

Written Submission - Selected (Re)Telling Website Blog Posts: (1,415 words)

Thursday 3rd March, 2018

During my second meeting with my dissertation supervisor, it was mentioned how I had commented in my proposal about "wanting to give something back". So, I thought I would take some time to think over it and elaborate on what giving something back actually meant.

For me this dissertation is something personal, yet at the same time I had decided that I wanted its findings to be engaged with by people other than myself and the person marking it. A great deal of this 'giving something back' stems from my own experience with higher education and how it has changed during my two years at Royal Holloway, University of London.

When I enrolled in 2016 I was the first person in my immediate family, and second only to my older cousin to enrol at university. It might not seem a significant moment for some people but for me it was a milestone.

(Re) Telling the New Town Story:
I remember discussing my thoughts about first coming to university with one of my closest friends a few months prior to this meeting. We both went to the same primary school before ultimately attending the same university. When our conversation turned to those old friends we went to school with, where they had since moved to, or the universities and work places they now study or work at, I began to draw my own startling conclusions...

When me and my friend enrolled at Royal Holloway in 2016, I estimated that we were the only two people out of my primary school class of 30-odd to start university. Yet in that same year, UCAS reported¹ that "the number of 18 year olds accepted at university rose by 1.5 per cent to 238,900, the highest number recorded to date". For students in England, the lowest entry rate in 2016 was 13.6% (+0.1) whilst the highest was 52.1% (+1.2).

UCAS also reported in the same article that students in England have a 32.5% chance of going to university, but it seemed that too few of the friends I grew up and went to

¹ UCAS (2016) *Record number of 18 year olds accepted to university this year, UCAS report shows*. Available at: <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/record-numbers-18-year-olds-accepted-university-year-ucas-report-shows> (Accessed 04 June 2018)

primary school with were enrolling at university, even if by the time I got to Sixth Form almost all my friends were going on to university.

I am cautious of drawing too much from anecdotal evidence, and I know some of my friends from secondary school have simply chosen to enrol at university a year or two after I did. So why is this important? University isn't a marker of success, or a necessity for people to succeed in their lives, far from it. However, I couldn't let go of a belief that was telling me that some of the friends I grew up with weren't simply choosing career paths other than university, or that the majority were dissuaded by the rise in tuition fees. I felt (as argued elsewhere²) that for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, access to higher education was sometimes determined by circumstance and lower incomes rather than the result of an individual's decision.

Giving something back then would be to produce a piece of work that engaged people in the local community and gave them the opportunity to ask questions or become inspired by the dissertation process at university. It's not strictly a social justice thing, I just think it is right to involve people and pass something on.

Jake (Re) Telling the New Town Story:

Thursday 7th May, 2018

The day has finally arrived when I can start drawing people's attention to the theme of my dissertation and this website, which aims to complement my research by (Re)Tracing, (Re)Showing and (Re)Telling the process as it unfolds.

You can read about my dissertation aims in more detail here, but in a nutshell, my project takes the 40th & 70th anniversary commemorations of Harlow and compares them in order to discover how the commemoration of the town's past has changed, specifically the process in which the town's history has been told and re-told.

I wanted my dissertation to be something personal, whilst simultaneously wanting the process and the results to be engaged with by more than just a handful of people. This

² Full Fact (2016) *Are there record numbers of young people going to university?* Available at: <https://fullfact.org/education/are-there-record-numbers-young-people-going-university/> (Accessed: 4 June 2018)

website is by no means a substitute for my dissertation, neither is it a glorified appendix. Instead, it is something separate which sets out to fulfil the additional aims I have envisaged for my dissertation, which I set out in a previous blog post.

So, if you're reading this, please take this opportunity to have a look round the rest of the website, but more importantly either now or later, feel free to ask questions, contribute and engage with the content that's posted, as well as the comments and opinions which will hopefully follow.

I hope you enjoy!

Sunday 15th July, 2018

The connection between geography and university.

My name is Jake Shepherd, and I am a Geography student at Royal Holloway, University of London. On the topic of 'making connections', I want to talk about two things: where you live and participation in higher education. Which if we return to the title of this talk, is the connection between geography and university. What I have to say is difficult, but the overall picture is positive. The takeaway message is this, we all have a part to play in challenging this connection, because connections can be broken.

I didn't start thinking about this connection until I moved to university in 2016. It was the first time I had lived outside of Harlow, but I wasn't alone, my best friend from primary school was also starting university at Royal Holloway. Which prompted the question – how many of our friends from primary school were also starting university that September?

However, before continuing I want to stress that going to university is not essential to being successful, and so never feel pushed into going. University should be 100% your choice, but this connection between geography and university suggested to me that other factors, namely where you live might also influence whether you decide to go to university.

I am not the only person interested in this connection. The Higher Education Funding Council for England created POLAR – or Participation of Local Areas to measure the "combined participation rates" of students aged 18 and 19 who went on to study at

university between the academic years 2009-2014 and 2010-2015. Local areas are ranked from 1–5 based on the proportion of students who go on to study at university. 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

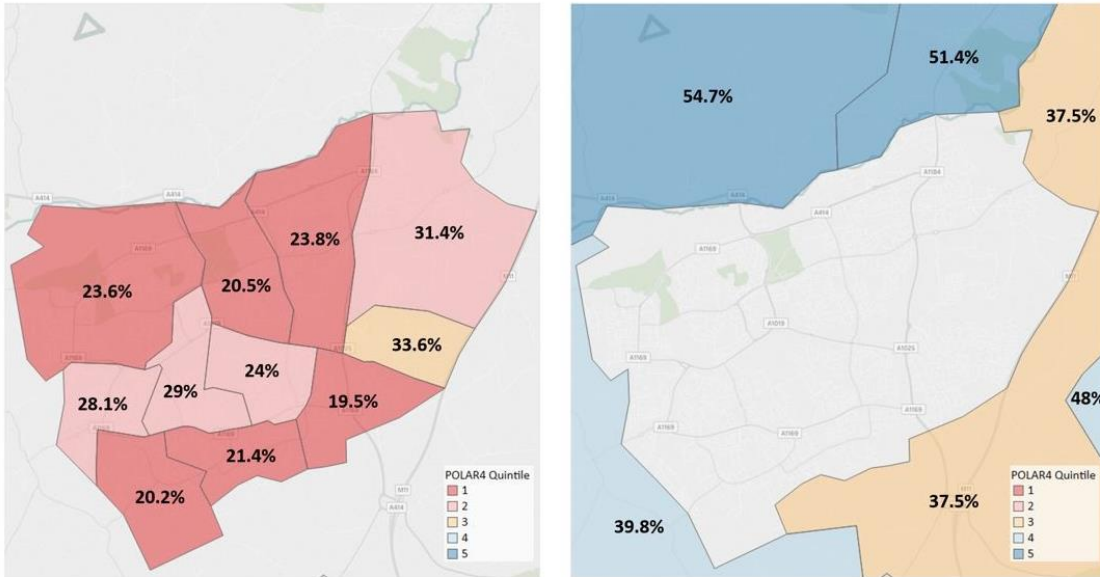
Whilst the connection between geography and university is visible on a national scale, returning to my question about the primary school friends I grew up with, what does this connection look like on a local scale? We can compare Harlow with the surrounding areas, but this doesn't fully contextualize, on a local scale, the connection between where you live and whether you decide to go to university.

So let's put this into perspective. Imagine you are on a bus, more specifically, the number 10 bus which goes from the train station to the town, and then to Church Langley. Between you boarding the bus at the train station and arriving at the town centre, the proportion of young people who go to university at age 18 or 19 increases by 8.5%. Suppose you stayed on all the way until you got to Church Langley, well despite some variation, when you step off that bus the participation rate would have increased to its peak of 33.6%, the largest across Harlow.

I did say the overall picture is positive though, and it is! Harlow has the second largest growth in young participation rates in the local area and the third largest across the whole of Essex. So the connection between geography and university in Harlow is already breaking, meaning that your decision to go to university is 100% yours. We all have a part to play in supporting young people in making their choice, and the trend you can see is a testament to our town's parents, teachers, schools and colleges who support young people in their ambition to go to university.

The takeaway message is this, we all have a part to play in challenging the connection between geography and university. Although, the connection is being broken already. Your choice whether to go to university is 100% yours, and there is no right or wrong answer. Looking ahead, the only young people in Harlow who I don't want to go to university are those who choose not to.

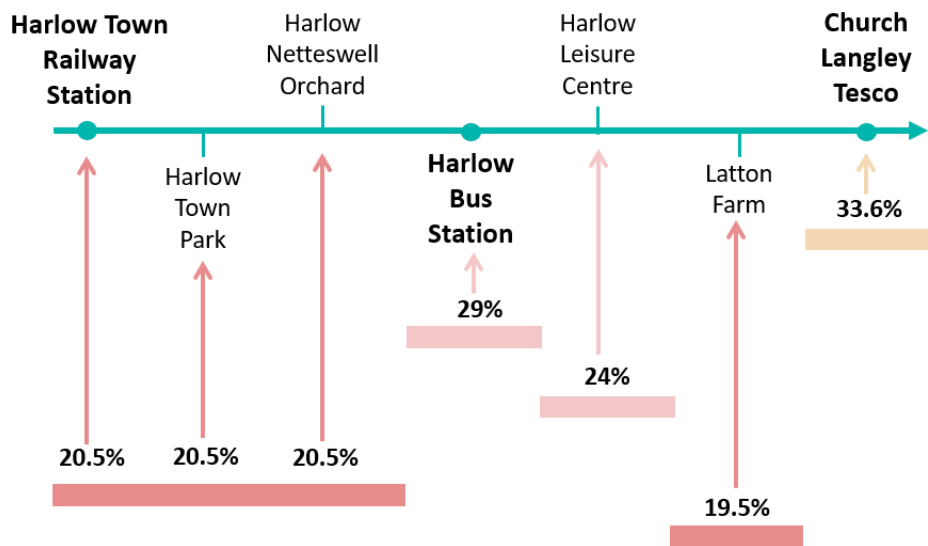
Photographic Submission: (3 Photos)



Comparative Mapping of POLAR 4 Data with % Young Participation Rate by Ward

Photo 1: Comparative Mapping created and used in TEDx Youth Talk and (Re)Telling Blogs

Church Langley - Bus Station - Rail Station 10



POLAR 4 Data showing % Young Participation Rate

Photo 2: Graphic created in the style of geographer Professor Danny Dorling and used in (Re)Telling Project



Photo 3: Poster from TEDx Youth Harlow Event as part of (Re)Telling Project

Media Submission: (1 Website, 1 YouTube Video, 1 Project Presentation)

(Re)Telling Website:

<http://retelling.co.uk/>

TEDx Youth Talk (00:05:54 Video):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBx1bX27utg>

(Re)Telling Geocaching Explainer (4 PowerPoint Slides):

<https://liverhulac->

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Telling the New Town Story: