followed by participatory photography activities, which enabled students to use their cameras as a powerful advocacy tool and as a way of expressing their "photo-voice". This method was employed to identify the key housing issues that relate to students' learning aspirations.

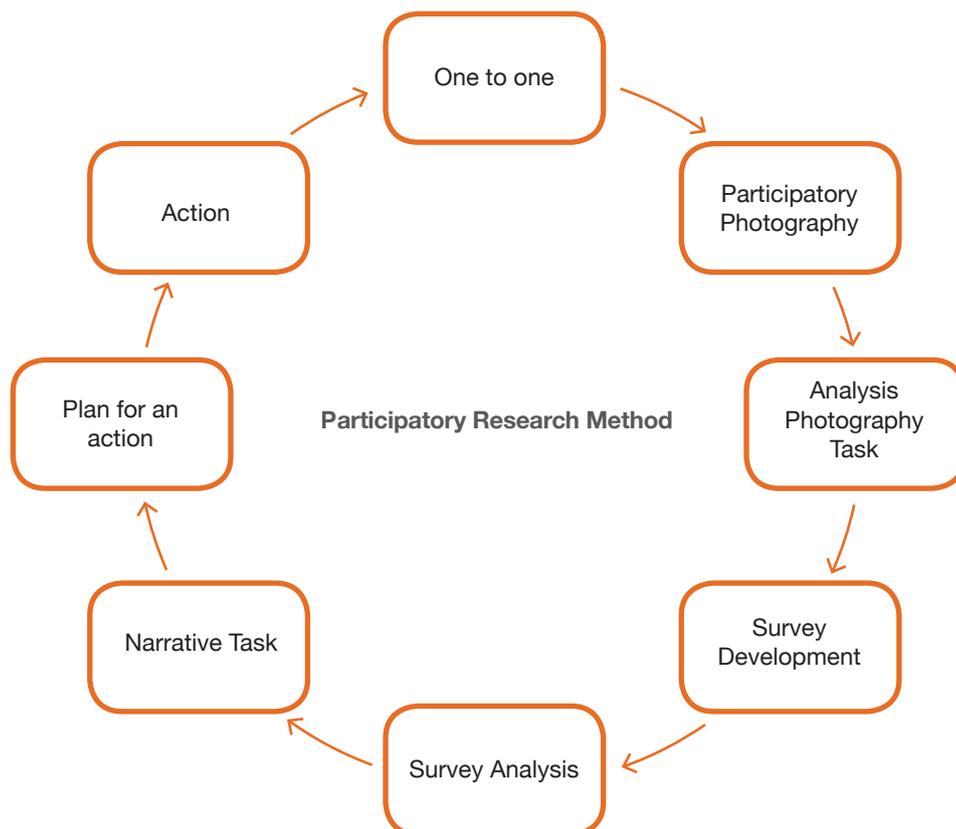
Then, surveys were developed in collaboration with the students to obtain quantitative data to complement qualitative data sources. Furthermore, in the narrative task, students were able to expand their perspectives with more in-depth reflections. Finally, an action plan was devised by students to transform their needs and aspirations into realities.

### 6.3 Analytical Framework

The framework underpinning this research is the 'Capability Approach' devised by Amartya Sen, from which three main concepts—functionings, capabilities and conversion factors—were taken into consideration for the research analysis. Sen suggests that everyone has 'functionings' or a set of things that people actually accomplish to do. For students, functionings could be doing their homework, sitting their exams, or applying to universities. On the other hand, 'capabilities' are defined as the aspirations and desires that people truly value and have the potential to achieve. For students, this may mean their potential to live meaningful lives through achieving their career goals or learning about their specific topics of interest.

Moreover, the aim of social development, according to the Capability Approach is to provide people with the right conditions so that they may turn their capabilities—aspirations—into functionings—achievements. To transform these assets into achievements they value, students need the right 'conversion factors', which can be defined as personal, social and environmental factors that play a role in enhancing or hindering students from using their education and shelter to achieve the things they value (Frediani, 2010).

Figure 6.3. Participatory Research Method. Source: Chapter Authors



External factors such as the construction of the ‘Cross-rail 2’ –that is going to connect Westminster with other areas of London—could result in a rise in the price and supply of the real estate market in the borough, thus impacting on students’ choice of housing. Ultimately, students could be forced to move further from their college, impacting on their learning experiences.

Furthermore, the availability of assets or opportunities students can access is also a critical factor that can enable them to achieve their functionings. Figure 6.4 illustrates that students may have diverse learning interest. While students’ and their family’s housing choice are not likely to have a direct effect on their learning ambitions, the way in which their learning attitudes are shaped is influenced by the abilities and opportunities they have. Thus, students’ achievement of these aspirations is strongly connected to their access to different types of assets such as financial—incomes and savings—physical—household environment such as space for studying at home—and social resources such as social network and friends.

From the Capability Approach perspective, the role of UCL students as social development practitioners was first to understand the relationship between students’ housing conditions and aspirations and secondly, to evaluate if their desired educational functionings are being

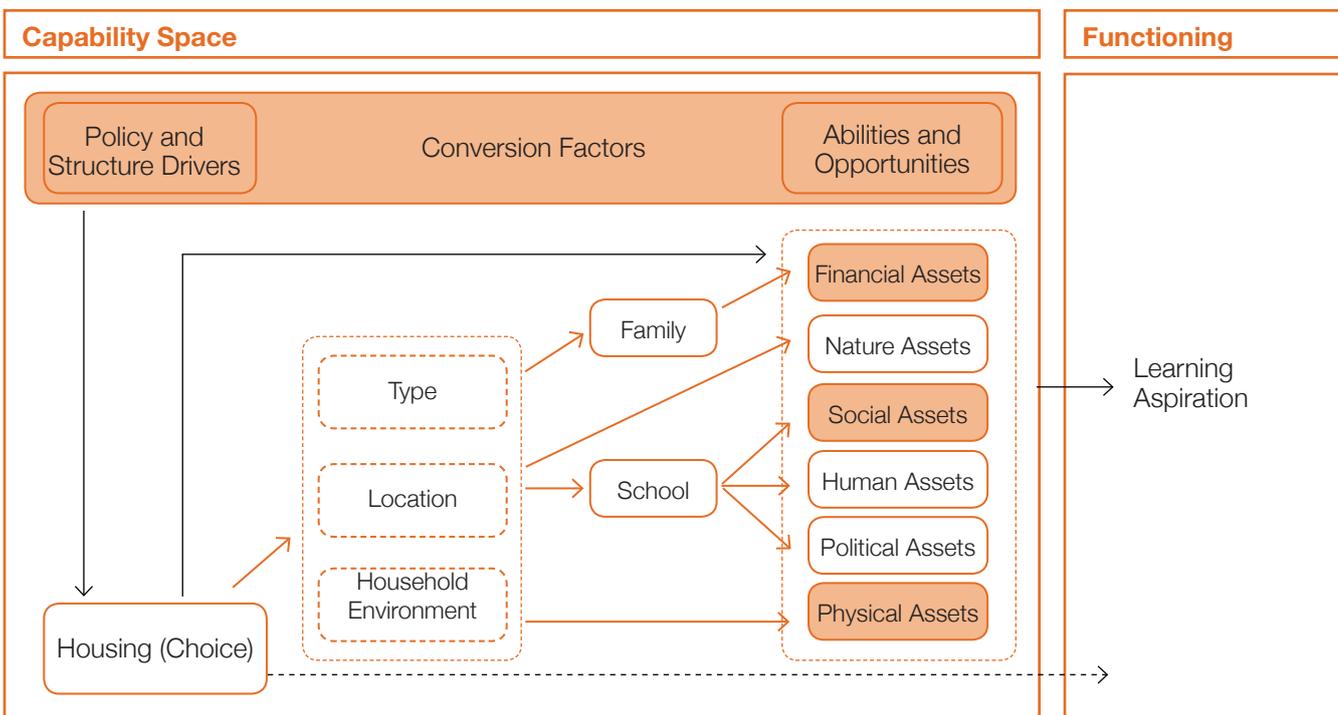
constrained by their available housing assets and how. Lastly, it was aimed to discuss a plan of action that could eventually give students the freedom to choose to pursue the functionings they value and increased their opportunity to live in a physical space that facilitates their capabilities to learn. In addition, this research sought to examine how conversion factors play a fundamental role in housing for students, by either increasing or limiting their access to opportunities and assets which they can utilise for achieving their learning aspirations.

### 6.4 Key Findings

#### 6.4.1 Unaffordable Housing: Who Pays the Price?

Throughout this research, it was consistently found that students and their families are struggling to afford rent. During the first session, one student expressed that he had changed house several times that year due to increasing rent prices, moving further and further away from the college. During the analysis of the participatory photography task, one student explained that he must work part-time to afford his rent. Similarly, in a one-to-one interview, a student said that he lives with his parents, but he helps them to pay their rent by working alongside his studies. To investigate

Figure 6.4. Capability Approach Framework. Source: Chapter Authors



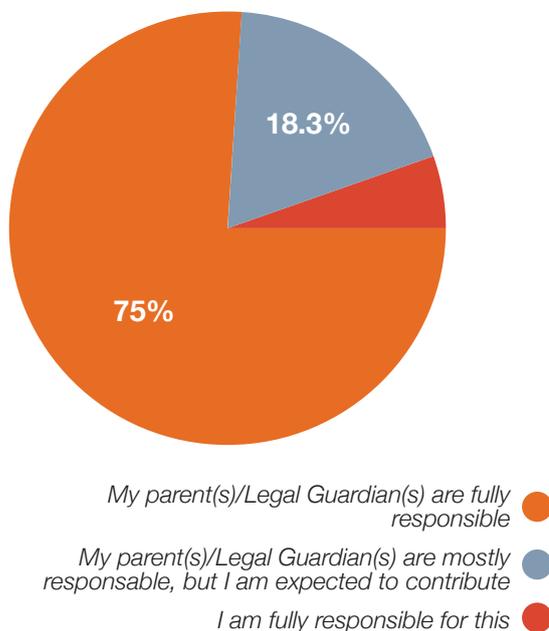
this further, a survey was employed to examine whether this was a common trend. According to survey results, it was found that nearly 25% of students in the research sample are expected to either pay for or contribute to paying for, rent, mortgage or household bills, as seen in Figure 6.5.

Moreover, 83% of students surveyed who are partly or wholly responsible for paying the rent, mortgage and bills, feel this situation has a negative impact on their learning experience. These findings demonstrate that it is not uncommon for students to be required to dedicate their time to earning money to help their family afford accommodation. This situation is strongly related to the housing crisis in London, caused mainly by the shift in housing policies—from renting to buying—and in the delivery of housing from the State to the market as shown Figure 6.1.

According to UN Habitat (2014, p. 9), “the violation of the right to adequate housing may affect the enjoyment of a wide range of other human rights and vice versa”. In order to secure adequate housing, students from the City of Westminster College have to sacrifice time, and this affects their learning experience. Therefore, their right to affordable housing is being violated and affecting their individual right to learn what they choose.

Student’s lack of financial and physical assets as conversion factors, force students to devote their time and energy to work to fully or partly to pay rent, thus hindering students’ achievement of their learning aspirations.

**Figure 6.5.** Percentage of students who pay for, or contribute to paying rent/mortgage/bills. Source: Survey data



### 6.4.2 Unpacking Physical Space: Converting Dreams to Reality

Space is fundamental to any activity and is not merely a physical dimension. According to the research presented in this chapter, simply having the physical space to study is insufficient for students to achieve their learning aspirations. Survey results presented in Figure 6.6, show that the three most important factors that make it harder for students to learn are; spending too much time getting to school (32%), not having a quiet space at home to do things (30%), and not having a good sleep at night (29%).

Similarly, as shown in Figure 6.7, the three statements related to learning assets that students most agreed with were: “my home is too noisy and busy to do homework” (35%); “I do not have enough space to sit and do my homework” (29%); “my journey to school is too long” (28%). Thus, physical space becomes an obstacle for students to achieve their learning ambitions, as these are being influenced by the conditions of their space: noise levels, lack of enough space and the distance of their space from school, as shown in Figure 6.7.

In addition, sharing a room with others can also lead to a lack of private space that students may require to achieve the learning aspirations they really value. Survey results showed that 44% of students share their room with other people. Furthermore, during the participatory photography analysis, one student referred to

**Figure 6.6.** Thinking about the place you live, three things that MAKES IT HARDER for you to learn. Source: Survey data

- Spending **too much time getting to school** (32%)
- Not having a quiet space** at home to do things (30%)
- Not having a good sleep** at night (29%)
- Not having enough space** at home to do things (26%)
- Not having pocket money** to cover weekly costs (26%)
- Not having help or assistance from family or friends (22%)
- Not having enough friends living close to me (22%)
- Not having a good breakfast (19%)
- Having to take care of siblings or other person at home (17%)
- Not having access to technology or equipment (14%)
- Nor being able to visit new or interesting places (12%)
- Having to frequently move to a different house or school (11%)
- Not living close to people who are different from me (6%)
- Not having a warm and comfortable house (6%)
- Not having enough access to parks or a garden (5%)
- Feeling unsafe about my trip to school (3%)

the inconvenience caused by sharing a desk with her sister (see Figure 6.8).

Another student mentioned, "Private space can comfort me". Therefore, aspirations of being comfortable could be achieved by having access to a private space. Another student shared a picture (see Figure 6.9) that showed he shared a room with a friend because there is "not enough room in my family home". Nevertheless, he also pointed out that "when exams come, sharing a room with a friend would be difficult" describing that a messy environment is not his idea of an ideal learning environment. As he is also responsible for paying his own rent, there is a lack of opportunity for him to improve his situation and have a clean and private space where he could study for his exams.

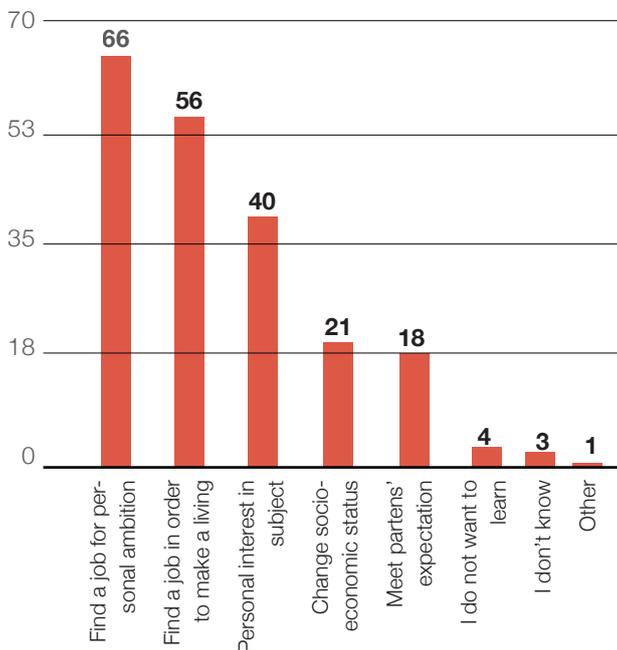
In this context, space is defined as an interplay of power relations that can constrain the access to the resources needed for improving students' capabilities of learning.

**Figure 6.7.** What Makes it Harder for Students to Learn? Source: Survey data

Students agreement with the following statements:

- My home is too noisy and busy to do homework (35%)
- I do not have enough space to sit and so my homework (29%)
- My journey to school is too long (28%)
- We have had keep moving house and it makes school difficult (16%)
- Some things are broken in my home (13%)
- My home is not a good place to sleep and it makes me tired (9%)

**Figure 6.8.** Why do you Learn? Students' Learning Aspirations. Source: Survey data



**Figure 6.9.** Stack of books on top of a desk. Source: Participatory Photography participant.



**Figure 6.10.** A student's room. Source: Participatory Photography participant.



Survey results showed that almost half of the students commute for more than one hour to the college, as they come from different boroughs. The high prices and the insufficient supply of affordable housing in Westminster could be obstructing their opportunities to live near the college. Thus, the right to adequate housing, that provides a good location with adequate access to education, is being restricted by external factors, such as failed housing policies.

Nonetheless, it is worth to highlight students' relentless attitude towards the inconvenience of inadequate housing. Despite living far from the college, students still make an effort to study at the City of Westminster College. In fact, 40% of the students in the sample stated that they learn due to personal interest in the subject they are studying. During the one to one interview, the teacher claimed that "students want to come because it is a large college with a good online profile" as demonstrated by the college's good score on the 2013 OFSTED report. This dedication reflects students' social values, such as the importance they place on receiving good quality education.

Moreover, during the focus group, one student claimed, "if you really want to study, you can always find a way. The difficulties are simply excuses". Several students expressed similar sentiments when discussing housing issues, however, this optimistic outlook can also mean a lack of awareness of how housing issues may be affecting their ability to learn. Despite this, survey results suggest that 20.2% of students feel that their housing situation is indeed making it harder for them to learn. Thus, the capabilities of several students who aspire to receive a good education from a reputable college are being hindered by their housing conditions.

## 6.5 Ways Forward

As a result of the problems highlighted in this chapter, it is believed that a plan of action is needed, as a mechanism for activating the gears of change. The proposed action is twofold. Firstly, the teacher who has been involved in this research has agreed to organise a weekly session, in which he and students from the college will be able to discuss the chronological history of housing policy in London, leading up to the current housing issues that the city is facing. The primary outcome of this action would be to raise awareness of housing issues among students, giving them a better understanding of the nature of their causation.

The second action proposed is to use the findings and actions presented in this chapter as a catalyst for arranging a meeting between UCL, City of Westminster College (CoWC), and Citizens UK (CUK), in which housing issues brought to light in this research project will be debated. It is hoped that both CoWC and CUK will be able to use the

data presented in this chapter as a tool for approaching Westminster City Council and outlining to them the problems that their students face, to negotiate a way in which, together, they could use policy to tackle these issues.

## 6.6 Conclusion

London is a global city and world's leading financial centre that attracts many people and investment. However, it is currently facing a housing crisis, which stems primarily from shifts in housing policy. Former social housing is now privately owned, resulting in the shortage of affordable housing supply and in the increase of the cost of rent.

Through the research presented in this chapter is evident that unaffordability does not solely affect the quality of life of adults, who are usually seen as being in charge of household finances, but also of the students; interfering in the realisation of their learning aspirations. This might be due to students assuming the responsibility of paying the bills, rent, and mortgage of their household.

Furthermore, the quality of physical space is also affecting students' aspirations; overcrowding and sharing space with others can be obstacles for students' opportunities to choose to pursue their learning aspirations for the future. Being unable to access adequate housing and education violates student's human rights.

It can be concluded that in addition to providing students with the assets needed for them to achieve their goals, it is essential to raise awareness of housing issues among young citizens, to tackle the policies that are ultimately responsible for the crisis. In future research, it may be useful to gain a better understanding of the actors that shape students' social values and how this relates to their capabilities.

## 6.7 Works cited

CITY OF WESTMINSTER COLLEGE. *Main Page*. [online] Available at <<http://www.cwc.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx>> [accessed on 15 January 2017], 2017

CITY OF WESTMINSTER COLLEGE. *Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Aims*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.cwc.ac.uk/aboutus/CollegeInformation/Pages/Mission.aspx>> [accessed on 14 January 2017], 2017a.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER COLLEGE. *Welfare*. [online] available at <<http://www.cwc.ac.uk/studentssupport/CareSupport/Pages/welfare.aspx>> [accessed on 17 January 2017], 2017b.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER COLLEGE. *British Values*. [online] available at <<http://www.cwc.ac.uk/studentssupport/Pages/>>

British-Values.aspx>[accessed on 17 January 2017], 2017c.

FREDIANI, A.A. Sen's Capability Approach as a framework to the practice of development. *Development in practice*, 20(2), pp.173-187, 2010.

GREAT LONDON AUTHORITY. *Overseas investors in the London residential property market project- brief*. [pdf] London: Great London Authority. Available at <<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/housing-and-land-publications/overseas-investors-london-residential>> [Accessed on 16 January 2017], 2015.

GREAT LONDON AUTHORITY. *Housing in London*, [pdf] London: Great London Authority. Available at <<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/housing-and-land-publications/housing-london-2015>> [Accessed on 16 January 2017], 2015a.

MARTIN, W. *Buying a house is becoming even more unaffordable for first-time buyers*. [online] Available at: <<http://uk.businessinsider.com/first-time-buyers-stamp-duty-2017-1>>[accessed on 16 January 2017], 2017

SAVILLS. *A World in London*, [pdf] London: Savills World Research. Available at <<http://pdf.euro.savills.co.uk/residential--other/spot-worldlondon-lr.pdf>> [Accessed on 16 January 2017], 2013.

UN HABITAT. *The Right to Adequate Housing*. Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev.1. Human Rights Fact Sheets. [online] Geneva: United Nations, pp.1-58. Available at: [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) [Accessed 18 Jan. 2017], 2014.

UNITED NATIONS. *What are human rights?* Available at <<http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/pages/whatarehumanrights.aspx>> [Accessed on 18 January 2017], 2017.

WATT, P. AND MINTON, A. London's housing crisis and its activism: Introduction. *City*, 20(2), pp.204-221, 2016.

WESSEX ECONOMICS LTD. *Westminster housing markets analysis: final report*. [pdf] Reading: Wessex Economics Ltd. Available at <[http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications\\_store/WHMA%20Main%20ReportFINAL.pdf](http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/WHMA%20Main%20ReportFINAL.pdf)> [Accessed on 16 January 2017], 2014.

WILES.C. *Affordable housing does not mean what you think it means*. [online] Available at:< <https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/feb/03/affordable-housing-meaning-rent-social-housing>> [Accessed on 18 January 2017], 2014.

## 7. The Ark Academy

### *Middlesex University London students:*

*Konstantine Tzirtziris*

*Claire Bohlke*

*Sara Bashir*

*With thanks to our collaborators Paul Amuzie and Tamara Joseph*

### 7.1 Introduction

One of the most important aspects in peoples' lives is shelter and housing. It is the place where people retreat, rest, and feel safe in order to prepare to face the challenges of the world. It goes without saying that housing is even more crucial for children and adolescents. They are at an age they are being nurtured, and raised, and developing habits, but most importantly they still need protection and safety. Without these, needs can be shifted and priorities can be changed. It can be very difficult for them to focus on finding the necessary resources in order to succeed in life. One of these resources that can easily be left out is education and learning. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how students define learning, how they feel about their housing situation and how that correlates to their well-being.

#### 7.1.1 The Ark Academy

A group of four post-graduate students from Middlesex University worked with Citizens UK and visited the Ark Academy in the Borough of Brent in West Greater London area near Wembley Park (Citizens UK, 2016; Brent Council, 2017). The Ark Academy is a mixed all-through school. It offers primary, secondary, and sixth form education hosting students from the age of 3 to 18 years old (Ark Academy, 2016). The school is funded directly from the Department of Education. It is in a great condition since it was established in 2008 and has facilities to accommodate students' educational needs and extracurricular activities. With facilities, such as an indoor gymnasium, football fields, and basketball courts amongst others.

#### 7.1.2 The Borough of Brent

The area of Wembley Park, according to London Metropolitan Police, is a tough area with crimes against the person and antisocial behaviour being in the top-10 in the Northwestern side of London (UKCrimeStats, 2011). Therefore, families that live in the area have those images in their daily life. As a result, the standards, compared to other areas, were expected not to be the same. For example, anti-social behaviour could be surprisingly rude

or unacceptable or even interpreted as severely violent for an outsider who is just visiting the area compared to someone whose house is around the corner and may define it as ordinary or normal.

The purpose of the study was to examine how students feel about their neighbourhood, house, and overall area, and how that impacts their life in school in terms of learning, getting good grades, and their well-being. After identifying what was potentially hindering the above, a discussion was conducted to decide what could be done in order to change or alter this situation, thus students could have a better educational experience and work toward the goals they set.

### 7.2 Methodology

#### 7.2.1 Design

In order to have a collective and more accurate picture, a mixed methods approach was employed for this study – part qualitative and part quantitative. The University College of London (UCL) developed a survey to collect some quantifiable data such as demographics. For practical reasons the survey was transferred onto a different platform to make it more accessible to the Ark Academy students. The survey was handed out in an electronic form and pupils filled it out during a session. To increase the size of the sample—and, therefore, more representative results—a snowball sampling technique was employed. This technique consisted pupils 'telling a friend' about the survey and pass the survey's link on to them.

Before the survey was handed out to the students, researchers established a base on which students would need to be informed and educated about why they were participating in this study. Furthermore, in order to capture more qualitative and it had to be examined through more participatory methods. Thus, the students participated in a weekly forum where they told their opinions about learning, quality of housing, well-being, and school life. Their opinions were collectively reported and used in conjunction with the surveys in order to fill in some gaps and discrepancies.

The last tool that was used for this project was participatory photography with captions, descriptions and opinions by the photo-takers—the students. An informed consent was signed by the parents or guardians taking into consideration that the pupils were under the age of 18 and they could not independently make the decision of disclosing the inside of their house. The photos remained anonymous, and they were all collected by the liaison person of Citizens UK at the Ark Academy. Some of the photographs, on an anonymous basis, were brought up in the sessions and were also discussed by comparing students' opinions.

### 7.2.2 Participants

The survey participants constituted a convenience sample for the most part given the fact that students used their classes or classrooms near the room the sessions were held in order to hand out the surveys. In addition, snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was employed; it consisted of students referring to their closest peers to take the survey and thus acquire more data. A considerable number of students that took the survey this way.

The number of pupils who participated in the participatory photography exercise were less. A convenience sampling technique was implemented once again in order to collect data. However, the application of snowball sampling did not have the same turnout as it was expected. Fewer pictures, compared to the number of surveys, were collected, but they were enough to reflect a general idea of students' housing. The main participants were the students in the sessions and members of the student association.

The teaching sessions and discussions were held in a meeting room at the Ark Academy. Only members of the student association participated, and their responsibility was to inform the rest of the students, their classmates, of what was discussed in those meetings. The population was mixed in terms of age and gender. There were students from all years, including sixth-formers. The participation of the pupils was consistent every week, only some occasional absences and minor changes on students occurred when pupils had to attend a class or a different activity.

## 7.3 Key Findings

The first step through the process was to get the students engaged into a conversation and create a space where students felt they were in a safe place where there were no right or wrong answers and no judgement. The first question was to define learning in general. After a brainstorming session, the answers started to converge into a common theme, acquiring more information. In their own words—without using any professional jargon—they all

agreed that learning is the acquisition of new information through teaching.

It is evident that the process of learning requires some mental activity and a certain state of mind in order to be achieved in the best possible way. That state of mind can be disturbed in multiple ways. Since researchers introduced themselves and the purpose of the study, it was already hinted that the aim of the research was to examine the quality of housing, and how that impacts students' learning. So, it was no surprising that it was mentioned that living conditions can boost or hinder learning. So, that was our hint to move on to the subject.

Learning can, of course, be achieved through various channels. School, peers, family are some of those channels. For children at the age between 6 and 18, school is the major factor for learning. However, students themselves might not see it this way. Thus, the purpose of them coming to school was discussed. The answers received during the discussion sessions were mostly "to learn new things". However, the survey showed that the main reason was to get good grades. When results were discussed with the students, they explained that good grades can lead to a better job and subsequently to a better life. So, learning was not about the acquisition of new information per se, but for a more practical reason. Most students expressed that they do not see the importance of learning something new if they end up getting a bad mark. Thus, the purpose of coming to school was obtaining good grades.

What is stated above is something that needs to be taken into consideration by teachers and headmasters; even governments. At that young age, learning does not seem to be appealing to students if it is not accompanied by the respective grades and recognition of their effort. Thus, a flexible, interactive reward system should be put in place to keep students engaged with the process of learning.

Most students at the Ark Academy answered that the place they do most of their studying is their home. It is where they prepare for the next day, get homework done, and where they review materials taught. When they got to answer questions about the levels of noise inside the house or the neighbourhood, or likewise, how quiet their place is for them to relax, the answers on the survey contradicted what they said in the sessions. This feedback led to holding a discussion to define the students' judgement standards. From data extracted from the survey, about 70% of the students surveyed live very close to the school, according to the Metropolitan Police (2016) the Wembley Park areas is a tumultuous neighbourhood and people who lived there for their whole life might have internalised the conditions of their environments.

During a session at the Ark Academy, on a loud day with a lot of sirens and outside roar, students compared those

conditions to what they defined as ‘not noisy’ on the survey, describing the conditions as quiet. Thus, what they answered as ‘not too bad’ needs further examination using more standardised criteria.

During conversations in the teaching sessions, it was mentioned extensively by the students that their house is not a bad place to be, but walking around their neighbourhood it is not exactly easy. When students were asked to elaborate on this statement and describe in more details, they referred to the people in the streets and their behaviour. That ties with the anti-social behaviour reports by the Metro Police mentioned above. Students said that they are often harassed or talked to by strangers. It was also remarkable that a few students very casually mentioned the fact that they were attacked by people on the street either trying to solicit money or sell drugs.

Likewise, and particularly for students who live in apartment complexes or shared living facilities, it was noticed once again that the house was in good condition as well as the front door, but the main door of the building was

broken and there were strangers inside the communal areas of the building. Those strangers either harassed the residents or engaged in loud, distractive activities such as scuffles or fights.

A student who particularly insisted on strangers having access to the building took a picture from a window in the house (See Figure 7.1), and a picture of his room (See Figure 7.2) to show the contrast between the two. He said that there are too many residents, too many visitors and no security at the main doors.

A key finding of the research presented in this chapter was that the survey results, in some instances, contradicted what students said during the qualitative sessions. In those sessions, researchers insisted and examined what students said to avoid feeding into a fabricated story or an exaggeration. Pupils appeared to point out certain things about outside noise, family being too loud distracting them from studying amongst others, but the results of the survey did not reflect the reality or at least the verbal statements. As shown in Figure 7.3.

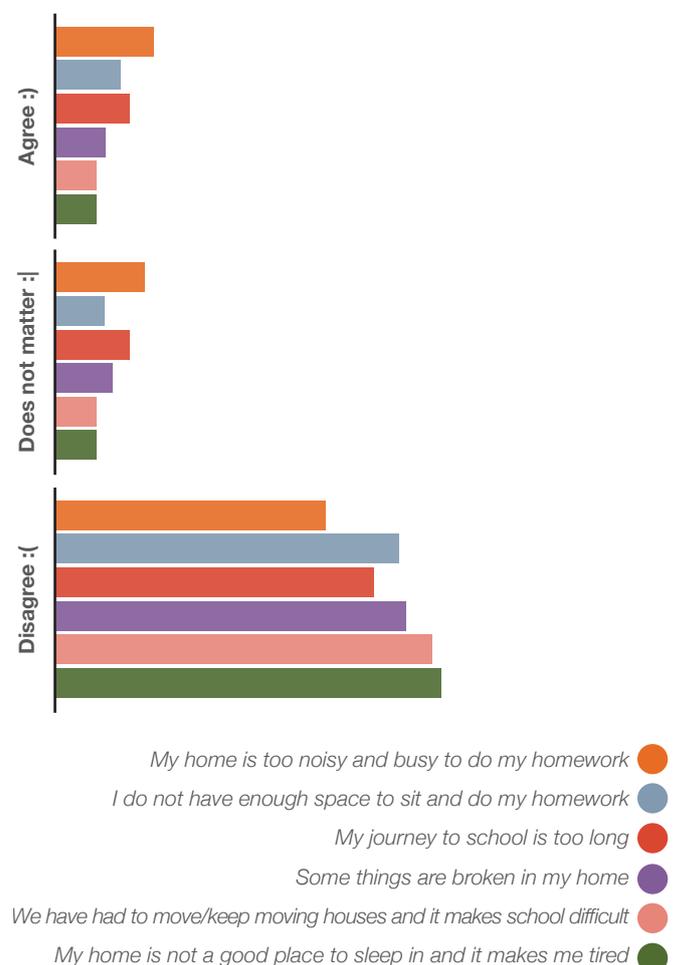
**Figure 7.1.** A glance of my neighbourhood from a window. Source: Participatory photography participant.



**Figure 7.2.** A picture of my room. Source: Participatory Photography participant



**Figure 7.3.** Survey results. Source: Chapter Authors



## 7.4 Ways Forward

Through conversations with the students of the Ark Academy, a school located in a rough area, one can see that there are indeed indications of the influence of housing conditions (and the external environment in which pupils live their everyday life) on their capacity to learn. Valuable insights and connections between housing conditions and learning need to be further investigated. The people that know the students better such as their teachers, must be active in identifying potential underlying issues linked to students' housing conditions. There must be a closer eye kept on students with bad grades or fluctuation in their performance.

Local councils and boroughs should be informed in order to, at least, improve the general condition of buildings with busted locks or front doors, people squatting in empty nearby buildings and go after loitering. Simple things such as improvement on CCTV and signage, which the area seems to be lacking, can deter potential buglers from engaging in criminal acts. Tangible and objective evidence based on the variables stated above should be recorded in order to focus on increasing security on specific streets or neighbourhoods.

Internal actions can be taken by the schools themselves. Consistent and specific surveys, expanding on the evidence and experience presented in this chapter, should be conducted more frequently to monitor and keep track of students' opinions and personal experiences. Such surveys can be produced by projects like the pilot project in which this research is based on, and developed by the school in order to compile data in a more systematic way. Landlord taskforce and councils can use this data to properly investigate housing in the school district.

## 7.5 Conclusion

The Ark Academy is an outstanding school. Facilities meet all the needs and requirements of a student. It is well fenced and secluded to prevent contact with unwanted individuals from the area, providing safety within the school. It also provides a good learning environment for the students with study halls, a library and computer labs. It has its own greenery and fields for sports including an indoor gymnasium. According to GOV.UK (2015) funding comes directly from the Department of Education, thus, overall the conditions in the school promote learning. Hence, future research could focus on how housing impacts learning of school children.

As mentioned before this is a pilot study that aims to collect evidence about the impact of housing on learning as well as how to examine this very fact and its im-

plications in the future. The quantifiable data gave us inconclusive results while participatory photography was difficult to be implemented to its full extent due to low responsiveness by the students. This may not sound ideal, but it provides data to redesign the study better (see limitations below).

Nonetheless, relevant information was captured through the survey and some of the photographs submitted by students, then later these were complemented through conversations in the teaching sessions and draw some conclusions. Hence, the results presented here are empirical and they show that poor housing, as well as poor neighbourhoods, do, indeed, negatively impact learning. It happens in a subliminal way distorting students' objectivity and images about what normal conditions are. Of course, they redefine normal, but that does not change the fact that their mind is distracted even ever so slightly. Furthermore, the same goes for other members of the family, and as a result, they deprioritize studying altogether (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2010).

To continue with some of the limitation of this pilot study, which can serve for future research, there should be a standard curriculum for the teaching sessions with standard material in order to probe into the heart of the issue. There was a lot of pondering throughout the sessions consuming valuable time which could be used for further discussions. Findings sometimes were contradictory, likewise, a redefined survey must be put together in order to come to conclusions and then reinforce those results with the qualitative sessions.

Overall, Ark Academy pupils identify that housing issues were hindering their learning. An outline can be drawn and future studies born from this pilot project must be conducted to get a more representative picture of how poor housing affects, not only learning but also students' wellbeing.

### 7.5.1 Impact of the research on Ark Academy

Paul Amuzie, the organiser for Ark Academy, stated that this year 22 students from Ark academy engaged in the Housing report. Working with 15 key stage 3 and 7 key stage 4 and higher students they ran a successful "action". As an organiser and facilitator of this team's work, he described that "I was facing a challenge: how could this school follow up on all the positive energy after the Housing campaign leading up to the London Mayoral Assembly at the Copperbox? However, this was a fantastic way of doing so"

The project brought in Middlesex students that the pupils could look up to and learn from. This proved so important in engaging the students and helping them to think professionally in their approach to the research. As well as upskilling the team they also engaged over 300 students in the questionnaires.

However, with all good community organising research and "listening" leads to action. Middlesex students during the research project uncovered a stark issue with how many Ark Academy students that felt they found it hard to work at home and study also happened to not have any desk space to revise or do homework. Since the project pupils have engaged their school and Brent Council in a campaign to provide desks for those that have space but need one.

Sammy, year 9, said, "We would never have known so many of our peers were struggling with this. We are going to start a campaign and I hope we win."

## 7.6 Works cited

ARK ACADEMY. *Ark Academy - Welcome*. Retrieved from Ark Academy: <http://arkacademy.org/welcome>, 2016.

BRENT COUNCIL. *Explore Wembley*. Retrieved from Brent Council: <https://www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/explore-wembley/>, 2017.

CITIZENS UK. *London Citizens Housing Manifesto 2016*. Retrieved from Citizens UK: [http://www.citizensuk.org/housing-manifesto\\_2016](http://www.citizensuk.org/housing-manifesto_2016), 2016.

GOV.UK. *Academies and Free Schools*. Retrieved from GOV.UK - Policy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/academies-and-free-schools>, 2015.

HOOVER-DEMPSEY, K. V., BATTIATO, A. C., WALKER, J. M., REED, R. P., DEJONG, J. M., & JONES, K. P. Parental Involvement in Homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 195-209, 2010.

METROPOLITAN POLICE. *Crime Mapping: Total Notifiable Offences*. Retrieved from Metropolitan Police: <http://maps.met.police.uk/access.php?area=E05000104&sort=rate>, 2016, December.

UKCRIMESTATS. *Wembley Central*. Retrieved from UKCrimeStats - The leading crime and postcode data research and analysis platform: [http://www.ukcrimestats.com/Neighbourhood/Metropolitan\\_Police\\_Service/Wembley\\_Central](http://www.ukcrimestats.com/Neighbourhood/Metropolitan_Police_Service/Wembley_Central), 2011.

---

## 8. Cardinal Pole Catholic School

---

### **Middlesex University London students:**

*Carmen Amalia Aattouch*

*Chioma Uwaneme*

*Florence Monique Wyatt*

*With thanks to our collaborators David Hanna and Caitlin Burbridge*

### **8.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to present an accurate picture of the way the research was conducted, its aims, objectives and outcome, including the findings and action plan.

The core reason why this research was conducted in the UK, and especially in London, is because of the current housing crisis; Londoners struggle to afford to buy a house or to accommodate in their rented or council homes. Furthermore, shortages in the number of houses available for Londoners, particularly in the social housing sector, disproportionately impact the poorest sectors of the society. It is estimated that more than 25% of all social housing stock in the borough does not meet the minimum standards defined by the Government's Decent Homes Programme (Molloy, 2013).

Around 1,500 tenants are living in overcrowded conditions even though 2,000 social housing homes remain empty in Hackney. Nearly 500 tenants are on a waiting list for Hackney Council's housing allocation, in the meantime families are forced to live in cramped one-or-two bed private housing (Crook, 2014). On the other hand, almost 1,200 tenants are in the same situation, but in overcrowded one and two-bed social housing. These figures have led to criticism towards the government's inaction on rent control and housing policy. Currently, the Hackney Council owns 44% of the 2,000 empty properties' (ibid).

However, the private housing sector also needs attention, a more rigorous supervision of landlords is necessary since they have failed to provide decent accommodation for their tenants. Moreover, Londoners' purchasing power to buy or rent a house has dropped dramatically, this due to high market prices and the lack of affordable options. The market prices have also increased due to higher demand for housing, therefore the government must find solutions in building more homes for their citizens.

This research project was conducted in collaboration with UCL, Citizens UK, three students from the Middlesex University and 28 pupils from The Cardinal Pole Catholic School. The research plan was given to the Middlesex University students who applied the methodology and

followed the aims proposed by UCL. The chosen methodology was applied in meetings with The Cardinal Pole Catholic School's students, aged between 10 and 17.

Following UCL's distinctive approach to research, education and innovation to address the great challenges facing the world—bringing health, culture, policy, business and beyond—the decided to conduct research on housing conditions and how these influence student's ability to learn, through the experiences and perspectives of school students (UCL, 2017).

Citizens UK is an organisation that coordinates communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good, being the home of community organising in the UK, with diverse civil society alliances in London, Milton Keynes, Nottingham, Birmingham, Wales and Leeds. Citizens UK develops the leadership capacity of their members so they can engage with politicians and other decision-makers on the issues that matter to them (Citizens UK, 2017a). Therefore, they are looking at what the community needs and how they can support them. For example, when the Olympic bid team wanted to bring the Olympic Games to London and sought support from communities, Citizens UK supported negotiations to ensure that decisions would bring benefits for local people, including a legacy of genuinely affordable homes through a Community Land Trust (Citizens UK, 2017b)

The Cardinal Pole Catholic School, according to its 'mission statements', is a learning community for all, based on partnership and respect, a strong and vibrant place which recognises the importance of individual needs and encouraging the creation of an appropriate learning climate (Cardinal Pole Catholic School, 2015). The school is located in the borough of Hackney (see Figure 8.1). Hackney Wick, located in the borough, is host to one of the largest communities of working artists in Europe and contains one-third of the Olympic Park. Hackney Central is well connected to central London with the extension of the East London Line, linking the borough to the Overground and Tube networks. Its cultural offer, which includes theatre and live music at Hackney Empire, continued to grow at the end of 2011 with the opening of the Hackney Picture House and event space. And over £5million was also secured to make further improve-

ments to the Town Centre and develop a fashion hub set to attract overseas visitors and London fashionistas alike (Hackney, 2012).

## 8.2 Methodology

The methodology employed in this research required the use of diverse methods, including four focus meetings—prepared beforehand—with structured questions that could allow capturing relevant information. For the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, various methods were employed, including:

### 8.2.1 Direct discussions/interview with the students

Through the employment of direct discussions and interviews with the students, researchers could get to gain students' confidence, creating a space where they felt comfortable to speak about themselves and allowing research to ask questions to the entire group, as well as to individuals. Students were briefed about the aim of the research project, which was to analyse how housing affects the learning capabilities of students.

To ensure students understood the researchers' perspective, learning outcomes were defined as spiritual,

moral, cultural, mental and physical and these can be achieved by all, but achieving these can be influenced by the student's housing profiles (i.e. council tenant, homeowner, private tenant or temporary occupier). The term "asset" and "learning asset" was also defined as a means to achieving valued learning, and how in this context, the access to assets can affect the student's opportunities and abilities to learn.

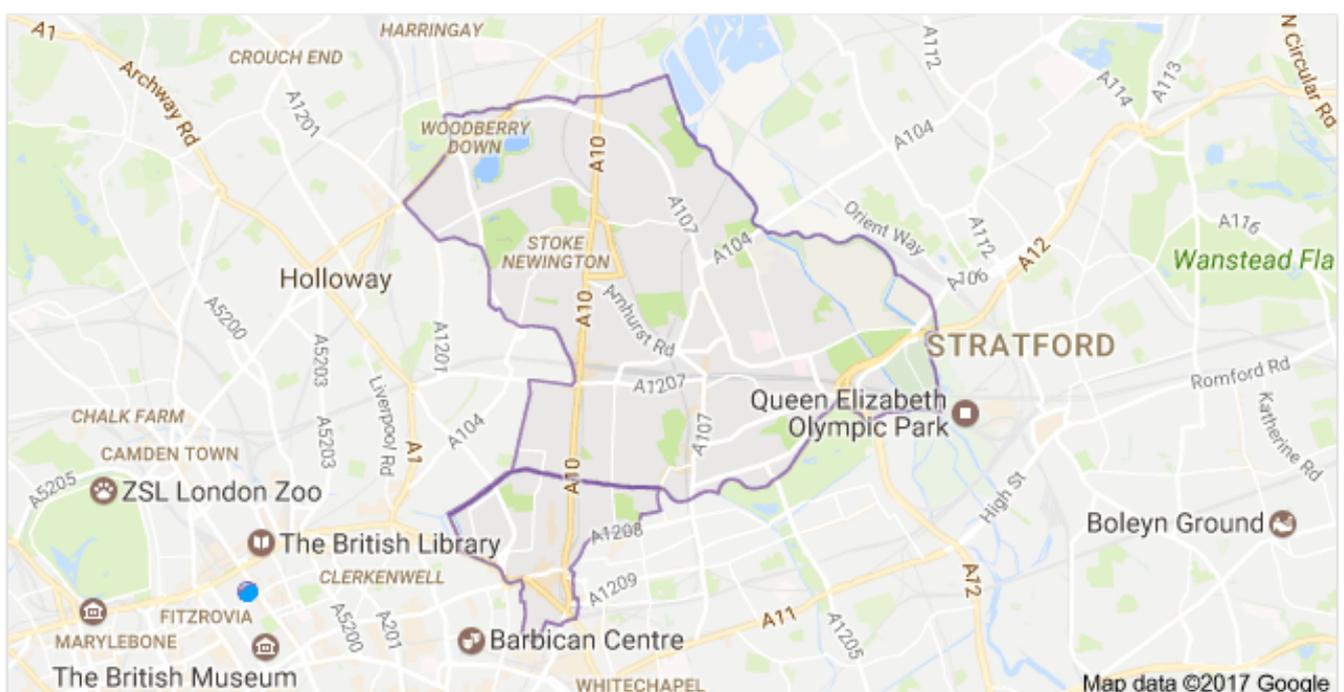
Students were asked individually: why they think they come to school, why education will help them, what do they dream of becoming and how education will help them to achieve the life they dream of. All students confirmed that they come to school to learn and to get into good schools, so in the future, they can get good jobs and have a 'big house' and a 'nice car', as well as to help their families.

### 8.2.2 Personal Narrative Task

The narrative task method offered the students the opportunity to be on their own, only having a paper where to put their thoughts down, without feeling pressured or being judged for their opinions by other students and researchers.

Students were briefed about what the task involved and that they should express solely their opinion regarding how housing conditions can affect their learning abilities and outcomes; students were encouraged that if they did

Figure 8.1. Map of the Borough of Hackney. Source: Chapter Author based on Google Maps (2017)



not have a personal experience on this, to think about somebody they knew, who might have experienced difficult times living in poor housing conditions and having to study at the same time. Not surprisingly, all of them they came with people in mind, including cases where they had to host friends as they had been evacuated by the landlord, or the house had serious mould problems to the point where living conditions were unbearable and landlords failed to help. Other students, talked about friends who have witnessed substance abuse and withdrawal symptoms and how this prevented them from getting a good night sleep leaving them tired and unable to focus at school. Likewise, students expressed how sometimes they need to wait for long periods after school for their parents to pick them up, as they are not safe to travel by themselves to their homes due to the insecure environment around their houses.

### 8.2.3 Participatory Photography task

Participatory photography was employed as a method with the aim of collecting precise evidence of how bad housing conditions look like, however, students felt uncomfortable to expose such private details. Guidance on the contents of pictures advised students to not include any person, picture or hint that can give clues to who the house was and asked for pictures to be sent to a designated email address, from where they could be extracted. However, to overcome the situation, already published pictures in media were utilised and discussed with pupils. Most of the pictures showed houses with problems of mould and damp or that exemplified overcrowded conditions.

### 8.2.4 Survey analysis

The last research method used was the online survey, which was conducted by Cardinal Pole Catholic students, but also, they have invited other colleagues and friends to take part in the survey. Students were advised that this survey should be taken unbiased and that all the information gathered collectively by researchers and pupils until that stage in the methodology would help them to answer the questions. The questions were designated to create a student profile, his/her aspirations on learning and access to learning assets.

## 8.3 Findings

Conducting one-to-one and group interviews offered students the chance to hear others' opinions and then interactively and more confidently, expose their own opinion. By interviewing students individually, it was possible to identify what students consider as factors that can affect their learning capabilities and outcomes:

- Overcrowded houses
- Noise
- Looking after younger siblings, as parents are at work or affected by stress and sick at home
- Wasting time taking younger siblings to/from school, as parents need to go to work early or come home from work too late
- Parents having three jobs at the time each
- Not very friendly neighbours where they live, making them feel unhappy
- Poor housing conditions, such as mould, causing health problems, therefore, off sick from school
- Lack of space in the house, so they cannot have an office, where they can study
- Some students reasoned that the schools or teachers sometimes push them to be very good or to do certain things, without thinking that they don't have access to certain resources—such as private space to study in their house—and this makes them feel inferiors to others.

The survey collected 121 responses and revealed the following information:

- 55.5% participants were male, 43.7% females, while 0.8% preferred not to say
- 45% off participants rent their home from the Council or Housing Association, 36% own the home, 8.1% living in temporary accommodation, and 5.4% renting from a private landlord or other types of accommodation; this information shows that more than half, 53.1% are living with Government's help and they might be the most affected by consequences of bad housing outlined in Annex 1. On the other hand, 64% of students' parents do not own their home.
- 84.9% of the students live at a fair distance from their school, taking them up to 30 minutes to get to school. However, there are 12.6% who travel between 30 minutes and one hour and 0.8% travelling between 1hour and 1hour and 30 minutes, 0.8% travelling from 1 hour and 30 minutes to 2 hours and 0.8% travelling more than 2 hours to get to school.
- A vast majority of students think that coming to school will get them a good job, 77.3% of them, as well as getting into a good university, while 21% say they come to school to stand up for their own and others rights, 17.6% to make friends, 11.8% to change things, 8.4% to help others and 9.2% represent other reasons
- 67.2% of students think that their home is not noisy and busy to stop them from doing their homework, while 20.7% don't care about this and 12.1% say their house is too noisy and busy
- 76.7% of students say that they have enough space to sit and do their homework, while 12.1% don't and 11.2% don't mind it
- Only 4.3% of students say that the journey to

school is too long, while 19.8% don't mind and 75.9% confirm living quite close

- 86.3% of students interviewed don't have broken things in their house and only 4.3% have, while 9.4% don't mind it
- 7% of students had to move homes often, this making studying difficult, for 6.1% does not matter and 89.6% did not have this problem
- 49.2% of students think that getting help or assistance from family or friends help the most to

learn, 22% think that living close to their friends and 6.8% say that spending time with people different from them help them to learn

- Most students say that not having their friends living close to them affects their ability to learn (37.2%), 25.5% are affected by having to take care of siblings or another person at home, the similar percentage by not having a quiet place at home or not enough space. 20.2% of students think that they spend too much time travelling to school and this

**Table 8.1.** Interpretation of narrative task: factors of housing condition that adversely affects learning capabilities. Source: Chapter Authors.

Ranking/ Theme	Dampness of the building	Noise/lack of sleep	Space	Electricity	Far distance from school	Negligence/ dormant attitude of government/ council	Poverty	Smoking	Offensive odour/dirt	Absence of educational tools at home
1	*					*				
2						*				
3							*			
4								*		
5	*						*			
6		*	*						*	
7		*	*							
8					*					
9										
10	*	*								
11		*								
12						*				
13	*					*				
14	*		*							
15	*		*							
16	*									
17	*									
18	*									
19	*	*								
20	*	*								
21	*		*							
22		*	*							
23				*						*
24	*					*				
25	*	*								*
26				*						
27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total of responses</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Note: Total students in the focus group: 28; Total student that undertook the narrative task: 26; Total absent: 2

makes it harder to learn

- As an overview, 66.7% of students think that their housing situation does not make it harder for them to learn, while 3.6% believe the opposite.

Through the analysis and summary of all the student's narratives and the main subject they have written about factors of housing, condition was ranked based on how these adversely affected students' learning capabilities. Table 8.1 presents the results. The highest ranked issue was dampness of the building, followed by noise and space. Students also strongly believed that the Government and the Local Council do not challenge housing issues.

Figure 8.2 presents a picture of a whiteboard of the room where a meeting was held on it, facilitators wrote the consequences of bad housing raised by students, for each of them there is an associated number of students who named them. From this, we can see that travel to school, neighbourhood and anxiety and depression are predominant among pupils.

## 8.4 Conclusion

Overcrowding is the most pressing issue in the housing sector, the current demand for social housing is the highest seen in 20 years, but government actions do not match the scale of the challenge. As a response, the minister allocated to Hackney £36,740 to solve the housing demand, nonetheless, this might not prove significant to the challenge.

The housing research project presented in this chapter represents the concerns of London citizens and aims to foster the production of academic work by institutions and organisations from the UK on pressing issues such as how young students cope with the current housing situation and how this affects their ability to learn.

Through the conveyance of focused meetings, where the Middlesex Students met the participants students from The Cardinal Pole Catholic School and applied research methods in order to collect relevant and substantial information, it was revealed that most students don't think their learning abilities are affected by their living conditions, nonetheless, through the in-depth analysis of interview's excerpt and direct discussions, most of the students expressed that the poor housing conditions do influence students' access to valued learning, and therefore it affects their future and reduces their chances to pursue their goals. Generally, students believe that the government is doing little to understand them and to help them cope with their housing issues.

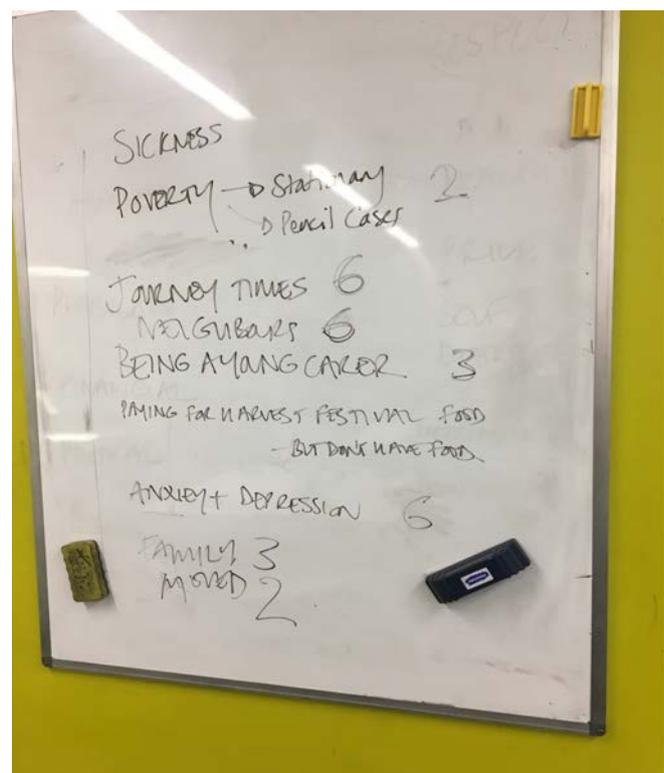
Further work could focus on meeting with the school representatives, to understand in more depth how they approach the housing issues and their awareness on

which students' might be restricted from using their learning potential. This new focus could also improve the evidence of housing issues in the Hackney area—where the participant school is located. Discussing the findings presented in this chapter with a council representative could also be sought in order to learn which actions are being taken. For future researchers, it is advised to work with smaller groups of students; Middlesex students identified that dividing students into smaller groups allowed the students to feel more comfortable to express and share their thoughts.

### 8.4.1 Impact of the research on Cardinal Pole Catholic School

Caitlin Burbridge, the organiser for Cardinal Pole, expressed that the housing research has provided an excellent basis upon which the students in the school have been able to develop concrete focused and effective action. Having identified that conditions in properties were a major barrier to educational outcomes, the students furthered the depth of their research to discover that many of the problems were a result of poor and unregulated landlords in both the private and public sector.

**Figure 8.2.** Opinions expressed by students about the consequences of bad housing. Source: Chapter Authors.



Cardinal Pole Catholic School students have then worked with other members of Hackney Citizens to identify case studies and stories of poor landlords across the borough. Further research identified that not only this is a problem in Hackney, but also that Hackney is the only East London borough to have a form of landlord licensing scheme. Without licensing, there are few powers or even resources that can be applied to tackling this important issue.

The pupils have started to take action. They have developed assemblies and petitions for the whole school, as well as encouraged those affected by the issue in other institutions to also gather support for a landlord licensing scheme. The students have currently gathered over 600 signatures of support for Hackney to get a landlord licensing scheme which they will combine with those from other Citizens UK member institutions in Hackney.

Furthermore, they are also preparing a public action with tents in an iconic public location where they will deliver their petition to significant council leads for housing and call for Hackney to implement a landlord licensing scheme, not only to create important landlord standards, but also to generate income to employ a local landlord standards enforcement team. The students have grown significantly in confidence, and are working hard to turn the stories they have unearthed into powerful action for the common good in Hackney.

## 8.5 Works cited

CARDINAL POLE CATHOLIC SCHOOL. *Behaviour for Learning Policy*. [online] London: Cardinal Pole Catholic School, pp.1-24. Available at: [http://www.cardinal-pole.co.uk/\\_files/Our%20School/Policies/4E3749BF7D78F44FCF1F45A07E730167.pdf](http://www.cardinal-pole.co.uk/_files/Our%20School/Policies/4E3749BF7D78F44FCF1F45A07E730167.pdf) [Accessed 31 Nov. 2016], 2015.

CITIZENS UK. *About Us*. [online] Available at: [http://www.citizensuk.org/about\\_us](http://www.citizensuk.org/about_us) [Accessed 27 Oct. 2016], 2017a.

CITIZENS UK. *Housing*. [online] Available at: <http://www.citizensuk.org/housing> [Accessed 26 Nov. 2016], 2017b.

CROOK, R. *Housing in Hackney: 1,500 in overcrowded conditions*. [online] Hackney Post. Available at: <http://hackneypost.co.uk/2014/03/21/housing-in-hackney-1500-overcrowded-conditions/> [Accessed 20 Nov. 2016], 2014.

HACKNEY. *Neighbourhoods | Destination Hackney*. [online] Destinationhackney.co.uk. Available at: <http://www.destinationhackney.co.uk/neighbourhoods> [Accessed 10 Oct. 2016], 2012.

OSBORNE, S. Hackney Council has a housing crisis. The Government just gave it £36,000 to solve it. [online] *The Independent*. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/hackney-council-36000-housing-crisis-homes-new-houses-flats-london-capital-a7535486.html> [Accessed 24 Nov. 2017], 2017.

MOLLOY, A. More than a quarter of all Hackney social housing lack standards - *Hackney Post*. [online] Hackney Post. Available at: <http://hackneypost.co.uk/2013/03/21/more-than-a-quarter-of-all-hackney-social-housing-lack-standards/> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2016], 2013.

UCL. *MSc Social Development Practice*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/programmes/postgraduate/msc-social-development-practice> [Accessed 13 Oct. 2016], 2017

## 9. City and Islington College

### MSc Social Development Practice, UCL students:

Lingyu Yang

Andrea Burt Heisecke

Jin Mengting

Sumit Bhagasara

Victoria Austin

With thanks to our collaborators Daniel Lawrence and Stephanie Leonard

### 9.1 Introduction

In his election manifesto the now Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, stated that “the housing crisis is the single biggest barrier to prosperity, growth and fairness facing Londoners today.” (Khan,2016). Housing in London is such a major concern that it was the biggest issue during the election campaign, which was called a ‘referendum on housing’ by both major candidates (EAT,2016). But it isn’t until a person lives in London and speaks to citizens that the full implications of this issue become clear.

This chapter presents an action research conducted in Autumn 2016 as part of the practice module of the MSc Social Development Practice. For this project, the Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London (UCL) partnered with Citizens UK to conduct a pilot study at a local Sixth Form College to understand the connections between poor housing and educational attainment.

Our researchers composed by five UCL students partnered with pupil ages 16-19 year from City and Islington Sixth Form College (CANDI), supported by Daniel Lawrence, a Politics Teacher and activist. The study aimed to discover the extent to which the housing situation of the students affected their learning. The research was conducted over a period of three months, employed diverse methods including, workshops, participatory photography, a survey, lectures and group discussions (for the UCL students), and a final poster presentation at UCL. The UCL team worked with the CANDI students to ensure the research targeted the issues that they considered as priorities. This research also served as the pilot for a larger investigation lead by Citizens UK to test the hypothesis that poor housing affects significantly on educational attainment. The research presented in this chapter provides both the findings and recommendations for future research.

#### 9.1.1 The City and Islington College and the Borough of Islington

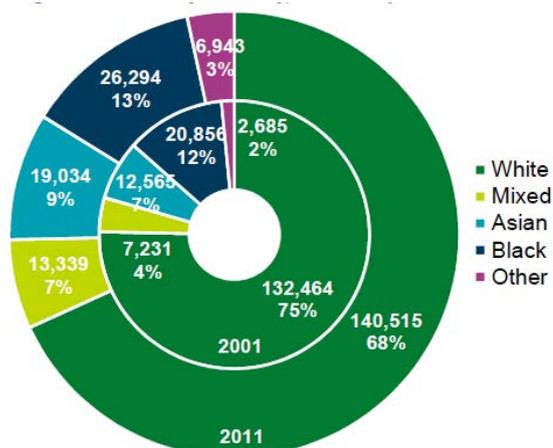
CANDI has approximately 13,000 students across 5 campuses located mainly in the Borough of Islington al-

though students attend the college from across London. This research was conducted with the A level students on the Sixth Form campus the Borough of Islington

Islington is one of the most densely populated and expensive places to live in London. Like most London Boroughs, the juxtaposition between large expensive townhouses and overcrowded social housing is apparent on almost every corner. With almost 140 residents per hectare, Islington’s high population density reflects the shortage of accommodation and land; small household size; and the popularity of the area, with a significantly high proportion of flats—rather than houses—in the borough often occupied by—relatively—affluent singles. The area contains some of the most deprived wards in the UK, while also exhibiting some of the highest house prices. This results in a shortage of good quality and genuinely affordable housing and a significant unmet housing needs. Furthermore, Islington has seen an 85% increase in the size of the private rented sector in the last 10 years. The average rental in the borough is above the London average (Housing Strategy 2014-2019, Islington Council).

Figure 9.1. Ethnic Diversity in Islington. Source: Islington Council (2015).

Islington residents by ethnicity, 2011 compared to 2001



The average price of an Islington house is now £859,175 (Islington Gazette, 2017), while the average salary is just £35,353 (Metro, 2015).

Islington is a very diverse borough, with a large migrant population. The Race Equality Foundation has studied how ethnicity intersects with housing need and found that Black African Households are 75% more likely to experience housing deprivation than White British Households, Bangladeshi households 63% more likely, and recent migrants are more likely to experience housing deprivation than those born here (Noronha, 2015).

The housing crisis is broader than the borough—although exacerbated within it due to the high house prices. In London, overall, during the year 2014-15, former Mayor, Boris Johnson, was only building 13% of affordable accommodation—by the old definition of 80% of the market cost. Sadiq Khan, London's current mayor, has vowed to change this, committing to build 90,000 new homes under a new definition of affordability (which relates to average wages); established a new living rent scheme and social letting agency; and consider the possibility of community land trusts, this supported by Citizens UK).

### 9.1.2 Housing and Educational Attainment in the Borough of Islington

A report published by the Scottish Government in 2010 reviewed the literature on the relationship between housing, neighbourhoods and schools and found that “neither housing nor education operates in discrete ways, and each is affected by a range of other cross-cutting areas such as health, transport, (and) employment” (Scottish Government, 2010). This study sought to test the hypothesis that “neighbourhoods and housing characteristics can impact on educational development and outcomes” (Ibid). It also suggested that overcrowding and homelessness impact, particularly negatively, on boys more greatly than girls (ibid).

Similarly, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) fact sheet on Child Poverty states that “the academic literature is very clear, differences in the social background of pupils are the primary factors causing inequality in educational outcomes” (NUT, 2017). The NUT argues that over focusing on the impact of teaching, schools and assets can miss the vital impact that home life and background can have on students' abilities to learn (Ibid).

## 9.2 Methodology

A diversity of methods was employed in this research including one-to-one conversations, focus groups, participatory photography, and a survey, this with the aim of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. As

a first step, a one-to-one meet was accord with Daniel Lawrence, a teacher who took part in last year's action research to gain insight into the challenges encountered by UCL students.

Furthermore, workshops were held weekly with the CANDI students. During the second week, the participatory photography method was introduced, students were asked to take photos of their houses and neighbourhoods and share the stories behind them.

The collection of data was an iterative process as trust was built with the CANDI group. After the first two workshops and literature review, a fundamental understanding of the relationship between housing and students' learning aspirations was formed. During the third workshop, collective interviews were conducted with the supporting teacher and the pupils.

At the fourth workshop, questions for the survey were shared and discussed with the group, the final version of these was agreed collectively. In total, 160 students answered the survey; this quantitative method was utilised to enhance and query the qualitative evidence we had already gathered.

Initially, the research methodology included performing a narrative task. However, due to logistic challenges, the method could not be employed. However, it was replaced with an action workshop conducted in collaboration with Citizens UK, where an action plan was designed collectively. This fitted more clearly with what the students identified as priorities, captured in their narratives through interviews, participatory photography and group discussion.

## 9.3 Analytical framework

The Capability Approach (CA) developed by Amartya Sen (1999) served as the analytical framework of this study. Sen claims that the development process should be about broadening people's choices and expanding their capabilities to achieve the things they value (Ibid). The CA is regarded as “an attempt to develop a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual wellbeing and social arrangements” (Alexandre, 2010: 178). Goerne (2010) describes five conceptual building block to the approach: commodities, conversion factors, capability set, choices and functionings. The CA allowed researchers to assess the link between the housing issues and students' learning aspiration.

By employing this framework for analysis, it was possible to identify what students valued from their education such as getting into a good university and getting a good job and to test the assumption that housing issues can impact students' learning outcomes, both positively and

negatively. Below, key themes identified through the analysis are described

### 9.3.1 Housing profiles

Housing profiles are often considered as the result of families' own 'choices', nonetheless, many scholars indicate that these choices often respond to internal limitations, meaning that people who live in conditions of deprivation often had to adjust their aspirations downwards (Nussbaum 2001; Teschl & Comim 2005). House profiles were divided into four types: homeowner, private tenant, council tenant and temporary occupier. Each of them has both strengths and weaknesses.

### 9.3.2 Learning assets

These are considered part of the 'capability set' which includes an individual's capabilities. For this study, the capability set was defined as the 'access to learning assets,' and these can be influenced by the housing profiles. A feature of the CA is its multi-dimensional analysis, thus, learning assets were classified as hu-

man, physical, financial, social, natural, political perspectives.

### 9.3.3 Learning outcomes

These are related to 'learning aspirations', they can be defined as the future achievements students aspire to, what motivates them to prioritise learning and ultimately what they want to get from College. As described by Sen (2005), a functioning is an achievement of a person. For this study, learning aspirations not only took into account students' opinions but also consider the wider context they are set in: spiritual, moral, cultural and social, mental, physical, in order to understand what students value the most.

### 9.3.4 Structural drivers

In Goerne's classification, structural drivers can be classified as 'conversion factors', thus the "personal, environmental and social conditions of each individual existence" could help an individual convert 'capabilities' into 'functionings' (Goerne, 2010: 8). These drivers can be ecological, economic, social and political.

**Figure 9.2.** (Right) A light full of water where a leak had caused damage. (Left) The family used pans to catch the drips. Source: Participatory Photography participants.



### 9.3.5 Connection between house profiles and learning outcomes

In order to establish the connection between housing profiles and learning outcomes, methods of participatory photography and focus groups were employed to evaluate students' choices, capability assets, and functionalities, in conjunction with a desk research and literature review to identify the structural drives.

## 9.4 Key findings

Below we present the key findings of this research.

### 9.4.1 House conditions

The students clearly identified a link between housing conditions and education. Figure 9.2, shows a lamp filled with water and many containers, the picture was taken by a participatory photography participant. The student explained: "There are four flats in my building. One of them had flooded and we were not informed about it. They tried to cover it up, but soon the ceiling in the other 3 flats began to fall in. Dirty water was coming through our lights. Thankfully, the landlords of different flats were really helpful. We got our electricity back after a couple of fire alarm alerts and blackout for one day." In addition, she also described that she and her family had to clean the dirty water in the middle of the night, which affected her studies because she could not get a good night's sleep and thus was late to class the following day. This is a clear example of how houses' poor conditions can negatively affect students' learning outcomes.

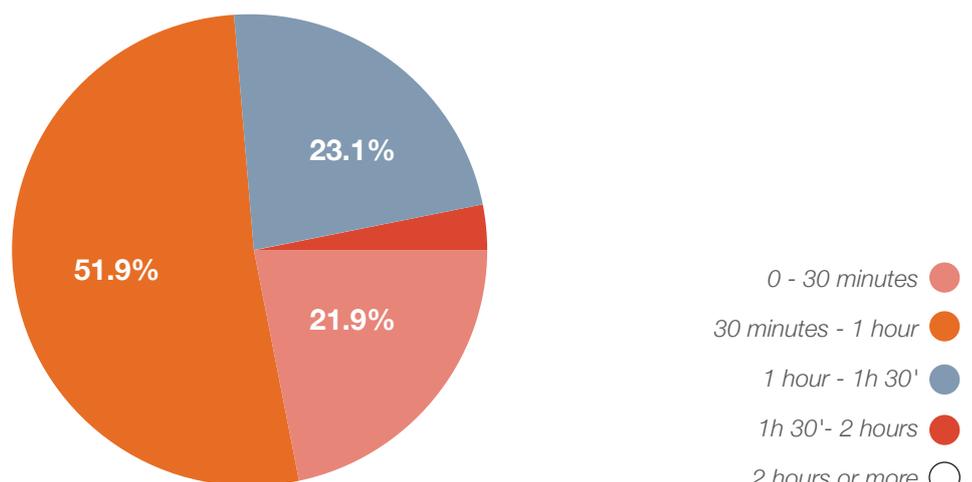
### 9.4.2 Distance to school

Some students commute for long hours to school, which can be a problem. In our survey, more than half of the students (52%) spend between 30 minutes to an hour travelling to college, but 23% of students travelled for more than an hour, with 3% travelling for more than 90 minutes (see Figure 9.3). In addition, 33,8% of students surveyed think that spending too much time getting to school is the top two things that make it harder for them to learn (see Figure 9.3). However, CANDI was seen as a good college, with an excellent student experience and a strong stance on diversity which attracted students from all over London. This was noted as one of the core reasons why some students accept the longer journey.

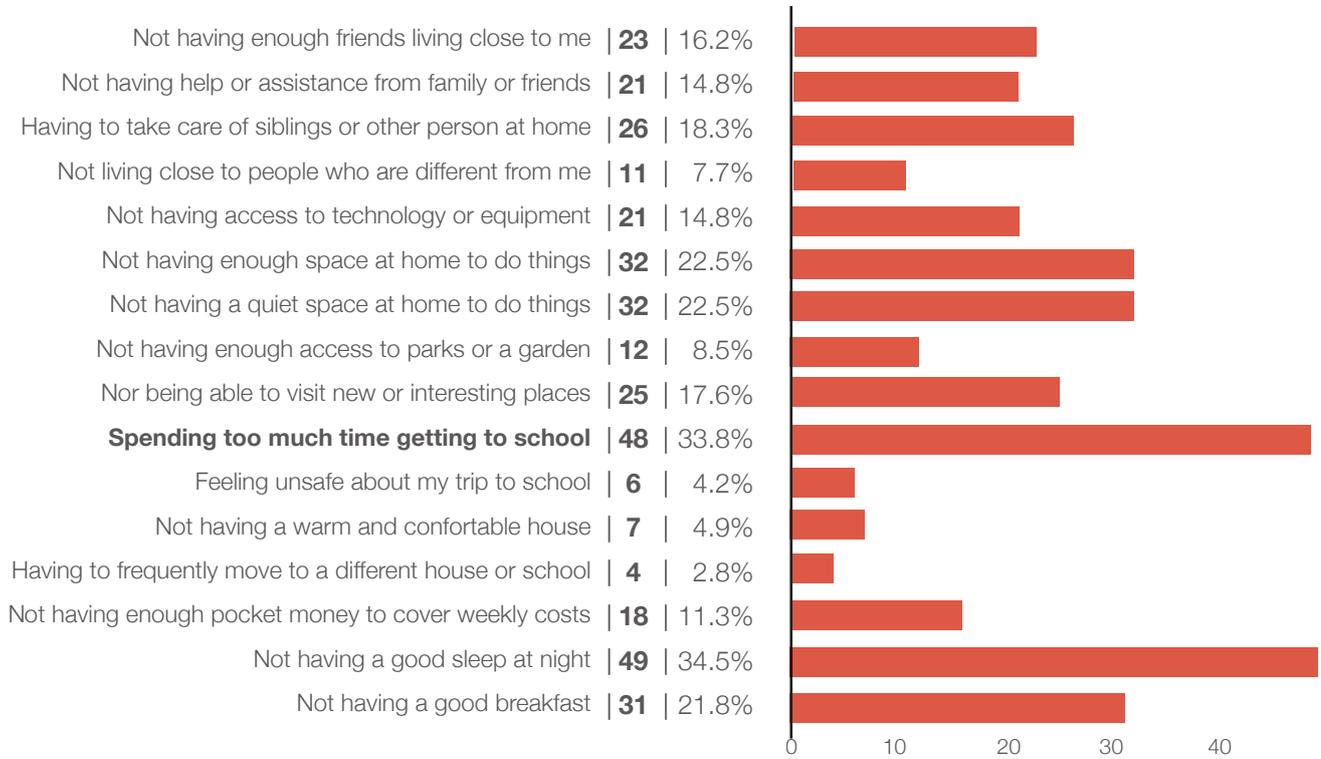
### 9.4.3 Technology

Access to technology was the issues most valued by students, as it is necessary for studying. For those who did not have access to computers or software, the use of the library after class was important to them. In our survey, the statistics show that there were 63.5% students that belief having access to technology or equipment in their homes would help them learn (see Figure 9.5). During focus groups, students highlighted that they have some troubles using the laptops in the school library as the opening times makes it inconvenient for them to reach the printers after class. During the participatory photography sessions, one student shared a picture of a temporary library around him as libraries are closing in London (see Figure 9.6). Equipment and places to study where clearly identify as essential physical assets for students to learn.

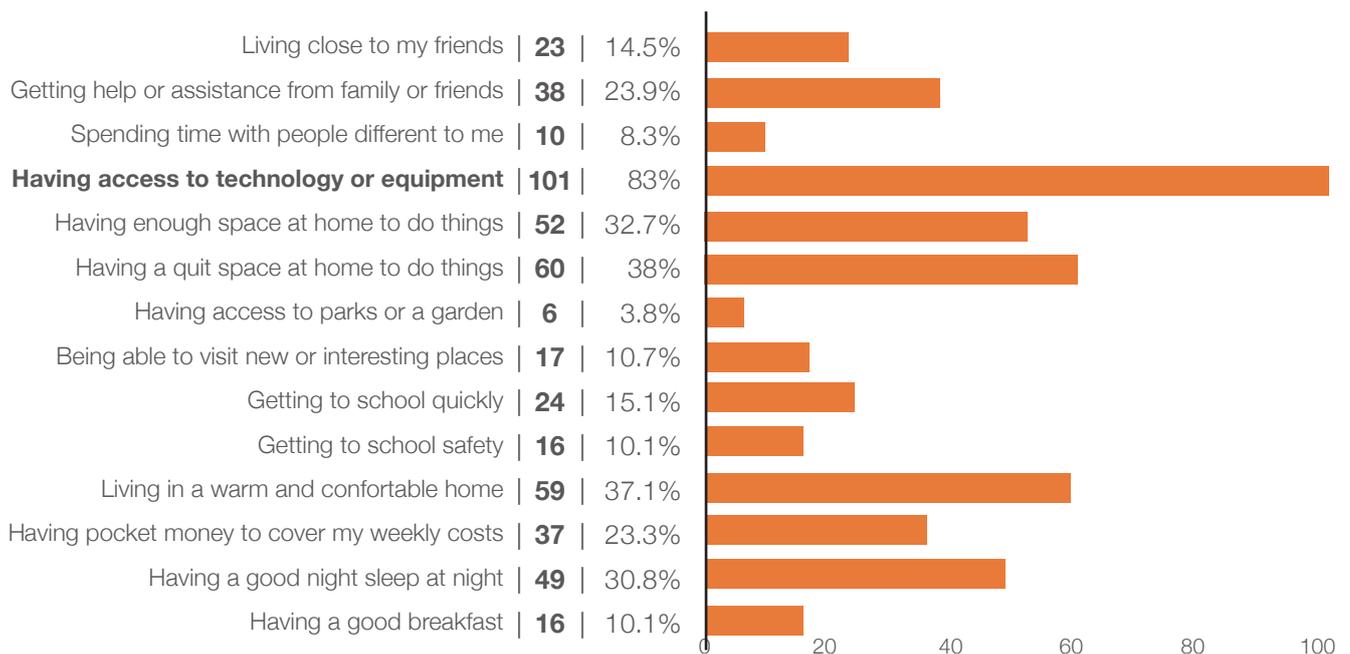
**Figure 9.3.** From your front door to the school gate, how long is your trip to school? Source: Survey data



**Figure 9.4.** Thinking about the place you live, what are the top 3 things that make it harder for you to learn? Source: Survey data



**Figure 9.5.** Thinking about the place you live, what are the top 3 things that help you to learn? Source: Survey data



### 9.4.4 Space

In this study, space can be defined as personal space (private) and as a space for study. Survey results showed that 40% of the students share the room with others (see Figure 9.7). Photographs submitted during the participatory exercise also evidence the cruciality of this problem. Figure 9.8 (right photograph) shows a student’s study desk, the drawer is occupied by other things such as tools which should not be stored at the desk. The left photograph of Figure 9.8 which shows a table was submitted by a student that described, “My parents brought this table 17 years ago. We have lived in 6 different places during the past 5 years, and it comes everywhere with us. In the last place, the space was too small, so we got rid of the couch instead of the table. I’m lucky to have a large surface to study on.”

On the other hand, another student expressed “my parents rented out our living room to a family for an entire year so we have no place to hang out.” Having a sufficient personal space and having enough study space means students could have the opportunity to study in their houses. However, survey results and photographs submitted showed that many students are not able to study at home impacting negatively their learning aspirations.

### 9.4.5 Quiet Environment

Finally, as the last key finding, a quiet environment is considered necessary for students to study at home,

nonetheless, it was revealed that not all students have access to this. 29.6% of students chose “Not having a quiet space to do things” as one of top three things that reduce their capacity to learn. Students who participated in the photography activity also regarded it as a problem. As shown in Figure 9.9 often there is too much noise around residential areas where students live, with a lot of development going on in the borough. A considerable proportion of students is affected by this issue, without a quiet space in their houses for them to study. Because of the lack of quiet space, students cannot concentrate at home and resort to studying at the college or a library, impacting negatively their learning and learning aspirations.

### 9.4.6 Reflections on Methods

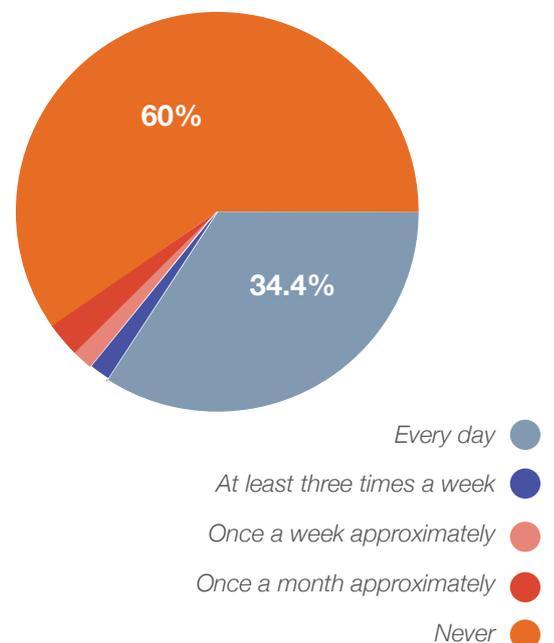
Once students from UCL build trust with the pupils and gained their confidence, pupils started sharing more pictures of the inside of their houses and described more in-depth the stories behind them. Some of the photographs revealed elements of the housing situations which were important to research and analysis of findings.

The survey could not capture the reality of students to the fullest. The fact that 58% of them in the survey didn’t feel their housing situation affected their college attainment may be due to limitations of the survey, for example, it did not allow people to connect housing issues with their academic outcomes. More qualitative methods—such as one-to-one interviews—allowed spaces for reflections and the possibility to analyse situations

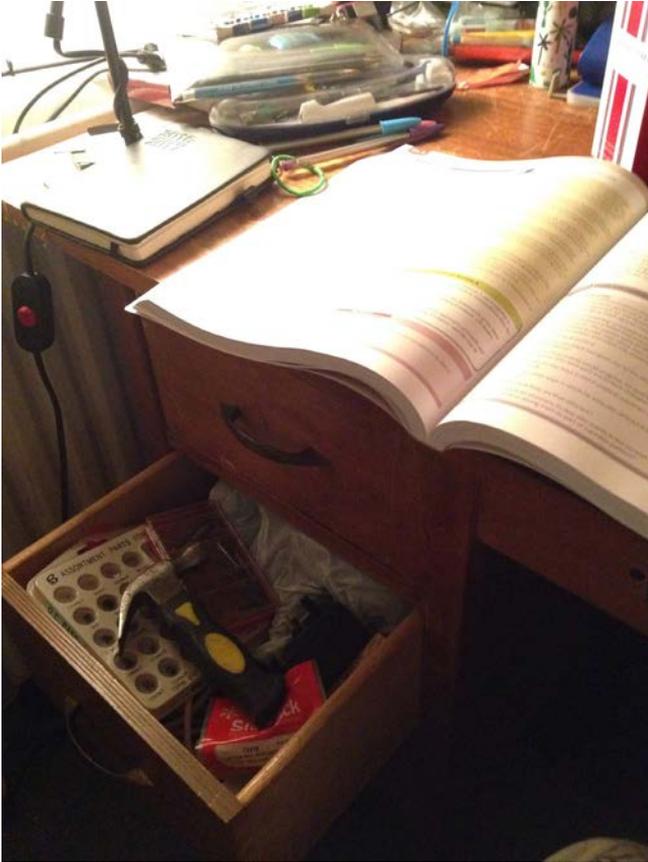
**Figure 9.6.** Having a quiet space to study was important to the students, but many local Libraries are closing. This temporary library was established because the old one was demolished. Source: Participatory Photography participant



**Figure 9.7.** How often do you share a room? Source: Survey data



**Figure 9.8.** Two multipurpose tables in different homes, it's hard to study on the table on the left, while the entire family shares the one on the right. Source: Participatory Photography participant



**Figure 9.9.** Construction works in residential areas. Source: Participatory Photography participant



more in-depth whereas a short survey constrains this spaces for reflection.

## 9.5 Ways Forward

The ‘action plan’ that emerged from this work holds two key elements. Firstly, hosting a ‘Town Hall meeting’ at CANDI to inspire the student body to take further action around housing. This is something CANDI students themselves proposed and will lead. The meeting will include an open dialogue about the housing crisis, and a discussion facilitated by Citizens UK where students can share their own housing experiences in more depth. This discussion will be specifically focused on how it affects their learning and aspirations. The idea behind this meeting is to access information beyond the limitations of the survey, and discuss possible actions, at the local level, on this issues.

The second activity consists of building a team within the college to take over the campaign for Community Land Trusts. The broad objective is to campaign for public land on which affordable housing can be built. This is estimated to be a 3-year project. Keir, a Year 13 student who was involved in the Housing Campaign last year stated: “Don’t be afraid of the Council. They’re just normal people who manage to be in power.” At the same time, the Citizens UK organiser reminded everyone that “we meet leaders, but it’s everyday people who change the world.” A statement that encompasses the mission of the action plan proposed.

## 9.6 Conclusions

Overall, CANDI students agreed that housing conditions affected their capability to study and learn. This statement has been supported by the evidence from the literature; the participatory photography; the workshop sessions with students; discussions with teachers and activists and through the wider contributions of the CANDI students including the Citizens UK meetings.

However, survey findings did not directly corroborate this conclusion, a regression analysis on the—albeit modest number of—responses showed a negative correlation. However, the survey did reinforce the fact that students valued things that good housing can provide—a quiet place to study, concentrate, relax and sleep—and wanted to avoid the negatives of poor housing conditions—noise, overcrowding and lack of privacy.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the survey wasn’t necessarily the best method to capture the richness and the nuances of personal experiences and opinions of these young people. If a broader piece of work is conducted,

multiple research methods should also be used—as the methodology employed in this chapter—where students feel comfortable about sharing their personal experiences would be ideal to obtain qualitative information and build trust with the group.

The activism and enthusiasm generated by the project show how important housing issues are to young people and how real are the links between housing and the learning valued by students. In addition, with Mayor Sadiq Khan in office, a supporter for the fight for adequate housing, is a good time to take action.

The increased numbers of students at CANDI as a result of government cuts on education has had a direct impact on students, most of them only come to college four days a week for longer hours. This was not seen as positive, though it enabled students to get a job, it meant they didn’t always use their free time for studying, especially since they lived far from the college’s library. Governmental cuts are affecting students’ educational experience and attainment.

## 9.7 Works cited

Ethnic Diversity in Islington, retrieved on January 17, 2017 from [https://www.islington.gov.uk/~/\\_/media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/publichealth/qualityandperformance/profiles/20132014/20131211ethnicitylanguageandcountryofbirth1](https://www.islington.gov.uk/~/_/media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/publichealth/qualityandperformance/profiles/20132014/20131211ethnicitylanguageandcountryofbirth1)

FREDIANI, A. A. Sen's Capability Approach as a framework to the practice of development. *Development in Practice*, 20(2), pp.173-187, 2010.

GOERNE, A. The Capability Approach in Social Policy Analysis - Yet Another Concept?. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2010.

ISLINGTON COUNCIL. *Housing Strategy 2014-19*, retrieved on January 17, 2017, from <https://www.islington.gov.uk>, 2014.

CANDI. (2017). *London's Leading college*. [online] Available at: <http://www.candi.ac.uk/study-with-us/why-choose-us/londons-leading-college> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2017].

ESTATE AGENT TODAY (EAT). Retrieved from: <https://www.estateagenttoday.co.uk/industry-views/2016/4/london-mayoral-election-a-referendum-on-housing>.

ISLINGTON GAZETTE, retrieved on January 16, 2017, from ([http://www.islingtongazette.co.uk/news/islington\\_house\\_prices\\_weather\\_brexit\\_storms\\_to\\_soar\\_8\\_in\\_just\\_one\\_month\\_1\\_4792416](http://www.islingtongazette.co.uk/news/islington_house_prices_weather_brexit_storms_to_soar_8_in_just_one_month_1_4792416)), 2017.

KHAN, S. *A Manifesto for all Londoners*, retrieved on January 15, 2017, from [www.sadiq.london](http://www.sadiq.london)

KHAN, S. 'A City for all Londoners', GLA, 2016

METRO. Retrived from <http://metro.co.uk/2015/11/18/how-does-your-salary-compare-with-the-rest-of-the-country-5511194/>, 2015.

NORONHA, NIGEL de. 'Ethnic disadvantage in the housing market: Evidence from the 2011 census', Race Equality Foundation, 2015.

NUSSBAUM, M.C. Adaptive preferences and women's options. *Economics and Philosophy*, 17, 2001.

NUT, *EduFacts Briefing*, retrieved on January 16, 2017, from [www.teachers.org.uk/edufacts/child-poverty](http://www.teachers.org.uk/edufacts/child-poverty)

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT COMMUNITIES ANALYTICAL SERVICES, 'A Thematic Review of Literature on the Relationship Between Housing, Neighbourhoods and Schools', 2010.

SEN, A. *Development as freedom*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1999.

SEN, A. K. 'Human Rights and Capabilities', *Journal of Human Development*, 6 (2), pp. 151–166, 2005.

TESCHL, M. & COMIM, F. Adaptive Preferences and Capabilities: Some Preliminary Conceptual Explorations. *Review of Social Economy*, 63(2), 229-247, 2005.

## 10. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, the findings from the different sections of the report and the contributions of all the student groups are brought together, to explore the ways that housing affects the learning capabilities of pupils in London.

The overall findings of this research draw on the data generated through qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Regarding the qualitative methods, the outputs from the interviews, participatory photography and narrative exercises were collated together to identify common issues. Meanwhile, the surveys were brought together to complement and support through quantitative data, as well as providing comparable information among schools on the issues arisen for the analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were developed with groups of pupils and teachers at schools, so the feedback in the sessions was relevant for understanding the complexity of the questions emerging in the research.

The survey had a mixed-design between the teaching staff, students and pupils, which allowed to consider some mandatory questions applicable to all schools—in order to facilitate the analysis and comparability between them—and some complementary questions that better suited the contexts at schools. Although the survey was not equally distributed among the participant schools, the tool had a good response rate from the pupils at schools with 901 surveys validly issued.

These surveys were conducted personally and through an online format—depending on the preferences of each school. Results on gender were almost equally distributed among the total of surveys, with a 54% of female responses and 44% of male responses (2% selected the option of “prefer not to say”).

The results of the overall research show evidence in 3 main areas: Housing condition and learning environment; Housing affordability and social learning assets; and Housing costs and aspirations. These areas are shown in Figure 10.1 below.

### 10.1 Housing conditions and learning environments

The findings regarding housing conditions and learning environment show relevant evidence on physical issues as:

- Inadequate spaces to study.
- Issues around overcrowding and lack of space for pupils to do homework.
- Issues around comfort, quietness and tidiness for learning.

A relevant aspect arisen from the survey was related to the importance of the housing conditions as learning as-

Figure 10.1. Main areas for research's findings. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira



sets (see Table 9.1). Pupils were asked about the things that help them learn where the subcategory of assets related to housing conditions had the highest number of responses (29.3% of the total answers). The assets related to housing conditions were: having enough space at home to do things (9.2%); having a quiet space at home to do things (10.1%), and living in a warm and comfortable home (9.8%). Pupils were also consulted about the things that make them harder to learn. Although their obstacles are mainly related to the lack of assistance of family and friends (with a 28.3% of total responses), the subcategory related to housing conditions had also a high rate of responses, with a 21.54% out of the total. The main impediments in this subcategory were related to having insufficient space and quietness at home for doing things (17.8%).

Further methods, alongside surveys, revealed in some groups that most of the pupils perform learning activities in the living room, as well as the kitchen and their bedroom desk. Despite the location around the house for learning purposes, some qualities as brightness, tidiness and quietness are essential –as common consensus- for a space to qualify as an optimal learning environment. Results

have also shown that the presence of distractor elements as television or external noise do not just affect the concentration but the pupils' mood and emotional distress.

**While noise and tidiness can be manageable through the right advice or measure, the level of crowdedness that some pupils have at home is a critical factor revealed by the research.** According to Leventhal & Newman (2010), overcrowding is one of the variables that have a significant negative impact on children's development and thus is one of the most severe constraints to solve in the short and medium term.

The diverse methodologies used throughout the research shows that the space pupils need at home, relates directly to their learning activities as doing homework. However, this need of space also affects other activities as playing at home and taking advantage of their own space for personal growth.

Regarding the type of home where students live in, general results show that almost the same amount of pupils live in their own house (36%) or rent from the Council or Housing Association (34,74%). The third option regard-

**Table 10.1.** Comparison between facilitators and impediments for the learning process. This information was collected through the general survey. Source: Beatriz Mella Lira

FACILITATORS (LEARNING ASSETS)			IMPEDIMENTS (LACK OF LEARNING ASSETS)		
Statements	%		Statements	%	
Having enough space at home to do things	9.2%		Not having enough space at home to do things	8.1%	
Having a quiet space at home to do things	<b>10.1%</b>		Not having a quiet space at home to do things	<b>9.7%</b>	
Living in a warm and comfortable home	9.8%	<b>29.03%</b>	Not having a warm and comfortable house	1.7%	21.54%
			Having to frequently move to a different house or school	2.0%	
Having access to parks or a garden	1.8%		Not having enough access to parks or a garden	4.3%	
Getting to school quickly	6.2%	12.46%	Spending too much time getting to school	9.3%	17.09%
Getting to school safely	4.5%		Feeling unsafe about my trips to school	3.5%	
Getting help or assistance from family or friends	<b>12.6%</b>		Not having help or assistance from family or friends	6.1%	
Living close to my friends	5.6%	18.20%	Having to take care of siblings or other person at home	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>28.32%</b>
			Not having enough friends living close to me	<b>11.8%</b>	
Spending time with people different to me	2.3%		Not living close to people who are different from me	4.4%	
Having access to technology or equipment	<b>19.1%</b>	25.14%	Not having access to technology or equipment	5.5%	17.85%
Being able to visit new or interesting places	2.8%		Not being able to visit new or interesting places	7.9%	
Having pocket money to cover my weekly costs	3.9%		Not having enough pocket money to cover some weekly costs	5.2%	
Having a good sleep at night	9.2%	16.18%	Not having a good sleep at night	9.2%	15.19%
Having a good breakfast	3.1%		Not having a good breakfast	0.8%	

ing housing profiles is renting from a private landlord (16,32%). **The results also show evidence about location issues that affect learning processes for pupils, due to long transport distances and commuting.** Regarding commuting time, most students make a daily trip of 30 minutes or less (60% of the total) followed by 25% of students spending between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Figure 10.2 shows these results graphically.

### 10.2 Housing affordability and social learning assets

The research has shown concluding remarks about the pupils' concerns regarding housing costs. Housing prices have increased dramatically in the last years. Furthermore, it seems that students are aware of this situation, either because they know their parent's opinions or because they have heard this matter on the news or at school. On the other hand, they are aware of the difficulties of getting a good job that may allow them to access to the assets and provisions they will need in the future. These concerns have arisen in qualitative work done by students in the photography task and their narratives, resulting in an understanding of the impact on their perceptions of housing affordability and aspirations.

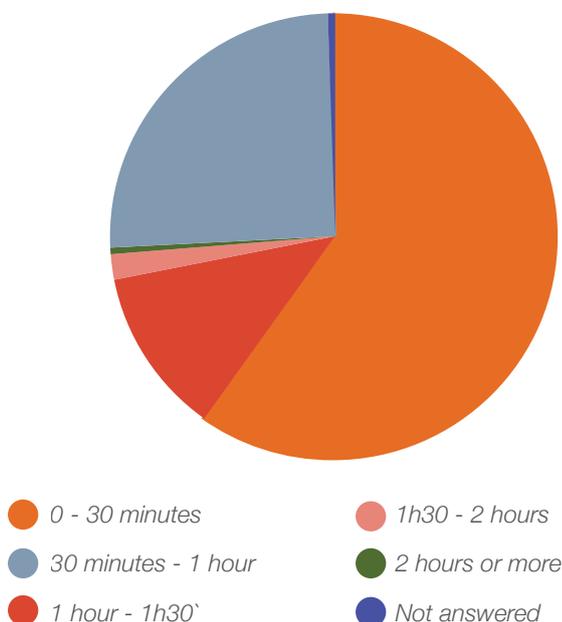
As it is shown in Table 10.1 the social capital and social support –sometimes conditioned by housing experience– influence pupils' learning assets. The most relevant group

of factors affecting their learning are related to the lack of presence of a safe space for inter-social relationships. In the survey held, this subcategory obtained 28.3% of the responses about the things that make pupils harder to learn. It is also interesting to point out that "taking care of siblings", as part of this group of statements, appears as a relevant issue that makes them harder to learn as well. **Getting help or assistance from family and friends, as well as living close to their social networks are relevant aspects that help them learn** (showed in 18% of the responses to the overall survey). The valuation of these ties not just reflects the importance of social capital and support in their home environment, but also shows how they appreciate human assets that encourage them to solve and overcome problems. The support provided by adults is an important social asset recognised by pupils. For example, one of the groups has identified through the qualitative process that the presence of a role model in their learning processes is essential for guiding achieving their goals.

However, the place chosen by pupils for social interaction led to another concern about housing environments.

Some particular pupils' groups were asked about the places they choose to meet their friends and people of their same age - for understanding the space barriers and potentialities for these interactions. Most students have referred to the school as the place where they socialise, as they live far away from their classmates or because they cannot play outside their house due to security concerns. **Both location issues and the lack of safety at housing environments are problems arisen from the findings that need to be looked out and solved in order to achieve further social capital in pupils' environments.**

**Figure 10.2.** Commuting times for pupils. Source: Survey data.



Diversity as the base for building socially focused learning assets was an interesting finding, specifically of the work made at Willow Primary School. Also related to the benefits of the interaction with friends and equals, in this particular case, **the multicultural community has become the richness of the school, assembling spiritual, cultural and moral learning outcomes through the interaction of the individuals.**

The issue of "having to move to a different house or school frequently" have been stated in the findings to a lesser extent, but nevertheless mentioned in some cases. This shows a direct consequence of housing affordability conditions in London since parents have been urged to change their place of residence regularly. When this situation happens, there is enforcement for children to readjusting their spaces, contexts and relationship with (in most cases unavailable) resources for their learning development. This aspect needs further research, particularly with a focus on the impacts and consequences of the detachment of children from their social network areas, affecting them not only in their learning processes but also in the accomplishment of their capabilities.

Another valuable learning asset found along the research is **the presence of technology, where both qualitative and quantitative insights revealed interesting findings.** Even though this evidence does not relate directly to the issues of housing affordability or housing conditions, is a relevant asset in terms of their learning processes and needs further research. Pupils consider technology as a significant factor for them to learn (26.4% in total for the overall survey conducted), where there was not difference in terms of gender. One of the groups asked the pupils to draw the tools and assets they have to learn, and most of them brought technological elements as computers, smartphones, calculators and Internet connection as facilitators of their learning. For example, it might be interesting further research about how the presence of technology in the space of capabilities may overcome some of the obstacles and disadvantages that pupils might have in their social or built environmental contexts.

The work carried out in The City of Westminster College shows in detail how pupils have silently paid the price of the unaffordable housing conditions affecting most areas in London. Students found that pupils and their families were continually struggling to afford the rent. The impacts varied, but a significant group of students stated that they had to work part-time or provide partial contributions for paying the rent. This situation not just infringes their individual rights but also impacts on their time and performance at school.

Regarding how housing costs have impacted learning aspirations, the report remarks how learning is associated mainly to:

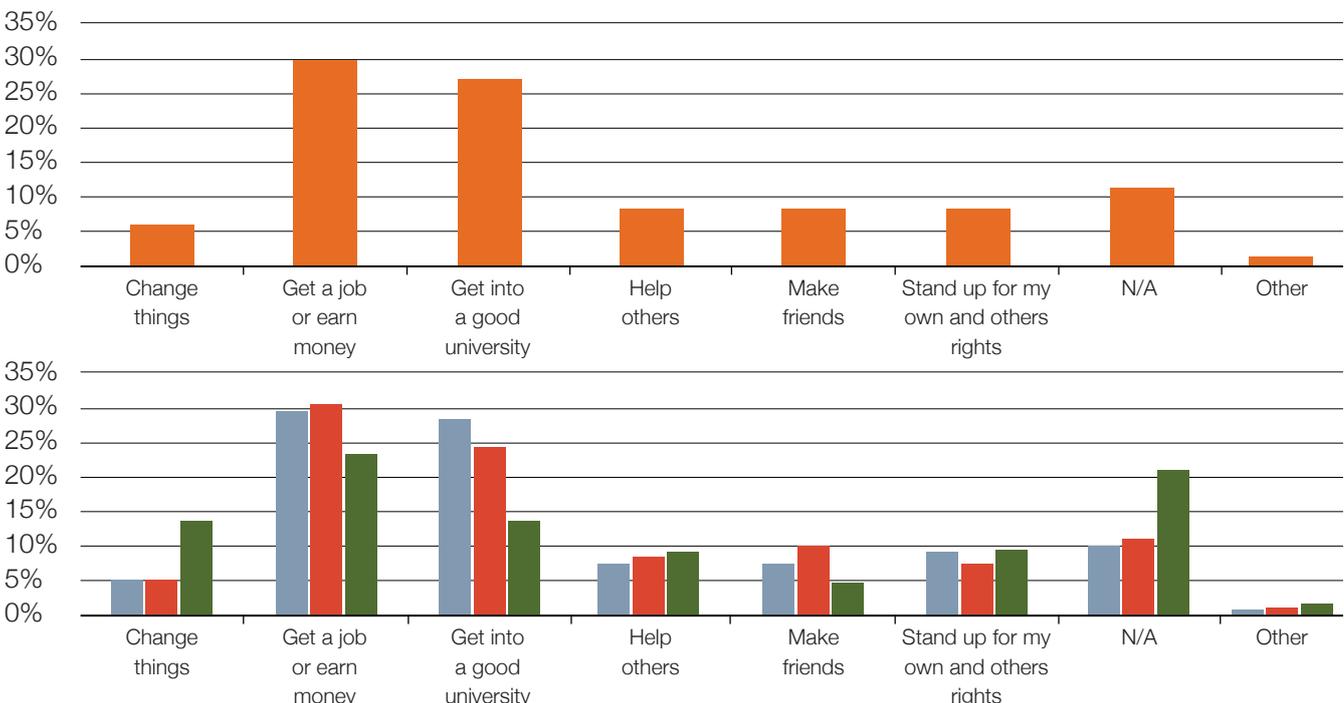
- Getting a good job in the future or going to a good university.
- Success for affording housing costs in the future.
- Changing current economic situation.
- Making parents proud of children's success.

### 10.3 Housing costs and aspirations

The high rent costs have put a burden on children, and this has meant parents have to work in more than one job, work double shifts or apply for social benefits. Even though it cannot be generalised that pupils have to contribute with economic or house workload, there is pressure on them for changing their situation in the future.

The research showed impacting results regarding students' aspirations on learning, demonstrating how financial motivations dominate the pupils' aspirations for their future. However, it is also important to outline that pupils have identified a variety of other aspirations based on their learning when having the opportunity to select, unobstructedly, without considering the financial pressures of 'adult life' –increased cost of living, housing affordability, among others.

**Figure 10.3.** Aspirations on learning, general results differentiated by gender. Female in blue and Male in red and Other in green colours. Source: Survey data.



In a first instance, aspirations as “Get a job or earn money” and “Get into a good university” were more relevant options rather than “Help others”, “Make friends”, “Stand up for my own and others’ rights” or “Change things”. Figure 9.3 shows a general description of this question asked along the survey, that gives an overall view on how pupils perceive other socially driven learning values as a less important aspect on their learning outcomes for the future. These results regarding aspirations on learning are transversal among gender, housing profiles and schools.

**The current housing situation in London is strongly influencing pupils’ aspirations** as they have a high pressure for achieving good qualifications and better prospects on a good job – as shown along the chapters of this report. In the case of St Mary’s Priory Catholic School, for example, represented for a group of pupils from 4th and 5th grade, results have exposed that pupils often find themselves oscillating between the “reality” usually imposed by the market and “the dream” they feel free to aspire. Having asked along different sessions and within diverse activities about their aspirations, pupils have to reveal statements deeply related to financial objectives. The common idea of getting access to University as a conductive path for achieving financial success may be related to the treatment of the educational system as a marketable commodity (Robinson & Tormey, 2003). In the field of education, the problem arisen from this perspective comes when there is a mismatch between the aspirations related to self-fulfilment and the search for betterment in their prospective monetary aspirations. This idea has been further developed in chapter 2 of the report.

Along with the idea of “getting a good job and income” in the future, in the case of Hendon School students’ learning aspirations were also associated with the achievement of economic goals, as “changing their current economic situation” and “having access to a comfortable life”. In the discussions, the payment of university loans and costs of transportation came up as some of the concerns of the adult life that can be achievable throughout obtaining enough economical resources. The current situations that pupils face in terms of their own contexts make them look for an alternative for improving their quality of life – especially in cases in which they live in a deprived context.

Students working with pupils from Greenwich Free School, Corelli School and St Pauls Academy performed an interesting exercise for understanding how aspirations can be shaped by immediate constraints. Pupils were asked to think about their learning aspirations assuming that they would have a secure income in the future and would not be concerned about housing affordability. Many of them manifested more socially driven responses, prioritising aspects as helping others, changing thinks and stand up for others’ rights.

## 10.4 Taking action and next steps

After reviewing the major findings of the report has been relevant visualising the following steps and future actions for improving learning conditions of the students. The work between DPU students and pupils end up in a very productive result, in which pupils were able to define the actions that they could promote in their schools and contexts. The results of the visualization of actions have been a wide range of ideas such as homework clubs as a stimulating environment for them to study (as Hendon and St Mary’s School proposed in their action plan); the creation of a website and social media channels to highlight housing issues; fundraising activities to help disadvantaged students, among others.

The first step for taking further action was built in coordination with teachers, DPU students and community organisers from Citizens UK. The group of Greenwich School, for example, took action in the form of an outdoor house party where the participants discussed the housing issues and committed to follow up the work done, proposing more solutions in the medium and long term. The research results have also allowed the group of students, teachers and community organisers to think about the possible changes at schools, as immediate actions that can be taken to improve learning conditions for students.

In the medium and long term, some policy recommendations have been developed together with Citizens UK considering the research and work done, in order to establish some parameters that can facilitate these processes of improvement.

### 10.4.1 Multi-faceted Approach

A multi-faceted approach is required to ensure the benefits of regeneration are more fairly dispersed across the socio-economic spectrum. For young people already living in states of precariousness, the lack of affordable housing in the city poses further risk to their social, educational and financial stability. In part, government policy could protect young people by ensuring that regeneration plans include affordable housing within local school catchment zones. Relocating families within their local areas allow them to maintain stable social networks and will protect young people from long commutes to school that can be both costly and unsafe. In turn, this grants them more time for homework and allows for those that have other responsibilities, such as caring or employment.

### 10.4.2 Care about Funding

Schools across England are expected to experience an 8% real-terms reduction in funding per pupil by the academic year 2019-20. Consistent shortages in teacher recruitment and retention have been attributed to increases in workloads, the devaluing of teacher pensions and a

lack of funding for professional development. Students experience these budget cuts through bigger class sizes and a reduction to both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, financial constraints prevent schools from providing sufficient pastoral support, which disproportionately affects those with Special Educational Needs. It is vital that general school budgets are increased so that schools can create a stable team of staff with the resources to identify and support those students who are subject to precarious living situations.

The Education Maintenance Allowance, means-tested support for Further Education students, was discontinued in England in September 2012 and replaced by the 16-19 Bursary Fund. These bursaries of up to £1,200 per year per student are intended to support the most vulnerable young people, but due to the reduction in resources, many of those high priority students who were once supported by EMA no longer qualify. Consequently, basic costs for equipment and travel can become a barrier for those intending to continue studying. The budget for the new bursaries should be expanded so that a greater number of low-income students can fulfil their educational aspirations.

#### 10.4.3 Diversity in learning activities

Beyond this, findings of this research demonstrate the importance of after school clubs that provide both curricular and extra-curricular activities. However, further resources are needed for taking action in the medium term for creating new paths for students to express their learning concerns and constraints, as well as opening channels for further improvement. In part, this could involve teachers facilitating discussions with their students around social issues that impact their education. Schools can begin to initiate their own campaigns to become active lobbyists in the regeneration process and in doing so, teach students the skills to articulate and negotiate their housing rights.

### 10.5 Further Research

Summarising, the main findings of this report are:

- 1) The housing crisis in London is particularly affecting young people, by worsening their learning environments.
- 2) London's urban trends are making housing less affordable as well as weakening social support systems. Overcrowded and poor living environments, as well as the breakage of community bonds, is making it harder for young citizens to do their homework and carry out their learning activities.
- 3) Furthermore, this research shows that the increasing housing costs are also affecting young citizens learning aspirations, by pushing them to prioritise financially rewarding rather the socially driven values.

Therefore, this report shows that addressing London's housing challenges is not only important to secure Londoners housing rights, but also as a means to guarantee a flourishing learning environment for London's young citizens. As the property market continues to impact the social landscape across London, further investigation is needed to generate more substantial and comprehensive findings. When housing development is so readily framed in economic terms, participatory research can offer an autonomous voice to the communities directly affected. This is a source of empowerment for young people who are so heavily affected by, yet largely powerless to, the effects of the housing crisis. By taking into account their myriad of personal experiences an extensive body of research can be built that can, in turn, advise and strengthen collective action.

---

11. Appendix: Report Briefing "Exploring the potential of relationships between university and civil society for meaningful learning and collective action"

---

# Innovación Social Colectiva

Research Briefing 4, January 2017



All actors involved in the action learning experience shared an understanding that the process can trigger a sense of engagement around local social issues, which can develop a collective consciousness of participants as change makers.

Exercise with participatory drawings at St Mary's Priory Infant and Junior School

## Exploring the potential of relationships between university and civil society for meaningful learning and collective action

**What is the potential of action learning relationships between the university and civil society? Under what conditions can these relationships flourish and contribute to advancing social justice? In this research briefing, we would like to present key evidence from research conducted in London, in which we explored an action learning experience between three actors: the MSc Social Development Practice (a Masters programme in The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London), Citizens UK (a UK charity devoted to community enhancement), and 8 schools in different London neighbourhoods.**

Our research shows that in the action learning experience the different actors involved are able to gain a sense of engagement around social issues, which can develop a collective consciousness as change makers. This engagement is possible through a shared learning process and collective co-creation of knowledge that can inform future policy campaigns. We have also identified potential obstacles to this kind of initiative, which are related to structural constraints.

These come from university regulations that fail to recognise the demands of achieving social impact, despite the increasing priority placed on 'impact' by research funders. However, our research shows that relationships based on trust and collaborative attitudes go some way toward overcoming those obstacles. In order to boost the key enablers of this engagement and to diminish the disablers, a set of recommendations are offered to all the actors involved.

### Introducing the main actors of the action learning initiative:

- The **MSc Social Development Practice (SDP)** aims to provide the practical skills and theoretical foundations needed to address the challenges and complexities of social development in cities marked by inequality and social diversity. This requires a planning approach that focuses on the household and community levels, and which is able to build the capacity of people to engage as agents of social change with a range of other institutional actors. The action learning initiative discussed here is part of the 'practice module' of Masters programme, which involved 35 Masters students, one lecturer, two teaching assistants and a visiting researcher.

- **Citizens UK (CUK)** is a UK-based charity that organises communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good. Its aim is to develop the leadership capacity of their members so they can hold politicians and other decision-makers to account on the issues that matter to them. In the action learning, five community organisers were involved, as well as the lead organiser for London Citizens.

- Eight schools, based in different neighbourhoods of London, and all members of Citizens UK, participated: **City and Islington College, Hendon School, St Mary's Priory Infant and Junior School, The Willow Primary, Greenwich Free School, City Of Westminster College, Corelli College** and **St. Paul's Academy**. A total of 100 students and 8 teachers were involved.



### The action learning experience

During the first term of the SDP Master (October- January) and as a part of its practice module, the Masters students conducted participatory research about the impact of housing on learning. Drawing on Amartya Sen's idea of capabilities, the students explored how the housing conditions of school students are affecting their learning aspirations and opportunities. The project builds on concerns about the impact of London's housing crisis on education, which were voiced during the listening campaign that informed the Citizens UK Housing Manifesto in 2015-16.

To answer their research questions, the Masters students applied different research methodologies: participatory photography, surveys, relational meetings, face-to-face interviews and personal narratives.

Also, in each of the 8 schools, potential action plans were designed with the aim of creating potential collective actions that the school students could take to address the issues highlighted by the action learning process.

This initiative reflects and draws from The Bartlett Development Planning Unit's (DPU) critical pedagogical approach, facilitating learning activities that are embedded, collective, reflexive, relational, active and trans-disciplinary (Allen et al. 2015)<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, it is aligned with University College London's (UCL) 2016- 2021 Education Strategy, by putting research and critical enquiry at the heart of learning. It contributes to the implementation of the strategy's commitments towards the Connected Curriculum framework, by helping to ensure that "students have regular opportunities to present their work and to apply their theoretical learning in practical contexts" (UCL, 2016: 7)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Allen, A., Boano, C., Frediani, A. A., Levy, C., Lipietz, B., & Walker, J. (2015). Decentering Urban Learning: DPU's Pedagogical Project. Urban Pamphleteer, 5, 35-38.

<sup>2</sup> University College London (2016) Education Strategy 2016-21, Office of the Vice-Provost, Education & Student Affairs, UCL. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/migrated-files/UCL\\_Education\\_Strategy\\_Final\\_Web.p](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/migrated-files/UCL_Education_Strategy_Final_Web.p)

### The research

From October 2016 to January 2017, a visiting fellow observed the action learning process described above and explored it through different methodologies and exercises. Thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted, with: teaching staff of the DPU; the UCL Public Engagement Office; school teachers; community organisers and directors of Citizens UK. There were also two workshops with SDP students and teaching staff, and an analysis was conducted of secondary information related to the Masters Programme and UCL public engagement policy.

### What are the most valued goals of the action learning?

For all the actors involved there is a common understanding that this action learning can trigger a sense of engagement around local and social issues, which can in turn develop a collective consciousness among participants of their potential as change makers.

Specifically, for the **SDP students and teaching staff**, some of their goals are related to:

- Applying theoretical frameworks and concepts to practice and acquiring a wider set of skills through practice.

- Experiencing the development environment in the UK (given that the majority of students are from other countries) and understanding the complexity among and within different actors.

- Understanding through practical methodologies how research can be participatory.

- Taking action that is relevant to policy.

For **Citizens UK**, the action learning helps them:

- To be more accountable to their constituencies, providing to the Masters and school students a meaningful space for learning.

- To obtain research-based evidence to inform their own campaigns.

For the **school students and their teachers**, the action learning makes it possible:

- To provide a space for the school students to research, have a voice and obtain recognition, especially through the interaction with Masters students.

- To become aware of how housing conditions affect pupils' learning.

- To translate the research into some practical action in the schools.



Discussing the results of the action learning at City and Islington College

### What are the main enablers of the goals?

- A **network of trusted relationships** between organisations, based on an alignment of visions between the SDP Masters programme and Citizens UK. There was agreement that **collaborative attitudes** based on respect, flexibility, openness and a will to engage with practical action make it possible to initiate and maintain these relationships. Moreover, certain key individuals have demonstrated positive leadership, experience and a sense of optimism which helps to overcome the difficulties intrinsic to a process marked by uncertainty, like this kind of action learning.
- For the academic staff involved, a key enabler is the **peer support** provided by DPU staff, which allows them to engage in this kind of initiative despite some larger institutional barriers. Another positive enabler is UCL's recognition of public engagement as an academic activity.
- Our research shows the importance of giving structured and timely **theoretical and methodological orientation** to the Masters students. This helps often inexperienced students to conduct the research and make it replicable.
- Also, **accompaniment** by academic staff and CUK community organisers was identified as a key enabler to Masters students. Where it happens, this forms a good foundation for SDP students in gaining access and interactions with the school participants.
- The **selection of the research topic** has proved to be crucial. The relation between housing conditions and learning aspirations was relevant for CUK and the schools, and also was attuned with the capacity of DPU staff.
- The good quality of the **research outputs** and their potential to inform campaigns and policies and to bring practical action in schools, were also identified as key enablers of this engagement.

### What are the obstacles to attaining the goals?

- The research shows the **institutional constraints** faced by an engagement of this kind: lack of physical space to conduct the learning activities, the increasing size of the student body and associated rise in the student-teacher ratio and, generally, the lack of institutional norms to recognise the workload of an engagement of this kind. All of this seriously hampers the action learning experience and makes it difficult to replicate.
- Also, academic staff face **pressure** to obtain more **research** grants and to publish in reputable journals. This can discourage academics from participating in time-consuming public engagement activities and mean that academic engagement relies too much on the commitment and disposition of particular individuals.
- Masters students come from different origins and backgrounds and do not usually have previous professional experience with participatory methodologies. As a result, **limited contextualisation** of the places, institutional context and policy environment in which participatory research is embedded, was identified as a potentially dangerous disabler, particularly when combined with **limited feedback and accompaniment** from DPU staff and Citizens UK community organisers.
- **Timing** is a crucial issue and should be seen as a constraint for this kind of initiative. Masters students have little time to be trained and to engage with the school students, which can make it difficult for the latter to apply the research methodologies properly.
- Our findings show that Citizens UK needs more **economic support** from the UCL, as is provided by other London universities. Increasing of economic resources would allow Citizens UK to provide further support to counteract certain other disablers, such as staff to accompany the Masters students in schools.

### **Nurturing and sustaining a university-civil society engagement: Recommendations for all the actors involved**

- To maintain an engagement of this kind it is essential to identify a strategic scope of collaboration that **responds to the interests of civil society organisations** and university partners. These interests should shape the collaboration throughout, from the design of the research process to the production of outputs. For this, it is essential to have 1) a common understanding of the goals of this engagement, 2) detailed planning of the activities included to attain the goals and 3) a realistic consideration of the resources that should be involved.

- To make the learning process more meaningful for the Masters students in light of their diversity of backgrounds and origins, it is important that the academic staff **provide a strong theoretical and practical orientation** throughout the module, with **a stronger emphasis on information on the local and wider policy context**. It is also paramount to **provide continuous feedback and support** to the groups of students.

- For most Masters students, this is a challenging exercise which demands an effort to understand a different and complex context, to perform in a different language, and to put (often new) facilitation skills into practice. Students need to **be autonomous and innovative**, while being sensitive in navigating the diverse power relations among stakeholders involved.

- For the university system, it is essential to **recognise that this kind of engagement embodies current higher education pedagogy in a socially meaningful way. This requires and justifies strong institutional support**: adequate physical space; reasonable limits on the size of the student body; appropriate recognition of the time required from academic staff, which recognises the need for additional preparation and contact hours; and sufficient financial support to involve additional teaching assistants.



Final exhibition at UCL

- For the civil society organisation, it is important to be aware that the Masters **students will need support and accompaniment** in their action learning process, which should be considered and planned in advance. Specially important is the role of community organisers who act as gatekeepers in the communities and facilitate the engagement of the Masters students.

- Also, for the civil society organisation, it is important to **understand the potential constraints that the academic staff are facing and align their expectations with the specific expertise of the academics involved** (which include teachers and students). This could make both the process and the outputs of this engagement more fruitful.

- Finally, our research shows the paramount importance of **attitudes** that should be cultivated throughout the engagement: **respect, collaboration, flexibility, openness and a will to engage with practical action** are examples of appropriate attitudes to make the engagement meaningful and to build trusted relations.

For more information contact with:

Alejandra Boni INGENIO (CSIC-UPV)  
aboni@ingenio.upv.es  
@sandraboni4

Alexandre Apsan Frediani (DPU-UCL)  
a.frediani@ucl.ac.uk  
@xapsan



[www.ingenio.upv.es](http://www.ingenio.upv.es)



[www.citizensuk.org/](http://www.citizensuk.org/)



[www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/)

<http://innovacion-soci.webs.upv.es/index.php/co-sharing>

**With the support of:**

Programa Estatal de Promoción del Talento y su Empleabilidad en I+D+i, Subprograma Estatal de Movilidad, del Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica y Técnica y de Innovación 2013-2016 – Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte





## SDP STUDENTS REPORT 2017 - DPU

**The Development Planning Unit**, University College London, is an international centre specialising in academic teaching, research, training and consultancy in the field of urban and regional development, with a focus on policy, planning management and design. It is concerned with understanding the multi-faceted and uneven process of contemporary urbanisation, and strengthening more socially just and innovative approaches to policy, planning management and design, specially in the contexts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East as well as countries in transition.

The central purpose of the DPU is to strengthen the professional and institutional capacity of governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to deal with the wide range of development issues that are emerging at local, national and global levels. In London, the DPU runs postgraduate programmes of study, including a research degree (MPhil/PhD) programme, six one-year Masters Degree courses and specialist short courses in a range of fields addressing urban and rural development policy, planning, management and design.

Overseas, the DPU Training and Advisory Service (TAS) provides training and advisory services to government departments, aid agencies, NGOs and academic institutions. These activities range from short missions to substantial programmes of staff development and institutional capacity building.

The academic staff of the DPU are a multi-disciplinary and multi-national group with extensive and on-going research and professional experience in various fields of urban and international development throughout the world. DPU Associates are a body of professionals who work closely with the Unit both in London and overseas. Every year the student body embraces more than 45 different nationalities.

To find more about us and the courses we run, please visit our website: [www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu](http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu)

**MSc Programme in Social Development Practice.** The central focus of the course is the relationship between active citizenship and development, with the recognition that diverse identities and aspirations are critical components of social change. This course responds to the increasing focus on well-being and 'people-centred' approaches, evidenced both by the revised policy priorities of many development agencies, and the discourses of grass-roots organizations, which question market led processes of development. At the same time, there is a need to problematize such approaches, given the power relations operating at various scales, from the global to the local, and the social dynamics of rapidly urbanizing societies. These concerns highlight the challenge of recognising and valuing difference in a way that strengthens, rather than fragments, collective action, and ensures universal principles of equity. This course offers the opportunity to engage with the theoretical and practical implications of promoting well-being and citizenship in the context of social diversity, exploring the traditional realm of the social sector as entry point to influence wider contestations of rights and citizenship as manifested in development initiatives.

To find more about the course, please visit our website: <http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/programmes/postgraduate/msc-social-development-practice>

### Visit our website

 [www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu](http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu)  
 [www.facebook.com/dpuucl](http://www.facebook.com/dpuucl)  
 [www.twitter.com/dpu\\_ucl](http://www.twitter.com/dpu_ucl)



**dpu**  
Development  
Planning Unit

The Bartlett

