

# Have Your Say. Creativity For All.



**tag.**

**HWFI** CREATIVE  
ENTERPRISE  
ZONE

**GOOD**  
**GROWTH**  
**HUB**

# About CEZ

Creative Enterprise Zones are a London Mayoral initiative to designate areas of London where artists and creative businesses can find permanent affordable space to work; are supported to start up and grow; and where local people are helped to learn creative sector skills and find new jobs.

This report and research into community insight was commissioned by Hackney Wick & Fish Island's Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) via Good Growth Hub.

With thanks to all partners, venues, speakers, young people and facilitators involved for making this report possible.



MAYOR OF LONDON



# About the report

The Good Growth Hub (GGH) and Hackney Wick and Fish Island (HWFI) Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) developed an event series, facilitated by TAG Agency, to explore the 4 pillars of the CEZ: Space, Skills, Community and Policy.

This report presents its findings.

Produced by Alvin Owusu, Tag Agency. Designed by Good Growth Hub.



We set out with the aim to build an evidence base which identifies local needs and locally created solutions.

We engaged local young people, employers, and workspace providers using workshops, design sprints, and creative explorations expertly facilitated by local creatives, entrepreneurs, and changemakers.

The central question we asked was:

**How do we build a neighbourhood that meaningfully supports creativity for all?**

# Contents

1. Demographics – A breakdown of who was in the room.
2. In between the cracks – Unpacking the communities experience of place to identify where to go next.
3. Ecosystems, ecologies & entrepreneurs – Exploring Hackney's relationship to entrepreneurship and how to build an ecosystem to support the culture.
4. Building Creative Neighbourhoods – Understanding how to build space that inclusively foster creativity.

# Demographic Insights

In attendance:

- 75 young people
- 19 employers

Over 50% of young people were part-time, freelance, or unemployed.

All young people self-identified as Creative. The creative disciplines include: writers, producers, actors, designers, photographers, illustrators, entrepreneurs.

Employers incl: LLDC, trident digital media, The yard theatre, barbeline press, soothe me, PLEXAL, Citizen projects, Grow Studios\*, BIG FACE ART, Yodomo.

\*Data based only on attendants who opted into sharing information.

# In-between the cracks

To inform the direction of travel. We gathered the community to hear their honest reflections and experiences of place. Listening to the joy, but also holding space for the grief and confusion that inevitably arose.

The session was facilitated by One Room Live – a Barking and Dagenham-based creative collective who are using spaces to bring together East London's 'lost' creative community. To show that creativity and inspiration can exist anywhere.



You can find palm trees in Dagenham, Fulham, Peckham, Clapton and other places in the UK. It's odd to see that a tropical plant can flourish in concrete and cold environments.

The origins stories of these plants are unconfirmed and it's equally as difficult to plant new trees in Hackney as it would be to remove them. Yet, the existence of this flora is proof that beautiful things can grow from cracks in the ground.

If we see the cracks in the ground as the lack of communal space, underinvestment in youth services, displacement, and cultural exclusion as just a few of the scenarios young creatives have faced.

The palm trees are the informal networks, communities, and spaces people have built and managed to create, heal, connect, and gather.

# Community Sentiment

How Hackney's creative community feel about their neighbourhood?

**Trainspotting:** Due to a lack of informal spaces to gather, young people shared that they have and hold a lot of conversations with their community in public spaces ie. train stations and car parks.

**People Power:** There is a deep underutilisation of local people and expertise. In the room, there was frustration because they've been asked these questions before and had had the answers for years. However, they lacked the resource, trust, and authority to create material change.

**Meanwhile spaces:** Similar to the above point. Young creatives had several ideas of how we can transform spaces ie. libraries and unused retail outlets to benefit.

**Disconnect:** A lack of understanding between the council's initiatives and the needs of local young creatives.

**“We’re just not speaking the same language”**



**Survivors guilt:** Growing tensions between the effects and benefits of regenerations. Young creatives felt they didn't know where to place themselves as participating in regeneration at times felt like siding with the 'enemy'.

**"After gentrification happens, if you take a job in one of these new spaces, you feel like a sell-out"**

## The community's perception of Hackney's offerings (or lack thereof):

### Abundance

- Ambition
- Sport
- Rich lived experiences
- Co-working
- Retail outlets
- Individuality
- Languages
- Faith Hubs/Centres
- Coffee
- Culture
- Skills
- Green Spaces

### Lack

- Economic Support
- Creativity Accountability
- Social Spaces
- Quality food after 11pm
- Lack of mixture & interaction with other generations
- Talent Scouts
- Knowledge of alt pathways
- Influence

### Both

- Outside spaces / Parks
- Sense of community (We have it but it's not actively cultivated)

# Ecosystems, Ecologies, & Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is baked into the DNA of Hackney, a place renowned for its diversity, culture and creativity. As the 'Disruptive Futures' report highlights,

When people from different cultural backgrounds are living on top of one another, they are continuously sharing perspectives, forming new ideas and imagining possibilities outside of their current realities.

At the cliff edge of inequality in the borough, a culture of entrepreneurship has birthed a generational trend of enterprise. Where most young people in the room were able to identify an entrepreneur within their immediate family.

**“From the immense amount of talent locally, in rappers, to footballers & all types of artists. When you’re good and have faced adversity in challenges in Hackney, this translates to a unique level of I’m better than the rest.”**

To dive deeper into an existing knowledge base of Hackney-based entrepreneurship, we convened a panel with leading Hackney Based creatives: Chris Figures, Bejay Mulenga MBE, and Olivia Taylor. In this, we discussed risks, failures, wellness and the skills necessary to build a successful business.

Drawing on the rich insights in the room, we challenged all attendees to design the ecosystem of support a creative entrepreneur in the borough might need to thrive.



# From the experts

1. Sacrifice is often a necessity rather than a choice as young creatives are forced to produce from a place of lack rather than abundance.

Art provides a level of clarity & stillness but in order to be in a place where I can focus on my art I have to sacrifice time & effort with friends & my community which means a lot - Olivia Taylor.

2. Young creatives need trust and resource. As 'unofficially' they carry with them histories of good business and creativity. Or else we risk over 'incubating' young talent.

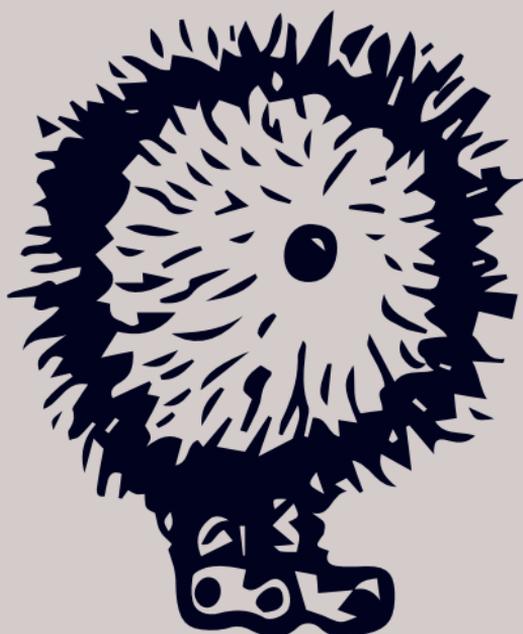
“The first entrepreneur I'd seen was my dad. He'd made a living of buying & fixing bikes, & sending them back home in Africa to sell. I leveraged this and started buying & selling sweets in school and making a markup. Turning a £1 a day allowance into £10.” - Chris Figures

3. Essential skills are still essential. We just need to find alternative ways to teach them.

“I'm a great communicator & was consistently good at the small things. This builds equity and a reputation of doing things well for one person leads to opening connections and referrals. Then you have a brand of doing something well & now you're the go-to person.” - Bejay Mulenga

**4. Stories are a critical part of entrepreneurship. The dominant narratives will affect how we do, and who gets to build a creative business.**

**From a local entrepreneur being able to authentically document their own stories, to a wider strategic communications piece about entrepreneurship in the borough. The stories told will elevate the market, and provide confidence, and opportunity to current and future entrepreneurs.**



# Build What You Need

**Task: Young creatives were challenged to design a programme/ecosystem of support for a local entrepreneur within their networks.**

**A solutions-focused designed sprint led by local people and rooted in local knowledge.**



**Q: Who's the local entrepreneur?**

**A: Young Local Cake Seller (Mum)**

**Q: What struggles do they face?**

**A: (1) She works another job full time job.**

**(2) She makes food in her house so the kitchen space is limited for creation.**

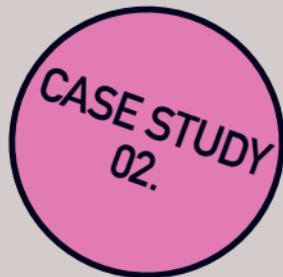
**(3) Storage space is a problem i.e. If you can store more you can sell more.**

**(4) Only sells by word of mouth or IG.**

**Q: How can the community help them & what should they do?**

**A: (1) Enable her to pitch to local businesses (B2B) and target SME's (small to medium sized businesses). (2) Her USP is a 'special finish' so she should target the wedding industry.**

**(3) She needs a larger space to work in.**



**Q: Who's the local entrepreneur?**

**A: SSNOW**

**Q: What struggles do they face?**

**A: (1) Having clear articulate business values that you can communicate.**

**(2) Cost of Production.**

**(3) Competitors are using similar marketing techniques.**

**Q: How can the community help them & what should they do?**

**A: (1) Put on a free, local brand building class.**

**(2) Build a core community in a singular location.**

# Building Creative Neighbour- hoods





**So how might we build a neighbourhood that inclusively fosters all forms of creativity for all people?**

**A session expertly facilitated by Space Black explored this. Space Black are a Hackney-based creative design studio, exploring alternative spatial futures for marginalised communities - through education, concept design research & culture.**

**To understand how to get to this ideal. We must begin with the communities definitions of creativity.**

# Creativity:



To take a part of the human condition and put it in a medium for others to interpret.



Building on existing formats and making something new.



The freedom to fix or make something truly in your own way.

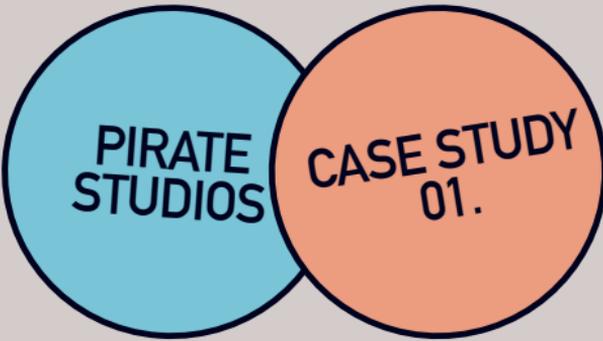


Imagining alternative realities and possibilities.



The definitions of creativity were centred on passion, purpose, storytelling, freedom, and individuality.

The focus was less on the outputs and more on the process which was a constant theme across the workshop.



Pirate Studios (PS) is a worldwide network of DJ, production, rehearsal, podcast and dance studios, giving creatives round the clock access to create using an entirely self-service entry code system.

PS was highlighted as a space that fosters creativity due to:

- Easy access to equipment
- Affordability (£20 an hour)
- No expectation to produce a creative output
- Trust-based relationships. Not overly surveilled.



Stratford Shopping Centre (SSC) is an old, financially neglected shopping mall opposite Westfield which has become a nighttime community hub for skaters, BMXers, dancers and East London's homeless. In recent times, the rooftop has been developed into a bar and urban park with cinema, food, games and events.

SSC was highlighted as a space that fosters creativity due to:

- The coexistence of different communities. All in the space for different purposes.
- The reclamation of space in spite of the gentrification experienced in Stratford due to the Olympics.

# How do we facilitate creativity?

From the spaces identified by the community. Here are the key ways in which we can foster creativity through spaces.

1. Representation
2. Accessibility
3. Handing over Ownership
4. Financial support
5. Spiritual & energetic release
6. Connection with nature

# The Future of CEZ

In the 3-part event series, we gathered young creatives and freelancers, employers, entrepreneurs, cultural producers, youth workers and academics.

All to answer the central question: How do we build a neighbourhood that meaningfully supports creativity for all people?

In other words, we were also asking how we might leverage the know-how of local people to shape the future of the Hackney Wick & Fish Islands Creative Enterprise Zone\*.



# Final Recommends

1. Centre marginalised\* people, communities and creatives.

It was clear many attendees felt that various forms of discrimination from classism to racism were at play in deciding who gets to be creative in the borough. Young people spoke about spaces being overrun and appropriated, being made to feel unwelcome through hypervigilance, and intentionally being priced out.

Creative industries rely on marginalised people but treat them as if they're disposable. Start here.

## 2. Invest in the cracks.

Young creatives in the borough have histories and legacies of entrepreneurship. The businesses are largely unregistered and tend to subsidise other low-paid work. Informally, they are building in the cracks from a place of passion, purpose and necessity. Find the cracks.

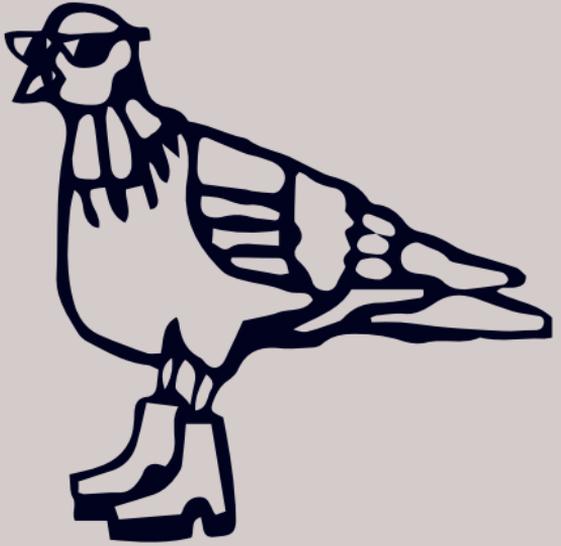
This isn't a call to build a new set of programmes or ramp up communications on the existing set of programmes. Rather, it is a call to learn the culture and provide resources to the informal networks of entrepreneurship and creativity.

It's a call to reflect on how we evaluate the success of programmes and question if they genuinely meet the needs of local people in the way they've met their own needs.

### **3. Build an interdisciplinary & intergenerational third space.**

**A sociocultural term to designate communal space, as distinct from the home (first space) or work (second space). A space for ease, connection, and community. Whether it is a completely new development, or programming an existing space over a year. Young creatives expressed a deep yearning for such a space.**

**Badu Cafe, a Hackney Wick-based coffee shop was birthed from BADU, a Black-led non-profit organisation founded with the aim of offering unparalleled support to families, schools and local systems. Badu Cafe has become a safe hub for young people and families. The opening of Badu is an example of spaces that reflect the importance of community ownership, diverse leadership and inclusive spaces for all.**



#### 4. Wellness as the next creative frontier.

Young creatives today have lived through 10+ years of austerity policies, a global pandemic, disinvestment in essential youth services, a worsening climate emergency, the London riots, a war on trans lives and most recently, the UK cost of living crisis.

A resilient generation who have created irrespective of the crisis they found themselves in. Now they are ensuring that they look after themselves at the same time. The CEZ can and should support this.

## 5. Tell everyone & tell them NOW

It is fundamental that this report isn't shelved. Rather, the information within this report must be disseminated with colleagues, councils, policymakers and more. As part of this events series, we held a final session with Hackney Wick and Fish Island workspace providers to present our findings and learning.

For many this was the first time they'd heard the concerns of local communities framed in this way.

We need to share and talk more.

Scan the QR code to download this report.



# About Good Growth Hub

We are an employment, skills, and training hub connecting East Londoners aged 18-30 with local businesses. Our vision is to see East London's young people thrive and local businesses grow, thanks to the work we do together.

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