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REdGENERATION: Art, Enterprise, Local Knowledge and the Curriculum

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Summary: The theme of this paper is engagement in art as a stimulant to enterprise education with young people. Reflecting on their experiences of initiating and managing the case study outlined, the paper describes a process of arts intervention in a school based enterprise project. Set against the social backdrop of urban renewal, the project outlined effectively establishes a voice for young people that counters the imposition of regeneration initiatives whilst maintaining the imperative of an art that is free from the absolute requirements of function.

Education and Teaching Context - Art and enterprise cells in local schools.

Subjects affected: Art, Fine Art, Public Art, Design Fields, Textile Design, Enterprise.

(Not all of these subjects are represented by degree programmes in the University but are the interests of our partners in schools.)

Keywords:

Art, Design, School Enterprise, Creativity, Innovation,

Project based learning, Action Learning, Kinaesthetic learning

Local relevance, Social Regeneration, Urban Renewal.

Participants:

University of Salford Academic Staff (Art and Design),
Artists and Education Ltd (Educational Consultants),
University of Salford Academic Enterprise Staff,
Albion High School Teaching Staff,
University Students and High School Pupils (Year 10),
Freelance Designers and Artists,
Manufacturing Businesses and Enterprise,
James Robinson PLC,
Investment from Arts and Business.

Background information

Between March 2006 and July 2007 the School of Art and Design at the University of Salford, through artists Paul Haywood and Sam Ingleson, entered into a project partnership with Albion High School in the Charleston district of Salford. This pilot scheme worked with pupils at the school to generate ideas for enterprise and, consequently, develop a business structure, owned and controlled by all participants, with the intention of commercialising those ideas. The process commenced with the input of artists (Paul Haywood and Maxine Kennedy) and their produce from a period of open research in the physical urban environment local to the High School. It is important to note that this driver gave initial impetus to the project and was commissioned by some of the partners present in the network of agencies promoting regeneration in the area. The absolute starting point was a period of speculative and open investigation of the landscape and terrain, within the regeneration area, by a team of artists led by Haywood and Kennedy. The concept of enterprise evolving via some of the arts research material was subsequent to the involvement of the High School and specifically the 10 young people and a learning mentor on the project. As a collective, or company, that includes artists and designers, the group elected the name

REdGENERATION, a conflation of 'regeneration' and the dominant 'red' brick of the built environment.



Figure 1 – The artists found 52 different shades of red present in brickwork along the length of a walk that cuts right through the centre of area.

The agreement entered into by the artists, young people and learning mentor was one where the concept for the project was defined by the word art and, therefore, it was accepted that the outcome was uncertain and unpredictable. Under these terms, each member of the group was satisfied with the term artist, though only one of the young people involved had any declared interest in art as a curricular subject. The most important shared objective and openly debated characteristic of the project was that it might have a commercial and economic output and therefore contribute to the future history of the local community and environment.

This project fits with recent and common governmental initiatives in secondary education provision in the UK. Agendas for 'Citizenship', 'Enterprise' and 'Vocational learning' are typically intended to target young people at risk of exclusion or low achievement. The impact has been a plethora of initiatives that have confused the educational terrain for the learner and the teacher and have potentially undermined the initial concept of comprehensive education, dividing the learner constituency along lines of perceived competencies, capacities for learning and, in the end, social advantage. The drive has been to establish equity of opportunity into higher levels of study, partially

fuelled by the mass expansion of the Knowledge Economy in the UK. 'By comparison with other countries, the English system does well by a proportion of young people who are engaged and motivated by conceptual study. It does much less well by those whose preferences are for learning which is more practical, with an obvious relevance and application to the wider world.'¹ The effect has been to separate out learners into typologies and, in reality, map initiatives onto areas evidencing low social and economic indicators. In the context of this project, the motive came from regeneration strategies that have been felt by a population disengaged from their source and infrastructure. What initiated the project was the willingness of the artists responsible for the project to interfere and intervene in political processes within their reach and the readiness and enthusiasm of the participants to find an expression for their own ideas and aspirations.

In engaging with a school the aim was to include a diverse range of learner interests from the stimulus of an open brief created by artistic thinking and practices. From the pupil's perspective, this was not so much an arts project as a project started by artists. Research suggests that the arts play significant part in the education of all pupils at pre-tertiary level. In addition 'the collaborative nature of many arts activities enables learners to develop skills in working cooperatively with others, often in problem-solving creative situations. The arts also offer many opportunities for learners to be pro-active and enterprising within meaningful and relevant contexts'.² The Salford REdGENERATION project draws on recent traditions and practices utilising art as a tool for social and political development within communities and neighbourhoods. However, the project authors maintain that the completed programme retains the identity of an artwork but one with discrete educational goals expressly concerned with the promotion of kinaesthetic tools and processes. Comparisons may be drawn in the work of AccessArt³ a charity committed to furthering the advancement of education in the visual arts, which designs and delivers creative projects in the community and in schools, engaging with learners of all ages. Working with teenagers, schools and creative professionals they

¹ 14 – 19 Education and Skills White Paper [page 21] published by the Department for Education and Skills (UK Government), February 2005.

Full text available at: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills/docs/14-19Whitepaper.doc [accessed 31 March 2008]

² Mc Naughton, M.J. Mitchell, L. & Eaton.W., 2003. *A curriculum for excellence review of research literature: expressive arts*. Glasgow: University of Strathclyde. [Online] <http://eprints.cdlib.org/3408/> [accessed 11 November 2007]. Full text available at: http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/images/Expressive%20Arts_tcm4-252171.pdf [accessed 11 November 2007]

³ In 2004 AccessArt became a UK registered charity and public limited company. AccessArt is now a leading provider of online visual arts learning resources with an international reputation for creating highly innovative resources. [Online] Available at: http://www.accessart.org.uk/press_room_june2007.php [accessed 25 October 2007]

created *The Immersive Learning Project*⁴. This three-year ground-breaking and inspirational digital learning space was created and inspired by teenagers, architects, dancers, sculptors and filmmakers. It encouraged and enabled creative activity based upon making, doing, articulating and sharing, asking when and where do teenagers learn best. The Salford project differs from each of these as the principal pedagogy is not centred on gaining competencies in the arts, rather an action learning strategy focussed on an enterprise scenario prompted by an artist's venture.

Social Context for REdGENERATION

Salford is a city in the North West of England at the heart of the industrial belt that grew up around the Manchester Ship Canal and the inland ports that supported new manufacturing in the 1800s. Salford sits directly next to Manchester and, therefore, presents a seamless conurbation of urban development. Salford was originally a wealthy and successful city and its' prosperous successes pre-date those of its' neighbour, Manchester. During the rapid industrialisation of the North West, Salford experienced intense urban development and population growth. Alongside invention, innovation and cultural richness, there has been a dense history of poverty and civil hardship experienced by citizens ever since the early stages of urbanisation. In the post-industrial phase of the city's history, paternalistic political gestures have focussed on urban clearance and redevelopment but have repeatedly displaced and fragmented establishing communities. The current experience of the City is one of mass regeneration, typical of a Blairite interventionist approach to the redistribution of economic potential in the regions. In the case of Charleston and Lower Broughton, renewal has been given a 20 year time scale, but there remains a reflexive habit of relocating existing communities in preference for a more affluent and investment ready incoming population. The REdGENERATION project has used this context to drive its' identity and to frame its own expression of pride in both the built and social environment prior to the new capital investments that seek to force change.

⁴ The Immersive Learning Project is funded by NESTA (National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts). [Online] Available at: http://www.accessart.org.uk/immersive_learning/launch.php [accessed 25 October 2007]



Figure 2 – New construction work on Frederick Road, Salford.

The artistic content of the project is concentrated at the start. It has been important to the entire process that those people employed as artists are accepted and accept equal stakes in the project. Whether they are responsible for art as a consequence of the project is as circumspect as whether the young people in the project will adapt or use any art in their work. At the same time, the main function of artists employed by the project has been to make art! The artists are not qualified to make judgements about the nature, scale or solution to the problematic social or economic contexts that sponsor their engagement.



Figure 3 – Shopfronts in Lower Broughton and Charleston

The nature of the artists brief or role in society frequently contradicts the assumption of value represented by concepts of social progress or resolution. This was acknowledged in the structure given to the initiative.

Project History

The Salford Innovation Park initiated a public art project in 2004. It was a city-wide initiative which sought to form the basis of a new 'Knowledge Quarter' in the city as part of the regional community strategy. The key focus was to achieve city-wide regeneration and development targets through the facilitation and empowerment of SMEs, working towards innovation excellence in their businesses. Interaction between further and higher education and the school sector was a unique dimension of the project, hopefully facilitating aspiration raising, higher attainment, skills development and improved employability, particularly amongst socially excluded communities and their children. Partners included the University of Salford, North West Development Agency, Salford City Council, Manchester Enterprises, Charlestown and Lower Kersal New Deal for Communities, Salford College, Albion High School and Charlestown Primary School.

In 2004 a £2 million ERDF revenue grant supported a business, education and community-based programme of local development to create new skills in innovation, enterprise and creativity. Its physical expression is a building – The Innovation Forum – located on Frederick Road in Salford at circa £9 million, which seeks to provide business space for start-up and established businesses. In addition, space is provided for education and community groups and for new initiatives, creating wealth and opportunities for local residents (educational, training, employment and self-fulfilment) and community ownership. It is intended that the building will act as a 'Hub' bringing people together to share and vitalise their knowledge, skills and capabilities. In the original plan it was envisaged that this will be “an exemplary model for the co-location of business, industry and education,”⁵ presenting a positive image of Salford as an innovative and modern city.

⁵ Knowledge Capital Manchester Report (2003)
<http://www.manchesterknowledge.com/pages/documents.html> to download pdf file of the prospectus

The Salford Innovation Park development team had the task of informing the design brief for the Innovation Forum Building. The Innovation Park's original commissioning of Maxine Kennedy, Sam Ingleson and Paul Haywood sought to gather observations and proposals in response to the entire district covered in their plans. The socio-geographic impact of the building, as a hub, had been pre-determined through a mixture of assumption and processes of public consultation. Therefore, there was a tacit understanding of the district to which the building development belonged.



Figure 4 – The Innovation Forum Building ('Hub') and colours from the range of Salford Reds.

The artists were required to be experimental and innovative, record fresh and immediate creative responses and to come up with alternative readings of the site that may influence its future development. The artists assumed dual roles of observer and tourist,

collecting evidence from the site and surrounding landscape. An edited collection of site relevant art pieces was produced, which sought to reflect the reality of the environment. This resulted in exhibitions and installations at venues local within the regeneration area mostly focussed on an edited paint range. Haywood and Kennedy selected 32 shades of red from examining vertical surfaces and brickwork within a pre-designated catchment of the intended building. Increasingly, as the project has developed the colour range has been refined and re-edited. The Reds colour palette was successfully used to inform the colours and materials in the new Innovation Forum building.



Figure 5 - The collection of visual evidence resulted in an art installation entitled '32 Reds' exhibited at the Glass Box Gallery, Sept-Oct 2003

The design of a limited and specific range of Pantones, which broadly represent environs of Salford has become a platform for engagement projects and, most importantly, the inception of the REDGENERATION company. There are twenty-six separate colours in the range, all matched to colours found in the red brick materials of the built environment. The partnership between the artists involved, the University of Salford and young people at Albion High School was intended to exploit the creative potential of the colour range and investigate the potential for enterprise and new product possibilities given that the colour range is symbolically located in Salford and effectively

provides a broad identity for the area. Examples of concepts in the early stages of the project and ideas stimulated by the colours are a range of bio-friendly household paints, a Salford textile and a sports kit for local teams. As the process has developed it has become clear that there are a myriad of possible design solutions possible from the vibrant relationship created by a mix of professional creatives, students, school pupils and business, particularly given the key of a shared symbolic identity. With the investment of Arts and Business the initial pilot project with Albion High School secured support from James Robinson PLC, a chemical engineering company manufacturing smart dyes. The resultant concept, originated by the young people at the school and subsequently driven through to manufacture was a limited range of colour change nail varnish, identified by the Salford reds, edited from the pantone collection. REDGENERATION's first product is a nail varnish that changes from clear to red brick under the influence of ultra violet light (direct sunlight).

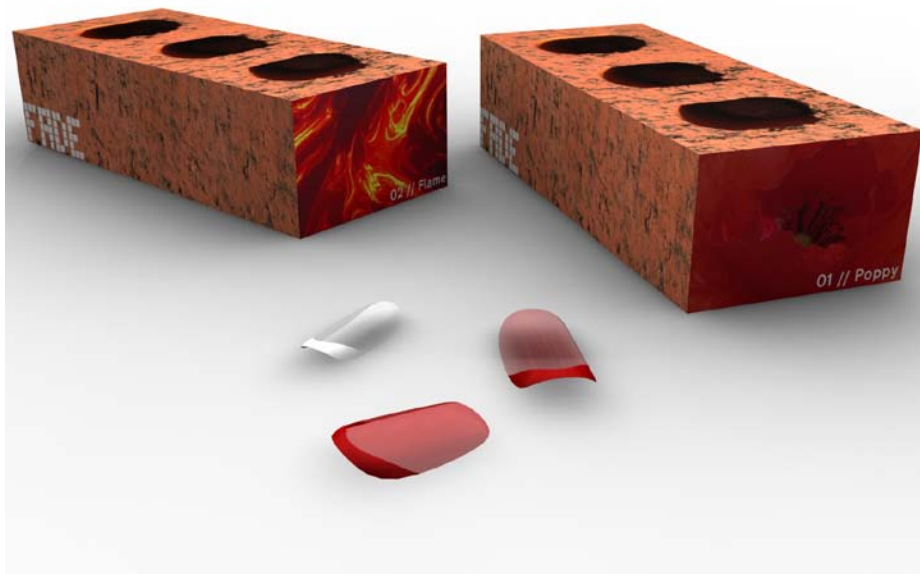


Figure 6 – Render of marketing imagery for the 'Fade' nail varnish and false nails, produced by REDGENERATION, June 2007.

Project aims

As High Schools in England are now committed to running enterprise learning projects and to embedding enterprise within the curriculum, the project sought to create an enterprise information pack based on proof and evidence of live projects that could be adapted for individual schools and would provide confidence in working partnerships with the university and project team. In the coming year the team aim to run a further 6 initiatives, based in Salford schools, that will replicate the model with Albion High School. As a consequence the aim is to establish a range of benefits with broad appeal, that can engage young people and students, which will strengthen the cross-disciplinary dynamic and, hopefully, expand on the creative potential of the initial concept. The core principle and goal of the projects is to position art and creative disciplines at the centre of cross-disciplinary enterprise team projects.



Figure 7 & 8 – Action Learning Sets. The REdGENERATION group meetings.

The primary aim of the pilot project with young people was to integrate a locally relevant strategic art programme into a new concept for enterprise in schools.

The objectives focused on:

- Establishing a group of young people to work as a team in the setting up of a school based enterprise.
- Promoting the work of the young people and running their business ideas as realistically as possible.

- Establishing new business links for the school and outreach into the business community locally.
- Promoting an understanding of enterprise amongst young people via original and locally relevant concepts.
- Developing a body of evidence and guidance for the transfer and application to other similar projects and schools in the city.

Project Structure

These objectives provided some guidance for the measurement of impact from the project. As a result, at the very beginning of the project with Albion High School the project accepted a brief from the Higher Education Academy to experiment with and explore the potential for enterprise in the curriculum via the deployment of Action Learning Sets. As a principle, the research focus provided by the HEA and the system of learning suggested through ALS structures ideally suited the experiences being established in the partnership with the School. The experience of the Action Learning Sets reinforced reflection and reflective habits. Despite the original motives, the pursuit of a public arts commission, the priorities of the project had necessarily shifted to embrace the wider community of interests now engaged. For the young people involved the lacunae of the project and its framework lay in the assessment and evaluation of its worth; they simply needed evidence of learning and progress. The use of Action Learning in the management of the group and in the decision making process maintained at least one form of democratic behaviour and helped the group to designate roles and to understand the input and contribution of all members. Sharing reflection presented opportunities for learning and for reinforcing experiences of learning. One of the most positive outcomes was the group's design of a learning log to capture and record both process and contribution. The log follows many of the headings that the group designed to help develop business planning. Effectively, the use of the learning log allows individuals to spend time on the consideration of strategy and creative direction as well as the completion of short term targets and milestones.



Figure 9 – Sam Ingleson with the REdGENERATION nail varnish. January 2008.

At the very first meeting with students from Albion High School it was noted by all involved that the concept of a beneficiary ran counter to the creative ambitions of the project. Partnership and collaboration were principles already enshrined in the overall management of the project and had to apply equally to individual contributors. As such engagement and employment with the project was noted as a matter of choice and individual contribution had to be respected on the same terms. The very concept of beneficiary was perceived to reinforce master and pupil roles, thereby limiting the potential for authentic creative input from the assumed objects of education. There was no issue within the group with the fact there would be waged and unwaged participants working alongside one another and the fact that the division mapped onto the roles of teacher and learner. At the same time, to achieve an impression or appearance of equal responsibility and thereby allow space for individual creative input and ideas, the impact of divisions between recognizable communities (teachers and learners) within the group had to be minimised. The structure employed by the team for the deployment of human resource was principally and tactically reactive, relying on practical deadlines and staged objectives defined by the group on a weekly basis. Loosely the team delegated responsibilities for business development, product creation and marketing to sub

groups, however the whole group maintained executive status and planning and major decision making was either adjusted or reaffirmed on a weekly basis. Via this model, the requirements for knowledge or skill based resources were constantly reviewed and were controlled by the executive: contribution quickly shifted to a mixture of choice (for individuals within the project team) and recruitment (with reference to specific knowledge and expertise demanded by the goals of the evolving enterprise).

In summary, once a project executive had been confirmed, as a team or business concept, contributions were controlled and planned according pragmatic short-term goals.

One important feature of the REdGENERATION project was an agreed set of business goals that focused the intentions of all involved and set clear, agreed, parameters. Clearly established business goals would help the group to achieve their aspirations, which were not all entrepreneurial. The group wanted to own and run the equivalent of a product development Community Interest Company. Their main role and function was to design, commission and bring to market, Salford branded products. They sought to make products about Salford, in Salford, for Salford. Above all, they sought to make profit from people with money and recycle that excess for the benefit of young people and for families in Salford displaced by the process of physical regeneration. Therefore, there were a set of goals defining the project.

- The agreement of a capital structure (CIC or equivalent) that targets external beneficiaries ie. the adoption of social goals at an early point.
- The enterprise quickly decided that its commercial capital was its identity, therefore, all physical commercial goods were to be controlled contractually by the executive and licensing or sub-licensing was not an option.
- The business was tiered very early on in the project. The executive group agreed and adopted a corporate identity and then established a sub-brand for specific outputs that can be built upon.
- Economic scoping was assumed to be focused on a local market from a very early stage and the executive established limits to its own aspirations as a matter

of principle and strategy. International markets have not been ruled out; the primary observation is that Salford is effectively competing with its immediate neighbours for its relative economic well-being.

- The sub-groups or working parties quickly identified and undertook 3 main business functions for the enterprise; business management, product design and marketing.



Figure 9 – REdGENERATION marketing and promotion material, including Salford Shoelaces.

The main arena for learning or gaining experience from the project was the group meeting at each session, in so far as the whole group shared their experiences and effectively provided a critique and appraisal of successes. Most of the contributors within the team quickly adopted a habit of team work when focusing on short term objectives, choosing to work in groups of 2 or 3. Infrequently, individuals chose to work independently.

As the team adopted a pattern of working in small groups, learning, or the experience of working, tended to be highly reflective though informal in character. As the enterprise agenda maintained a high degree of design content there were regular and frequent opportunities for speculation and experimental thinking, contextual analysis and

reflection. This helped the group to quickly develop a habit of open debate and discourse. One weakness in this context is that the academics, learning mentors, artists and paid administrator did not have the opportunity or structures available to reflect on their own learning with any significance or consensus. There was, then, a constant risk of those contributors edging away from the enterprise process and into a fixed role of teacher or facilitator.

Observations

Despite the apparent success of this pilot there are areas of concern for the project team and, specifically, areas of critical discourse for those within the team wishing to maintain their identity as artists. The positive outcomes of this pilot project have been many. There now exists a real product; owned by the company, in the process of manufacture and ready for market within a range of retail outlets. All that is in train and equates to, success notwithstanding the test of attracting of a customer base for the product. Media coverage has been strong and frequent and the profile of the community, the school and the geographic region have benefited from attention derived via the project. The young people involved in the project have gained the equivalent of 2 grade B qualifications relevant to the 16 year age group in England. The anxieties of the delivery team have remained focused on the potential to transfer the model and the location of art within the programme.

As artists intervening in the educational system the project seeks to establish a role for speculative creative enquiry and kinaesthetic curiosity within an increasingly constrained brief for education and its' objects. The project aims to disseminate and influence practices via proof and the evidence of 'live' projects that can be adapted for individual schools and circumstances. There is a goal to promote confidence in working partnerships that stretch across levels of learning (primary through to tertiary). The core principle and goal of the project has been to position art (creative disciplines) at the point of genesis of cross-disciplinary (enterprise) team projects.

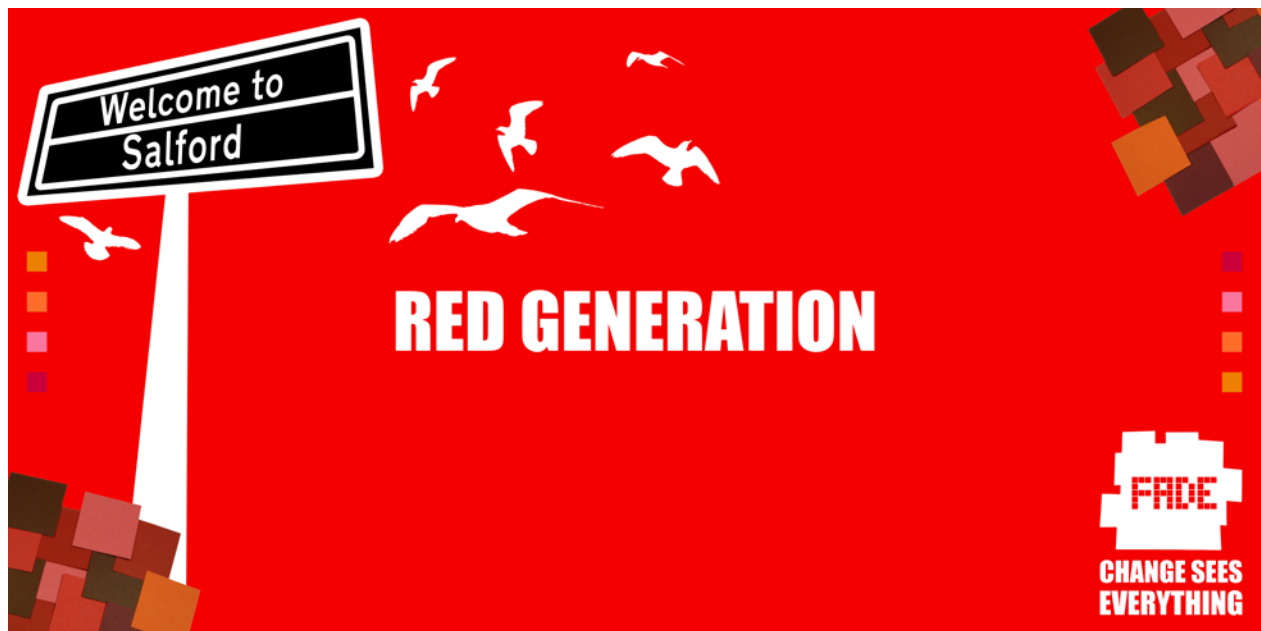
The identifiable weaknesses from this first experience have been:

- Professionals engaged with the project have not had the opportunity to reflect on their own learning to any significant degree.
- Enterprise and other initiatives in education, across the region, present a confused picture to learners in this context; the very notion of enterprise in education is unclear and learners find the current situation in the UK unhelpful.
- The school timetable is understandably rigid and allows for only a very limited timetable of engagement for projects such as these. Equally contributors from the University have struggled to harmonise their timetables with that of the project.
- The normal structure of education promotes completion dates, a system that assumes resolution. All of the contributors in this project have appreciated its growth and the projection of new and emerging objectives. There is, therefore, a direct contradiction in the expectations of education matched against the expectations of enterprise (or an interventionist arts strategy).
- Resources are finite within education with very limited opportunity for investment, even in consideration of projects such as this one which has aspirations for a sustainable future and commercial growth. The limitations of any available funds are normally that they require additional outputs and have their own goals attached. There is no culture of investment banking or speculation within the education sector to allow projects a start-up resource with uncertain outcomes.

Having identified potential barriers, the REdGENERATION concept is planned to role out across at least 6 other schools and locations in the coming 12 months. The project is committed to creating a space for educational structures sitting just outside of the physical environment that can help with the extension of benefits and of the timetable. It is anticipated that this space has the potential to address very specific debates and concerns that form part of a communities identity. Currently the project is working with a community partnership in South Manchester devising an enterprise project with the potential to confront the growth of gun culture in the area. For that aspiration to succeed, multi-agency co-ordination, media facing public relations and advance funding streams will all have to be mastered. That particular initiative is progressing rapidly and looks likely to gain the full support necessary to progress its initial concepts. The capacity for role out in the region is significant. What started as art seeking an

interaction with enterprise education has quickly shifted to enterprise initiatives seeking content from art and design specialists. At the same time, the organators seek to maintain their role as artists and remain committed to that professional identity. In this context, as initiators, we are very conscious that we started as artists and remain committed to that professional identity.

As artists, they want to make art! They are not qualified to make judgements about the nature, scale or solution to the problematic social or economic contexts that sponsor or motivate their engagement. On the contrary, they do enjoy or gain satisfaction from compounding problems and teasing out diametrically opposing discourses running counter to any notion of resolution or to a prevailing culture that desires closure. They want to resist function as an imperative in the making of their art. In reference to these projects, the point at which production (manufacturing) becomes viable, both economically and politically, is also the point at which the art input becomes irrational and, possibly, untenable within the matrix of roles and responsibilities that the project generates.



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