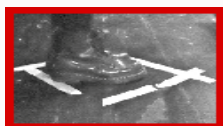




introduction

This website articulates and evidences a practice as research (PaR) enquiry led by Professor Sally Mackey at the Half Moon Young People's Theatre, Limehouse, London, UK, in 2012. It is designed for audiences with an interest in practical research into performing place with young people. At its simplest level, the research enquiry can be accessed and understood by following the main pages of this site. Further reflections, supporting evidence and contextual documentation are offered through links from each page to pdfs, film clips, audio clips, photographs and other websites. Whilst such extracts aim to represent a range of different voices and multiple views, a necessarily subjective mediation of the enquiry is acknowledged. The site has been designed to represent 'findings' according to the questions of the research enquiry rather than to present a holistic account of the project. Selection and editing of material has been undertaken with that in mind together with a belief that 'the places used, inhabited and associated with young people matter' (Hopkins, 2012: 11). Half Moon's *Place* project stands alone as a research enquiry with its own research questions. It is also part of Mackey's AHRC-funded larger research project 'Challenging concepts of "liquid" place through performing practices in community contexts', 2011-2014. (www.challengingplace.org) The site is sequential on the whole. It is arranged to flow from one section to the next with a choice of reading and viewing within each section. The sections comprise: About the Research, Concepts of Place, Planning the Activities, a choices page leading to Fearful Place and Everyday Place and Inconclusions.



next



about the research

Research questions

Place at Half Moon Young People's Theatre was one part of Sally Mackey's larger research project entitled: 'Challenging concepts of 'liquid' place through performing practices in Community Contexts' (Challenging Place) funded by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council). Three research questions led this full enquiry:

- What can practical intervention tell us about how abstract concepts such as place, community, dislocation and belonging, as theorised by contemporary academics, map onto the 'real life' experiences of vulnerable social groups?
- Can one or more models of performance practices help ease feelings of 'dislocation' among community participants, where such feelings exist?
- How might such models be evaluated, disseminated and made fully accessible to community theatre organisations?

[Further details on overall research project](#) (pdf)

After a two-day planning intensive with Half Moon artists and facilitators (April 2012), we devised a subset of these research questions specifically for the Half Moon *Place* project.

- How might the performance project at Half Moon identify and 'ease' a fear of place?
- How is everyday place 'performed'? How does expressing everyday place through performance shift the quotidian?
- Are extraordinary e.g. 'special' places important? How do performance practices help demonstrate 'special places'? How does performance help enhance a relationship with a special or extraordinary place?

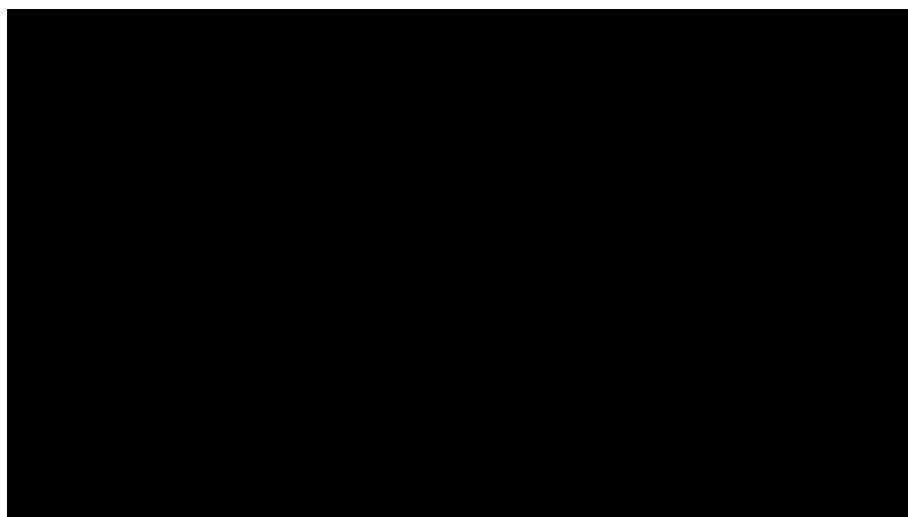
[Relationship between the two sets of research questions](#) (pdf).

Half Moon's *Place* project was designed to interrogate these questions.

Research Project overview

In all, the Half Moon *Place* research project comprised:

- 2 x 2 intensive days of exploration with artists, researchers and community partners into the themes of the research (July, 2011; April 2012)
- a ten-week summer term participatory drama workshop programme with the Half Moon's senior youth group (12-17 years old) led and observed by artists and researchers
- planning and preparation outside the sessions where the research was continually probed, leading into material to specifically address the research questions and utilise relevant performance practices
- *early dissemination of the project at an 'Exchange for Change' symposium at Half Moon, 13th June 2012, with 50 members of the industry
- *two performances to the general public, July, 2012. [Place programme](#) (pdf)
- *an edited film of the show (see below)



- a range of additional research activities as part of the PaR process such as: interviews, questionnaires, archiving and analysing significant documentation, audience feedback, follow up sessions with participants, reflection on the research in the light of additional reading, preparation for a book chapter
- this website

*** represents formal outcomes. Additional dissemination has taken place at academic conferences and seminars. Further outcomes will succeed this Practice as Research website when the remaining two practical *Place* projects are completed.**

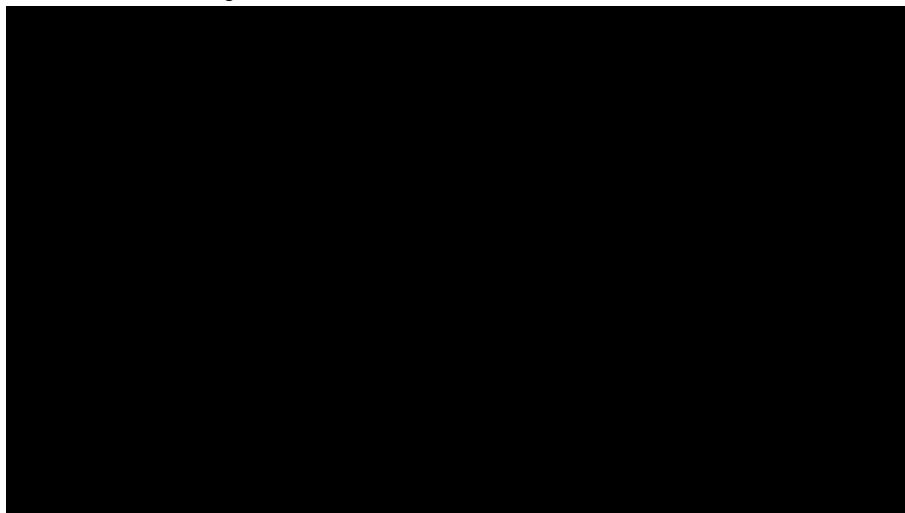
Half Moon

Situated in east London on the borders of Tower Hamlets and Limehouse, Half Moon Young People's Theatre is a rare building-based organisation focussed solely on theatre with and for young people. It

produces theatre, runs youth programmes and is a receiving house for young people's theatre.

[About Half Moon](#) (pdf)

Chris Elwell describing Half Moon



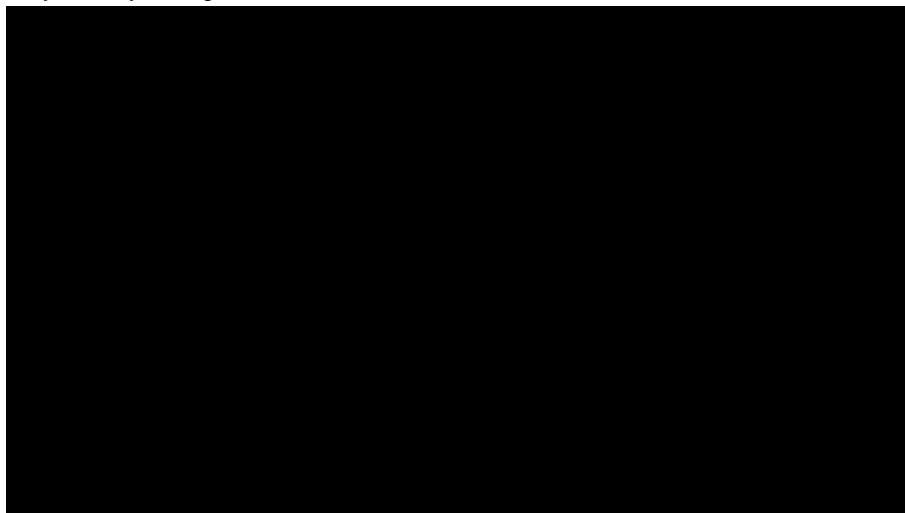
(video from first 2-day intensive, July 2011)

www.halfmoon.org.uk

Choosing Half Moon Young People's Theatre as one of three community bases within the overall research project was because of its geographical location, the age of the participants and a longstanding productive working relationship between Central and Half Moon. See *Sally Mackey talking about Half Moon* below for more on this.



Sally Mackey talking about Half Moon



next

home

Research Methods

The primary research methodology for Challenging Place has been practice as research. [Further details about the Research Methodology](#) (pdf) offers more detail about this and reflects on some of the opportunities and challenges inherent in the project. 'Planning the Activities', one section further into the site, offers a range of evidence of the research methods used.

Scoring the entire research process has been the complex theoretical and practical exploration of

'place'. The next section offers some selected thinking about place.

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©copy2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London

Further details on overall research project

'Challenging concepts of "liquid" place through performing practices in community contexts' (Challenging Place) is an AHRC-funded research project led by Sally Mackey, 2011-2014.

The summary on the original application for the award reads:

'Challenging concepts of 'liquid' place ...' ... brings together two research teams - Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, and Aberystwyth University - and three community arts project partner organisations: Half Moon Young People's Theatre, London; Oldham Theatre Workshop (OTW); Cyrrff Ystwyth, Aberystwyth. Using recently devised performance practices with each organisation, the research asks to what extent contemporary theories of dislocation and transience are evidenced in particular 'real world' contexts, how performance practices can be used to consider relationships to place and how dislocation can be eased through such practices. The projects will stimulate theorisation together with 'best practice' models for further dissemination as material for facilitation in community arts organisations.

Traditionally, 'place' is associated with longevity, continuity, community, the normative and security - as well as boundaries, defence and exclusion. In contrast, contemporary existence is more frequently described as place-less, characterised by transience, wayfaring and deterritorialisation. This project makes use of current academic thinking about place, mobility, globalisation and cosmopolitanism while also raising questions about how we define and experience place and 'dislocation'. In real social contexts, there is wide variation and the situation is hugely complex: whilst deterritorialism has led to geographical dislocations, with all the concerns and problems that displacement can imply, other people may experience place very differently.

The research comprises three stages, each of a year's duration. First, three participatory performance-related research projects will be developed and refined. The research teams will work with project partner organisations (all of whom have established reputations in community drama) to create place-based projects that use models of performance practice previously derived within research environments. The community groups comprise newly located refugee families (with OTW), unemployed predominantly second generation translocated migrants (with Half Moon) and learning and physically disabled adults who do not have mobility of place (Cyrrff Ystwyth). The choice of the three organisations offers a diversity of location, target community group and form of practice. While all the participating groups might be described as socially vulnerable, most importantly they have been selected as demonstrating different relationships to place.

In Year 2, a range of performance manifestations will take place. Forms of performance will include fully realised devised performance, a workshop series and short residencies. The researchers will provide guidance, 'training', oversight and evaluation as well as some hands-on facilitation. The focus is the participants' response to their sense of place and 'locatedness'. The projects will be documented through recorded interviews, questionnaires, film footage and observation notes. This will provide material to judge the effectiveness of the practical research, to prompt refinements of both the models of practice and current theory.

In Year 3, analysis and organisation of the outcomes of the research will take place. This includes re-forming the models of practice into material for use by other community arts organisations, the completion of three journal articles and a book proposal. The models of practice will be disseminated through an industry-related symposium held at Central with approximately 75 representatives from international and UK community-related organisations. The flexible models of practice will be presented through web-based documents that offer a series of performance-based activities with graphic representations, DVD clips and reflections on appropriate usage. This work will then be made available on dedicated website pages at Central.

This research follows questions raised at the end of a previous project *Performing Place: the Caer Llan Trilogy*, 2002-2004 (www.performingplace.org). See http://crco.cssd.ac.uk/35/225/Additional_thoughts.pdf for Mackey's thoughts about performing place at the close of this previous research project which specifically lead into the *Challenging Place* application (made in 2010). For example:

These projects have employed some of the broad practices of the CLT. Beyond this, it would be interesting to test the specific strategies and theories that have arisen out of deconstructing the project in this site. Do these translate? Can such a set of strategies and theories offer a coherent and comprehensive approach to a performance of place? In addition, can such a performance of place be deemed useful, valuable or worthwhile to the participants?

Between writing the application for Challenging Place and its realisation as a research enquiry at Half Moon, the nature of the 'client group' at Half Moon changed from NEETs to their senior youth group. The change was agreed by the AHRC. Changing aspects of participatory drama work at Half Moon was a result of funding cuts, prevalent in arts organisations at this time.

Relationship between the two sets of research questions

In focussing on the project at Half Moon and particularly during the artists' and researchers' intensive two-day event in April 2012, we decided to create a subset of questions for this project that would support the overarching Challenging Place main research questions. The two points below explain both the rationale for the choice of questions and how these relate to the main research questions.

1. The artistic and research team wanted to focus on specific aspects of place with the young people because, after lengthy discussion, we believed:
 - Particular interpretations of 'place' to be most relevant to young people;
 - The time for development was going to be limited and we needed to focus quite tightly to achieve outcomes. Half Moon complete a series of workshops with a showing at the end of each period. With only 10 weeks of development and devising time, this was necessarily going to limit the potential for the work and we chose to be more specific therefore;
 - The broad topic of 'place' is conceptually complex; breaking it down made it more accessible for the youngsters;
 - We recognised that simply 'place' may even be dull for young people.
2. The subset of questions for Half Moon offers a fruitful range of 'questions' appropriate for contributing material for the first two main research questions of the overall project, Challenging Place. (Activities undertaken would, by their nature, contribute to the third main research question of course.) We wished to break down 'abstract concepts such as place, community, dislocation and belonging' into material that would have the most chance of reaping useful responses as 'practical intervention'. We did this after lengthy discussions and academic input in the 2 day intensive training sessions with Half Moon artists and researchers (April, 2012) by selecting to work on fear of places, the 'performance' of the everyday and extraordinary or 'special' places.
 - Experimenting through performance with fear of place was obviously linked to the second main research question.
 - How urban youth think about their everyday places, how they may rethink those places, what 'performing' – or altering or reviewing or enhancing – such places might look like: all this contributes to an understanding of how 'abstract concepts such as place, community, dislocation and belonging ... map onto "real life" experiences' of young people.
 - Whilst not immediately represented in the Challenging Place project, 'special place' was related to previous research into place (Mackey, 2002). This asked how we create particular places perhaps interpreting them as substitutes for a comparative longevity of place, now usurped by a vaunted mobility. We were interested in what counted as 'special places' to these urban youth and, again, this might well contribute to how 'abstract concepts such as place, community, dislocation and belonging ... map onto "real life" experiences' of young people.



Accompanying each of the three research questions was an increasing interest in virtual places for young people. With education consultant Mark Prensky's famous 'digital natives' (i.e. those born after 1993) in mind, and with an awareness that public spaces have become increasingly policed for young people (e.g. Cahill, 2000; Pickering et al, 2012) and building on a recent project undertaken by Half Moon on young people and digital technology, we expected each of the three 'Half Moon' research questions to wrestle with place as virtual.

A message from the team...

We hope you enjoy this evening's performance. It's been a very busy term for our Junior and Senior Youth Theatre groups; the young people have spent time developing new skills, building positive relationships and exploring a wealth of creative ideas. Each week brings something different and the tutors and core staff team have had a great time working with the groups; we hope the young people have enjoyed themselves just as much!

We subsidise our youth theatres to keep the fees affordable to all. The true cost of a session is around £10.50 per child. If you feel able to make a donation in addition to the fees, this would be much appreciated.

(If you are a UK taxpayer we can also reclaim and add an extra 25% in Gift Aid to your donation, at no cost to you – so let us know!)

Finally, as Half Moon relies on grants and donations to run the youth theatres, we are extremely grateful to the following for their support:



Unity Theatre Trust



About Half Moon

we include, we inform, we inspire

Half Moon Young People's Theatre aims to produce and present professional theatre for and with young people that informs, challenges and shapes their artistic potential, placing these creative experiences at the core of the company's policies and practices.

Our Youth Theatre groups will be back next term from w/c 24 September onwards. However, the building is closed for refurbishment until November so we will be based somewhere else locally for the first half of the term. We will stay in touch over the summer and let you know in September about the start of the Youth Theatre sessions. For more information contact Suzie:

020 7265 8138 / suzie@halfmoon.org.uk

www.halfmoon.org.uk



Place

Half Moon

Senior Youth Theatre

4th and 5th July 2012, 7.30pm



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



itc
MEMBER



Place

What is place? How do we think about place?

These were amongst questions posed to the Senior Youth Theatre ten weeks ago. They have been exploring: 'How can we perform place?'

The piece has been devised over the past weeks by the participants with support from a drama tutor and two theatre directors. They have had three sessions with both a choreographer and a sound artist to enhance their engagement with the work and their performance skills.

The whole project has been underpinned by a research project titled 'Challenging Place', 2011-2014, led by Dr Sally Mackey at the Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London and is supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The final piece is an abstract and creative series of linked encounters, steeped in the young people's own relationship with 'place'. The performance integrates movement, sound and film through which the 'everyday place' and 'places of fear' are explored within an ordinary school day.

As this is a research project, we value your feedback. If you do not get the chance to fill in a questionnaire, respond to a short interview or post something on Twitter this evening, please feel free to email your feedback to: S.Mackey@cssd.ac.uk

@HalfMoonPlace

#challengingplace

www.challengingplace.org



Place is also part of the **5 Boroughs Youth Theatre Festival**; a celebration of young people and their youth theatres from across five of London's Olympic host boroughs (Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest together with invited guest companies).

The 5 Boroughs Youth Theatre Festival has been awarded a Transformers grant, funded by The National Lottery, through the Olympic Lottery Distributor, and managed by East London Business Alliance:



With thanks also to Arcola Theatre and Hackney Theatre Partnership

THE ENSEMBLE COMPANY

Amy Gregory	Ben Sacarello
Cache Thake	Daisy Snooks
Damie Adams	Dehbia Saber
Eby Ebere	Henry Mathias
Isobel Crossan-Jory	Jordan Gray
Kate Winter	Luke Fisher
Matthew Hodges	Rosie Burwood
Seye Akintewe	Tuwaine Barrett

FOR CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA

Sally Mackey	Joanne Scott
Anna Bosworth	Jo Yeoman

FOR HALF MOON

Youth Theatre Directors:

Vishni Velada Billson
Sam Adams

Drama Support:

Amanda Castro

Sound Artist:

Patrick Furness

Choreographer:

Stephanie McMann

Youth Theatre Access Worker:

Dario Walters

Producer (Creative Learning):

Beccy Allen

Technical & Production Manager:

Fred Beaufort

Cleaner:

John Bunker

Front of House Administrator:

Suzie Crowe

Administrative Director:

Jackie Eley

Director:

Chris Elwell

Development & Communications Manager:

Felix Mussell



concepts of place

Challenging concepts of 'liquid' place, interrogating given discourses about place and mobility, are at the heart of this enquiry. The particular perspective on this field was summarised in the original application for funding the project:

Place is a live and critical topic outside and within the academy. Refugees, migrants, and second-generation citizens wrestle with reconciling 'new' and 'old' places. As Bauman suggests (2001), those who sense a threat to their security-of-place sometimes retaliate with entrenchment and territorialisation. Unhappiness and violence can result from dis-ease with place; lack of place (atopia) may lead to a desire for belonging. In the academy, 'mobility' is understood as iconic of contemporary existence in contrast to 'traditional' place, often defined as static, bounded and permanent. Geographical movements of people are seen to be a result of both choice ('exterritorialism') and enforcement (deterritorialisation), while dislocation is perceived as a negative result of such mobility.

Such assumptions about 'traditional' place and 'contemporary' mobility need further scrutiny. What is the reality of these claims? How do those who might be perceived as vulnerable or at risk in their locations actually perceive 'place'? ...

Discussions about 'place' recurred throughout the Half Moon project of course and are present in many of the clips of the project in the following sections. In reflecting upon the project, a number of writings about young people, place and space became increasingly relevant as is reflected in the analyses of the project in later sections.

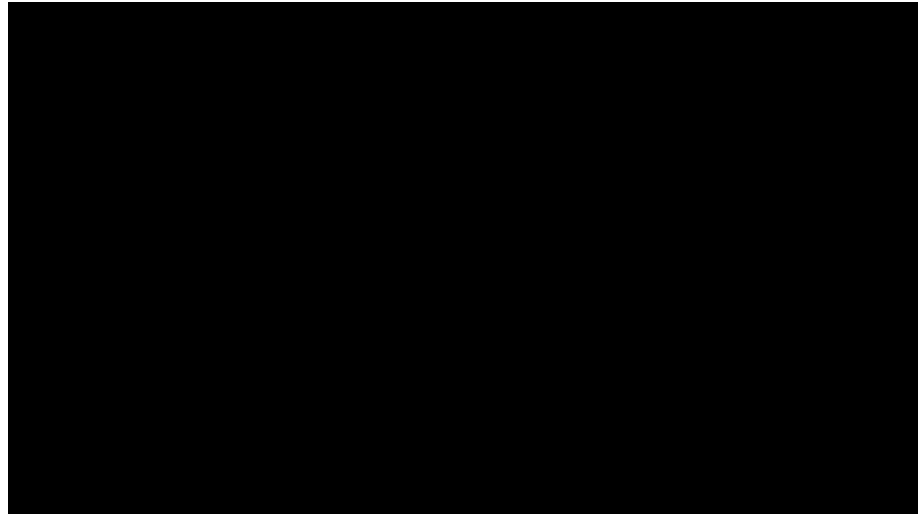
Links below offer some relevant considerations of place that occurred during the project.

- Extracts from the original two-day intensive (July 2011) evidence discussions about concepts of 'place' relating to the whole project. Whilst not specifically aimed at urban youth, there are several interesting ideas here about how the research team and community partners were thinking about 'place'.

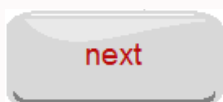
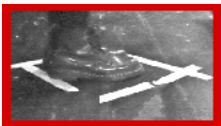
This edited clip includes reference to: Baumann's use of 'liquid'; a description of what Mackey means by 'place' and its performance and how such performance is informed by denizens; place as described by others. Others in the group respond, with Pearson talking of the importance of the fabric of place as well as the archaeological history of place, Elwell

discussing the imagination of place, Orton's privileging of geography over naming, Pearson commenting on the three-plans of Cardiff, Mackey talking of how places can be receptacles for conscience and Ames on community within the geography of place and 'gift' being at the heart of community.

July planning - discussion of place



- An article Mackey was writing was used to explore some ideas of temporary place at that opening event – although 'temporary place' decreased in importance during the Half Moon project. ['Extract from Nest article'](#).
- Previous articulations and early theorising about the performance of place include references to understandings of 'place' from Mackey's Performing Place project, 2002-2004. See 'About Performing Place 1 and 2' and 'About Temporary Locations' at: www.theatreapplied.org/Pages/fur_read_index.html
- Prior to the July performances at Half Moon, audience members were asked how they perceive 'place'. This audio clip brings together some interesting thoughts including: place as a physical safe place – Blackfriars Bridge – for a homeless person, a number of different places from which you form your identity, sometimes a negative e.g. 'Know your place'. As well as yielding some interesting material on people's understanding of place, the pre-performance interviews established the concept of place in minds before the production started. 'Audience response to place' audio file below.
- When the youth group were asked their thoughts on place in the first session, they responded and their ideas were typed immediately onto the screen in the studio. ['Young people's response to place'](#).
- In an early session exploring different types of place, the group were asked to express a brief moment of their 'extraordinary places'. Andrew interpreted this as exceptionally ordinary or *extra* ordinary.

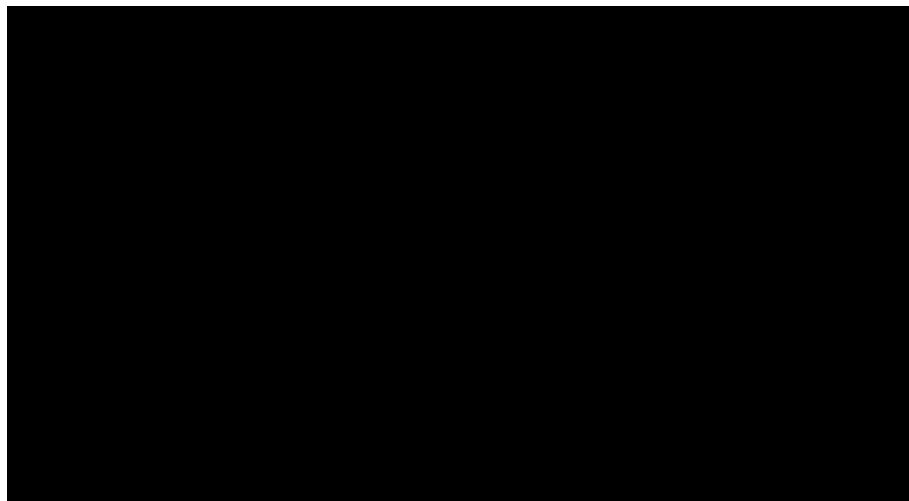


Extra-ordinary



back

home



This moment in the work provoked further consideration of subverting the extra-ordinary, the mundane everyday.



introduction

This website articulates and evidences a practice as research (PaR) enquiry led by Professor Sally Mackey at the Half Moon Young People's Theatre, Limehouse, London, UK, in 2012. It is designed for audiences with an interest in practical research into performing place with young people. At its simplest level, the research enquiry can be accessed and understood by following the main pages of this site. Further reflections, supporting evidence and contextual documentation are offered through links from each page to pdfs, film clips, audio clips, photographs and other websites. Whilst such extracts aim to represent a range of different voices and multiple views, a necessarily subjective mediation of the enquiry is acknowledged. The site has been designed to represent 'findings' according to the questions of the research enquiry rather than to present a holistic account of the project. Selection and editing of material has been undertaken with that in mind together with a belief that 'the places used, inhabited and associated with young people matter' (Hopkins, 2012: 11). Half Moon's *Place* project stands alone as a research enquiry with its own research questions. It is also part of Mackey's AHRC-funded larger research project 'Challenging concepts of "liquid" place through performing practices in community contexts', 2011-2014. (www.challengingplace.org) The site is sequential on the whole. It is arranged to flow from one section to the next with a choice of reading and viewing within each section. The sections comprise: About the Research, Concepts of Place, Planning the Activities, a choices page leading to Fearful Place and Everyday Place and Inconclusions.



next

About half moon

Half Moon is a local organisation with a national remit, which gives young people from birth to 18 (or 25 for disabled young people) an opportunity to experience the best in young people's theatre, both as a participant and as an audience member. The company places an emphasis on engaging participants and artists who are often excluded from arts activity, such as those from BME communities, Deaf and disabled people, or those excluded due to socio-economic circumstance.

Half Moon specialises in new writing and artform development, working collaboratively with a wide range of partners. The company's expertise is in supporting young people and artists at every stage of their creative development, providing a gateway to engagement, offering pathways for progression and experimentation, then disseminating outcomes with the wider sector through performances, touring productions, open dialogue and continuing professional development. Uniquely, there is a synergy between Half Moon's participatory and professional theatre programmes, which have equal status and are mutually enriching.

Those who create, deliver and experience the activity, also evaluate it. The format of this evaluation changes as appropriate, in order to include everyone, such as those with limited communication. In addition there is often external evaluation by peer professionals and theatre critics. This feedback in turn feeds into future work.

Artform Development and Producing:

- producing and presenting the best professional theatre at the home venue and in other arts and youth spaces nationally
- nurturing and mentoring new artists, particularly those under-represented in the sector
- inspiring established artists to work in the Theatre for Young People sector.

Participatory Programme:

- providing an extensive education and outreach programme for groups and independent attendees
- placing children and young people at the heart of the creative processes to develop professional work
- giving children and young people representation in all aspects of the organisation.

Each year Half Moon works with new and established artists to push the boundaries of the theatre artform. In addition to writers, designers and other theatre creatives, this can encompass a myriad of skills, such as beat boxing, contemporary dance, digital media and poetry. The company presents over 20 shows annually, as well as hundreds of participatory sessions. This all demonstrates a desire to make a difference to the young people reached, the artists worked with and to the theatre for young people's sector as a whole. Each year the company engages with over 25,000 individual participants, with approximately 60% of users from Black and Minority Ethnic groups and 10% disabled, demonstrating a commitment to engaging those often excluded from cultural activity.



Half Moon is a regularly funded client of Arts Council England and receives annual grants (Arts and Education) from Tower Hamlets. Each year the company raises over 50% of its turnover from ticket sales and other earned income, charitable trusts, corporate support and individual donations.

Authored by Half Moon staff.

Research methodology: background and reflection

Please see the final section of this website, Inconclusions, for further thoughts about the research methodology.

Background: practice as research

Challenging Place uses practice as research (PaR) methodology, thus privileging performance-related practices as the key mode of enquiry. To understand how young people might 'perform' their everyday places, whether performance might shift their perspective on their everyday places or places of fear and how they consider those places as a result of performance-related practices - the research must be practical at its core. This is a form of research where performance-related activities are the 'experimental' process: ' "[P]ractice as research" (PaR) indicates the uses of practical creative processes as research methods (and methodologies) in their own right, usually but not exclusively in, or in association with, universities and other HE institutions' (Kershaw et al, 2011: 64).

Mackey is not new to using PaR methods (see, for example, <http://www.performingplace.org>) and has been undertaking research through practice since the mid-1990s. She has contributed to debates in the field and, in turn, has been influenced by ongoing enquiries into PaR particularly in the 2000s, when searching questions were asked encouraging its rigour as a research process e.g:

- 'How does 'practice as research' problematise notions of 'professional' and 'academic' practices?'
- What might be the various epistemologies of and knowledges generated by practice as research?
- What kinds of resourcing/plant/infrastructures are needed for practice as research?
- What makes an instance of practice 'count' as research? Does practice as research involve different methods as a result of its framing as research as distinct from 'pure' practice?
- How might the multiple locations of practice-as-research knowledges be conceptualised and assessed/evaluated/judged? And who decides?
- Must practice as research include some form of disseminable 'reflection' or is the practice in performance/screening contexts sufficient to stand as research outputs? What might be the role of documentation across media?

(<http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/sept2003.htm>; accessed 2.5.05)

She has also developed her own form of documentation which she calls 'complementary annotation'. This comprises the gathering of a range of material that refracts the practical research in order to provoke responses in the researcher (see below).

Theoretical ideas are immanent in PaR. Understandings of place and its performance, for example, (see following website section) fortify the practical research of Challenging Place. The denomination of 'practice as research'

emphasises practice as the core means by which knowledge is discovered. But for that emphasis, 'praxis' would offer another way of considering such work with praxis interpreted as an integration of theory, practice, reflection and action. As a term, however, perhaps praxis doesn't forefront practice in the same way that PaR does. So, this section concentrates on PaR as the primary mode of enquiry with theoretical thinking inherent in this process.

Background: challenging place research methodology

Guided by the research team, PI Sally Mackey and Co-Is Margaret Ames and Mike Pearson, each partner organisation in the overall Challenging Place research enquiry has developed and used performance of place practices in projects with community groups. These are evaluated and analysed using ethnographic methods. Refined models of performing place practices are to be disseminated and further implications of the research will be theorised in journal articles or book chapters.

Development of practical research

The practical research methods used are evidenced throughout this website.

Led by Mackey, an initial two-day introduction and exploration of performance place practices and theory took place in July 2011 with the research team and project partners (including Chris Elwell, chief executive of Half Moon). The practices to be tested were drawn from several sources e.g. Wrights and Sites 'mis-guide' activities and other relevant walking practices; adaptations of Peter Reder's 'City of Dreams' projects; superimpositions of mapping places such as Misha Myers' 'Homing Place' stemming from earlier Situationist models; sonic compositions such as the work of Graeme Miller and CI Mike Pearson (e.g. <http://www.carrlands.org.uk>).

Specific practices were introduced and demonstrated at these induction workshops with the project partners, drawn from examples such as these identified and PI Mackey's three-year 'laboratory' research project *Performing Place*. Ideas and exercises offered at the workshop from Mackey's work included:

- repeated performances such that one site is perceived as continuously under erasure (Derrida's *sous rature*) and therefore always temporary;
- re-experiencing the site through many forms of improvisation (e.g. *bouffons* work, incongruous object manipulation, personal response performative demonstrations) in order to re-view and reinterpret quotidian dwelling spaces;
- contriving dense inhabitation of an everyday site used for multiple purposes (performatively) and thus experienced variously and richly (e.g. a work place as well as a place of dwelling; inhabiting a place 'ecumenically' by utilising it for many different purposes)

To successfully build on the original two-day workshop, it became clear to Mackey that for the project at Half Moon a further 2 days would be needed to work closely with the particular artists on the project, not present at the original two days in July 2011. Led by Mackey, similar material was introduced at this workshop in April, 2012. In the final half-day session and led by Half Moon's project coordinator Vishni

Velada Billson, we began to select appropriate practices for the projects. The initial practices selected were:

- deemed appropriate for the nature of the project e.g. expected to facilitate a re-viewing of location for the participants;
- accessible to the participants (taking into account language, ability, intention, cultural sensitivity);
- able to be run by experienced practitioners led by Mackey's research questions.

In addition to being selectively represented on these webpages through video clips, the precise practical methods used will be alternatively collated for the final post-project webpages where facilitation materials will be annotated and made available to a number of different community arts organisations. The post-project webpages will hold material from all three projects, not just Half Moon.

Led by Mackey, the Half Moon research team (research assistant Jo Scott, MA placement students from Central, Anna Bosworth and Jo Yeoman, and the practitioner team led by Velada Billson) organised 'complementary annotation', a system of data gathering for analysis suggested by Mackey (2007) to: ensure a comprehensive documentation and archiving of the process; help refine the practices retrospectively; provide matter for measuring the impact of the work; offer material for journal articles and book.

'Complementary annotation' included live documentation of the project (e.g. extensive filming, photographs, scraps of writing, noting and retaining objects used and artefacts created) as well as appropriate ethnographic research methods such as those utilised in GIM (Global Impact Monitoring) to measure impact (Baños Smith, 2006):

- semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observation, footage analysis;
- change stories if available (participants identifying notable moments of change – or shifts in perception - for themselves);
- 'return' discussion seminar including the playing of the filmed show three months later. (Previous research suggests shifts in cognising place have additional validity when noted after a gap.)

Specifically, the practice-based methods led by Mackey included:

- Two days of introduction to the ideas of the project and practicing ideas with Mackey and the artists and interns, April, 2012.
- 10 x 2 hours practical drama workshop series with the young people using a variety of exercises, summer 2012.
- Interviewing (e.g. the youth participants; artists)
- Facebook site responses
- Twitter responses (e.g. on the night of the performance)
- Photographs
- Videos of: practical sessions, interviews, the performances (post- and pre-also), material for inclusion in the workshops or performance
- Audio recordings (of, for example, audience members discussing 'place')

- Recorded Skype conversations between Velada-Billson and Mackey, specifically debating the weekly events during the 10-week practical workshop series.
- Object collections
- Written/drawn scraps
- Post-session discussions
- Questionnaires (to audience and artists)

Initial reflection on the research process

One of the objectives of Challenging Place was *not* to use it as a source for analysing practice as research as a methodology, where ‘the documentation of practice ... at worst displaces the thing itself’ (Nelson, 2013: 5). Reflection upon the research process for the whole AHRC research project may well be articulated more formally once all three projects have been completed. What the research *finds out* is of primary importance in the entire Challenging Place research project – not to debate methodology itself. It is intended as ‘insightful practice’ (Nelson, 2013: 10).

Nonetheless, there are aspects of the research process worth addressing from the Half Moon project, which may well contribute to a fuller reflection on the research methodology after the completion of all the projects.

Useful aspects of the Half Moon research process can be summarised as follows:

- The importance of a strong team of practitioners willing to be guided by Mackey’s conceptual lead and able to offer their own ideas. Mackey’s research enquiry was enhanced through the numbers on the ‘team’ and the constructive working atmosphere. Example of such enhancement includes:
 - The numbers involved (8 at one session, for example) gave weight to the project for the young people. It felt ‘important’ because of the number of adults putting in time.
 - New ideas were created, received and adopted encouraging a more interesting project. (e.g. Anna Bosworth’s work on digital media and its presence in the studio space and outside had led us to question ‘virtual’ places, for example.)
 - Artists gave additional time, willingly.
 - Because of the numbers of artists, more activity was undertaken because the group could be split into smaller working groups with different artists.
- Having a previous positive relationship with some members of the team allowed for an enhanced PaR process. Half Moon’s artistic director, Chris Elwell, had worked at Central with Mackey and understood her work. Velada-Billson had been at Central 20 years previously and had worked well with Mackey as a student. This particular research relationship became important

in the weekly Skype meetings. We were thinking and operating from a position of mutual respect and also some shared history of knowledges.

- The weekly Skype conversations between Velada-Billson and Mackey arose because of a concern Mackey had about 'entering into' the research process fully enough, although present at each workshop session. With wanting the community organisations to facilitate the projects – as an important part of the research enquiry – it was possible for Mackey to be distant from the Half Moon project after the two-day intensives. Skyping and recording these conversations were an unforeseen method within the PaR and became critical. It was an opportunity for Mackey to share ideas with Velada-Billson and, as appropriate, guide and steer the thinking behind the choices of activities. This became an essential part of the process and is raised several times in material on this website. The complexity of working *through* community partners was eased by this weekly Skype meeting.
- The use of digital media within - and beyond - the sessions enhanced the possibilities of the research. We were able to access young people's thoughts and ideas beyond the workshop space of Half Moon.

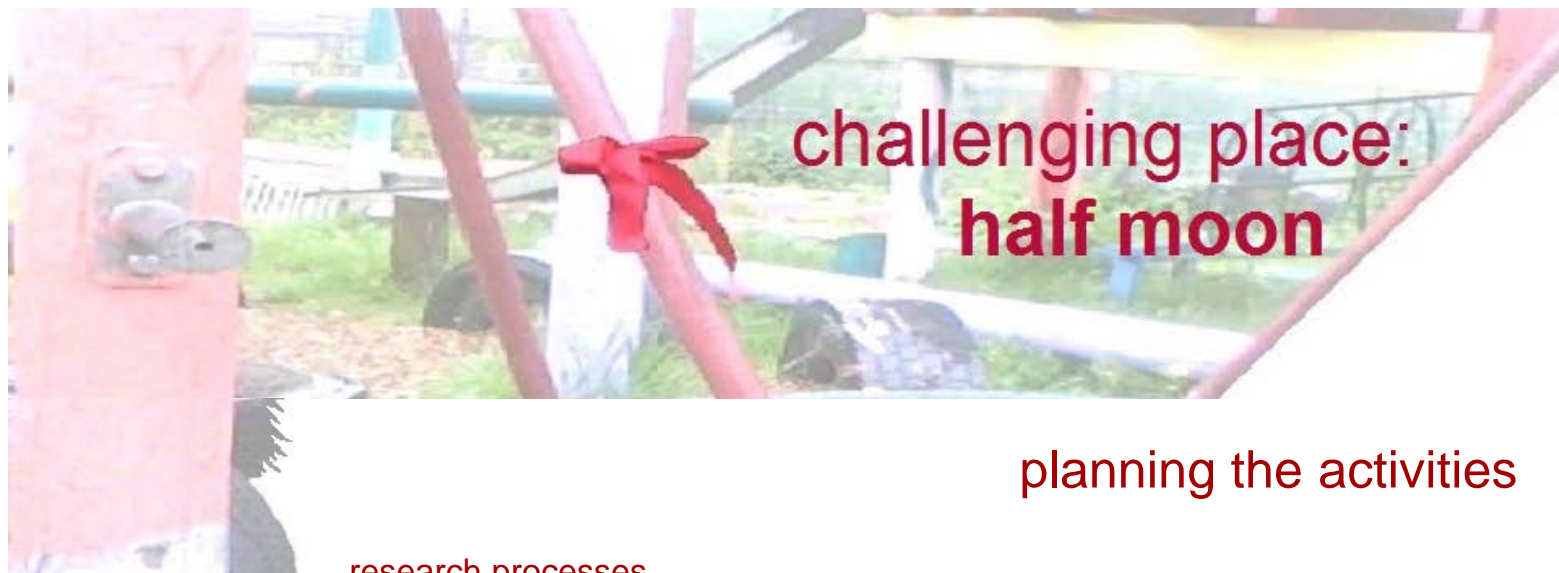
There were several challenges, many of which will impact upon the wider research project reflection.

- There was a sense of a shortage of time with only ten sessions, and the last few used as 'rehearsals' leading up to performance. (As mentioned above, having the opportunity to run several sessions at the same time within or outside the building helped here.) This was frustrating in many ways as we all felt more experimentation would have reaped further insights into performing practices and place.
- How to articulate the research and its 'findings' within this website? There were a number of questions to be considered in creating this website as a research outcome. Sifting and selecting threads of research for articulation on the website has led to questioning intersubjectivity, for example: whose voices should contribute and how is this 'evidence' representative? Researcher subjectivity needed to be acknowledged in the mediation of the research, as it is on the home page of this site. One of the reasons for this website as an articulation of the research is to facilitate the voices of participants directly, whilst recognising editing acts as a form of researcher-choice.
- For the project to remain within the territories set out in the original proposal, certain forms of performance practice were at the heart of the enquiry. Such



practices were utilised during the project yet the team were aware that some of the youngsters struggled with these initially. They weren't 'proper' drama, in the youngsters' eyes perhaps, as the work didn't follow conventional devising patterns leading to a faux-realistic theatrical conclusion. This tension was never fully resolved although several of the participants expressed a real enjoyment in the more abstract form.

- Identified above, a particular challenge was leading a practical research project with so many layers of participants. It is this that underscores the later section 'Planning the Activities'.



planning the activities

research processes

This section revisits research methods (see ['About the Research'](#) above), offering evidence of planning the practical activities in relation to the research questions and giving some insight into the complexities of the research process. Activities themselves are evidenced in the following sections (Fearful Place and Everyday Place); in this section the emphasis is on the planning.

There are three phases accounted for in the extracts:

- Initial induction or 'training' into the heart of the research matter
- Ongoing planning for the practice as research
- Reflection – on the planned workshop activities and on the processes

These extracts are selected to demonstrate more than simply the phases of the research activity, however. There were particular challenges that were part of the PaR, even if not entirely unexpected, and one of these is highlighted through these extracts: how does the investigator lead and guide PaR when others are undertaking the facilitation?

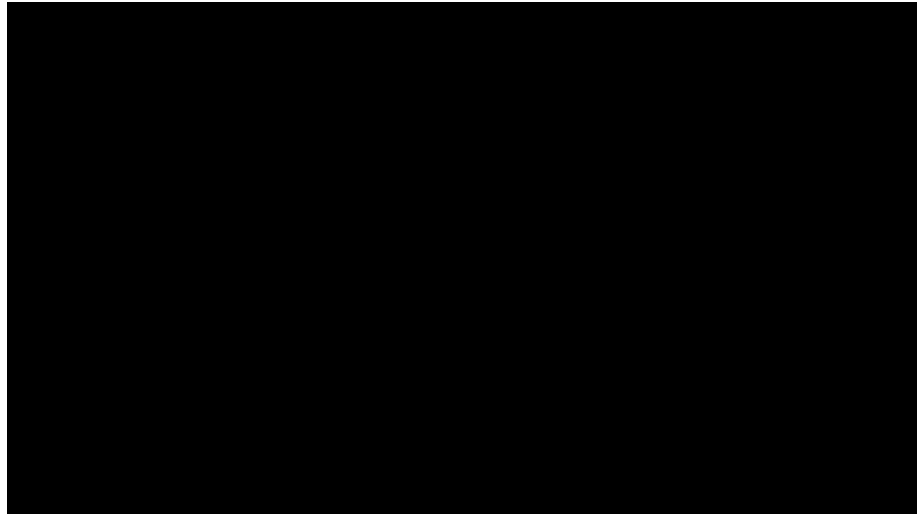
Challenging Place was devised with the intention of working alongside community arts organisations, recognising that such organisations already use arts with relevant community groups. Research would be most productive making use of established companies and their community links and to work directly with 'the industry' facilitates an impact agenda directly and usefully. One step removed from the community group 'targeted' for the research, however, it was important as the leader of the research that Mackey developed a high-functioning practical research process with relevant Half Moon artists and facilitators who would be working directly with the young people. As well as being present at all the Half Moon workshops, this included:

- finding ways of introducing the research context, theories and methodology to industry practitioners and artists
- maintaining an input into the choices and direction of practice and retaining a focus on the research questions
- recognising the priorities of the organisation and accommodating these within the research

trajectory (e.g. that a final performance would be built)

What these extracts also evidence, therefore, is the complexity of the PaR process: how research ideas were introduced, examples of ongoing planning including how Mackey, as lead investigator, worked with the facilitation team throughout the process, and how practitioners themselves reflected upon the processes of the PaR.

- At the original two-day intensive, Mackey introduces some of the key ideas in the research. Explaining research, *April planning* video clip (below) and towards the end of [Extracts from April 2012 intensive](#) (pdf), there is a list of overall points that arose from our discussions that were relevant to the forthcoming practical sessions with the youth group.



It demonstrates something of an ideal in our thinking, whilst also pointing to our awareness of potential challenges in realising these with the youth group (see point 17).

- After recognising that close, research-related input would be useful as part of the PaR, Mackey set up weekly Skype meetings with Velada Billson (lead facilitator). These proved to be valuable and important for both as a mechanism for sharing, developing, reflecting and rethinking ideas and keeping the work focused on the research questions during the 10-week workshop and performance project with the youth group at Half Moon. The following are all audio recordings of those Skype discussions.

Planning 4 profiles the dissemination of responsibilities for the practical research to, for example, Patrick (sound) and Anna (digital media) and how Mackey and Velada Billson (VVB) endeavour to 'let go'.

Planning 5 offers an example of Mackey returning to the research question about everyday place as it related to the practice being undertaken and how the activities engage a re-viewing.

Planning 6 exemplifies the inputting, discussing and exchange of specific practical activities that would support the 'everyday' enquiry.

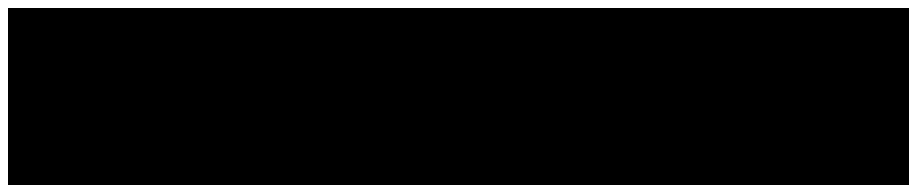
In *Reflecting on Cornflakes* Mackey and VVB discuss the participants' possibly limited conceptual understanding of aspects of place and deconstruct the relevance for them of cornflakes as a signifier of the quotidian, partly through the longevity of a branding.

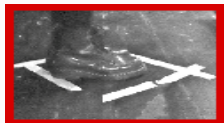
Reflecting on the digital profiles two 'moments' that were important in the evolution of interrogating 'virtual place'. First, Mackey comments on the surprising lack of social media involvement by the youth group and, second, Mackey and VVB consider 'performing BBM' (the only real contender in the field of social media for these youngsters) within the project piece.

The third research question concerned 'special places'. *Reflecting on Special/Extraordinary Places* traces the relegation of the importance of this question suggesting it is not taken much further. This was because, first, early work on the participants' special places had not revealed interesting material. It was felt that this might be because of their comparative youth. Mackey points out that 'special place' was not key to the original Challenging Place research project aims, in fact. Second, one of the youth group had misunderstood 'extraordinary' places in an early exercise, taking this to mean 'particularly or "extra" ordinary' and this had proved to be a rather more interesting a line of enquiry.

Reflecting on fear of place shows up two points: the unusual focus and attention given to this topic through movement by two of the participants and how another was able to conceptualise fear of place without having a specific fearful place.

- ▶ This video clip shows Mackey 'pointing' discussions towards the research questions before, during or after the workshops.

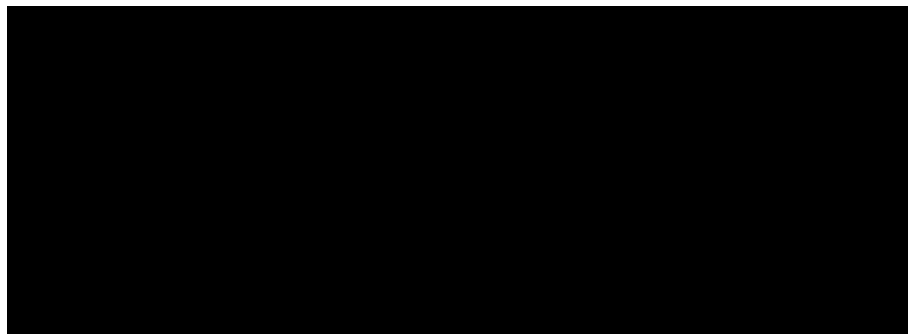




next

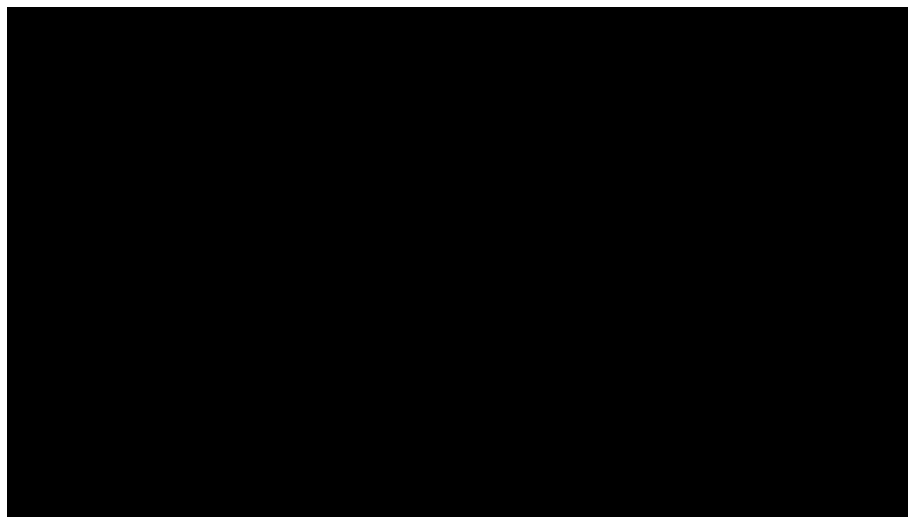
back

home



- [Planning via e-mail](#) (pdf) reflects the artistic team's commitment to the work and their thoughts for developing the research themes through different forms of practice.
- Vishni Velada-Billson (lead facilitator) and Patrick Furness (artist) discussed some of the difficulties and rewards in the planning of the activities. VVB expresses her initial desire to understand the concept of performing place, what she wanted out of it for the participants (led physically rather than narratively) and the importance of the Skype calls as part of the process. Furness discusses the use of voice as a swift way of entering into the musicality of the project and that the move from facilitating artist to sound composer had its own benefits in terms of the 'professional' feel to the production.

Vishni and Patrick



A view on place and performance

I interpret 'place' as having more import than material 'site' for inhabitants. Place becomes 'a perceived environment or geographical area with which individuals (or groups) believe they have a personal relationship; there is a psychological interaction between person and location.' (Mackey 2007a: 181) A performance of place, then, might demonstrate, inflect, respond to, interrogate or challenge the material and psychological construction of a particular locus and is interpreted as a series of performative operations as well as constructed performances. In using 'performative', I refer to the post-Butler interpretation of the term as 'conventional cultural behavior' (Taylor 2003: 6), suggesting that place can be created through the repetition of normative behaviours - in addition to a constructed, framed, developed 'performance' that might be created in and of that location. Whilst site-based performance may well be performed by 'visitors' (e.g. professional practitioners, students) I argue that a performance of place is enacted by inhabitants, therefore. It is more likely to comprise the reframing of a moment in an inhabitant's everyday than, for example, a devised performance in response to a site's mytho-geography.

The interpretation of performing place suggests a practice situated within the concepts, discourses and practices of applied and social theatre with its emphasis on community, citizenship and locations (Nicholson 2005) where matters of place might be of particular import to a group of people. Historical legacies of power and ownership, contemporary deterritorialisation and migrations, disillusionment or disengagement with locus or even, simply, the need to 'create place' in the absence of long-term attachments might all give cause for applied performances of place. It is such a range of practice that I have sought to identify, construct and evolve.

... A focus upon 'performance' in provisionally inhabited places responds to a growing emphasis on temporary place as iconic of our times. Place might be considered, now, as a meaningful waystation, as pause, or as momentary location, location, for example. This 'place' might be described as part of travelling up, across across and along (Ingold 2006, 2011), as a 'meeting' place (Massey 1997) or as a



as a site containing a gathering of stories-so-far (Massey 2005). Some commentators suggest humanity as immanently without longevity of place and deterritorialised, no longer tied to particular locations or communities (see, for example, Deleuze 1993 or Bauman 2007). I am interested in how, or to what extent, community-based performance practices can reconcile a form of transience with an affective response to place. Even if accepting place as most usually nomadic (and some would argue against this), we need not assume place as a waiting room for transient bystanders. Place might still be usefully affective retaining, for example, characteristics of belonging, familiarity and even to some extent security even if only inhabited non-permanently. With this interpretation, temporary place becomes, more, interspersed periods of affective dwelling. Of particular interest to me is the potential role of performance practices in bringing about a changed perception of such places when they are sites of dis-ease.

(Mackey, 2013: 46-48)

Young people's response to place

Group responding to question on what is place, typed up simultaneously as the words were stated:

- A place is a physical spot where you can be no matter what the consequences, it has to be a real place...
- Out of place means you don't belong but place is the opposite - where you belong.
- But sometimes you don't know you're out of place until you're at the place.
- Place is something you can make up out of your own mind – an imaginary place.
- It can be an online or virtual or a real place – Like Facebook.
- The Internet can be a place – the WORLD wide web.
- A place is somewhere to meet.
- As long as in your mind you feel like you're there.
- A mysterious place!
- You can be in two places at once.

Dictionary definition

A particular position or point in space
Used to refer to an area already identified

Extracts from April 2012 intensive

This is the first part of retrospective notes sent to the Half Moon artists after the two-day intensive encapsulating key content from the day. (Further extracts are used in the sections on Fearful Place and Everyday Place.)

16/17.4.12: Challenging Place two day intensive event with artists from the Half Moon

Overall research project title: **Challenging concepts of 'liquid' place through performance practices in community contexts.**

The aim of the project is to investigate the research questions:

1. What can practical intervention tell us about how abstract concepts such as place, community, dislocation and belonging, as theorised by contemporary academics, map onto the 'real life' experiences of vulnerable social groups?
2. Can one or more models of performance practices help to remedy feelings of 'dislocation' among community participants?
3. How might such models be evaluated, disseminated and made fully accessible to community theatre organisations?

The objectives are to:

- achieve three performing-place practical outcomes;
- record, evaluate and analyse the impact of these interventions in the three community settings;
- modify the models of performance practice in the light of outcomes of the three projects;
- present these as a workable facilitation 'pack' for use by a large number of community arts organisations;
- re-examine theories of the performance of place in applied contexts addressing extant and emergent interdisciplinary approaches to dislocation and mobility;
- disseminate the results of the work through three peer-reviewed journal articles, a symposium (for 75 or more community theatre organisations) and webpages containing the facilitation material; submit a book proposal on place and applied theatre practices.

As a result of the Half Moon two-day intensive, we are refining the aims within the overall project to specifically ask the following:

1. How might the performance project at Half Moon identify and 'ease' a fear of place?
2. How is everyday place 'performed'? How does expressing everyday place through performance shift the quotidian?

(Just background questions for me to think about ... how we think about these (or rethink them). For what purpose? To find more value in them? Simply to understand what young people think about everyday places? That we want to understand how young people might perform them differently and how that affects your sense of place?)

3. Are extra-ordinary e.g. 'special' places important? How do performance practices help demonstrate 'special places'? How does performance help enhance a relationship with a special or extraordinary place? (Notes to self - Half Moon theatre; maybe the virtual (or parts of the virtual). What's of interest for the research project here? Possibly something about asking how extra-ordinary places count 'more'?)

PLAN OF THE TWO DAYS

- Introductions.
- Introduce project. Use handouts. (Some of which is included here e.g. research questions and objectives.)
- Introduce companies.
Cyrff Ystwyth – I used photos and some clips of Cyrff Ystwyth material that had been used when the company was first introduced to me.

Oldham Theatre Workshop – I used links into OTW and talked about their work from there.

Half Moon – I used various things – 'Going to Half Moon' video clip of one of my first journeys there; website; Wonderful World video created by a youth group there.

- Introduced and discussed what I meant by place and performing place and work that has already taken place on this.
I used examples of the work on Performing Place www.performingplace.org from the Caer Llan Trilogy. (Click onto the website to remind yourselves? I showed you some stuff about the repetition of performances, for example, under Performing Place 1 – which is just two pages into the site.)

I emphasised certain key themes that were characteristic of performing place for me: Disruption; repetition of performance in sites; density of dwelling; excess (associated with performance of place); artists as those also being placed/the self in the work.

I referred to the work of others – Mike Pearson, Wrights and Sites and their Misguides and others.

- Anna talked about the 'virtual' and we introduced ourselves to how this might be thought about.

IDEAS from the group about themes or areas to focus on

1. Places of 'fear' and how to alleviate that
2. Special places?
3. Do people make place?
4. How does place 'define' you?
5. Do you exist in virtual place?
6. Exploring the 'sensation'/activity of a place. Possibly extending that into a fantasy of a place. 'Feeling' a place and how you might transform it.
7. Owning a place: the territorialism of place e.g tree houses, forts. The extension within the 'norm'. How might that extend to facebook and the virtual.
8. Place-memory: e.g. remembering how they felt when they arrived at Half Moon. How their memory alters.
9. Fear – again: darkness and light
10. Daily encounters with place.
11. Feeling out-of-place (excluded: only 2 children in a shop...)
12. Why they are here right now.
13. Tangled web – interconnections, locationally, the density and all that comes into it e.g. the web being cut. The dislocation.
14. Language – bits of language: language of place. (virtual - detagging, status update, checking in)
15. How does one relate in this place – how we move through them and what's happening to us at that time: body, sound, personal space...
16. Sense memory of a place. How a smell or sound translates. (The most powerful sense...)
17. The story of the place – how we narrate our place. Or how do we therefore reperform our place. How do we work with young people whose base line of storytelling would not be ours (!). The *Eastenders* syndrome...
18. Rules of place. Young people 'challenging' the rules of place. They wish to push boundaries, test the rules of place. At other times, they don't want to challenge or break the rules of place e.g. how to operate in their own bedroom, or within Half Moon.
19. Sonic space. What is it – how would they describe it? Then what is their sonic 'place'? What would be your *ideal* sonic place? The value of silence.
20. Shared place? Or independent place? Consider the collaborations and the individualised.

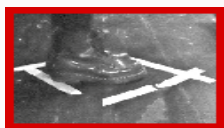
Must remember that the very topic of performing place is probably dull for the participants. The place of performance somehow needs to challenge a certain perception of the topic. We are disrupting their wish for performance in that place.



choices

introduction to everyday and fearful place

As identified in the audio file 'Reflecting on Special/Extra-ordinary Places' below and on previous page, the third Half Moon project research question (concerning 'special places') was not interrogated extensively.



The remaining two questions took prominence:

- How might the performance project at Half Moon identify and 'ease' a fear of place?
- How is everyday place 'performed'? How does expressing everyday place through performance shift the quotidian?

Behind these lay the Challenging Place main research questions with - and particularly relevant for these sections - this first:

- What can practical intervention tell us about how abstract concepts such as place, community, dislocation and belonging, as theorised by contemporary academics, map onto the 'real life' experiences of vulnerable social groups?

Of course, the PaR enquiry revealed matter outside these two questions and this is discussed elsewhere on the site. The two sections [Fearful Place](#) and [Everyday Place](#) respond to the questions above in particular.

These short documents from the research project offer examples of performance practices we were considering for each of the research questions:

[Original ideas for fearful place](#) (pdf)

[Original ideas for everyday place](#) (pdf)

everyday
place

fearful place

next

back

home

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London

Planning via e mail: 8th – 15th May 2012

On 8 May 2012, at 22:16, Stephanie McMann wrote:

Hi Vishni!

Thought I'd send you a quick email while I'm still thinking about tonight's session.

They all seem fantastic and a real impressive bunch. I feel that time restricts how I'd ordinarily like to work with them (especially in introducing ways of moving, but now I know what I'm dealing with). But I think a lot can come from what we've got so far.

From what I've seen them do, I've started to come up with an extremely simple movement phrase (made from their movements I saw tonight) which I'd like to teach all of them. It would also mean we could shorten the slow/fast parts to make more concise. It will be for when they are all in the box, and may bring one or two out to run around the space (something along those lines, I have a few people in mind-but it could be anyone as I wouldn't want to seem selective?).

In terms of the fast/slow parts it would be helpful at the start to have a mini discussion (5mins even) about how they are connected to fear of place-and then these thoughts will help with the performance/intensions to movement when we come to rehearse it? not sure what you think about that?

So along with having them in groups it would be nice to have half an hour at least with a unison part? If its a relatively short phrase, it shouldn't take long to teach...would just need rehearsing at different points to bring them into unison. It should also move them through the space and shake it up a bit.

I feel like I needed this session to get to know them, and I hope it didn't all seem a bit bewildering?

I'm away in France working from Thursday morning to Sunday evening. But will do a bit of work on this tomorrow night and have next Monday off so can finalise anything with you then, maybe chat to you on the phone next monday at some point?

Anyway, I'm excited with where this is heading...it would just be wonderful to have more time-but such is life! Just hope you are happy!?

Much love, Steph. Xx

From: Vishni Velada Billson <vishnivb@gmail.com>

Date: 8 May 2012 22:25:45 GMT+01:00

To: Stephanie McMann <stephlmcm@hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Tonights session...

dear steph was about to text you but thought it too late -that all sounds wonderful and I loved what you created....it was fab!

I love the way you work...sleep well and speak next monday Vx

On 9 May 2012, at 20:10, Stephanie McMann wrote:

Hi Patrick (and Vishni!),

Hope you are well! It was lovely to see you briefly on skype yesterday!

Just sending you an e-mail regarding preparation for next week. I was hoping I would have more detail, but I'm slightly snowed under, and finally have a day off on Monday so will solidify my plans then (away tomorrow morn until sunday eve).

But I thought it best to send you something now.

So I hope to continue with the main group piece...in terms of choreography, plans are to:

- Begin with the three boys in the centre-playing with their fear motif.
- Bring in the slow/fast groups at different intervals...hoping that their motifs and sound brings them
- to the centre to surround the boys in the central square (with a possibility of the groups swapping
- between fast/slow)
- When in the centre square, each group finds their pairs and begin to use the space (possibility of them finding the edges) but this shouldn't be too long.
- Then develop a small unison/group part where they will work as a group, possibly splitting and moving around the square/space but using the same phrase of movement, (again, I think this would be an important part to do as it will bring them together a bit more-but I am aware we are short on time, shouldn't take crazy long to teach..and could be played with in terms of choreography in the future).
- Not 100% of the ending yet-but that may become clear once we work on it-or its might blend into another section.

Vishni, It would be lovely to get to some lift work, or more movement about space but I am unsure if there is realistic time.

Anyway...so there is a brief rundown of the potential group piece (Vishni, I hope I have made sense and stop me if there is anything you aren't happy with). It would be lovely to complicate it further to add more interest but again, time is not on our side. However they are a great bunch of performers so can pull any of it off! I am not sure of the exact length (especially in terms of how long for music, but I don't think it needs to be lengthy at all. It would just be helpful to have difference in sound in order to cue the different parts, and make that quite clear for them to hear.

Patrick, Vishni explained that you already had an idea for the cornflake piece (white noise-into crunching? roughly?) I think that sounds brilliant and can work on what ever you will create. There will be opportunity to develop it along side each other I imagine?

Anyway...hope this has given some brief understanding to my thoughts. Think we will try to split groups a bit next week so we can work on a bit of detail, but perhaps we can work this out later.

Hope this e-mail has made sense...!!

Warmest wishes for the week ahead and I really look forward to seeing you both next week!

Much love. xx

Subject: Re: ideas for next week...
From: vishnivb@gmail.com
Date: Thu, 10 May 2012 06:51:46 +0100
CC: patrickfurness@hotmail.com
To: stephlmcm@hotmail.com
Sounds great!!!

If you are around on Monday lets try and have a chat? I am having a Skype meet with Sally from 10-11am maybe if either of you are around after that? I think it would be good to do some whole group work and then split them in half or 3 to develop some sound and impro stuff -we have only 1.45 hours with their break of 15 mins so we are really looking at;

6.30pm-7.15pm 45 mins whole group
break -15 mins
7.30pm-8.15pm 45 mins split group (cornflakes, sound, impro)
8.15pm-8.30pm share

wishes Vishni xxxxxx

From: Patrick Furness <patrickfurness@hotmail.com>
Date: 10 May 2012 14:07:47 GMT+01:00
To: Vishni Velada Billson <vishnivb@gmail.com>, <stephlmcm@hotmail.com>
Subject: RE: ideas for next week...

Cool,

Monday should be fine for skype meeting, I would quite like to explore vocal and singing with the group so some vocal exercises would be a good place to start.

Would like to create an uncomfortable choir with them which I will back up with some music.

Could possibly create some sort of rhythmic cornflake music live using a mic and a sampler.

Patrick

On 10 May 2012, at 09:42, Anna Bosworth (Stu) wrote:

Hi Vish,

I have two weeks left before I depart so definitely up for doing some filming.

I know you mentioned last week that the kids are going to explode if they don't do some kind of devising next week.

I wonder if I could work with a smaller break away group to create a short film / piece that they devise about place (perhaps Amanda and I could do this?)

We could get a group to devise and then film a scene about place -this could even be an extension of the sequences they have been creating last week about fear. We could even film outside the Half Moon (just on the pavement) to get a different sense of place.

The film could be incorporated into the final performance. Additionally I can rip YouTube videos if they want to incorporate other bits of film to make it more creative or make a montage.

The kids can film / choose music etc so they would own the piece (we can use my camera).

Alternatively I could work in the foyer to collect images / videos from the Internet, directed by them and create a montage that you can use in the final performance.

Thanks,
Anna x

Hi Anna

yes that sounds perfect -so far this is my imagining of a logistical outline of next week: What do you think?

I have cc'd Sally so she can observe planning unfurling and Amanda so you can start to be in contact re; planning that 45 mins (I hope that feels good for you amanda! I haven't had a chance to ask you what you think but am pretty sure you will be happy to create a piece of impro-film?)

love Vx



6.30pm-7.15pm: 45 mins whole group working on choreography (maybe take out 4 boys middle group for 20 mins to make cornflake soundscape?)

break -15 mins

7.30pm-8.15pm 45 mins split group into 4

Group 1: Ben, Daisy, Kate & Twayne working with Steph on cornflakes motif

Group 2: 8+participants working with Patrick creating -the uncomfortable choir

Group 3: 8+participants working with Anna & Amanda to create a piece of devised film

Group 4: 8+participants working with Sam to create a piece of impro/monologue response

8.15pm-8.30pm share snippets!!



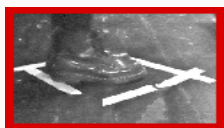
everyday place

Each of these two pages (fearful and everyday place) summarises reflections upon the research initially. Evidence of activity follows and is organised with these in mind.

- Participants found the performance practices to be a method of re-thinking the quotidian.
- They engaged willingly in many of these activities, seeming to enjoy the sense of the ludicrous in certain activities.
- Extended work on integrating external, everyday activities and the project would have been preferable for Mackey in terms of the research.
- 'Virtual place' did not resonate as hoped in the project work yet still contributed to an understanding of place – as well as the research process itself.
- A shifting of thinking about everyday places was clearly demonstrated, together with useful and productive experimentation showing how performance practices can be the medium for such a shift. The impact of this re-viewing is difficult to identify, however. This is explored further in Inconclusions.

Evidence is offered to support these points in the embedded clips, below. Relevant context is given in accompanying writing.

- [Cornflakes](#)
- [Half-term filming](#)
- [BBM messaging](#)
- [Use of digital technology](#)
- [Participants' responses to technology](#)
- [Facebook responses to everyday place](#)
- [Participants' response to everyday place activities](#)



next

back

home

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London



fearful place

Each of these two pages (fearful and everyday place) summarises reflections upon the research initially. Evidence of activity follows and is organised with these in mind.

- As might be expected, there was no consistent response to places of fear by the participants. This group of young people have separate identities and experiences and, therefore, different responses to such places. A couple couldn't even identify specific fearful places, for example.
- Within the comparatively safe space of Half Moon, some of the youngsters offered some deeply personal responses to places of fear. (Not all of these are evidenced on the website for reasons of privacy.)
- The performance practices encouraged and facilitated expression of fearful places by many. They allowed a more abstract medium of performance than these youngsters were used to which, in turn, appeared to facilitate an alternative way of considering places of fear.
- The PaR process was effective as a means of responding to the research questions in many respects e.g. as practical intervention making manifest abstract concepts of place.
- The PaR process was not always useful for capturing evidence of relevant moments, however. Discussions took place in several spaces at Half Moon simultaneously and were not always recorded, for example, and some early discussions about places of fear weren't evidenced.
- Performance practices can 'ease' a fear of place as expressed by certain participants although the tangible evidence from this project is limited.



next

back

home

Evidence is offered to support these points in the embedded clips, below. Relevant context is given in accompanying writing.

- [Tape and movement sequences](#)
- [The uncomfortable choir](#)
- [The lost boy](#)

- [Facebook responses to fearful place](#)
- [Participants' response to fearful place activities](#)

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©copy2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London



inconclusions

Suggesting both 'in conclusion' and 'inconclusive', this section offers an ending to the website articulation of the Challenging Place Half Moon project. As such, 'In conclusion...' is an appropriate linguistic opening yet this final section is inconclusive and ambivalent also.

Three points support this ambiguity.

1. Whilst leading to interesting findings **the PaR process** has been complex and has opened up questions about methodology. Methodologically, the project has used what might be termed 'applied theatre practice as research', a little-known variety of PaR, perhaps. Applied theatre favours work where facilitators work with non-professional, context-specific groups who are active participants in workshops and projects. Applied theatre *PaR*, then, implies practical research that is led and facilitated by the researcher. In more usual performance PaR, the researcher is the auteur and/or practitioner of his or her own work (see examples in Nelson, 2013). In applied theatre PaR, the researcher is likely to be a facilitator of the work of *others* with these participants and their practice as the 'researched'. In such cases, the facilitator-researcher would conceive and guide work, as appropriate for the research enquiry. This is increasingly seen in applied theatre PaR PhDs, for example. The PhD student is the researcher-facilitator rather than the researcher-practitioner.

In Challenging Place: Half Moon, Mackey's role was even further removed; she was not even the facilitator. The overall enquiry was conceived to work with already existing community arts organisations, building on strong industry connections at Central, encouraging the fusion of academia and industry and recognising industry practitioners as more effective than stranger-academics in facilitating community groups. One of the challenges of the research project, therefore, was how to guide the practice such that the research questions were extant and pervasive whilst working with and through the organisation's facilitators. Velada Billson and Adams were exceptionally gifted facilitator practitioners; it was important that they had the opportunity to develop their own material, translating and effecting ideas for the research enquiry, rather than simply following session plans from Mackey, for example. In this instance, then, the PaR was led and held by Mackey but at a distant as the facilitation of sessions – which made manifest the practical research enquiry – were run by Velada Billson and Adams.

Much of the strength of the project came from an excellent working relationship,

however, which was critical for such a complex PaR project. A way to jointly plan and reflect was found. The complexity of a twice-removed practical researcher - not the practitioner of your own research or even facilitating participants - is an interesting and challenging one, however, and worth considering further.

Mackey talks about this research layering process in the video clip below, *Inconclusions*.

[Identifying the researcher](#) (pdf) offers a detailed outline of Mackey's research actions, as 'twice-removed' practical researcher, offering an insight into how this research process operated.

2. **'Findings'** concerning the performance of everyday and fearful place have been summarised and evidenced in the previous two sections, [Everyday Place](#) and [Fearful Place](#). These were not entirely conclusive, however, as stated within the summaries on these pages. Nevertheless, they offered some insights into: how young people consider place as expressed through performance; how place can be re- envisioned, reconceived and reflected upon differently by participants as a result of subverting and challenging understandings of place through performance; the lived places of London youth.

[Audience responses](#) (pdf) to the final performances support these findings. They recognised how the young people understood and performed place differently and the responses also evidence a reconsideration of place by the audience members themselves. (The responses were collected from post-show questionnaires and interviews.)

The artists, too, reflected upon the young people's responses to fearful and everyday places during the process of the project recognising how the young people entered into the work. [Artists' perspectives on fearful and everyday place](#) (pdf)

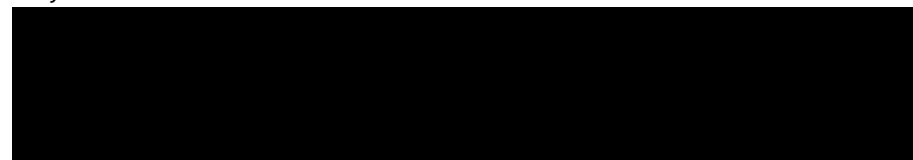
3. Additional findings

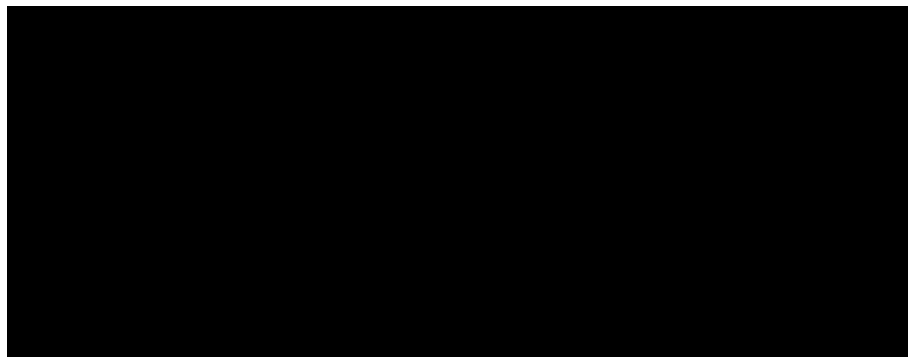
Identifying responses to the research questions themselves did not preclude a range of other thinking arising out of the project. Some of this thinking is identified in these two clips.

In *Sally in Conversation*, Mackey comments on:

- the desires of members of the group to do 'real drama'
- the five weeks of experimentation and the pros and cons of finishing with a performance (e.g. that the performance demanded commitment and that family and public praise raised the young people's sense of achievement).

Sally in conversation

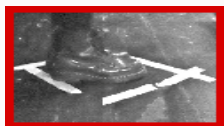
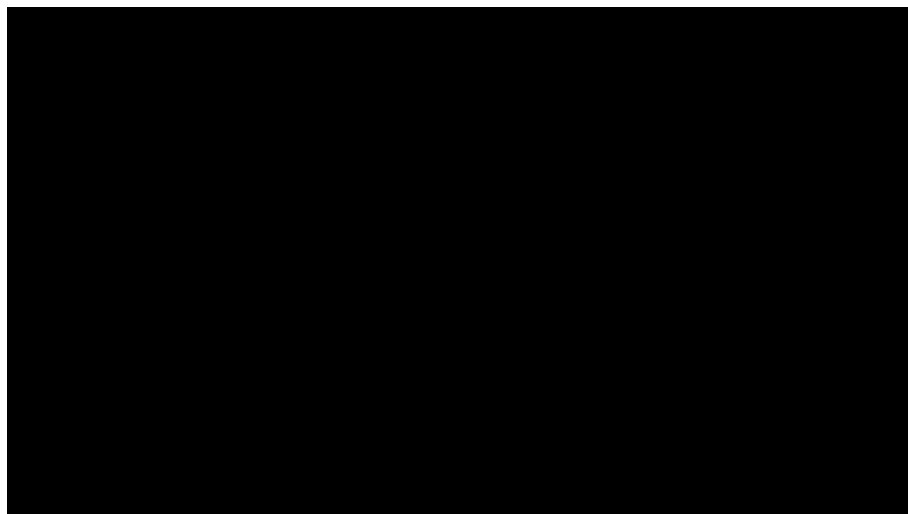




In *Inconclusions*, Mackey talks about:

- the particular age of the participants as a less researched group, the 'surprising' safety of this group and how public space can become private place for older youths
- the research methodology and the layering (as raised above)
- the transferability of the performance practice models
- the artists as participants, their interesting comments on the project and how their responses to the ideas of the project had become important as participants as well as artists. For more on this, see: [Artists' Response](#)

Inconclusions



[back](#)

[home](#)

4. This project is one of three PaR projects. Challenging Place: Half Moon has its own outcomes but a **final inconclusion** is that all *three* projects, complete and analysed, will contribute to the overarching questions in the research project, Challenging concepts of 'liquid' place through performing practices in community contexts.

[Acknowledgements and Bibliography](#)



Original ideas for fearful place

This is extracted from retrospective notes sent to the Half Moon artists by Mackey after the two-day intensive. The list is a set of practices suggested by the artistic team at the end of the two-days of planning perhaps to be used for experimenting with addressing places of fear. The list here omits the masking tape exercise which we had tried out as a group ourselves and that was then used successfully to prompt ideas from the youth group - as well as providing the logo of the boots and masking tape on the website here.

The two lines at the end of this artefact suggest something of the puzzlement of how the practice will cohere with the research questions successfully.

16/17.4.12: Challenging Place two day intensive event with artists from the Half Moon

Fear of place with a view to addressing and easing such fears

- Ball of wool, Throw ball to person who agrees with your statement. Create a web of fear. See the commonality between the group.
- Tell me ... place. Monologue. About somewhere you're fearful of ... Drilling down further and further. (Vish – I can see this physicalised too.)
- Playing with emotional responses physically – on and with body. Sequencing movement/teaching each other.
- Images of fearful places. Anonymous?
- Writing down on bits of paper. Removing it from that person. Naturalistic impro – build up a whole spectrum of possibilities – fear of place.
- Performing in public outside. Film?
- Trust exercises.
- Turn off lights – sit in silence
- Physical signature – replace a word/place/emotion with a physical action.
- One sense off – whole perception of place alters.
- Darkness – experience total darkness. Exercise – hold hands in circle ...silence.

I'm keen on 'disrupting' a fear of place such that it becomes less fearful. How does that 'boundary' disappear? A repetition of performance of a minor kind? Dunno...

Original ideas for everyday place

This is extracted from retrospective notes sent to the Half Moon artists by Mackey after the two-day intensive. The list is a set of practices suggested by the artistic team at the end of the two-days of planning perhaps to be used for experimenting with everyday places. The lines in the opening paragraph point to the underlying questioning of the relevance of this area of enquiry to the overall Challenging Place project.

16/17.4.12: Challenging Place two day intensive event with artists from the Half Moon

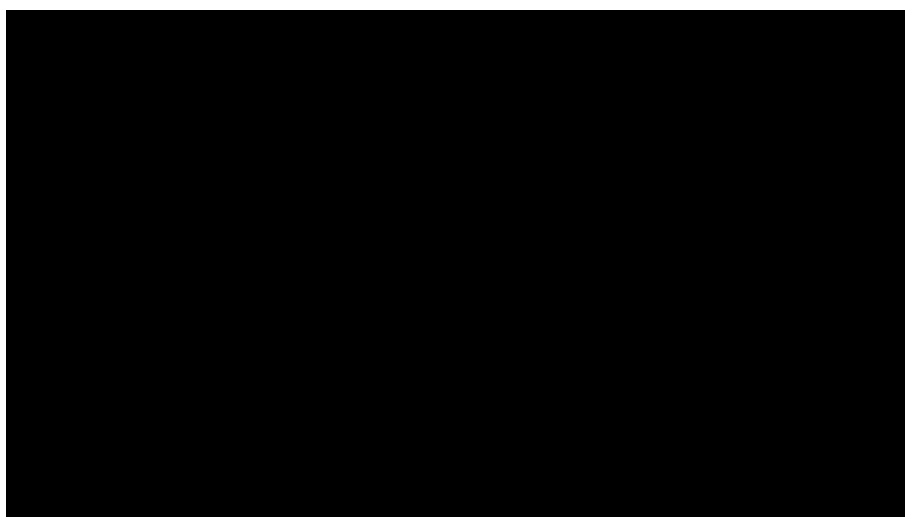
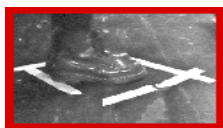
Everyday places and how we think about these (or rethink them). For what purpose? To find more value in them? Simply to understand what young people think about everyday places? That we want to understand how YP might perform them differently and how that affects your sense of place? How expressing everyday place through performance shifts the quotidian.

- Week's worth of images
- One word poems
- Status updates for a week – a block of text, anonymous '@everyday' from FB
- Everyday action into danced movement
- Taking everyday gestures from places and taking them out of context, abstracting them
- 'I am from...'
- Routine: places; islands
- List of place ... e.e. Egypt + America – England – London – Charing x hospital. Alternative maps
- Generating vocab.
- Try movement sequence – in lots of 'places'; video projection as record or mirror
- Rules of everyday place; counter rules; contract of place; e.g. do everything with your left hand – does that change yr relationship with place?
- Creating a space + building a vocab to be used/explore it. How you enter/exit.
- Ear map
- The last thing you shared with someone via social networking "FIRSTS"
- 'clear the space' exercise



everyday place

Cornflakes



This clip includes an initial activity of laying a path of cornflakes along the pavement from the nearest station at Half Moon (Limehouse) and in through the door of the theatre building of Half Moon. Participants respond with due puzzlement. The theme of cornflakes continued in the 'everyday' activity of eating cornflakes choreographed within a workshop. The clip ends with an extract from the final performance where cornflakes were part of *Place* and the sense of anarchic disruption of the quotidian.

VVB had developed the idea of using cornflakes from the intensive two days where Mackey had laid emphasis on disrupting the everyday as a means for participants to re-view their quotidian environments. The choice of cornflakes is discussed by Mackey and VVB in the *Reflection on Cornflakes* audio file below.

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



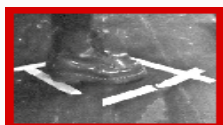
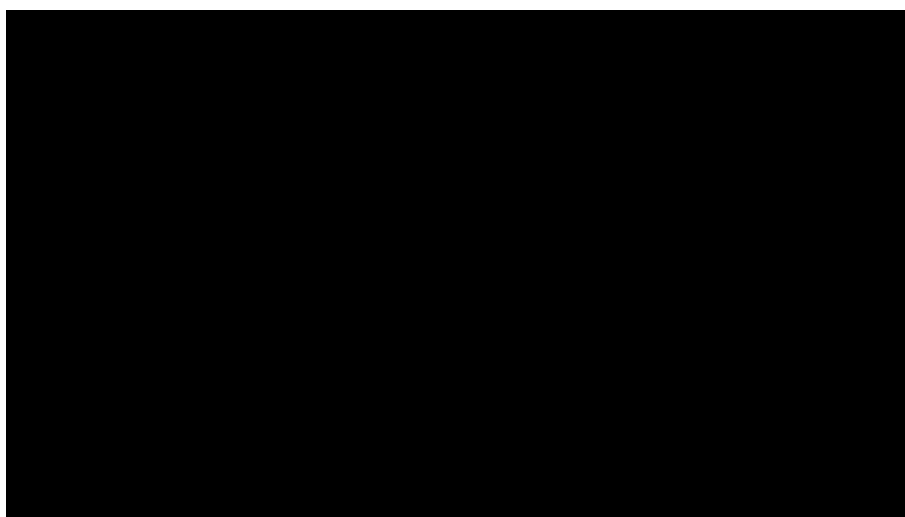
Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London



everyday place

Half-term filming



Mackey was keen to take the 'disruption of the everyday' into the participants' everyday environments, beyond the Half Moon theatre space and its close environs. If the research was enquiring into young people's response to urban space and how to rethink this, their places in more familiar 'urban spaces' needed to be considered. Filming took place over the summer half term break with three of the participants. We had discussed the use of objects as a means to re-viewing place in *Planning 5* (listen below). (See, too, [Object Perspective](#)) where further exercises were undertaken with 'anthropomorphic' objects as a way of re-thinking the dwelling and inhabitation of locations.)

In this clip, Half Term Filming, two of the girls engaged with everyday activities (eating cereal and tying a tie) at home and at a bus stop. The boy undertakes two activities (homework and using a remote control) in unexpected places also. Much of this film was projected in the final show. It is something that the young people in the group responded to instantly with spontaneous laughter at upsetting conventional forms of behaviour in places.

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



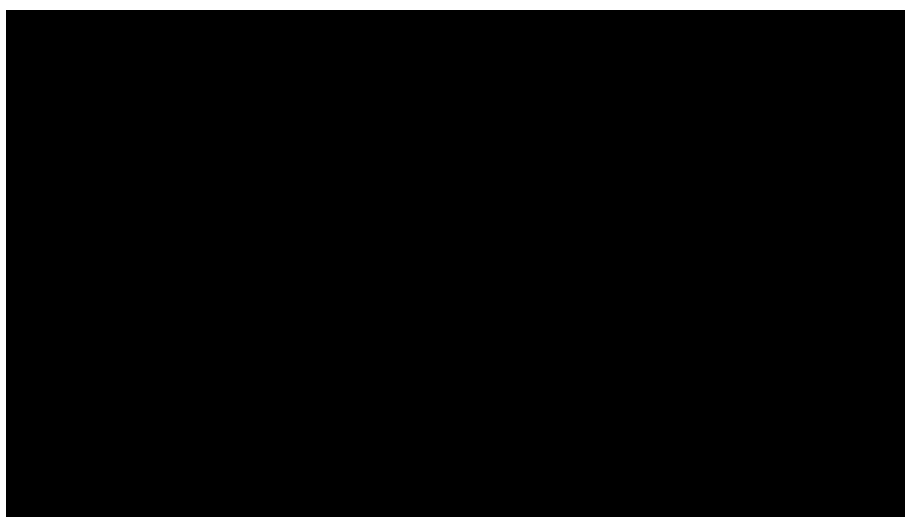
Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London



everyday place

BBM messaging

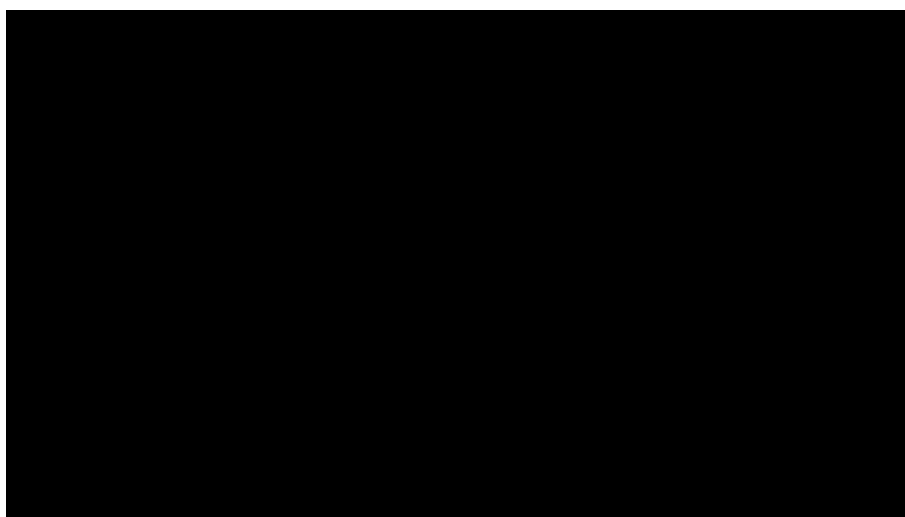


Whilst research into 'young people and virtual place' wasn't to prove as rewarding as we had hoped (see [inconclusions](#)), there is useful evidence of how the digital performs as a place for young people. This clip shows work in sessions and through to performance. BBM messaging was a favoured method of communication between this age group. This sequence suggests a shared language of place, a virtual everyday place that performs through a different medium.



everyday place

Use of digital technology

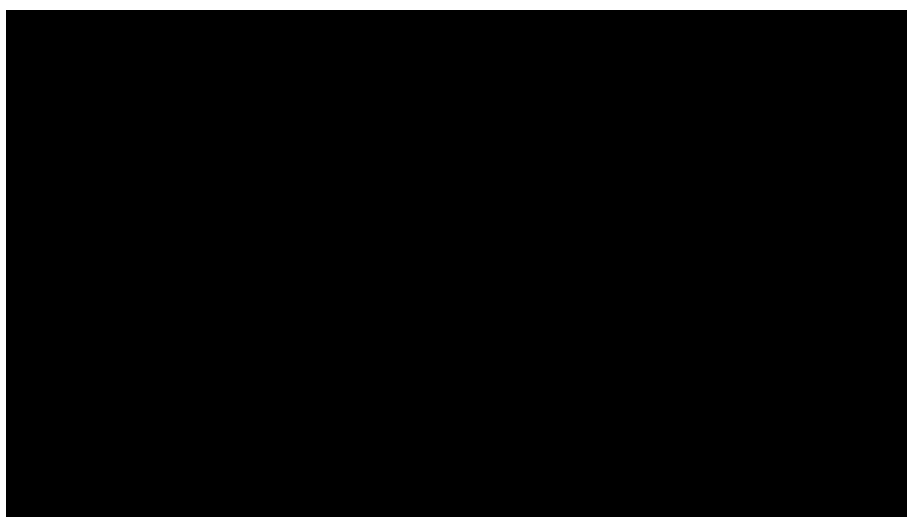


Digital technology was used in various ways in the sessions from live instant pictures put up on Facebook and projected during rehearsals to speaking with Vishni – absent for one session - when she was in Cornwall using the Minack Theatre's webcam and a mobile phone to incorporating short films into the final performance. This clip demonstrates some of this. Our intention had been to infuse digital technology into the project with a view to understanding how place reverberated virtually for the young people. As stated elsewhere in this site, we had overestimated the importance of the virtual in these young people's lives.



everyday place

Participants' responses to digital technology

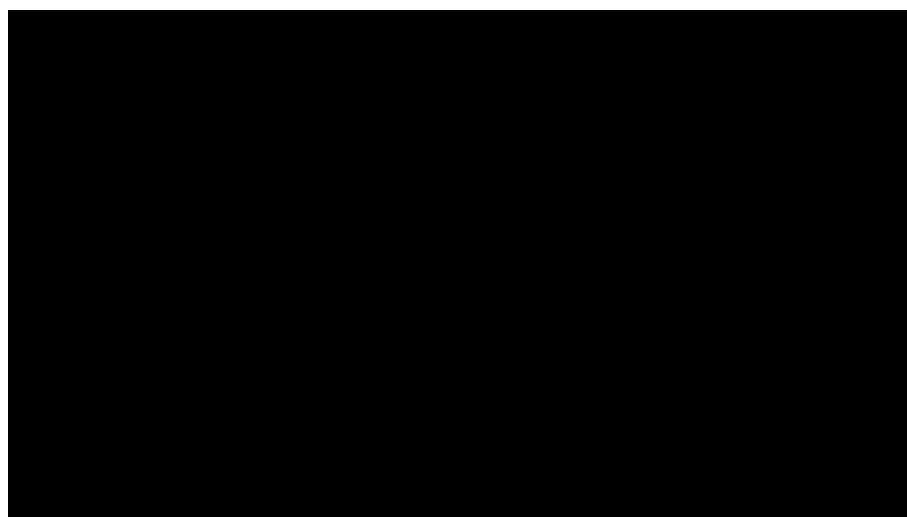


Perhaps most striking about this is the participants' caution about the cameras recording their work which was not something that was evident in the sessions. Participants commented on how it had added to the project in several ways also.



everyday place

Facebook responses to everyday place

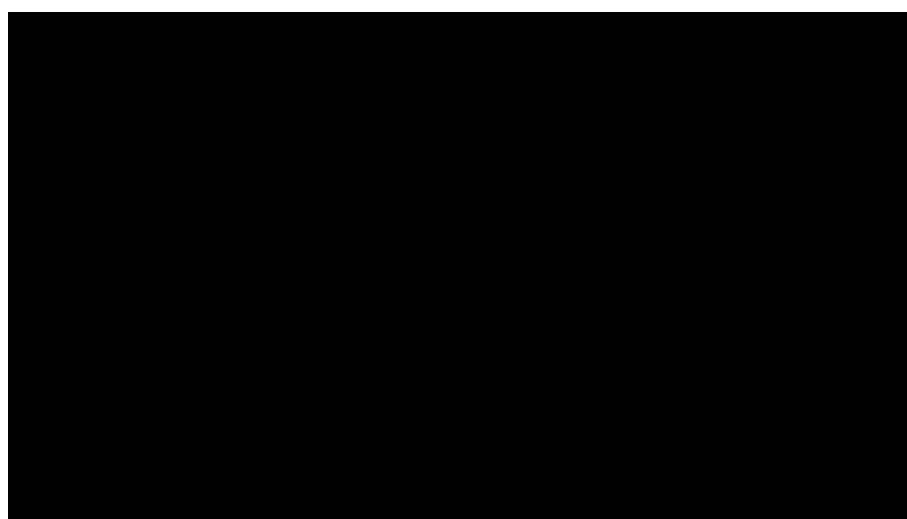


In this clip, there is a further representation of the uses of digital-everyday places using a virtual platform both in between sessions and during sessions. A Facebook site was set up for the youth group - with a slow uptake initially. Initial images respond to reviewing everyday places outside Half Moon through using a different object – the ribbon, the pipe cleaner, however. (Note, one of these images is used as the background image of this website.) Other images follow. Some of these were taken during workshops and immediately put up on Facebook and displayed during the session. It became part of the everyday of the project.



everyday place

Participants' response to everyday place activities

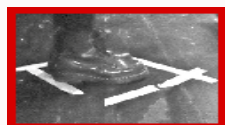
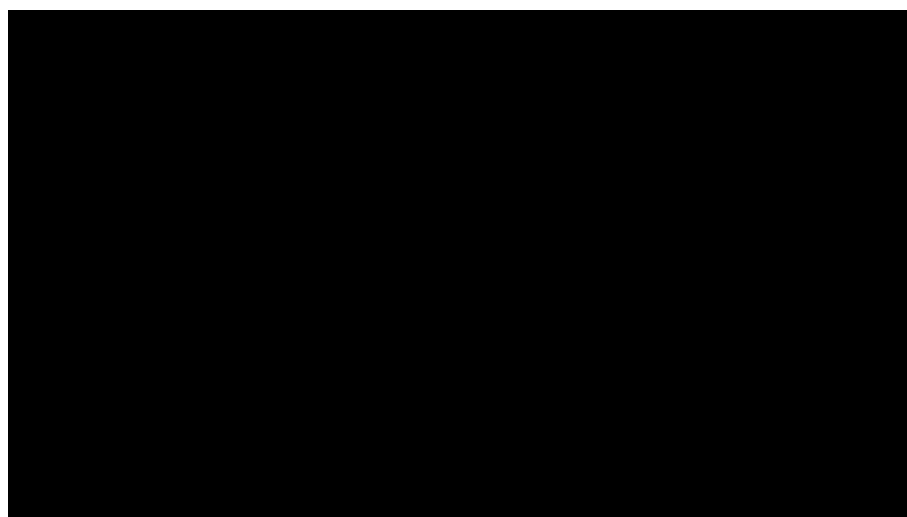


Participants respond to activities around everyday place in this edited clip acknowledging the pleasure of the unusual and, too, how this was represented through 'abstract' performance. Places experienced through non-normative activities (the bus stop, the walk to Half Moon) were now regarded differently. What isn't expressed clearly is impact on the participants by such alterations. 'Weird' is used frequently as an expression but how the practices shifted the young people's view of life is not clear.



fearful place

Tape and movement sequences



This clip includes facilitator Sam Adams trialling the use of masking tape at the April 2012 intensive followed by its use in an early session with the youth participants. The clip evidences a development of movement motifs expressing individuals' fearful places through into performance. Of note is the clear expression of a place of fear by Andrew (in red originally), his art room at school. The abstracted movement is evocative. Despite interesting performance work, the two girls in the clip were unable to think of a specific fear of place and were generically conceptualising rather than using a particular idea. (Mackey and VVB discuss aspects of this work in *Reflecting on fear of place* below.)

A repetition of movement is apparent here, one of the suggestions for using performance practices to 'disrupt' a fear of place mentioned in the [Original ideas for fearful place](#) (pdf).

Film of a further participant in an earlier exercise (writing on the wall) is deceptive. She writes of being frightened of being on her own. In a non-recorded conversation earlier, however, she had spoken of her old school as her main place of fear where she had been bullied and had subsequently left as a result. She chose not to write this. Ironically, this long term and committed member of the youth group did not attend for the half term following this project as Half Moon temporarily relocated – to the

school she had left: a salutary and wry follow up to exploring places of fear.

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



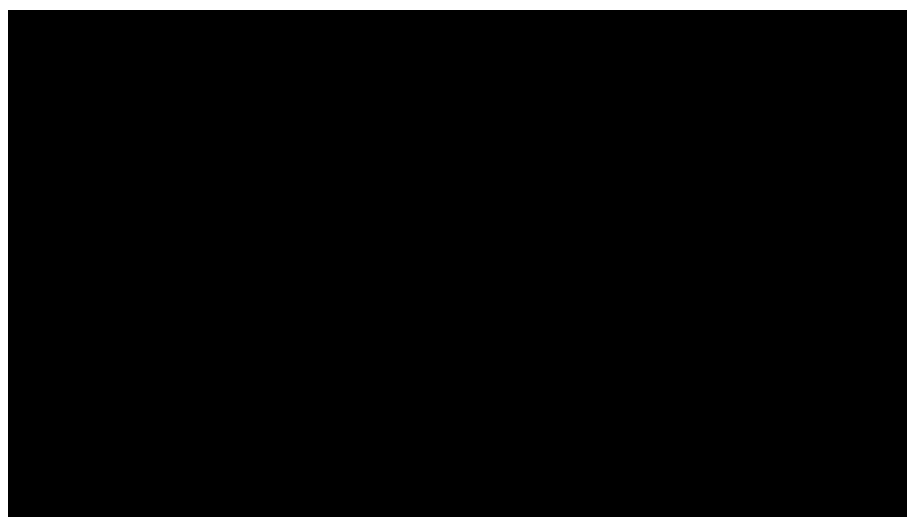
Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©copy2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London



fearful place

The uncomfortable choir

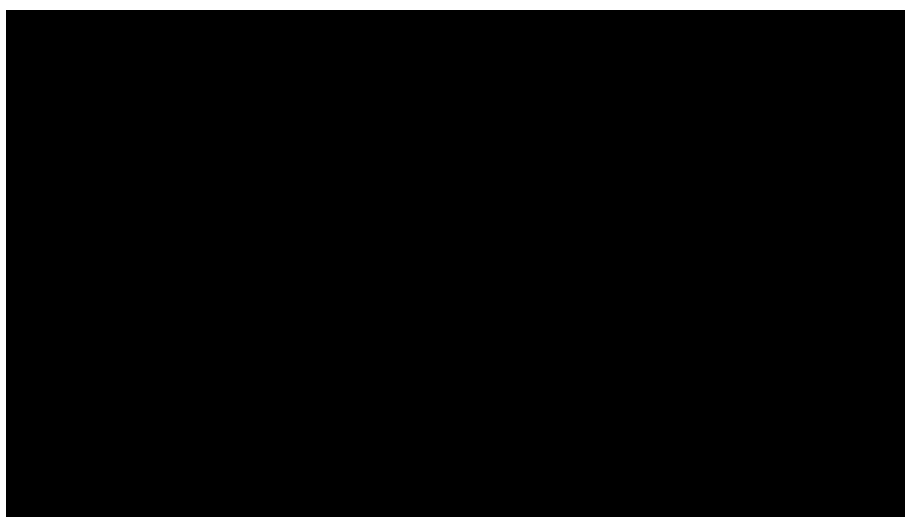


Sound artist Patrick develops his idea of the Uncomfortable Choir. (Mackey and Velada Billson discuss this in *Planning 4* below). The Uncomfortable Choir was brought into the final performance piece, not without some resistance initially from the larger group of participants although the first group – shown – had embraced the ideas with conviction.



fearful place

The lost boy

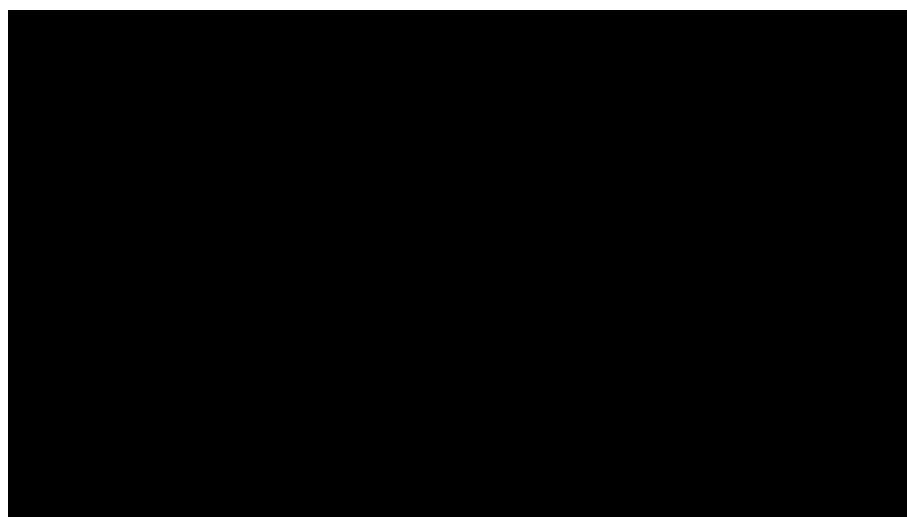


James joined the group three weeks after the start of the project. Recognising the group were keen to do some devising work of a less experimental nature, this small group created a short film during one session, self-referentially using James' arrival and his apprehension in coming to Half Moon as the topic of 'fear'. He chose not to return after two weeks however, citing a lack of ease with the style of performance activities. The project and the particular emphasis on non-naturalistic performance practices did not suit everyone.



fearful place

Facebook responses to fearful place



As part of the project, we were keen to explore 'virtual place'. Anna Bosworth set up a Facebook site for the group (adopted and still used by Half Moon with the group). This extract shows members of the group, including the adults, using it to show images of places of fear. Such extensions to the PaR methods offered individuals opportunities to share ideas outside the workshop space but were also brought back into the space and shown on the screen during workshop sessions. This is more clearly evidenced in the equivalent clip in *Everyday Places*. (Mackey and VVB discuss their original surprise at the limited social media usage in the group in *Reflecting on the digital* below).

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



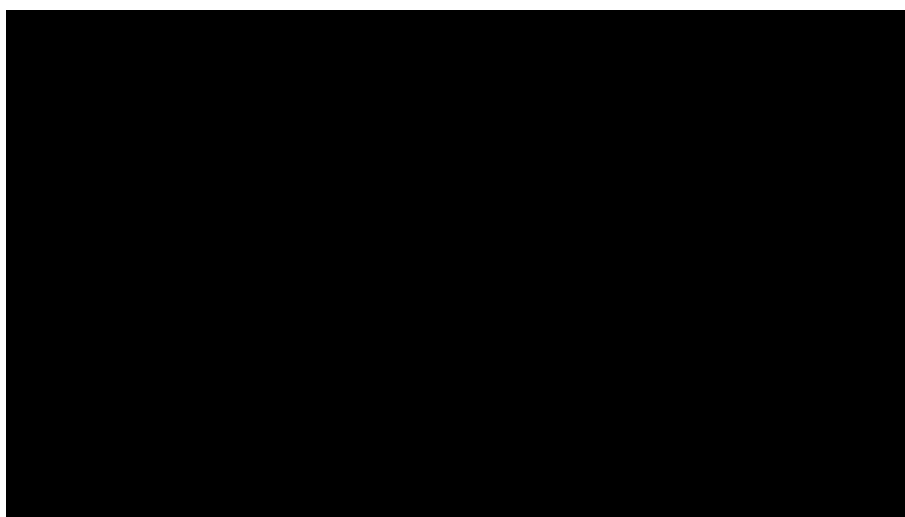
Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London



fearful place

Participants' response to fearful place activities



Participants offer thoughts on how they feel the project raised and addressed places of fear, muse over the effect of the practices selected and some articulate how they feel differently about, and question, such places. Andrew approaches the (previously feared) art room in a confident manner, for example, because he had explored it in an exaggerated way in the project. It evidences, too, the two girls who feared no particular place!

Identifying the researcher

The role of a practical researcher working alongside community organisations is a complex one. Mackey's role as researcher is evidenced across this website yet it might be interesting to identify prosaically what that means. This list identifies her research activities including examples of where 'evidence' of these can be found on the website.

- Conceiving the research enquiry and research questions based on previous research; writer of the AHRC award proposal; principal investigator.

Evidenced on:

- [About the Research](#) page, specifically in 'Further details on the overall research project' and 'Relationship between the two sets of research questions'
- [Concepts of Place](#) page through the links to the Nest article and Performing Place project on this page

- Creating, organising and running two x two-day research symposiums for the steering group, explaining the key research questions, introducing theories of place and its performance, identifying practices, facilitating others' contributions and outlining how the project would work with suggested models of performance practices. With the group, expand from these performance practices, selecting the Half Moon research questions and producing post-symposium documentation.

Evidenced on:

- [About the Research](#) page through the pdf 'Further details about the research methodology'
- [Planning the Activities](#) page, through the 'April planning video' and 'extracts from April 2012' intensive
- [Concepts of Place](#) page in the video clip, 'July planning – discussion of place', in the *Nest* article and performing place work

- Planning the overall trajectory of the Half Moon project with the artist facilitators.

Evidenced on:

- [Planning the Activities](#) page, in the 'extracts from April planning' pdf and 'April planning' video clip

- Working with the facilitators in planning the sessions, making key suggestions to retain a thrust towards the research (e.g. setting up the filming at some of the participants' homes as Mackey wished to move the work outside the theatre environment).

Evidenced on/in:

- [Planning the Activities](#) page in audio clips of Skype conversations with Velada-Billson, specifically Planning 5 and 6
- [Half Term Filming](#) video clip

- Attending all sessions and entering into the moment to nuance and shift directions before, during or after the sessions, using the opportunity to keep the work close to the research enquiry.

Evidenced on:

- [Planning the Activities](#) page, in the 'Discussion within and after sessions' video clip, as well as in the skype conversations with Velada-Billson, specifically 'Planning 5' and 'Planning 6'
- Holding a weekly reflection and planning meeting with the lead facilitator over skype. Engaging in ongoing e-mail conversations between sessions.

Evidenced on:

- [Planning the Activities](#) page through the audio clips of skype conversations between Velada-Billson and Mackey
- Bringing a small research team in to support the research enquiry within the sessions: Anna Bosworth on media and digital technologies; Jo Yeoman on general support and documentation; Jo Scott as Research Assistant and documentation.

Evidenced on/in:

- [Planning the Activities](#) page in the Planning 4 audio clip
- [Filming of sessions](#) (Jo Yeoman)
- [The Lost Boy](#) film and [About the Research](#) page in the edited video of 'Place' performance (Anna Bosworth)
- [Use of digital technology in sessions](#) (Anna Bosworth)
- [Facebook responses to everyday place](#) and [Facebook responses to fearful place](#) (Facebook page set up by Anna Bosworth)
- [Video and audio clips throughout the site](#) (edited by Jo Scott)
- Organising all the documentation, undertaking some of the documentation and 'catching' moments for others to film (e.g. the response from the youngsters to the cornflake trail).

Evidenced in:

- [Cornflakes](#) video clip
- [The Uncomfortable Choir](#) video clip (filmed by Mackey)
- With Jo Scott, agreeing questions for interviews and questionnaires and interviewing.

Evidenced on/in:

- [Concepts of Place](#) page in the 'Audience response to place' audio clip
- [Inconclusions](#) page in 'Audience Responses' pdf
- [Participants' Response to Fearful Place activities](#)
- [Participants' Response to Everyday Place activities](#)
- [Inconclusions](#) page in 'Artists' perspectives on fearful and everyday places' pdf and 'Planning the Activities' video clip

- Writing papers on the project, sometimes including the other two PaR projects

Evidenced through:

- <http://www.cssd.ac.uk/research/funded-research-projects/challenging-concepts-liquid-place/outputs>
- Leading the advisory group meetings, taking advantage of suggested input from that group.
- With Jo Scott, planning the website and writing all the material (with Jo Scott undertaking all the digital editing and Shaun Canon creating the website).
 - Evidenced in the site as a whole, particularly its design and navigation, as well as the selection and ordering of edited video and audio clips and pdf documents
- Locating the 'meat' of the research from the process, evidence and outcomes, as well as articulating this within the writing on the site and in pdf documents
 - Evidenced throughout the site, and particularly in the findings on the [Everyday Place](#) and [Fearful Place](#) pages and in [Inconclusions](#)
- Selection of evidence to support this articulation
 - Evidenced throughout the site through the choice of video and audio material included, as well as its ordering to articulate the research enquiry
- The drawing of 'inconclusions' from the project, the research outcomes to date
Evidenced on:
 - [Inconclusions](#) page
- Offering appropriate practical activities which could be implemented with the group to serve the exploration of the research questions, drawing on previous experience of working in this area
Evidenced on/in:
 - [Planning the Activities](#) page in 'Planning 5' and 'Planning 6' audio clips
 - [Object Perspective](#) video clip
- At the beginning of the project, establishing specific conceptions of place, which would lead and inform the research undertaken
Evidenced on:
 - [Planning the Activities](#) page in 'April Planning' video clip
 - [Concepts of Place](#) page in the 'July planning' video clip



Audience Responses

“I loved the tooth brushing rhythm and the video footage of the young people in their own homes. I also loved the humour and the strong ensemble elements of it- oh and that it didn’t follow a literal narrative- I loved that! Also the texting worked really well for me- and the boy who was afraid of his art teacher- really good that directors were able to use this. I could have sat for much longer.”

“For me, as the production visually brought the young people’s homes actually inside the Half Moon and into the performance, I felt that this created a strong framing for the performance- and as articulated by one of the performers during the post-show chat- that it helped them to take a step back a little from their own lives so that they could perhaps watch themselves and where they live and what they do every day so that they are able to have a more critical and insightful view of themselves and their surroundings. I also think that by letting the children perform as themselves- or parts of themselves- enabled them to have more of an ownership (maybe) of their drama group and drama building.”

“When I left the theatre I made a succession of errors on my way home- 2 x wrong trains and incorrect Jubilee line direction. I didn’t feel annoyed strangely- I felt the performance kind of continued and I was able to explore places, specifically trains.”

“I thought it was an interesting concept that had developed well. The cast did very well and had had good direction. The young people obviously enjoyed performing. A challenge for the cast to create an abstract idea.”

What connection did you make between ideas of ‘place’ and the performance?

“Performance. Place: What you carry in your head. What passes unconsciously until challenged”

“I thought about how much place is defined by activity”

“The places that were familiar to the players, stretching those places...perhaps things they wanted to do in those places though normal boundaries prevented it... perhaps just thinking about why they behaved as they do in those familiar places”

“That drama/movement can intensify an identity with place and highlight things in new ways.”

“It was more that the idea of place had been disconnected and allowed us to challenge normality”



challenging place: half moon

“I felt that no place was specifically referenced- all very metaphoric and so place wasn’t very tangible.”

“That a place, any place, soon stops being a physical place, with a physical location, and takes on an emotional dimension.”

“The alternative take on everyday situations, and the sense that we constrain our imaginations and impulses to conform”

“The transformation of people into objects- novel idea and made me think about the value we place on “stuff” rather than people”

“The pouring cornflakes on the floor, looked like a fun thing to do - well done to the cast for making it intriguing/interesting”

“The choreography worked very well. Association with place and fear. Fear a very strong emotion which we have all experienced at some time in our lives- even if only in a nightmare!”

“When the children expressed their fears (opening dream sequence and writing on wall in film) because it’s a rare insight into what they’re thinking- they don’t ordinarily say so in day to day conversation.”



challenging place: half moon

Artists' perspectives on fearful place activities

Anna

"I think the young people at half moon did struggle with some of the more academic approaches to the project, and when probed about place and its connotations, a lot of them clammed up, or were only able to offer and articulate more whimsical understandings of place. However, there was a neat translation of vulnerable place and a transformation for some participants, for example Daisy at the bus stop, or Eby articulating his fear of gangs"

Steph

"I was very surprised and excited the day a few of them began to take the initiative to play with a sense of slow and fast movements between them. Although it was quite a push to (in time) to cover the exploration of 'slow' and 'fast', I felt a mini breakthrough as they began to experience they could change and respond to each other through their bodies and proprioceptive sense rather than following a movement pattern. This was a great moment for me as even though I think the time on a group movement exercise was rushed- this was an exploration I had wanted to at least reach. So they could use movement to improvise, copy and repeat to change within each other and change the feeling of the group, as a group."

Sam

"Highlights include – masking tape exercise in which we asked them to use this to create their fearful place and then to find some repetitive movement to represent what they felt about that place which yielded some very diverse and dynamic responses"

"I was also surprised by the degree to which HM young people were prepared to share their fears of place and how cathartic that process appeared to be for them"

"I believe we were able to identify places of fear for the young people and went a little way to giving them the environment to air, debate and share their feelings about those places safely...the question I remain especially interested in (with a view to learn more) is 'How can we ease fear of place?' particularly in relation to working with young people"

Artists' perspectives on everyday place activities

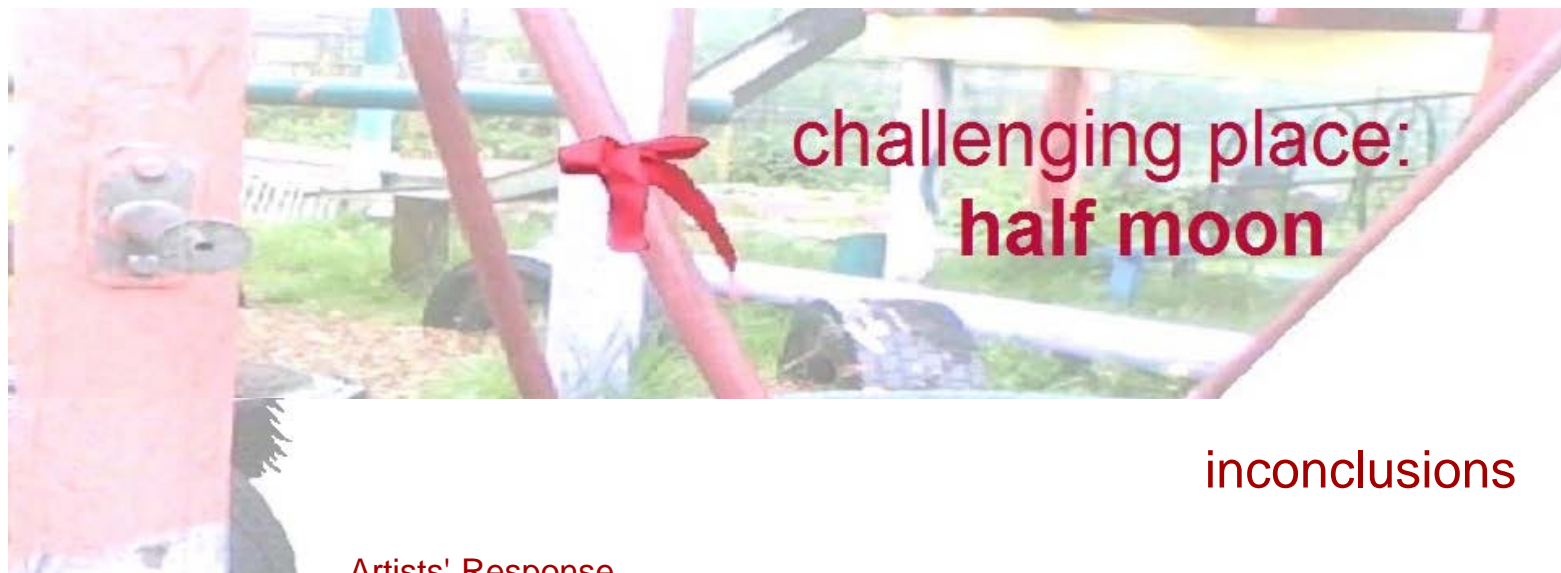
Amanda

"I enjoyed watching the group translate the concepts into beautiful and very moving scenes. I also very much enjoyed visiting some of the young people in their homes and filming them undergo some practical experiments and interviews – I found in their own homes they seemed comfortable and they came up with some great ideas for little experiments with place and performance which I then filmed."

Steph

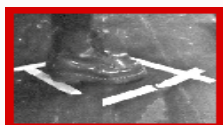
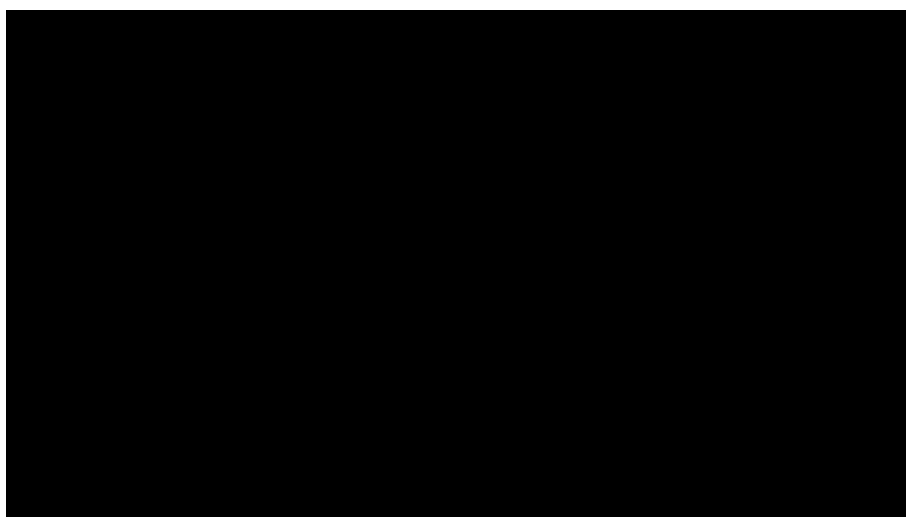
"By encouraging them to approach everyday environments and actions such as brushing their teeth, and transforming their approach to an idea and inviting them to look at it differently, plants an idea to look at their environment and feelings towards the places they experience with a different eye, and a more creative approach which can equip them with further tools to approach their sense of place within their city."

I found enjoyable working with the young people, especially the cornflakes motif for me, as I felt the opportunity to work in depth and collaborate with the young people about how they might eat cornflakes in the morning and how we might transform that as a four. The opportunity to work closely with individuals I felt helped gain discussion and performance which was really quite conceptual."



inconclusions

Artists' Response



back

In this clip, roughly three months after the project finished, Vishni talks about how the youth group had developed commitment and improved its performance practices. She talks of how the showcase performance was 'an epic' moment for them in terms of that shift in theatrical understanding. Vishni spoke with pleasure of how she had engaged with the theory around the work and that she rarely had the chance to deconstruct what she's doing in relation to theory.

When asked, she talked of when she had dwelt on ideas of place after the performance and how these ideas are more vivid e.g. in Aberystwyth; the new foyer at Half Moon. Patrick commented on how much he'd taken away for his own practice, understanding how the 'puzzle pieces' of parts of the project fitted together. He, too, talked of how the group were uncomfortable with the abstract ideas of the piece – but that this was now within their memory.

Additional insightful comments from the artists are offered here about the effect of the project on the group and also on themselves: [Impact of activity on artists](#) (pdf).

**CENTRAL
SCHOOL**
OF SPEECH & DRAMA
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

©2013 Sally Mackey, The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London

Bibliography

- Hopkins, P. (2010) *Young People, Place and Identity*, Abingdon and Oxford, Routledge.
- Cahill, C. (2000) 'Street Literacy: Urban Teenagers' Strategies for Negotiating their Neighbourhood', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3: 251–277.
- Mackey, S. (2002) 'Drama Landscape and Memory: to be is to be in place', *Research in Drama Education*, Vol. 7, No. 1: 9-25.
- Mackey, S. (2013) 'Cuckoos in the Nest: performing place, artists and excess', *Applied Theatre Research*, Vol 1, no. 1: 43-61.
<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/atr/2013/00000001/00000001/art00005>
- Banos Smith, H. (2006) 'International NGOs and impact assessment. Can we know we are making a difference?', *Research in Drama Education*, Vol. 11, No. 2: 157-174.
- Bauman, Z. (2001) *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Cambridge, Polity.
- Kershaw, B. et al (2011) 'Practice as Research: Transdisciplinary Innovation in Action' in Kershaw, B. and Nicholson, H. (eds) *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, Edinburgh University Press.
- Pickering, J. et al (2012) 'Invisible Walls and Visible Youth: Territoriality among Young People in British Cities', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 49. No. 5: 945–960.
- Nelson, R. (ed.) (2013) *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.

Several additional texts are referenced in extracts from articles and websites within this site. Bibliographies for these are available within the original (e.g. Mackey, 2013 above).

Acknowledgements

All credits for the Half Moon project on *Place* can be found [here](#)

Acknowledgements for the website

Fiming:

Anna Bosworth

Sally Mackey

Jo Yeoman

Jo Scott

Jay Stewart

Website design and development:

Shaun Canon

Editing and assistance:

Jo Scott



Writing:
Sally Mackey

With grateful thanks to all those who contributed to this research project.

The research was funded by:

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London www.cssd.ac.uk

Half Moon Young People's Theatre www.halfmoon.org.uk

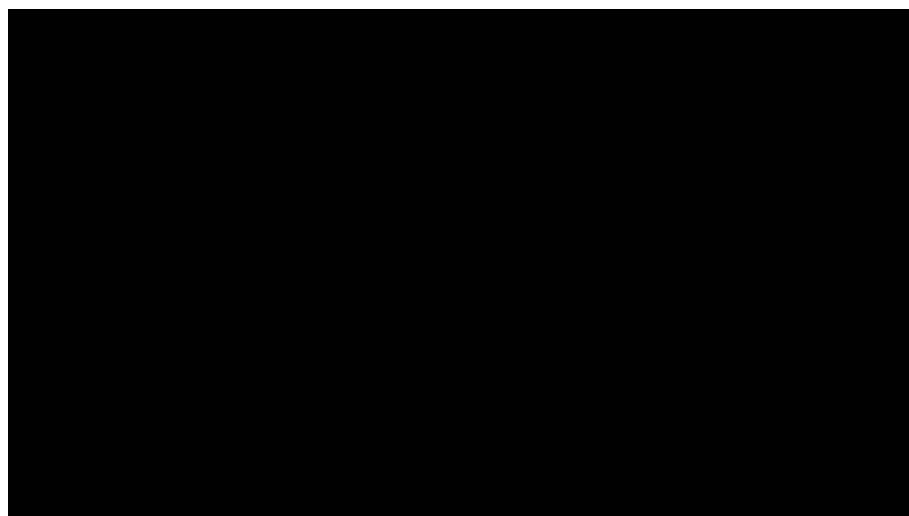
The Arts and Humanities Research Council

Each year the AHRC provides funding from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities. Only applicants of the highest quality are funded and the range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, please go to: www.ahrc.ac.uk.



everyday place

Object perspective



Please use the browser 'back' button to return to previous screen



challenging place: half moon

Overall comments from the artists: the impact of the project

Steph

"I think through the process of this work that through the medium of performance, young people have the opportunity to grasp tough concepts to do with their identity and place in society through theatre/movement which is unusual to them. I think performance creates a safe environment in which they seemed like they could approach uncomfortable subjects as it perhaps wasn't a usual way for them to discuss or process these ideas."

"On a personal note, I have definitely thought about this work and my sense of place as a dancer and in my community/environments (studios/cafes I am in regularly), both at home and at work."

"This project has made me see that concepts to do with young people's mobility and experience of place in which makes up their life really forms their view and experience of their expectations, something obviously immensely valuable to their approach to life. Not just movement wise, but as a way of tackling big concepts with young people, I think the collaborative approach of different modes of performance has been a huge contribution to the success of the work, as it allowed a varied choice for the young people to interact with and to aid their experience of performing place."

Sam

"In general I find myself viewing everyday public places differently and observing/listing the unspoken rules of that place. Also, I recently journeyed back from a place I had never visited and found myself taking pictures of landmarks to ease my anxiety about not knowing where I was going. I imagine I was trying to ease my fear of a new place."

Amanda

"I have learned that many of the previous youth theatre/ education/outreach projects I have worked on were quite safe in terms of what they expected from their participants and the kind of work they produced, and it is really worth setting a higher standard and setting more challenging projects for young people, as they are more than able to reach this standard and create complex, interesting and beautiful work."

Anna

"I absolutely think multiple performance practices can work for participants. Although not all the young people liked doing movement or dance, I think each participant was able to find something whether that was through video work, 'acting', script writing, movement, sound work etc"

"I think that the FB group as a 'place' and now a living 'trace' of the project being carried on by Beccy @Half Moon is also an exciting part of the legacy of this project."