University of Cumbria

Outdoor Learning Ecosystems

Delivering progressive outdoor learning experiences across the life course

David Harvey

IOL NW Conference 15/01/21

4 Levels of learning challenges

PLANETARY / GLOBAL

SOCIETAL

INTERPERSONAL

INTRAPERSONAL

Based on Hannon, V. (2017) *Thrive.* London: Innovation Unit
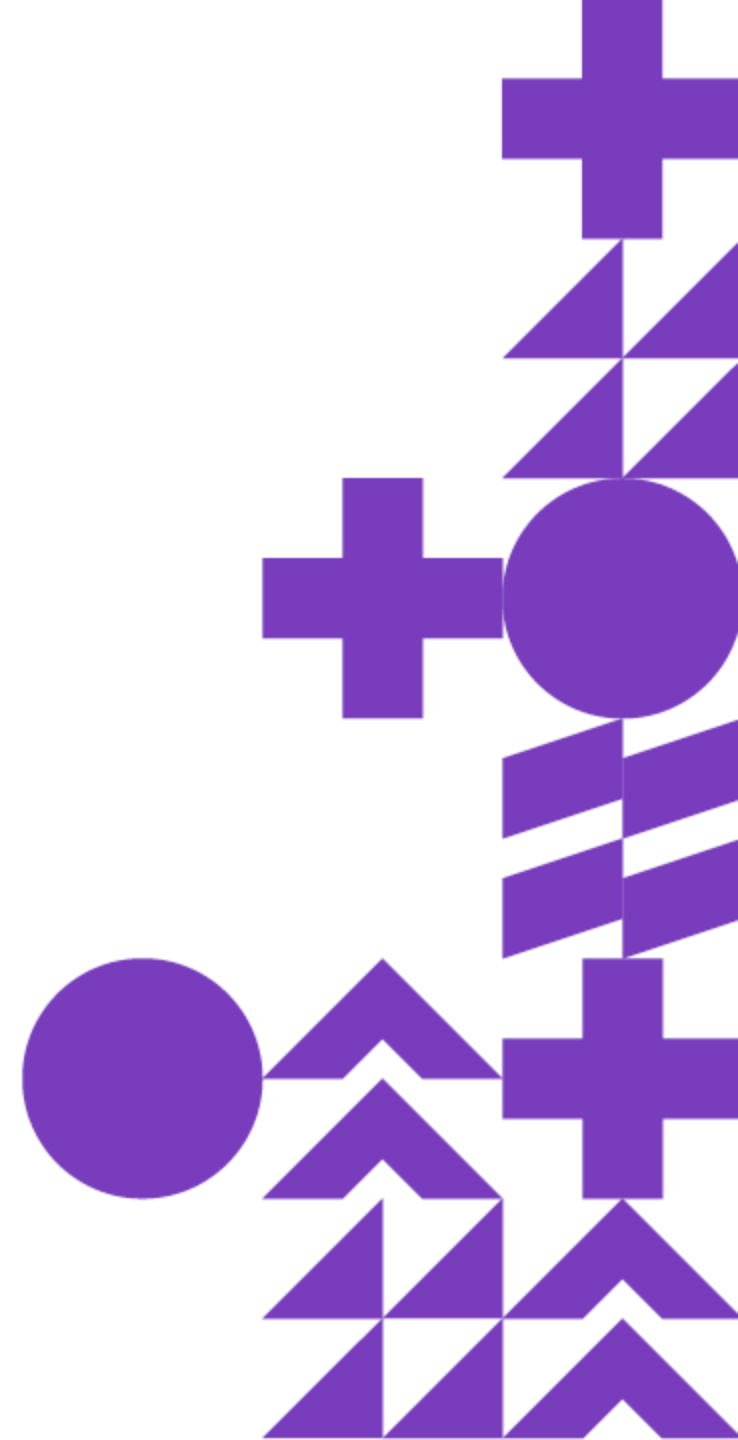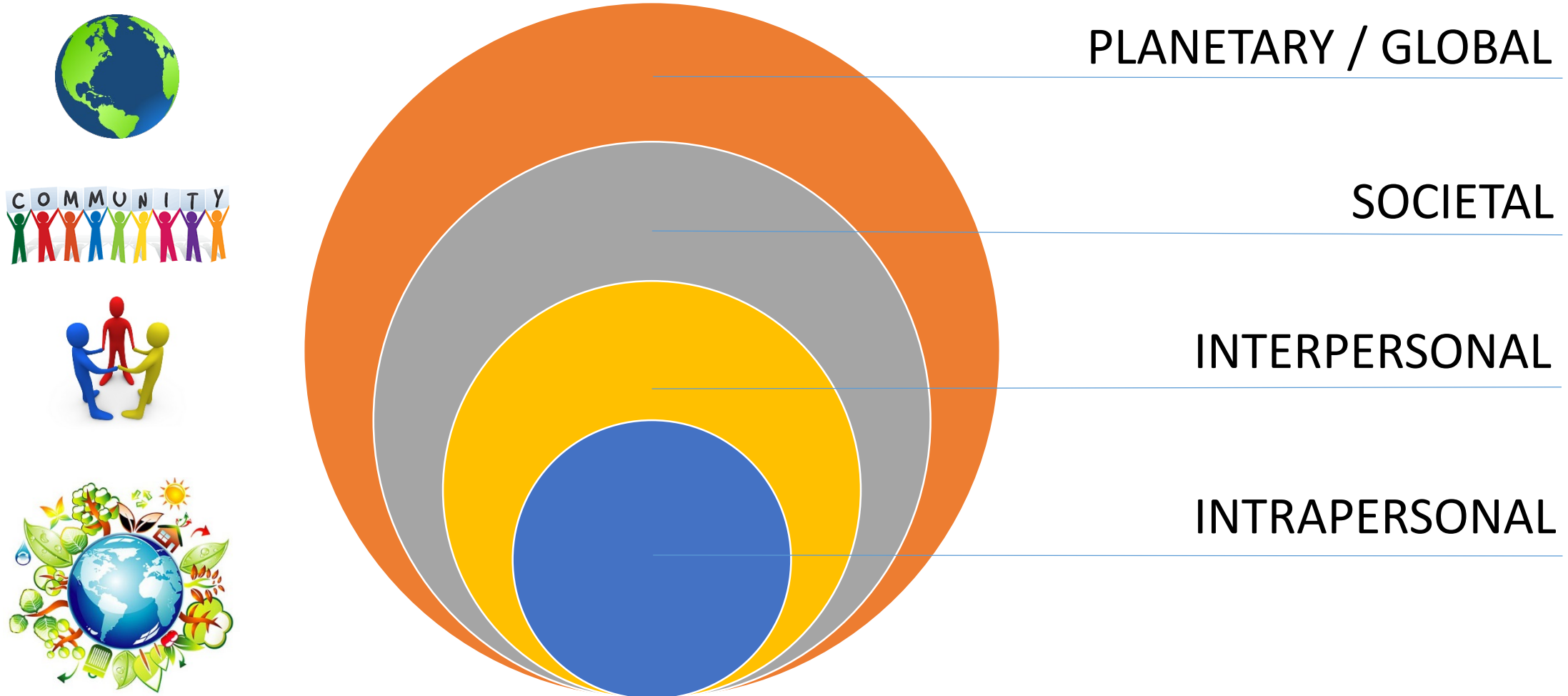
4 Levels of learning challenges

- **Planetary / Global**
  - ✓ *To live sustainably within the earth's resources, protecting its ecosystem and biodiversity*
  - ✓ *To acquire global competence*

- **Societal**
  - ✓ *To equip learners to navigate a disrupted and uncertain landscape of work*
  - ✓ *To prepare young people to reinvent a democracy which is participative, authentic and meaningful*

- **Interpersonal**
  - ✓ *To develop loving and respectful relationships in diverse, technologized societies*
  - ✓ *To engage with, and learn from, other generations*

- **Intrapersonal**
  - ✓ *Attain a secure sense of self, with identified sources of personal nourishment and renewal*
  - ✓ *Learn responsibility for personal health, fitness and wellbeing*

Hannon, V. (2017) *Thrive.* London: Innovation Unit
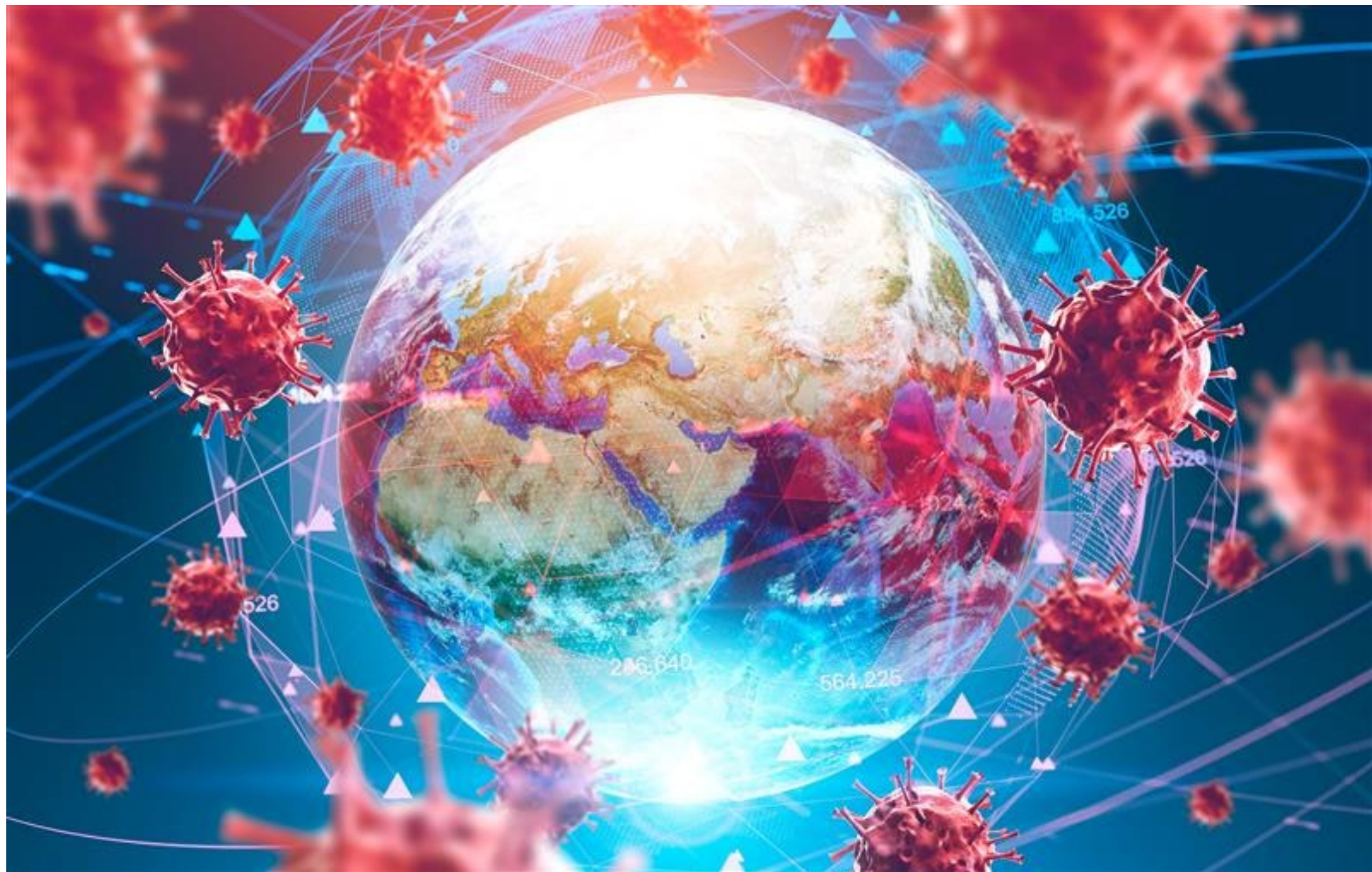
Why bother? Reasons for engaging in OL

- Raising achievement (curriculum)

- Personal and social development

- Nature connection (environmental awareness)

- Health and wellbeing

(Waite, 2020; IOL, 2020)

- Employability, environmental action, social action, organisation effectiveness, preparation and support for recreation…

(IOL, 2020)

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Which purpose is you dominant driver?

1   Personal and social development

2   Health and wellbeing

3   Raising achievement

4   Environmental awareness

5   Employability

6   Environmental action

7   Preparation for recreation

8   Organisational effectiveness

9   Something else

Write the number (as many are relevant) in the chat

Benefits

- Individual

- Social
- Environmental
- Health
- Economic

Benefits

- Enjoyment
- Confidence and character
- Health and wellbeing
- Social and emotional awareness
- Environmental awareness and nature connection
- Activity skills and curriculum knowledge
- Personal qualities
- Skills for life
- Increased motivation and appetite for learning
- Broadened horizons
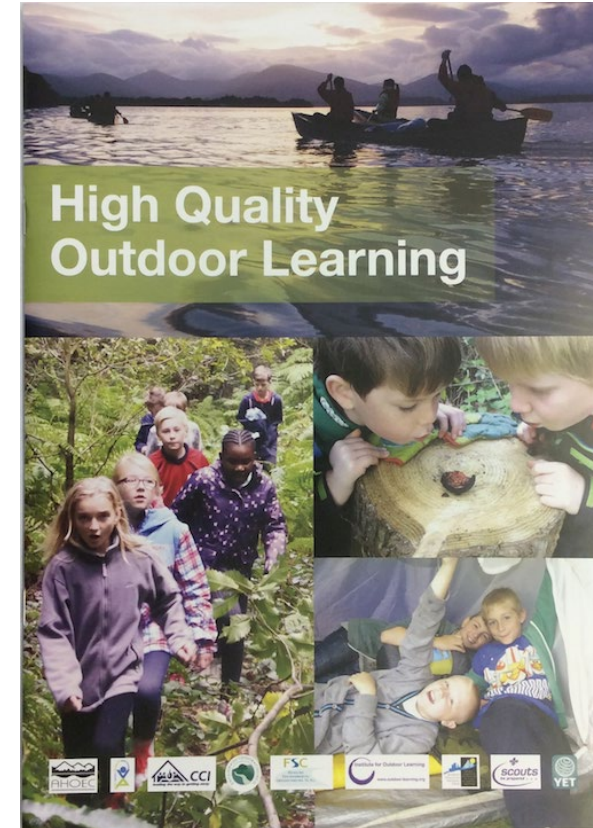
Ways to access Outdoor Learning
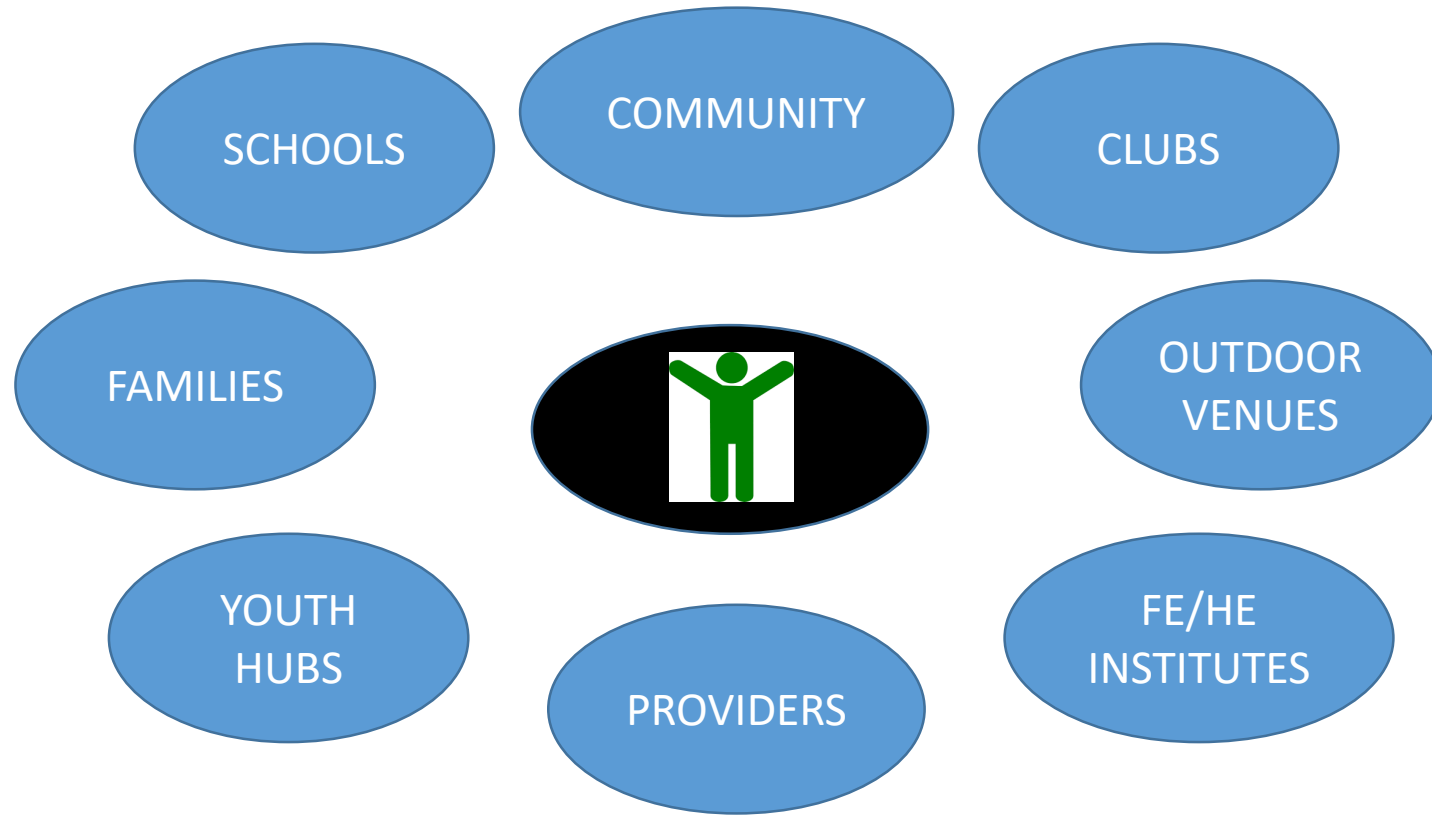
Inequitable access

- **13% of children** (under 16) and **5% of young people** (aged 16-24) typically never visit the natural environment or even spend any of their leisure time outdoors.

- **18% of children living in the most deprived areas** never visit the natural environment at all.

"Many communities in modern Britain feel that these landscapes hold no relevance for them. The countryside is seen by both black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and white people as very much a 'white' environment."

Landscapes Review

We want our national landscapes to work together with big ambitions so they are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone.

Final Report

Findings (1)

- Access to knowledge
  - Awareness of opportunities
  - Awareness of what is actually needed (skills, equipment, knowledge)

- Access through social identity
  - Community, gender, age, status, education, birthplace…
  - History, culture and practice

Findings (2)

- Access to technology
  - Transport,
  - Equipment (eg boots, clothing, bicycles…)
  - Roads, paths, cycle paths

- Access to labour
  - Staff and volunteers to deliver / facilitate outdoor learning
  - Job opportunities

Central nodes: SOLE TRADERS, COMMUNITY PROJECTS, CHILDREN, YOUTH GROUPS, SCHOOLS, CLUBS, FAMILIES, YOUNG PEOPLE, OUTDOOR VENUES, FARMS, PARKS & ZOOS, OUTDOOR CENTRES, ADULTS, FE/HE INSTITUTES

Surrounding nodes: CAPABILITIES, KNOWLEDGE SOURCES, PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, CULTURAL NORMS, INFRASTRUCTURE, GOVERNMENT, INSTITUTIONS, POLICY, SECTOR EMPLOYERS, LOCAL AGENDAS, LOCAL BUSINESS, HEALTH AGENDA, ENVIRONMENT AGENDA, OTHER APPROACHES

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Progression

"From early years to lifelong learning…
Engaged at a level that matches their learning…
Activities have the greatest impact when they are progressive"
(EOC, 2015)

"The Outdoor Citizens model is for progressive experiences from birth to
adulthood that build on each other to develop knowledge, skills and familiarity
with the outdoors." (Outdoor Citizens, 2020)

"All children and young people are participating in a range of
progressive and creative outdoor learning experiences which are
clearly part of the curriculum"
(Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010)
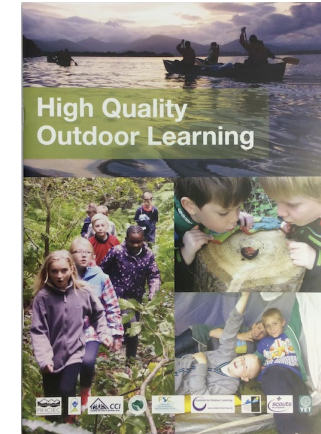
A natural progression

An individual has the potential to move from being in and connecting with the natural environment to becoming an active, healthy, responsible, ethical citizen able to influence others on the importance of managing our natural resources sustainably now and in the future. When deciding, which intervention should be introduced it is important to understand where an individual is along the Natural Progression.

A NATURAL PROGRESSION... DEVELOPING A SUSTAINED KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND INTERACTION WITH NATURE

Emotional Connection

Cognitive Connection

Step 1
Being in the natural environment, enjoying it and feeling comfortable in it

Step 2
Connecting with nature – observing and experiencing

Step 3
Developing knowledge of the natural environment, its resources and multiple benefits

Step 4
Understanding own and others impact on nature and why sustainable management is needed

Step 5
Taking a personal position on managing our natural resources now and in the future – values and beliefs
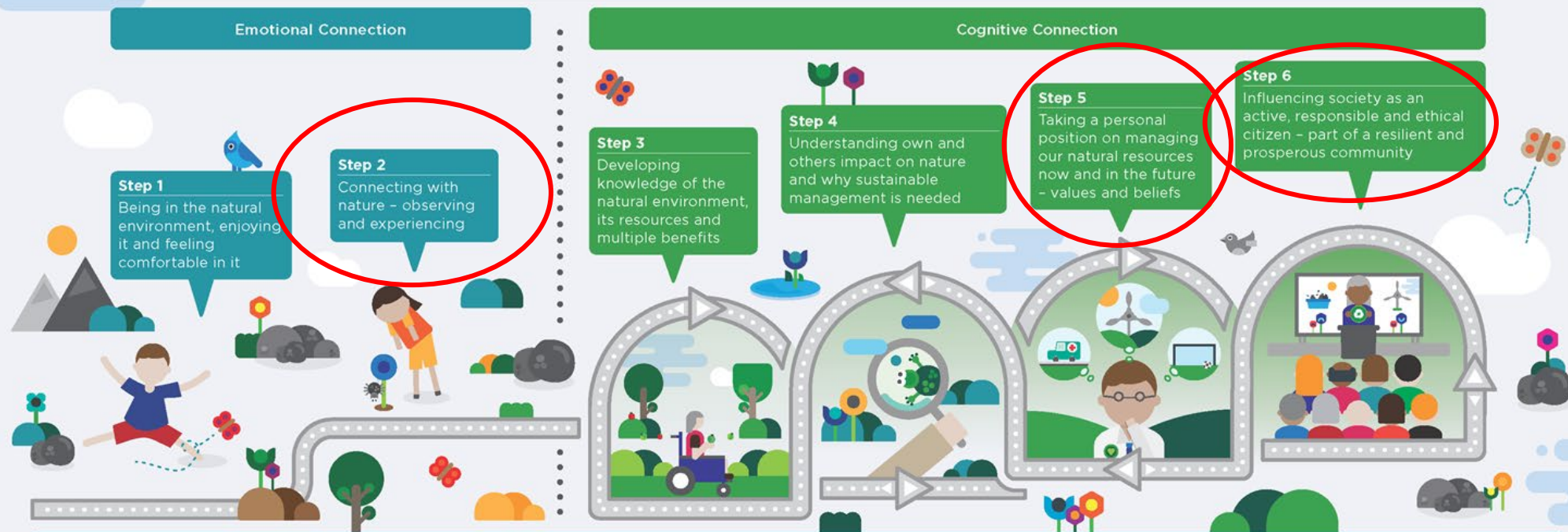
Step 6
Influencing society as an active, responsible and ethical citizen – part of a resilient and prosperous community

Multiple benefits of developing a sustained knowledge, understanding and interaction with nature

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthy	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture	Globally Responsible
• Environmental employment & volunteering • Outdoor education & skills • Attracts investment • Economic resilience	• Adapting to climate change • Flood management • Improved air & water quality • Assists biodiversity	• Increased physical activity • Better mental health • Prevention of e.g. obesity, Type 2 diabetes • Community food growing	• Accessible spaces & connecting corridors • Tackles social exclusion • Deprived communities benefit most	• Involvement in design & maintenance instils local pride • Places to get to know your neighbours • Stronger community identity	• Desirable spaces with Welsh culture & identity • More visits – arts, sports, recreation • Creative, expressive, fun opportunities	• Local & national economic development • Climate change mitigation • Meets national & international policies

NRW (2020)

Progression?

Age

Developmental outcomes

Formal — **Non-formal** — **Informal**

Pre 5
- Attachment
- secured
- nurtured

5-9
- Exploration
- Engagement
- Memory making

9-13
- Independence
- Inclusion
- Risk taking

13-18
- Leadership
- Influencing
- Problem solving

Formal
- Structured use of outdoors in personal, social & emotional development e.g. forest schools
- Introduction to seasonal indicators
  - Led in outdoor adventurous activities
- Local environment species identification
  - Introduction to nature sustainable values & behaviour
- Describing affective nature experiences through written word and visual art
  - …..enhanced by residential setting
- Science experiments in 'nearby nature'
  - Basic competency in outdoor adventurous activities
  - Geography field trip
- Exploring human impact and dependency on nature
  - Expressing own relationship with nature through written word and visual art
- Residential field study trip gathering, analysing & interpreting data
- Animal husbandry programmes
  - Adventurous outdoor activity accreditation programmes and development of leadership
- Exploring global sustainability

Non-formal
- Petting farm visits
- Outdoor nurseries
  - Journeying through 'nearby nature'
  - Guided seasonal walk
- Nature reserve visit
  - Growing plants from seed
- Voluntary organisations e.g. cubs & brownies
- Enjoying 'living outdoors' :
- Camping, fire-lighting, cooking & shelter building
  - Observing wildlife & keeping a journal
- Outdoor activity participation following guidance e.g. personal geo-caching or orienteering sessions (individually or in groups)
  - Multiple night camps including cooking for self & others
- Fruit & vegetable gardening
  - Increased reflection in and on nature
  - Voluntary organisations with outdoor focus e.g. scouts, guides, cadets, woodcraft folk
- Structured specific outdoor developmental schemes e.g. NCS, Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Facilitated or self led expeditions over seas
  - 'Solos' in nature

Informal
- Outdoor Play
- Family Walks
  - National Trust '50 things'
- School grounds play structures
  - Family beach combing
- Nature trails
  - Self led play in nearby nature
- School farm visits
  - Age specific activity from 'Nature Organisations'. e.g. WWT or RSPB
  - Mountain biking or remote walks with family or youth group
- Tree planting
- Wild camping
- Volunteering in local outdoor conservation and leadership roles e.g. National Parks & Nature Reserves
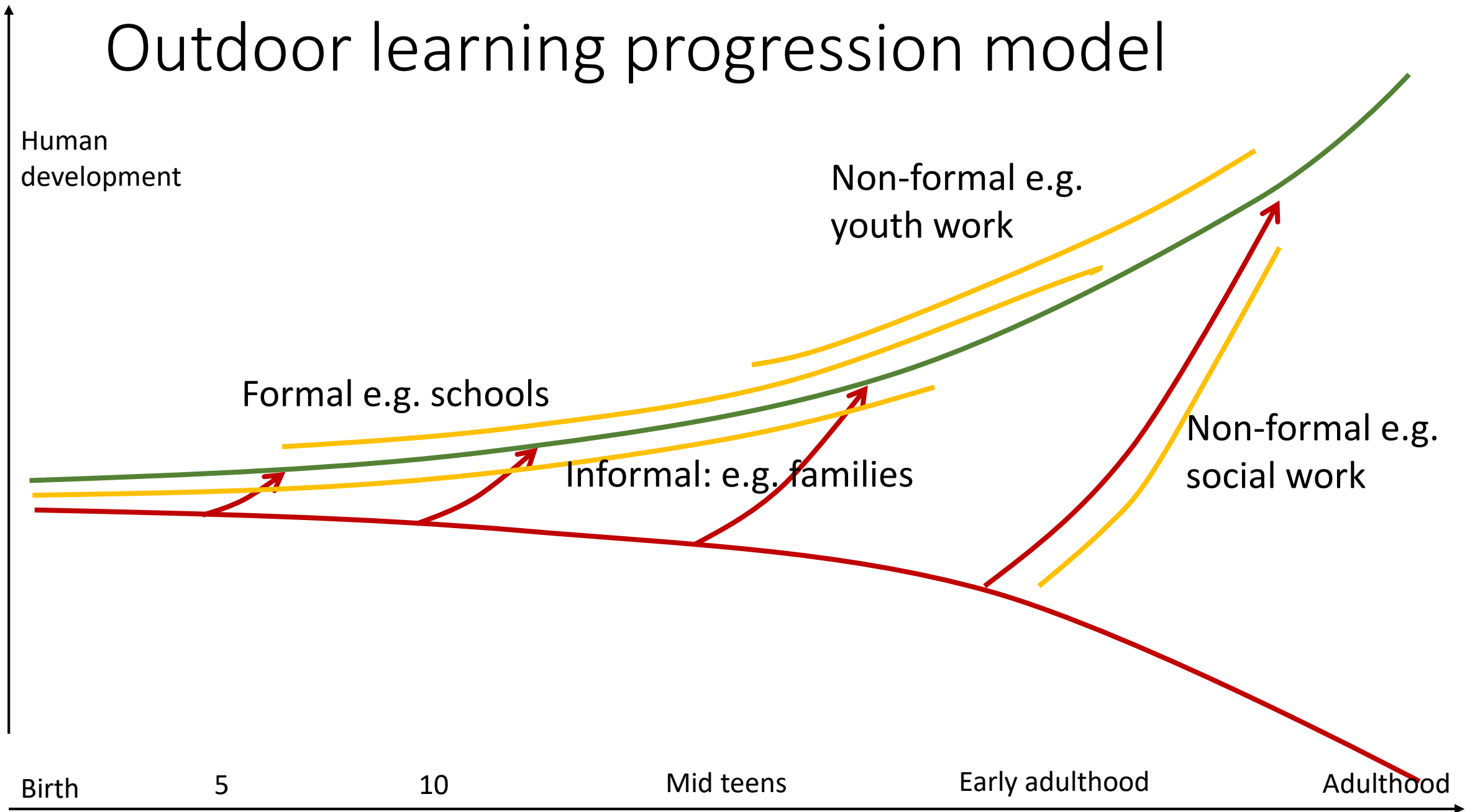- Participation in local outdoor sports clubs e.g. canoeing, climbing, orienteering, caving

Some but not all formal experiences are facilitated by schools/colleges. Many other organisations offer structured and accredited services (e.g. youth and community organisations)

Institute for **Outdoor Learning**

Outdoor learning progression model

Human development

Non-formal e.g. youth work

Formal e.g. schools

Informal: e.g. families

Non-formal e.g. social work

Birth   5   10   Mid teens   Early adulthood   Adulthood
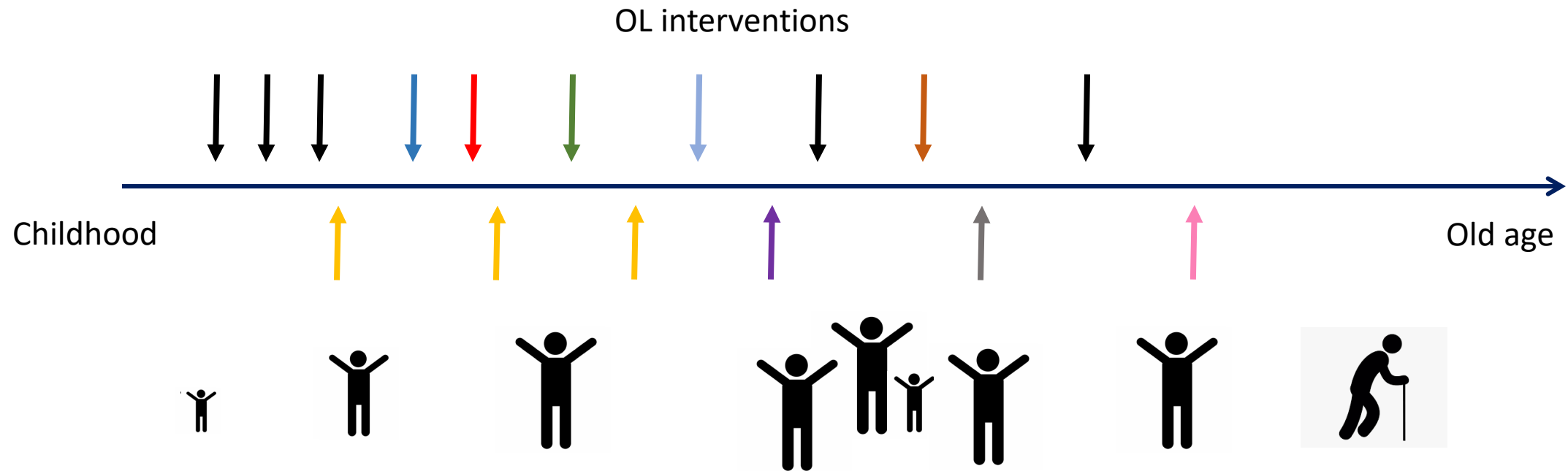
Loynes (2019) after Pretty et al. (2009)

Progression

> '*Implicit in progression is the notion of continuity and coherence. Learning is not seen as a series of discrete events, but rather as a trajectory of development that connects knowledge, concepts and skills within a domain.*' (Hayward *et al*, 2018)
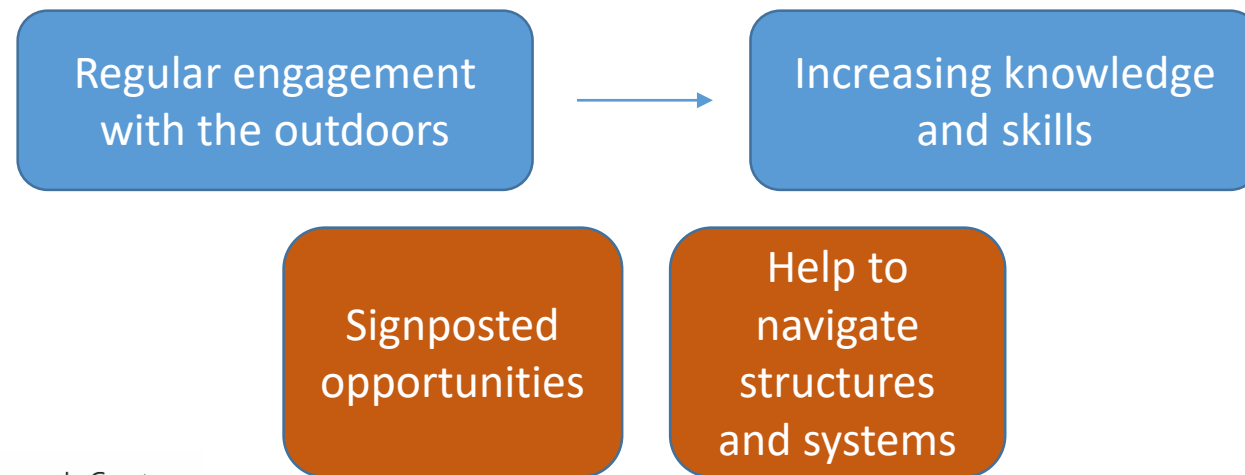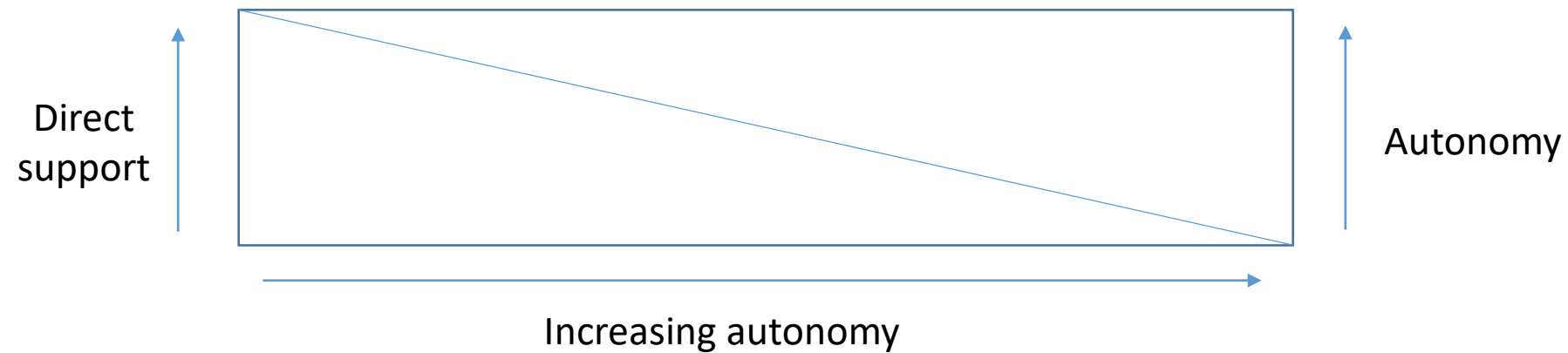
- Occurs across time
- Implies change

- Depends on a notion of purpose
- Provides a way to link experiences

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OL experiences over time

OL interventions

Childhood

Old age

Increasing agency

Direct support

Autonomy

Increasing autonomy

Regular engagement with the outdoors → Increasing knowledge and skills

Signposted opportunities

Help to navigate structures and systems

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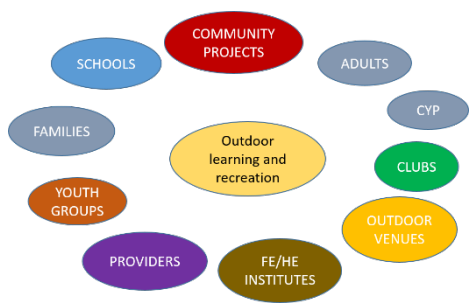David Harvey, 2020

Autonomy and agency

- **Autonomy** is the ability to make a reasoned choice about ones course of action and to be responsible for this choice.

- **Agents** are beings with the capacity to act, to behave as a subjects rather than objects in their own lives in ways that make a difference, and '**agency**' denotes its enactment.

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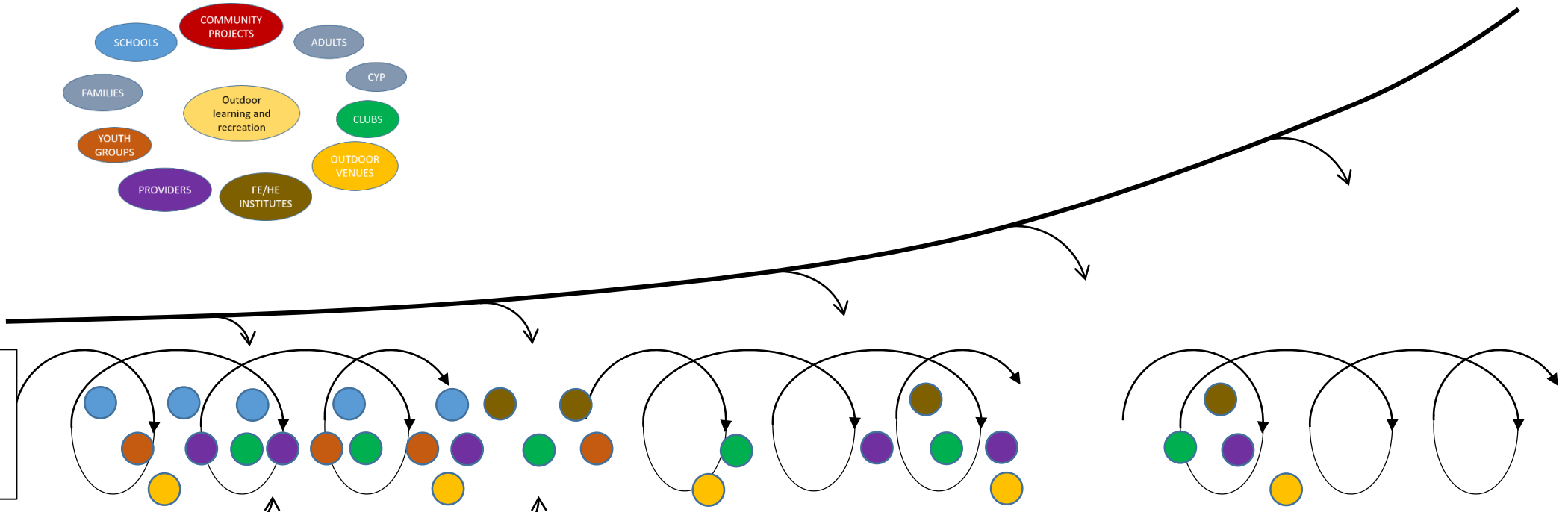Learning, Education and Development

A purpose for OL?

- To develop autonomy – the real freedom to choose to engage with outdoor learning or recreation over the life course for reasons that have personal meaning

- Could be seen from a practitioner/provider or participant perspective

- Role of OL provider is to help this journey towards autonomy

+ve
Human
Development

SCHOOLS
COMMUNITY PROJECTS
ADULTS
FAMILIES
CYP
Outdoor learning and recreation
CLUBS
YOUTH GROUPS
OUTDOOR VENUES
PROVIDERS
FE/HE INSTITUTES

Individual
Family
Community
Organisation

-ve
Human
Development

Formal

Non-formal

Informal

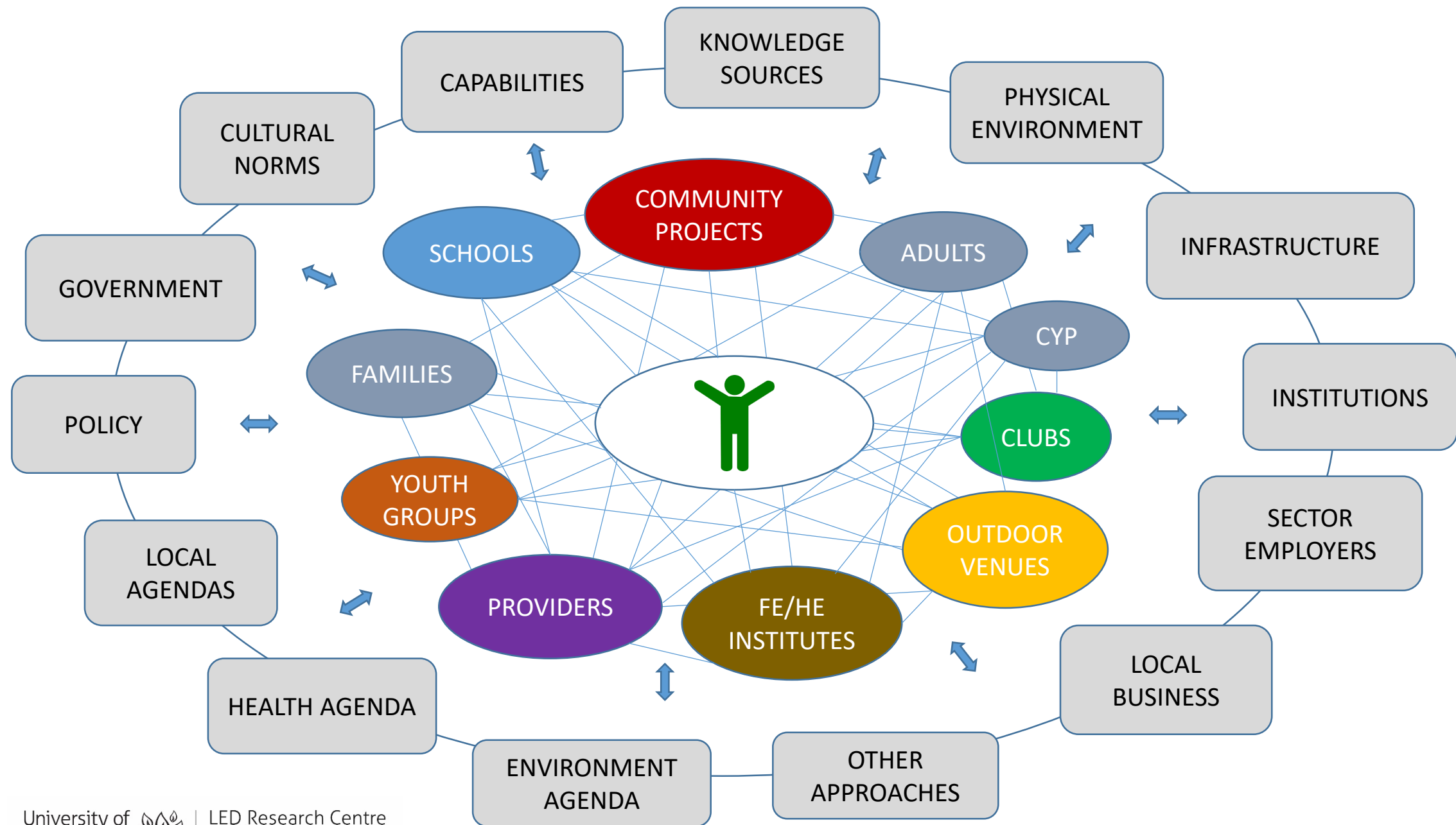Lifespan

David Harvey, 2020

Implications

- How does their practice contribute to autonomy?

- How do providers link what they are doing with what could come next?

- What additional knowledge and skills are needed for practitioners to develop their participants' agency and autonomy?

- From a participant perspective, what support systems need to be in place to enable them to be able to link progressive OL experiences that develop autonomy?

- No single provider will be the sole source of OL interventions across a lifespan, so how can provision be connected for best advantage?

Towards an ecosystem

- Interacting and interdependent organisations
- Institutions, organisations, systems, structures and culture
- More than an alliance or a partnership
- Local context, 'ground up', purposely designed
- Incorporates drivers and barriers
- Creates the support structures to enable the delivery of the 'value proposition'

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CAPABILITIES

KNOWLEDGE SOURCES

CULTURAL NORMS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

GOVERNMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY

INSTITUTIONS

LOCAL AGENDAS

SECTOR EMPLOYERS

HEALTH AGENDA

LOCAL BUSINESS

ENVIRONMENT AGENDA

OTHER APPROACHES

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

SCHOOLS

ADULTS

CYP

FAMILIES

CLUBS

YOUTH GROUPS

OUTDOOR VENUES

PROVIDERS

FE/HE INSTITUTES

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Implications

- What aspects of the ecosystem are in place already?
- What structures/resources are needed to support the ecosystem?
- What do practitioners need to know/do to engage with the model?

- Who is working with who?
- What structures are present?
- What opportunities are available for further engagement?
- What could next steps for participants be?

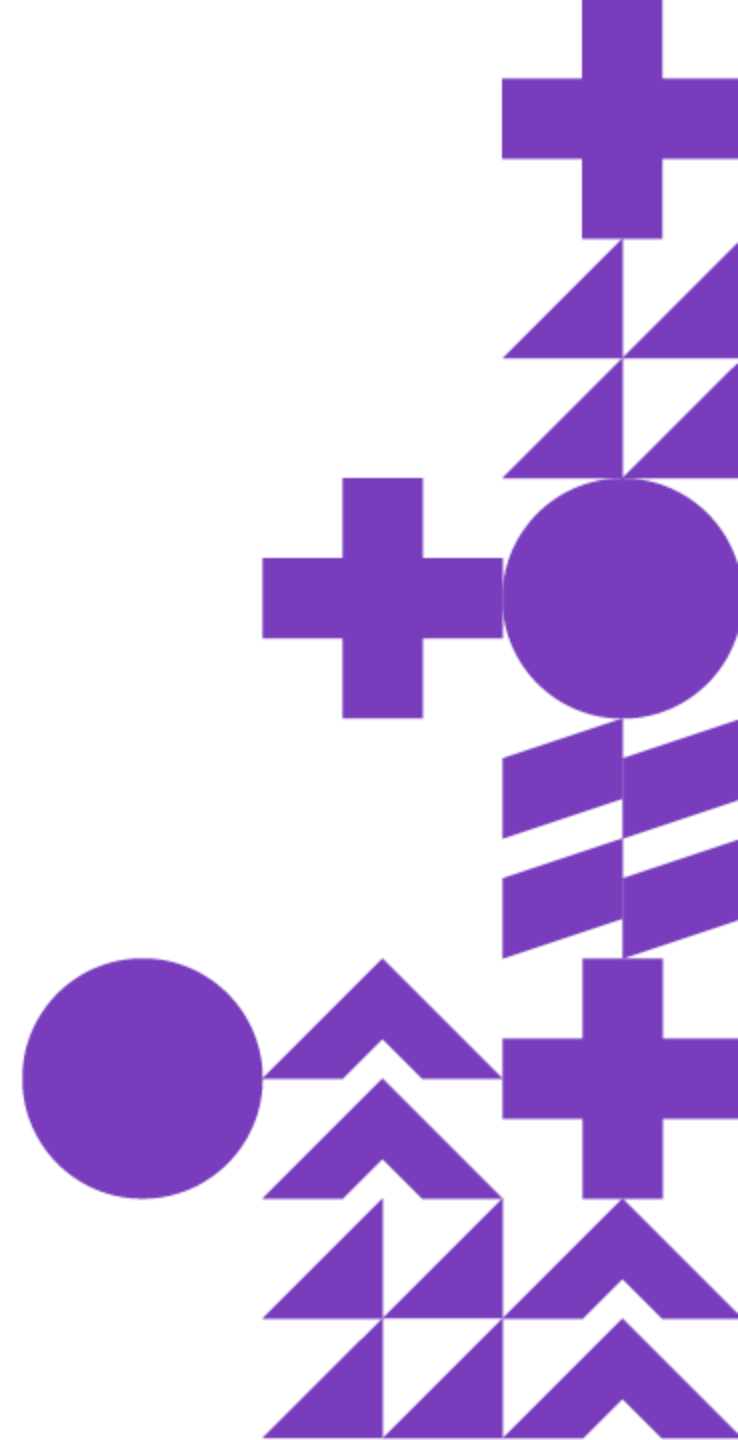# Where next?
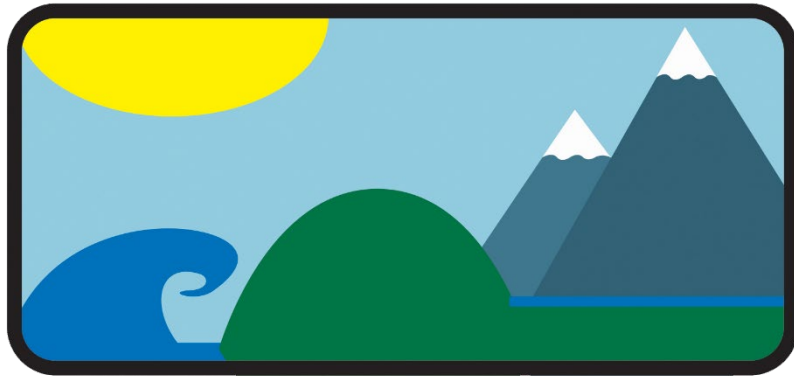
Thank you!

Questions and comments?

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