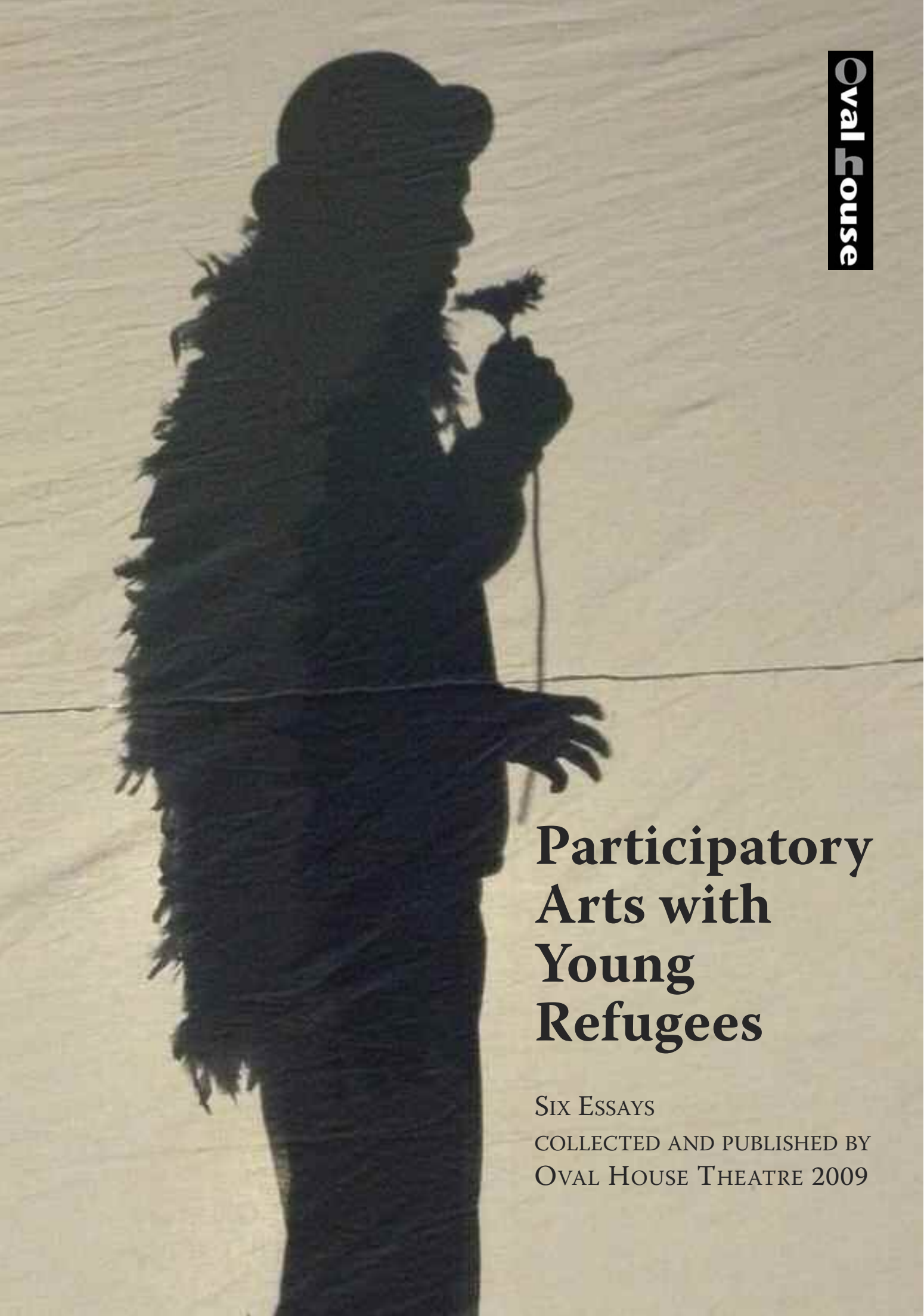

Oval House

Participatory Arts with Young Refugees

Six Essays

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Photography and Integration:

A case study of a PhotoVoice project

Liz Orton managed PhotoVoice's Moving Lives project from 2003-2008. The project used participatory photography to support refugee integration in East London.

Prior to working for PhotoVoice, Liz worked as a freelance researcher and writer. She has a background in international development and has worked for ActionAid, Christian Aid and VSO. Liz is passionate about the social potential of photography, and interested in issues of ethics and responsibility in participatory practice; and in new possibilities of authorship coming from the spread of collaborative projects. Liz is currently working as a freelancer.

"It can't be over, there's still space on my memory card!" was one participant's reaction when she found out that the digital photography project was coming to a close.

It's a comment that's stayed with me because it epitomises the enthusiasm for digital photography that so many young people show. It also illustrates how hard it is sometimes when a project has to draw to a close, and how important it is to find follow-up strategies.

PhotoVoice has been working with young refugees in East London since 2002. Its current project, Moving Lives, is a four-year participatory photography project aiming to assist the integration of separated young refugees in London.

The project is run by PhotoVoice in close partnership with Dost in East Ham, which supports vulnerable children, including young refugees, through education, play, advice and advocacy.

Since the project started, it has gone through a number of different phases. In all we have trained about 120 young people in photography skills, leading to different educational, therapeutic, self-development, and advocacy outcomes.

New Londoners

The latest phase of the project is a mentoring scheme, called New Londoners. It began last summer when 15 young refugees were partnered with 15 emerging and successful London photographers. The young people, aged 16 to 23, come from 10 different countries, with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Some had been in the UK for just a few months when they joined the project, others for as long as six years. They had all been participants on previous PhotoVoice projects and were selected as mentees because of their potential as young photographers. PhotoVoice had worked in this way before – partnering individual

The way the bird's head is turned to one side and his chest is pulled out, he looks powerful and strong, like a leader ... a King is sitting on his throne. He is surrounded by colourful berries, they remind me of the people in his Kingdom. I think he is looking for his Queen

participants with photographers – but never for long periods of time, in fact never usually for longer than a day or two. More commonly, PhotoVoice works in workshop contexts, with a few facilitators and a large group of young people of up to 15 participants.

The role of the mentor was to support, affirm, advise, enthuse and encourage the mentee and ultimately to enable them to reach their full photographic potential. The mentors helped nurture the mentee's confidence in their own photographic ideas, and bring those ideas to life. They typically met together about once a fortnight, went to exhibitions, met for cups of tea and juice, talked about the stuff of life, and reviewed the mentee's latest photographs.

The main focus of the mentoring relationship was the production of a creative body of work by the young person. The mentors and mentees worked together for around four months. The mentees would mostly take the pictures while on their own, and the mentor would give regular feedback and suggestions.

This picture is of an apple tree. It is not in our garden but it comes down over our garden. That's why I wanted to take the picture. When I look at the apples they seem to be ours, but they're not.

Some of the relationships terminated, as planned, at the end of last year, and others continue to this day.

The possibilities and opportunities created by the one-to-one aspect of mentoring are immense but like all relationships it requires commitment from both sides and carries risks.[1] For PhotoVoice – as well as for the participants and mentors – it has been a rich learning experience. What has been so exciting, has been watching the young people's confidence in their own abilities flourish. Some of the key challenges have revolved around the capacity of both parties to consistently commit to meeting up. Freelance photographers have unpredictable schedules, and many of the new arrivals, aside from the fact that they are typically teenage, so often had meetings with solicitors, social workers or support workers at short notice. We found that the mentors needed more support than we had planned for, and PhotoVoice is currently looking at the question of how it can find the means and the capacity to provide better ongoing support not just for mentors on Moving Lives but for all its project facilitators.

The 'creative brief' for the mentees was a relatively open one: to make a body of photographic work and writing on any aspect of the theme of New Londoners. One or two of the participants were able to fix on a subject relatively quickly and easily. For the majority, finding their photographic voice was not such a smooth process – one of simply choosing a subject and shooting, or deciding what they wanted to communicate – but a case of exploring with the camera. (It should be born in mind that most of the mentees did not get involved in the project because they had some message they wanted to get out to the rest of the world or had grand dreams of realising a particular photographic project for publication; but because of the opportunity to have a mentor and because they like taking photographs).

So initially – and more especially for the newer arrivals – embarking on the creative

[1] There is a huge literature about the rewards and challenges of mentoring. I am not going to go into the details here. PhotoVoice's own external evaluation of the scheme has not yet been finalised.

process was quite difficult. But as so often happens, this early uncertainty gave rise to great things. They photographed the things immediately around them, the details of the everyday, small observations, things that appealed to them or were important to them. The images are good but what makes them special as a body of work is our understanding of why they were taken. Put together with words, the images take on a much more significant meaning. The pictures are linked not by any obvious documentary narrative – so it's not possible to say that they are about one particular thing or another – but by the intentions of the young photographer. The images become part of the ongoing conversation they are having with their new home, as they learn to live and settle in London. Hence viewers through their images and words understand something more not just of New Londoners but of London itself.

It is difficult to make generalisations, but the value the participants derived from the project was shaped by how long they had been in the UK, and, related to that, how old they were and how much prior experience they had of taking photographs. For the newer arrivals, the project was very much about supporting integration; helping them to get to know London, widening their experience of using public transport, being in a supportive relationship with an adult who knows London, being actively engaged in learning a new skill, feeling valued and respected as a person, having a means of expression for feelings and ideas. For the older participants – who are more settled and now in employment or full time study – the value of the project derived more from improving vocational skills and professional development, deepening existing ties with PhotoVoice, and creative achievement and enjoyment.

Photography as a tool for integration

Photography is full of potential as a creative aid in the process of integration. At its simplest, it's an accessible tool for self-

Maybe I'll be happy here.
For every happy thought, unhappy thought.
For every time I think of being here,
I think of there.
Wanting to be here, but missing there.
Not being a part of here,
but also beginning to be a part of here.

expression: it can be quickly learnt and it's not difficult for newcomers to take decent pictures. A young refugee – new to the UK – who might be lacking confidence, and speak little English, can quite easily and quickly master a basic digital camera. Digital photography gives instant results, and requires no formal training to become a tool for communication, observation and creativity.

At first all the young refugees we work with – like all young people – love, above all else, taking pictures of each other. They take instantly to the idea of 'posing' for the camera. Both the photographer and the subject quickly get involved in directing and giving instructions to each other. Taking these portraits of each other becomes a step in building peer relationships and in creating a sense of immediate community.

The young people also quickly turn the camera on themselves and, looking at their self-portraits over time, it is possible to see how they form a kind of visual autobiography. These self-representations are about performance and fantasy, idealisation, experimentation, humour and identity. They act out different roles: Bollywood film star, hoodie, pop star, fighter, athlete, sports star, hard-working student etc. In a sense, photography is not just a reflection of the process of creating new and multiple identities – it is a very part of the process.

Photographs, of course, create instant and permanent records. Nearly all of us do this in different ways in our lives: we create tracks for ourselves through albums, diaries, videos, mementos etc. When you are uprooted from one place to another the need to do this can be even stronger. Photographs can be built into histories and albums that reflect a new life, a new start. Pictures can decorate walls in sparse bedrooms, fill the gaps with new memories and friends, pictures can be sent to families and friends, they can be emailed and sent through mobiles.

Sharafat, one of the New Londoner mentees says, *"I like photography because photographs stay forever. 100 years later people will still see them and remember that this person did some good; that this person is still here, still standing."*

At a time when their lives are being defined by 'official' records and legal form-filling, photographs provide a way that young refugees can create their own. Evidence that they are in charge of, that they can frame in their own terms. This creation of memories and evidence is really important for many new arrivals. According to another mentee, Feng: *"In my photography I want to capture a moment before it is gone. I do not decide what I will photograph, I just see a moment and try and record it."* In looking at the world through a lens, in deciding how to frame what we see, we mark out conscious moments in the endless process of observation.

© Chalak/ New Londoners/Dost/PhotoVoice

Daniel Belfry waits for his usual 8.45am train to Victoria station.

'When I first came to England it surprised me when I saw how many different cultures there were all living here side-by-side. I love it. I didn't just want to photograph other people, so I decided I would do it myself. I like performing and dressing up.'

© Shamin/ New Londoners/Dost/PhotoVoice

The author Hari Kunzru, who writes an introduction to the New Londoners book, says photographs 'are also evidence, proof that the photographer was in a certain place at a certain time, which is another way of saying that these pictures are memories - and when you have memories of a place, you're beginning to put down roots.'

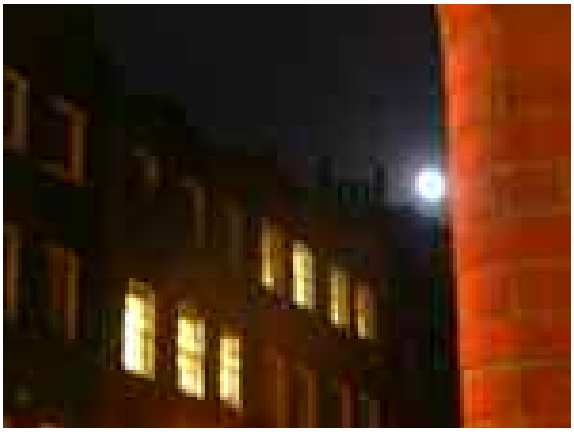
The camera is a tool to negotiate unfamiliar places. PhotoVoice facilitators take project participants on shoots all around London – along The South Bank, to the City, to Brick Lane, Covent Garden, Piccadilly Circus, around Westminster. There are always hundreds of almost identical images of the London Eye, but in almost everything else there is uniqueness and creativity. 'Taking pictures is a way of establishing that a new life does have a form ... You reach into the churning flow and try to extract something, one thing, which has a shape and a purpose, something which will belong only to you', writes Hari Kunzru.

Photographs can be a medium to facilitate discussion and dialogue. I will always remember a comment made by a community worker after a participatory photography workshop. *"I was totally shocked at how a photograph in a person's hand would enable someone who finds public speaking impossible, to stand in front of a group and speak confidently about their very personal struggle ..."*

Photographs can create a distance between the person and the subject, and this depersonalization can help a person who wants to talk but might find it difficult.

It is through this discussion and dialogue that photography also allows learning, not just about image-making but about the world around us, and about each other. Young people arriving in London are faced with much that is unfamiliar. Things might be done differently from in their own country. Attitudes and norms are different. Even for the most adaptable of young people, this transition can be unsettling. Looking at and making images, can be part of this process of learning.

I am not trying to make a particular claim for photography over an above any other media or

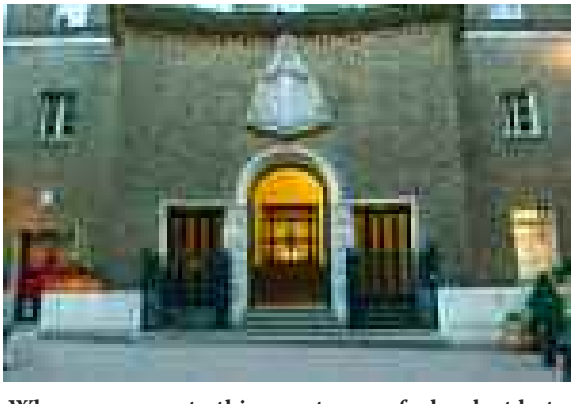


Full moon means togetherness for Chinese people. But for me, the only thing I can do is glimpse the moon at a dark corner.

© Feng/ New Londoners/Dost/PhotoVoice

A 'foreigner' lying in China town? Well, in fact we are all 'foreigners'.

© Feng/ New Londoners/Dost/PhotoVoice

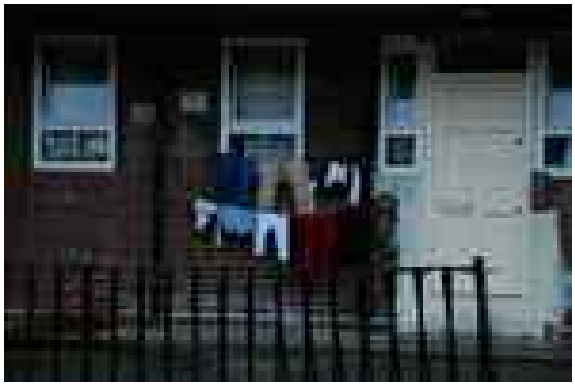


When you come to this country you feel so lost but here I met other Congolese people and this reminded me that I am not alone. The refugee council put me in touch with the church. The church is so special to me. It is a refuge.

The photos reflect my life back to me. Something about them makes me think of how music links peoples' lives, the way these photos link with mine.

© Loria/ New Londoners/Dost/PhotoVoice

art form, but to explain something of the possible relationships between image-making and social integration. In addition, photography can probably only work in this way if the young person is given adequate and comprehensive support in other areas of their lives. PhotoVoice works in close partnership with Dost which provides emotional, education, advocacy and therapeutic support to young refugees. It is this work which is the bed-rock of meeting new arrivals' most immediate integration needs.



My friends in Iraq would be shocked if I told them I took this photo in London. They would not believe that some Londoners live in such poor housing. It is just like Iraq - the washing line, the drain pipes, the badly painted door, the only thing which looked out of place were the windows, they looked new.

New Londoners Book

The mentoring part of New Londoners is now finished, though many of the relationships continue more informally. We are working with an independent publisher to bring all the images and writing together in a photography book. In very broad terms the theme of the work is young people in transition: from childhood to adulthood; from dependence to independence; from one place and culture to another. It is a poetic record of fifteen young people negotiating complex ideas about home and place.

The challenge from this point onwards is how to market the book. This will be a familiar challenge for anyone using participatory arts methodologies with excluded communities. A tension – between how the work is made, and how the work is 'marketed' – has always characterised PhotoVoice's work with young refugees in the UK. It is a highly politicised environment, in which the media has been particularly inflammatory. Issues of refugee representation are extremely sensitive.

The aims of the book are:

1. To help build communities and promote integration by deepening public understanding of New Londoner realities.
2. To humanise and sensitise political and policy debates about young unaccompanied refugees in the UK.
3. To create a coherent body of creative work which represents the young voice of New London in the first decade of the twenty first century.
4. To build the skills, self-confidence and photographic potential of the young participants and enable them to communicate to a public audience.
5. To learn about mentoring models within the context of participatory photography projects and to build a community of practioners.

The young people are acutely aware of the dilemma. One participant explained: "We have had different experiences from other young people and it's important that other people learn about those experiences, but we don't want them to make us different." And another: "I am the same person that I was in my country, my personality is the same, but my circumstances are different." What should the book be called? If we don't use the word refugee in the title, how can we describe what it is about and who made the work? How can we challenge old labels without creating new ones? How can we preserve the integrity of the individual voices while also communicating to audiences who they are as a group? How can we ensure the work is judged on its own merit and not because of who made it, as other art is?

The young people we work have repeated their desire to be treated as young people first and refugees second. They want to have the opportunity to represent themselves and their ideas, without fear of judgement or discrimination. PhotoVoice is keen to move

beyond the use of personal testimonies about refugees' past lives; while these offer good creative material for engaging public audiences and building sympathies on an individual level, they haven't necessarily done much to progress the broader asylum debate. Refugees continued to be understood according to their 'refugee-ness' rather than all the other things that make them a person. They become marked by their experiences as a refugee and known for that part of who they are above all others. The media – and the public curiosity it claims to satisfy – has contributed to this problem, by focusing in on 'pain and suffering'.

Through the book we hope to begin to side-step the traditionally limiting portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers as a group of people defined by their immigration status, and provide a voice to young new Londoners through which they can represent themselves as they want to be seen and heard. Our ambition is to help re-frame the debate about asylum away from fear, hostility and difference and towards commonality and recognition.

We wanted to ensure that the participants in the project understood these dilemmas and were involved in making communications decisions alongside PhotoVoice. We organised a workshop at which we all discussed some of these issues. Participants were very active in discussing the possible use of the word refugee in the book's title. Only one of them felt happy about the word – *"This is who I am and people need to know that I am here as a refugee, it will help them understand". Others felt uncomfortable about it. "The word refugee is like a judgement for us, people at school will say bad things about us."* They preferred the term New Londoners. *"It is an open word. It says something about us, about the fact that we have come from other places, but it's clever because it doesn't give everything away. It gives our identities a place to hide",* said one participant.

"It is important that we are involved in making this book. It is a big thing for us. And it's important that other people should learn about what is going on. Even a great Prime Minister – with great skills – might not know about our situation", said another participant.

I like the pockets in these trousers. I can't find good quality, fashionable clothes in London. They are better in Eritrea.

© Mussie/ New Londoners/Dost/PhotoVoice

The intended audience for the book is quite carefully and narrowly defined: we want to target politicians, public sector leaders, policy makers and policy influencers, the refugee sector and youth sectors. These are the people who can make a difference to the lives of the participants in their everyday professional decisions and behaviour. The book won't tell them what to think or what policies or practices to change but we hope it will make them familiar with these young people, not just as refugees, but as young people with different sensibilities, attitudes, ambitions and hopes for their future in the world.

The book will be marketed, not as a refugee book, nor as a charity book, but as an art book with a serious purpose. It is a book about the present, and how the past informs that present. We hope it will sensitise and humanise social and political thought and debate around immigration and asylum. Through it people will see a different side of London, through new eyes. We hope the book will succeed in engaging, stimulating and surprising audiences; creating interest, ideas and debate.

Participatory Arts with Young Refugees

BARBRA MAZUR is Grants Officer at the Paul Hamlyn Foundation with responsibility for the social justice programme and manages one of the Foundation's special initiatives: the Fund for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Young People which aims to address some of the complex issues facing refugee and asylum seeker young people throughout the UK while also aiming to develop the capacity of RCOs. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Fund is now closed for applications and the PHF is focusing on disseminating the lessons learned from all of the funded projects.

Barbra joined the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2004 with over seven years' experience in the voluntary sector. During this time she worked as a Philanthropic Associate at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors in the United States. Since coming to Britain five years ago she has worked as a Grants Manager at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in the Social Development and Environment sectors. Most recently she has worked at the Big Lottery Fund as a Grants Officer on the Education Programme.

To create a more just and equal society has always been the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's primary aspiration. And the Foundation has been consistent and distinctive in valuing the role that arts organisations, artists and educators can have in helping those who haven't been treated fairly to move forward.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation has tried to address unfairness/inequalities more directly, notably through the Fund for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Young People. Set up in 2003, the Fund was created to try and tackle in a more immediate way some of the complex issues faced by this group. The idea came from one of our trustees, a refugee himself – as, indeed, was our founder.

The Foundation's Fund for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Young People's over-arching objective is to support activities to help integrate young refugees and asylum seekers, aged 11-18 within host communities. A secondary, but nonetheless important aim for the Fund, is to help build the capacity of refugee community organisations, so that they are better equipped to serve the needs of young people. The fund supports a range of projects and voluntary organisations (including arts organisations). Over the past four years, the Fund has spent £3.3 million in this way with arts projects accounting for about one third of the total spend (just over £1 million). However it is notable from looking at the funded activity that, even where the arts were not the main focus of a project, some element of cultural activity was often included. While the Fund closed in 2007, the Foundation has commissioned an independent evaluation of its impact and is committed to disseminating the learning.

It is clear from the evaluation so far that projects supported through the Fund are doing much to address the issues facing young people. The interim report identified both the positive impact and the challenges

faced by the funded projects, which include:

- young people's involvement in planning and delivery in nearly all projects
- interest and participation of young people were among the project's main successes
- for many RCOs it was their first time using 'the arts' as a way to engage young people
- projects were working with smaller than anticipated numbers of participants, partly because of a difficulty in recruitment, but also due to the intensive support needs of participants.

Partnership work was seen both as essential to the success of the projects, but setting up and maintaining effective partnerships was also seen as a significant challenge.

What we have learned so far

The Fund for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Young People placed a strong emphasis on the need to work in partnership, with arts organisations strongly encouraged to link up with refugee community organisations. All along we've tried to encourage work that draws on the views and preferences of the young people and in which they have a genuine stake.

When assessing applications we sometimes had concerns – in relation to applications we've received, not projects funded – about arts projects being perhap too artist – rather than young people – led. This can lead, I suspect, to young people feeling even more marginalized. It may also mean that the primary focus of the work becomes to enable the young people to tell their stories, through whatever medium. Given the troubled histories of many of these young people, clearly we all need to be careful about respecting their privacy and ensuring that they're treated like young people first. I'm sure we'd agree too that it's important to manage these young people's expectations and not to lead them to believe that by participating in an arts project they are all going to become artists in their own right.

There is recognition from the RCOs we've funded that they have a lot to learn from arts organisations, not just about how to record and capture the value of what they do, but also about planning and imaginative ways of reaching out to and involving young people. The exchange between the RCOs and the arts organisations we've funded, which we've facilitated through a number of events, has been one of the most positive outcomes of the Fund so far.

Across the board the numbers of young people being helped are smaller than was originally intended. This reflects the volatile nature of the wider policy climate, and the fact that refugee and asylum seeker young people are a very hard-to-reach and marginalized group. But it's also about the time and quality of support needed to help these young people. In a funding world where value for money is key we need to be careful about not pushing organisations to spread themselves too thinly in order to get the numbers right. It was suggested that greater time needs to be invested in outreach and that where possible appropriate projects should do their own outreach and recruitment.

While projects identified partnership working as a key to their success, many also identified partnerships as the main source of problems. The problems involved lack of commitment; lack of time or time pressures on individual staff; wanting to benefit from shared funding without providing the commitment and sharing activities; failing to identify and engage refugee and asylum young people; having different agendas and methods of working; and communication issues due to time pressures. Power issues.

Communications/discussions/building trust were seen as being crucial to addressing these issues. In some cases it was felt that adjusting behaviour or redefining objectives and activities would be necessary to counter the issues. Having clear partnership agreements from the outset was deemed critical as was a willingness to adapt, to be flexible, to change tack if partnerships were going awry. Indeed, flexibility, the ability to roll with the punches

and simply to persist in the face of difficulties, was thought to be an essential quality for anyone working in this area.

We've also learned that the more time is invested in planning and partnership building prior to project implementation the better. And, this isn't just about planning what you're going to do and with whom, it's also about thinking from the start about how you're going to record what you're doing/what reporting mechanisms you should be using/how you'll capture the value and impact of what you're doing.

We've discovered that arts organisations often have quite sophisticated recording techniques, i.e. video diaries, web logs, log books (or diaries), gathering personal testimonies and stories. This is not of course the case with the RCOs we've funded who are eager to learn from their peers in arts organisations.

Conclusions

It is too early to say what the precise impact of our funding is. However, we are encouraged by the arts projects and the impact they seem to be having on young refugees and asylum seekers. We are beginning to see the extra value of an 'arts approach' including the discovery that in areas without established infrastructures of support for young refugees, arts organisations are often taking the lead in providing for this group. But there are still many challenges – and this applies to the arts projects as well as the others – including partnership working and lack of engagement.

Using what we have learned from our funded projects and others, we have produced a simple, user-friendly **Evaluation Resource Pack***, which offers advice about how to assess the work you are doing, using a participatory approach. The pack also encourages approaches where leadership is shared with young people, in recognition of their experiences and knowledge about relevant issues and in the interests of supporting their personal development.

Recommendations

Involve young people in formal planning and decision making

Projects must address the problem of lack of engagement by making sure project workers themselves are good communicators and when necessary good teachers; involving project participants in designing and planning activities that are relevant to them, building provision tailored to their needs, their abilities and their interests, and encouraging them to get involved themselves in aspects of provision when they are ready.

Support should be given to build the capability and capacity of young people to take leadership roles in arts organisations and/or set-up their own organisations.

Good partnership working, with a range of partners, can help build the capacity of an organisation as well as raise awareness within RCOs and the wider community.

While initially there may be a need for projects to invest a considerable amount of time in training and sharing practice with partners and other agencies, the benefits in the longer term may be that partners will act as powerful advocates for the project and for refugee and asylum seeker young people,

* Please contact the Paul Hamlyn Foundation if you would like a copy of the Evaluation Resource Pack.

helping to break down some of the negative preconceptions about them, as well as having a greater understanding of the needs of young people referred to them.

Find ways of continuing to address issues of poor or sporadic attendance

Sustaining the interest of young people could pose problems when the young people had other issues of concern, particularly worries about their application for residency. This could also prohibit the extent to which they were prepared to engage in local activities. Through continued partnership development to address gaps in referrals, taking time to build up relationships with family members as wells as provide 'taster sessions' to introduce people to the project should increase interest and participation among young refugees and asylum seekers.

Case Study

The Roma Support Group is a registered charity and Refugee Community Organisation based in the London Borough of Newham and has been operating since 1998. RSG runs an advice service for Roma people and a variety of activities based around music and arts, education, sports and mentoring services for young people. Participants come originally from Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary. PHF funding, from October 2005 to September 2008, is being used to combat the social exclusion and marginalisation of young Roma by building upon and strengthening their musical and artistic talents, as a way of supporting their personal and social development and as a possible route into future educational and employment opportunities. In the process the project hopes to counteract racism and ignorance among the wider public about Roma culture and history.

The activities of the project are very responsive to the declared interests and concerns of young Roma – their views are continually solicited through informal feedback (group discussions and brain-storming sessions) and more formal exchanges (one-to-one interviews with project worker, completing evaluation and feedback forms). Two young people participate in the RSG Board of Management. Four project participants participate in the Art Project steering group. The use of studio facilities helps young people build on their existing musical talents, experiment with different styles of music, and learn about the technical side of recording, mixing and producing music on CD. Girls are showing a particular enthusiasm for flamenco. Young boys are keen on street dance. The young people are in great demand at festivals and multi-cultural celebrations across London and further afield. This enables them to show off their culture and their talents. It supports more general integration with non-Roma communities. It helps to challenge popular stereotypes and to encourage some interesting collaborations with other communities. It gets families and adults involved (e.g. in the making of costumes) although the need to resolve conflict between what young people want to do and the expectations of their parents and elders requires negotiation, patience and effort on the part of project workers

The Roma Support Group is well trusted by the wider Roma community. Volunteering is enthusiastic and there is no shortage of young people wanting to be involved in the activities provided. In terms of the future, the project manager says that both the project and the organisation will continue to be driven by the needs and concerns of the community itself.

Safe and Sound

Who are Music for Change – what do we do, what is our philosophy?

DOUGLAS NOBLE is Community Project Manager at Music for Change in Canterbury, an arts education charity working in the education and community sector across the South East and beyond, to raise awareness, understanding and respect for diversity through music and performance. Music for Change see music and the arts as playing a vital role in breaking down barriers between people and cultures.

Douglas, an ex-immigration lawyer, joined Music for Change in 2005, since when he has been managing a range of music projects working with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Kent, aimed at supporting the process of arrival and integration. In addition a key focus has been working with UK based overseas artists and host community young people across the South East to examine some of the misunderstandings about newly arrived communities, providing facts and accurate information to help participants take an informed point of view.

Music for Change has developed into one of the country's most successful and well-respected education and community arts organisations.

Felicity Harvest
Executive Director of Arts Council South East

Celebration. Education. Respect. Three words that operate as a by-line for Music for Change and neatly sum up our underlying philosophy. A Canterbury-based arts organisation formed in 1997 by Tom Andrews, we work through music and performance to raise awareness and understanding of diverse cultures. We see music as a powerful tool for beneficial change; a language that can bring people together and break down barriers to communication and understanding; and a resource that can enhance and support the learning experience. Our work is about learning through creativity, learning through first hand personal encounter, and learning whilst having fun.

We are based in Kent, but work across the South East, into London, and on occasion into the rest of the UK and beyond. Last year alone we reached over 120,000 people, and worked with 150 artists.

We place artists from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds in educational environments. Through workshops and participatory performances, participants experience and learn new music and performance skills, and through that encounter something of the artists' cultural background.

We aim to break down and challenge preconceptions and prejudices; at the same time highlighting similarities and celebrating differences. The work has a number of additional benefits and applications, including links to curriculum subjects and cross-curricular teaching, addressing themes and issues, supporting team work, turn taking, confidence building, creative problem solving, and enhancing literacy and numeracy skills. We are convinced of the benefits of creativity to the process of learning.

We are very fortunate to work with a pool of high quality artist facilitators from a range of countries including Sierra Leone, Ghana, Bosnia, Argentina, China, India, Zimbabwe, Trinidad and Jamaica. They are all professional performers, but also committed and skilled educators, some of whom have been working with us for many years.

A selection of Music for Change artists:


Téa Hodzic


George Fiawoo


Zirak Hamad


Usifu Jalloh


Lucky Moyo

Usifu's workshop was entertaining, inspiring; we are looking forward to working together with him again.

Gershon Berkowitz, National Coordinator
Young Refugees Media Project

Outline of the Safe & Sound delivery

Historically the core of our work has been in schools, and the majority of this in mainly white primary schools in Kent. However, we are constantly looking to develop new creative project delivery. In late 2004 a decision was taken to develop project work both with, and about, refugees and asylum seekers.

At that early stage, the project, funded by the Arts Council, with additional support from Youth Music Action Zones in Thanet and Surrey/Sussex, was conceived as having two distinct but linked directions. The first being workshops with newly arrived and more established refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants living in Kent, alongside the mentoring of new artists from refugee or exiled backgrounds. The second being a pilot in schools using music and performance workshops to raise awareness and understanding about refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. Both were delivered through and with a range of partners providing services to refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities. More detail about these activities is given below.

This starting point has opened up a whole range of opportunities to develop the work in new directions and to collaborate with other partners, and has now grown into a significant aspect of MfC delivery, fundamental to what we are trying to achieve. This has been an ongoing process of hands-on learning, with the experience, knowledge and understanding that we gain from one piece of delivery informing future work and how we approach it, always working closely with the artist facilitators.

Our work in this sector can now be seen to fall into three main categories or areas, although these are linked and there are many cross-overs between them:

- Work with refugee, asylum-seeker and migrant adults, children and families.
- Community cohesion work with the host community.
- Awareness raising work in schools.

In addition we have developed a significant strand of delivery with detainees held in Immigration Removal Centres across the UK, in partnership with the Music in Detention Project, that will also be looked at in more detail below.

What has led me to MfC and work with asylum-seekers and refugees?

Before looking at the delivery I would like to touch on my own personal motivation in pursuing this work, as I believe that has been a significant factor in how and why it has developed and grown. In 1994 I qualified as a solicitor and joined the Immigration Department of a Legal Aid practice in Rye Lane, Peckham. It was a baptism of fire into the hurley-burley, cut and thrust of the publicly-funded legal sector. It involved taking on a rapidly expanding portfolio of asylum casework, and representing a range of people from around the world who had come to the UK to seek refuge and request

protection from the UK government under the Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees.

By 2002 I found myself at Fisher Meredith solicitors in Stockwell, London – one of the UK's leading rights firms – as head of the Immigration Department and a salaried partner. However, I had decided that I wanted to move away from the Law and pursue a career in the creative industries. I gave in my notice and after periods at art school and working for the CAB found myself at MfC.

I had learnt a great deal through my years working with newly arrived communities, and felt that there was much I could take with me into a new career. Not least, I saw that there was a need to support the process of integration and community cohesion. I was convinced that this was very much a two-way street as there are impacts and changes that have to be faced by those who are newly arrived in the country, as well as by the communities that host them. Unmanaged and unsupported, tensions can develop and remain unresolved. The government's panicky response to this in the late 90s was the Dispersal Policy, which forcibly moved newly arrived people away from areas of the country that were considered to be unfairly bearing the brunt of the perceived influx of asylum seekers.

As a solicitor I fought hard in the High Court on behalf of clients to prevent families and communities being broken up, and later in Kent would see at first hand a negative impact of the policy, as the county was largely stripped of its refugee and asylum seeker communities. I believed back then that the policy was ill-conceived; a knee-jerk reaction to the issue, that played into the hands of those that sought to fuel the worst fears and prejudices, and would lead to tensions and resentments in the dispersal areas.

I believed that there had to be a more constructive and positive way of supporting communities through this inevitable process of change. One thing that we can be sure of is that the sad but frequent occurrence of wars, poverty, famine, repression and extreme weather conditions, alongside easier and cheaper international travel, means that migration is not going to slow down, let alone stop. As a society we will be closer to true community cohesion if we come to terms with that and embrace the opportunities it offers us.

As a result of meeting the talented,

Emmanuel Okine and students from Archers Court School, Dover

interesting and diverse group of people who were my clients, I came to the conclusion that we are very lucky to have them, but sadly neglecting the potential afforded by this. Refugee-receiving countries in the developed world are the destination of the cream of the refugee crop. Often it is the academics, professionals, business people, intelligentsia and creatives who have the financial means and resources to make it here against the odds and surmount the many geographical and political barriers placed in their way.

The majority of refugees respond to the need to seek safety by picking themselves up – along with any possessions they can carry – and walking away from what they fear as far and as fast as they are able; if they are lucky arriving at relative safety. Almost certain poverty and further hardship across the nearest border or in another part of their home country awaits.

We do not have a refugee problem. It is the millions of people who have no other choice than this who have the problem. We have an opportunity. It is up to us as a society to realise this and respond in a positive and constructive way, and to offer the newly arrived communities the support to make the best of themselves and their potential once they get here.

I arrived at MfC in April 2005, when the previous Safe and Sound project leader moved from the area. I knew that this was a job made for me, and said as much in my interview. Here was an opportunity to use creativity and the arts to realise some of my thinking; to work through the powerful communication tool of music to support the much needed work with the host community and newly arrived communities.

> *I've learnt that England can't just be for us. It can be for everyone.*
> ***Student from the Marlowe Academy Ramsgate***

Safe and Sound delivery

Over the last three years we have amassed a significant body of work, but due to limited space here, I will outline just a few examples.

Work with refugee, asylum-seeker and migrant adults, children and families

We developed this work in partnership with three organisations in Kent who support, provide services to, or work with these communities; Migrant Helpline, Kent Refugee Support Group and the Finding Your Feet Project (Now KRAN at Riverside).

Migrant Helpline

Migrant Helpline ran induction centres in Dover, Margate and Ashford. The centres accommodated male and female single adults, as well as families with children from a huge variety of countries, whilst they were inducted into the asylum-seeking and support processes, pending dispersal to other parts of the country.

We set out to provide music activities in the centres that would be meaningful, offer stress relief, break down some of the barriers to communication between residents, and raise morale. It was also an opportunity for the residents to be introduced to something of the diversity of the UK, as the work was led by Usifu Jalloh, a UK-based music facilitator from Sierra Leone.

Usifu facilitated drumming, dance and vocal sessions, in which he taught basic West African rhythmic patterns, building in complexity depending on the abilities of the participants.

As a West African living in the UK, Usifu has absorbed and appropriated a diverse range of musical influences and styles which he uses in his delivery. For example he will switch from a traditional West African rhythm into Twinkle Twinkle Little Star via She's Coming Round the Mountain to Who let the Dogs Out? In this he is embracing European and other musical traditions, making a positive reference to and pointing out similarities between cultures.

The use of the drum has the benefit of being an immediate and hands-on introduction to music making that does not rely on previous musical experience. In addition the circle provides a safe common meeting ground between the residents – despite lack of a shared language.

Once the confidence of the group was gained, and they felt comfortable and at ease with the rhythms and structure, participants would be encouraged to offer their own rhythms, drum patterns, songs and dances, thus sharing something of themselves with the fellow residents, as individuals with a valuable contribution to make.

> *Hotel staff told me that the clients were in a good mood for days after each session-this really helps with the day to day running of the Induction Centre.*
> ***Feedback from staff at Dover MHL Induction Centre***

Finding Your Feet project

At the same time we developed a close relationship with the wonderful Finding Your Feet project in Canterbury for unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers. They provide a five-day-a-week programme, including a place to learn a sufficient level of English to enter college, cultural orientation and practical survival skills. This is the one group of asylum-seekers who are not dispersed out of the county, and in fact there are some five to six hundred young people living in Kent at any one time. As well as those in foster families and attending school, many of them are aged 16-18 and live in independent accommodation provided by Kent County Council Social Services, who also provide them with subsistence support.

We provided a series of workshops including West African drumming and dance, Indian dance, Zimbabwean contemporary and traditional singing, and Kurdish music and dance. We aim to support the young people to express themselves through creativity, and to learn something of themselves and the community where they find themselves.

Zirak Hamad, a Kurdish performer who came to the UK as a refugee from Iraq worked with the group to develop a performance for a Kurdish party. This was particularly positive and successful, as many of the young people who use the project are from Kurdistan.

> *We are changed for four months. We will not cry for four months. We were very happy. We thought we were back in Kurdistan*
>
> ***Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers from FYF Project***

The group leaders at Find Your Feet worked with the workshop facilitators to ensure that the activities were relevant to the ongoing learning of the young people. They have commented on how beneficial the programme has been for the young people, and how it has supported their education programme, particularly in the area of understanding and use of English.

One significant example of the personal impact of the work came from a series of African dance and drumming workshops led by Usifu, which ended with a performance at an open day. A newly arrived young woman from Burundi took part. When she had arrived at the project she was barely able to talk to men. After seeing him perform West African music in which she appeared to see a reflection of herself, Usifu was able to gently and sensitively make contact with her through shared cultural references and songs. Eventually, she felt sufficiently confident to choose to sing a solo of a West African song to an audience of friends, social workers, foster carers and supporters.

Integration work with the host community

> *Yours was by far the most impressive work with young people I saw during the week (and I saw a lot!). I have been praising your programme all over the South East.*
>
> ***Nathalie Teitler of Refugee Action – commenting on the Refugee Week Global Cultural Day***

Reaching out to the host community has been a very important element of the work. One of the key tools for this have been a series of events related to National Refugee Week. In partnership with Migrant Helpline we have produced a range of celebratory and meaningful activities, featuring music and education workshops, with opportunities to join in as well as watch. Audiences and participants include refugees and asylum-seekers from across the county, the general public and students from primary and secondary schools.

The work at the Migrant Helpline induction centres in Margate led to a performance by adult and children asylum-seekers at the Global Cultural Day Refugee Week event in June 2005. The performance – supported by Usifu Jalloh – was the finale to the day, and went down a storm, with all of the audience up on their feet dancing and singing along.

We saw the potential to use this work to build bridges with the host community and so we developed a short project working with the young people from Find Your Feet and young people from Canterbury High School, funded by the Esme Fairbairn Foundation and the Joannies Trust. The participants developed a joint performance piece with Usifu. The participants and students designed an event to showcase this work, which they called the Respect Event. As well as a drumming performance, it featured acts from young people from the school and its feeder primary, all based on the theme of respecting and accepting difference. This is now an annual event at the school, involving the Find Your Feet project young people, some of whom have joined the school as students.

We now invite the Find Your Feet young people to take part in a range of other general projects for young people living in Kent. This has included Cricket Roots, looking at the history of black cricket players at Kent County Cricket Club through song writing. A second project, Notes from Underground in partnership with Stour Valley Arts, involved designing, building and performing on instruments made in and from materials found in an ancient woodland.

Awareness raising work in schools

> *It has changed my mind about refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, as I thought they were bad people but they are not.*
>
> ***Student from Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate.***

The St Edmunds RC Secondary School in Dover has a small but significant minority population of students from a Roma background. Many have been in Dover since the late 1990s when they arrived as members of asylum-seeker families. Now – post 2004 – they are nationals of the EU. Staff had concerns about their attendance and the status of this group within the school.

In 2006 we delivered The Journey, a project funded by Creative Partnerships Kent, and led by Téa Hodzic, a Bosnian musician who came to the UK as a refugee in the 1990s. Téa had already taken part in a scheme to mentor musicians in educational workshop skills that we ran alongside the work with refugees, asylum seeker adults and families. On this project she was supported by another musician, Dave Kelbie.

The project involved working with a group of students from across the year groups, some of whom were Roma, towards a performance inspired by Roma music and culture. They developed a song and dance performance, based on themes of change and movement, looking at what we lose and leave behind, but also what we gain from that transition. What was key to the project was the way that Téa and Dave supported the process by which the students found an understanding and empathy by reflecting on their own experiences of leaving friends and family when they move house or change schools, and in the transition from primary to secondary school.

The final performance was to three year groups and teachers, supported by Téa's band Szapora, which includes a Roma musician, and which plays Balkan and Roma music. The performance was outstanding and when Téa invited the performers up to join the band, everyone in the room stood up, clearly keen to get on the stage. We were very happy to learn that the school reported the attendance of one Roma student who had taken part in the project went up by 25%.

In late 2007 and early 2008, with support from The Arts Council, The Baring Foundation and Rythmix Youth Music Action Zone, we ran a pilot of five short residencies in schools in Kent, Sussex and Surrey, aimed at raising awareness and understanding about refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants through a combination of education workshops and music activities. This was developed in partnership with the Migrant Helpline Information Department who already had a programme of schools workshops.

We knew that we had to link what Migrant Helpline did to the artists' creative performance delivery process. We wanted to integrate and join up the delivery so that the creative work supported and enhanced the key learning outcomes.

Usifu Jalloh with asylum seekers from Migrant Helpline – Margate, June 2005

Cricket Roots recording session June 2007 involving asylum seeker and host community young people

We held an ideas exchange day involving the artist facilitators and the Migrant Helpline workshop facilitators, where artists took part in the Migrant Helpline workshops. This gave them a personal understanding of the subject matter, and of what the participants would experience. We then jointly developed performance workshop ideas using songs, games, movement and rhythms, that built upon and supported the key learning outcomes from the Migrant Helpline delivery.

In the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate a group of 20 students from years 7 to 8 developed a short drama piece with songs, supported by Alexander D'Great. Alexander, originally from Trinidad, is a Calypsonian who works with the griot tradition, using song as a means of commentary and reportage. The students developed a storyline based on the experience of young people in West Africa being forced into the army, then escaping and travelling to Europe in the back of a truck to claim asylum. They clearly saw themselves in the shoes of the child soldiers, and used this insight to inform the lyric writing process, using language they could relate to and understand. A range of narrow and negative attitudes expressed at the beginning of the week were transformed into a highly empathetic performance with powerful lyrics.

I used to think they were criminals but now I know they might just want sanctuary.

I thought asylum seekers came for no reason but they only want to seek safety from wars, no money, gunshots.

Students at Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate.

The project has now visited schools in Woking, Canterbury, Eastbourne and Brighton. Most recently we worked with a group of students with special educational needs at Downs Park School in Brighton.

The process of refining and developing how we and Migrant Helpline work together has continued through the project delivery. In this particular residency, the facilitators worked side by side with the performance activities flowing out of and being informed by the discussions, thinking and learning that had gone immediately before. This combination of short bite-sized delivery from the artists and the Migrant Helpline facilitators, mixing classroom activities with games and music worked particularly well.

I thought they were a bunch of people who came over to take our jobs, but I realise now that they are people trying to make their lives better.

Student from Downs Park School, Brighton

Work in Immigration Removal Centres

We are very fortunate to be part of the Music in Detention Project, which has allowed us to link the above with work with detainees in Immigration Removal Centres. The Music in Detention Project aims to take music into all Immigration Removal Centres across the UK. We have been involved in the work since 2005, starting with a series of pilot projects, and we now regularly work in Immigration Removal Centres, both with detainees and with staff. One element of the work, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, involves a community exchange programme aimed at raising awareness about detention and immigration detainees in the communities where Immigration Removal Centres are located.

Dover Immigration Removal Centre sits on the cliff above Dover, in a converted Napoleonic fortress with moat, barbed wired-topped earthworks and entered through forbidding red-brick gates. St Mary's CE Primary School is at the bottom of the hill in the town below. Lucky Moyo and Téa Hodzic worked with the year 5 pupils and detainees to jointly write and record a song, We Got the Right. The two groups worked on the same song separately with a series of workshops swapping between the school and the Immigration Removal Centre.

The process involved the children thinking about the rights they believe they have at home and in the classroom, and relating those to the human rights that we all share, regardless of where we come from. They were helped in this process by a workshop run by Migrant Helpline, and by Lucky giving them a sense of what it would feel like to have some of those rights restricted. For example, he told them that he had decided to take away their Game Boys, ban football, outlaw visitors to the town, and impose a rule that all adults had to live in Folkestone, the neighbouring town.

On a level they knew this was a game, but the feelings provoked a passionate response. The rights were then declared through song, and recorded. The detainees responded to the recording with their own lyrics and provided a musical backing track. This song, which is the result of the work, received its first public performance by the St Marys pupils at the Stay-a-While public performance event at the Dover Discovery Centre on 22nd March 2008, to a sell-out audience of parents, Immigration Removal Centre staff and the public.

Alexander D'Great and Sujata Banerjee at Migrant Helpline and Music for Change Ideas Exchange Day

We got the right – to love
We got the right – to live
We got the right – to have a home
We got the right – to have friends
We got the right – to love
We got the right – to education
We got the right – to become who we want to be
We got the right – to be a child
We got the right – to be different

Lyrics by Year 5
at St Mary's CE Primary School, Dover.

It has showed me that these people are not what the press portray ... it was an inspiring day.

Audience member at Music in Detention
Stay-a-While event in Dover.

Conclusions

There is much to celebrate in what we have achieved through music and performance. We have touched the lives of many people, and brought members of the host community together with refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. We have helped to support informed thinking and to provide positive, face-to-face human encounter. We have developed some wonderful music and performance outcomes, and some powerful and moving lyrics which reach a wider audience. These have grown out of the creative and learning process that takes place during the delivery which is equally, if not more, important.

Working in partnership with other organisations, bringing in expertise, skills and experience that complement what we are able to offer, has been at the heart of the programme. As has the input, ideas and involvement of a group of very talented and dedicated artists who live in the UK as exiles, either by choice or necessity. Without their hard work and creativity it would not happen.

We have left a legacy with individuals, groups and schools, with closer ongoing relationships and contacts in place. We are regularly contracted by agencies and organisations that support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, to work with their user groups and communities. This includes the Step-Up Project in Merton, Refugee Action in Bristol and The Young Refugees Media Project in London.

However, we are not complacent and feel there is much more work to do. We have learnt a great deal, and know that what we do, we can do better. We are keen to extend awareness raising work to a wider range of schools across the South East, and wish to extend the length of residencies to fully establish the medium and longer term impacts, and to measure whether there is fundamental attitude change. We want to know what people do, say and think weeks, months and years after our work.

Students at Bishop David Brown School Woking performing as part of Safe and Sound

St Marys CE primary students dancing at the Stay-a-While event.

We are very fortunate to have secured core funding for three years from the Baring Foundation Arts Core Fund, funding the development of this work, and we are very grateful for their support and investment in what we are doing.

We are keen to develop further work with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and host community young people, and to design programmes with them that fully respect and reflect their shared and separate cultures.

The shifting agenda away from diversity towards community cohesion changes the wider political, educational and arts landscape in which we operate, but does not lessen the need for the work. The House of Lords report earlier in 2008 focusing on the apparent negative economic impact of migration into the UK was perhaps an unhelpful contribution to the debate, and highlights that there is much work to do to provide some counter balance to the messages coming from the very highest levels of UK society.

Freedom is looking me right in the eye
Freedom is a lorry and a helpful guy
Freedom is an alley in the dead of the night
Freedom is a tunnel at the end there is a light.

Lyrics by students
from Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate.

Web links

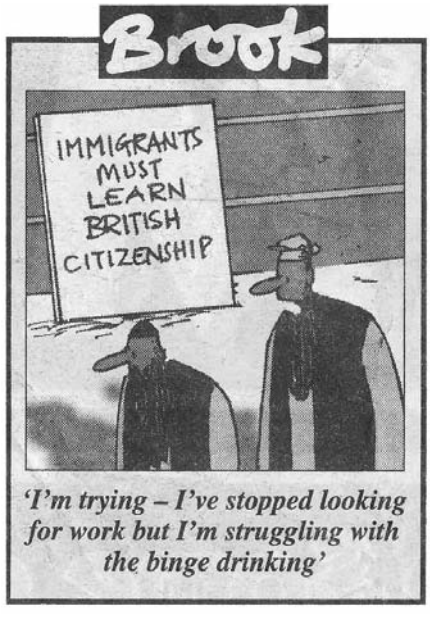
Music for Change
www.musicforchange.org
Migrant Helpline
www.migranthelpline.org.uk
Kent Refugee Action Network
www.kran.org.uk
Music In Detention
www.musicindetention.org.uk
www.myspace.com/musicindetention
Refugee Week
www.refugeeweek.org.uk
Refugee Action
www.refugee-action.org.uk

Citizenship, Belonging and Drama

at Oval House Theatre

TINA MUIR is co-director of Patchwork Theatre, a theatre company running drama workshops in schools and community locations. Over the past five years she has worked as a drama practitioner running a variety of drama workshops with young people in Australia and the UK. She has been working with young refugees and asylum seekers in London through Attic Theatre's Many Voices programme and was Research Assistant on a 2 year AHRC funded Refugee Network project which concluded in December 2007. She is currently completing her Masters in Applied Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London.

This article forms part of a wider research project which looks at how drama can initiate or develop a sense of belonging to a place when working with young refugees and asylum seekers.



This cartoon, published in the London Metro Newspaper on 21st February 2008 raises some complex questions about what it means to be a British citizen and to experience a sense of belonging to a place. A sense of place, of being 'in place', is often associated with a positive feeling – a feeling of inclusivity and community. However, as this cartoon highlights, there needs to be an awareness of what people are being asked to belong to and an acknowledgement that belonging has both positive and negative implications.

'Belonging' to somewhere could be interpreted as being destructive – to belong to something or someone else suggests a lack of liberty or freedom, a loss of individuality, culture or status. It is important to have an awareness of what people are being invited to belong to, and whose interest this belonging serves. Acknowledging that there is a negative slant to 'belonging', this article will predominantly focus on the positive aspects of the term – inclusion, community and shared values. These terms were implicit with the work being carried out in the *Living Here* project at Oval House Theatre.

The project is a 3-year participatory arts project, due to culminate at the end of 2008. As part of the project, theatre practitioners run weekly workshops with young refugees and asylum seekers attending schools in the local area.

Focusing on one of the *Living Here* workshops this paper grapples with the concept of citizenship, and what it means to be a citizen, in order to explore the ways in which the participants negotiate their experience of 'belonging' as 'New Londoners' [2]

The two main strands of citizenship can generally be thought of as social practice and legal status, although there is a blurring between the two. Social practice centres around ideas of identity, values, participation in community, national or global events and the negotiation of relationships with those around us on a day-to-day basis. The term practice suggests that rather than a fixed relationship with each of these ideas, there is a constant and active re-negotiation.

Legal status, on the other hand, is linked to the rights the individual is granted (or denied) such as liberty and freedom of speech, and contains rights such as the right to justice, to cross borders, to social welfare, to participate in political voting, and to education.

The participants in the *Living Here* project are largely excluded from the legal status of British citizenship, and remain in a state of uncertainty, where there is the possibility of deportation at any moment. Arguably this can have a major impact on the ability to experience a sense of place – if there is the chance that they may be deported (and arriving as an unaccompanied minor whose age is in dispute makes this threat very real) then the likelihood of the young people settling to a place and developing an affinity for it is diminished.

Place is also a significant factor in the ways in which young people are able to interact with each other and move towards experiences of integration and friendship. However, there is often a spatial separation which takes place in society – both in day-to-day life as well as in institutions. This lack of shared space is apparent in the educational institutions which some of the participants attend: although the young refugees attend secondary school, they can be separated from the 'British' youngsters both in terms of education as well as spatially; often being housed in a separate building. There is a sense of exclusion–inclusion at the schools attended by the participants: although the young people have been accepted into the school, they can still be excluded from interacting with the majority of 'indigenous' young people because of where they are located in the school space.

In addition to this, or perhaps as a result of this separation, participants on the *Living Here* project experienced a tension between the 'indigenous' young people and themselves and were met with abusive and racist insults as well as physical violence.

Osler and Starkey claim that 'rights are … the essential starting point for citizenship … Rights provide the possibility to practice citizenship and to feel a sense of belonging' (qtd in Weller, 41). The very fact that young refugees and asylum seekers are denied many social and political rights in the UK would seem to dilute any sense of belonging they may have to a place. Oslo and Starkey's claim also highlights the link between citizenship as a legal status and citizenship as a social practice, and suggests that it is through having rights that we are able to practice being active citizens.

Susie Weller maintains that British teenagers are not seen as full citizens (and are not considered citizens largely because they do not yet possess their full entitlements to legal rights) and are thus termed as 'citizens-in-the-making' (Weller 2007). Young refugees appear to be doubly marginalised – not only are they teenagers, and thus according to Weller, 'citizens-in-the-making', but they are also denied many of the rights (both in social practice and legal status strands of citizenship) which British young people have. If this is the case, then how can these young

[2] This is a key concept which is discussed later in the article.

people begin to feel a sense of belonging to a place? At a larger, national level, or in large institutional settings, the degree of citizenship that these young refugees and asylum seekers experience or feel is minimal. However, this can be altered when examining a local situation where senses of citizenship and belonging operate in alternative ways.

Oval House Theatre's *Living Here* project offers a place for the young refugees and asylum seekers from the local schools to come and participate in drama workshops. From my observations as a participant and observer in the workshops, it was clear that the participants felt welcomed into the space as their interaction with the landscape of Oval House is easy and comfortable. This was particularly evident before the workshops began where there was half an hour of 'loose interactions' during which the young people could chat with each other, listen to music on their phones and lounge on the sofas. There are often few opportunities in other parts of their life for the young people to chat with each other outside school hours. The 'loose interactions' time allows the young people to relate to each other in a different way and explore alternative aspects of citizenship to that which they experience in the institutionalised school space. Food and drink refreshments are also served and the participants are responsible for helping to put these out, as well as clearing up before the workshop begins.

On my first day at Oval House, the young people welcomed me to the space and offered me various refreshments. Having recently

arrived in a new country as unaccompanied minors, there is very little opportunity for the young refugees and asylum seekers to experience being an 'insider', and the opportunity to be hosts at Oval House engendered a sense of inclusion and belonging – they were the insiders in this relationship, and I was an outsider being welcomed into the space.

Being invited to adopt the role of host engenders a sense of citizenship as a social practice. Furthermore, if citizenship is in part created through social practice, and includes our interactions with those around us, then this 'loose interactions' time can encourage a feeling of inclusion, community and belonging amongst the participants.

Although the young participants of the Living Here project can experience marginalization in their day-to-day lives, Oval House Theatre provides an opportunity for them to practice being part of a community, and to feel a sense of belonging to somewhere; to be a citizen of Oval House Theatre and to feel 'in place'.

Key terms such as 'respect', 'diversity', 'cooperation' and 'negotiation' are integral to the language of Oval House and the young people learn these terms through practicing their meaning in their interactions with other members of the group. This is citizenship as social practice being actively practiced by the young refugees and asylum seekers becoming active citizens through their day-to-day interactions with other people, based on ideas and cultural beliefs associated with the words 'respect', 'cooperation' and 'negotiation'.

These key words used at Oval House are major factors in creating a feeling of belonging. Their use in the workshops is not simply about encouraging the young people to speak English (with the participants coming from a wide variety of backgrounds and therefore languages, English is usually the common language which is spoken by the group) but also ensures that language is used to encourage a sense of respect and community in the group and gives the young people the tools to be able to express their ideas and opinions.

Language also helps improve their understanding of what is happening in the workshops – and avoids them feeling lost or excluded from what is going on.

In a recent workshop based on 'Jack and the Beanstalk' at Oval House, the practitioners explicitly explored and highlighted key terminology to ensure the young refugees and asylum seekers were prepared for a scheduled group outing. The practitioners were keen to ensure the participants had an awareness of traditional folktales (and particularly key vocabulary within folktales) before they embarked on a theatre trip to see 'Into the Hoods' (a contemporary retelling of fairytale stories using hip-hop music and dance) in London's West End. The workshop invited the participants to adopt a variety of roles and interact in dramatic tasks to help tell the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Focusing on three key areas of the workshop; the use of language, the 'Farewell to Jack' section and the 'What happened next?' question, this article will look at how these moments relate to ideas of belonging and citizenship.

Subhead?

As these young people have minimal English, Oval House practitioners usually begin a workshop by exploring ideas physically through the body, rather than focusing on language and text-based theatre practice.

However, the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' workshop began with the practitioners highlighting key terminology by writing and speaking a key word (for example, giant) and drawing a picture of a giant. Language, and the exclusion from understanding language, can affect one's sense of belonging to a place or a group, and interfere with the quality of engagement in the work. By making the terminology explicit, the young people were aware of what was happening at each stage in the process, felt included in the group and were able to participate with confidence.

Language is often associated with being an oppressive power; using the language of the majority to categorize and fix the identity of the 'other'. Once the Oval House participants had been attending the workshops for a period of time, they were asked to use English in the workshops as this tends to be the common language between a multi-lingual group of young people. Although it could be argued that this insistence upon using English in the workshops had the underlying effect of suppressing the 'home' language and thus identity, this is not the intention of Oval House practitioners. Their intention is to make the workshop space inclusive for all individuals, and language can be one of the most powerful ways of excluding those who do not understand a language.

Using a story which was potentially unfamiliar to the young people meant that there were no preconceived ideas about the story from the practitioners handled this in a very open way. Rather than dictating the story they would stop at each section and ask 'What happened next?'. The participants were then given the opportunity to direct where the story went. Although there were clear structures set up and a certain amount of guidance in terms of how the story progressed, the 'What happened next?' question was a genuine opportunity for the young people to imagine their own scenarios. This format of giving a gift (the story) and leaving gaps for them to include their own ideas enabled them to feel a sense of ownership over the story. This was particularly pertinent to the young participants and their experience in the UK where there is a huge emphasis on assimilation and 'fitting in' with the community and culture.

In this workshop there was a chance to take something that would be considered 'British' and give it their own slant – the slant of 'New Londoners'. This is a key concept used at Oval House to refer to the participants in the *Living Here* project. Questions about identity are implicit within this concept and can suggest a suppression of their home identities. However, I believe that Oval House practitioners recognise that there is not one fixed identity but rather that one's identity is made up of a myriad of identities and interactions with the places,

cultures and people around us. Although this does not change anything regarding their citizenship at a legal level, the concept of 'New Londoners' highlights ideas about belonging to London and emphasises their role as a new citizen of the UK through their social practice. While acknowledging the past, Oval House focuses on the present and future of the young people, and the workshops are a way of ensuring that the young people have the skills required for their day-to-day lives as citizens of the UK with rich cultural diversity living in London.

With regards to the 'What happened next?' offers, it was interesting to note that although the participants had the opportunity to take the story in new directions, they chose not to do so. At least one of the participants knew the traditional story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and whenever the question 'What happened next?' was asked, she would offer the next section of the traditional story. This really interested me as there was scope for re-imagining the story and taking it to different places which were more familiar to them, but instead she chose to stick with the traditional plot, and her colleagues agreed.

For me, this behaviour ties into the participants' ideas of knowledge and belonging – through demonstrating their knowledge of a traditional English folktale they perform a potential for belonging to that place – a shared knowledge of culture and stories. I was initially surprised by their enthusiasm for continuing with the original storyline, but on reflection understood that this not only demonstrated a knowledge of British culture, but also brought up some interesting ideas about affiliation and identity – who the young people choose to identify with and how they re-construct their own identity through the choices they make both in and out of the workshop space.

Nicholson explains that 'becoming a refugee was not an identity of choice, but of necessity' (Nicholson 2005: 94). Within this larger framework, where identities are thrust upon the young people (for example, becoming a refugee) there are less charged choices which the young people do have agency over – for example, the choice of adhering to the traditional story or taking it in new directions; and ultimately the choice of identifying as 'other' or looking to renegotiate their own identity in relation to the individuals and cultures around them.

Another section of the workshop that I would like to discuss is the penultimate section of the workshop; where the young people were asked to take on the role of the mother saying farewell to Jack as he embarked on his journey up the beanstalk.

This very quickly shifted from being a straight forward goodbye to a scene where the mother was offering predominantly cautionary advice to Jack as he climbed the beanstalk: 'be careful', 'look after yourself', 'come back okay'. The transition from saying goodbye to Jack to offering advice and encouragement allowed the participant to adopt a more complex role – one which required them to have to watch the person that they loved go out into the world, unaware of where their path might lead.

In this scene, the participant was being asked to adopt an adult role; one which included feelings of anxiousness and concern. Although the character was fictional and based on a folktale, the actions of the character mirrored everyday life and there was a sense of the scene potentially resembling an emotional goodbye which the young person may have experienced themselves. Taking on the role of the mother allowed the young person the opportunity to adopt new roles and opened up a space where they could play with unfixing their own identities.

The practitioners then encouraged each of the young people in turn to say a farewell to Jack and offer him advice for his journey. Nicholson discusses the concept of 'transportation', where the participants journey into a different world through taking part in drama workshops (in this case, the world of 'Jack and the Beanstalk') but at the same time, this imaginary world re-connects and engages with the world around us. She

writes that 'It is about travelling into another world, often fictional, which offers both new ways of seeing and different ways of looking at the familiar' (Nicholson 2005, 13). In this workshop, the 'goodbye' section connected with past experiences of parting, but also related to future events – the *Living Here* project was coming to a close for these participants and having to say goodbye to each other would be inevitable. In the reflection meeting, the practitioners decided that the theme of 'farewell' was something that should be explored further with the young people in order to allow them the opportunity to bring the project to a close on their own terms and to say goodbye to the various members of the group.

Feeling a sense of belonging to a place can mean that having to leave behind the place, group or people can be challenging and often emotional. The respect and support which these young people experienced at Oval House created, in the words of Richard Schechner, a 'community-for-the-time-being' where, during their workshop session at Oval House, the young people became a community. This community may not exist outside the walls of Oval House, but in the safe space created during the workshops, the young people were able to interact with one another, re-negotiate their identities and experience a sense of belonging to that place, starting from the 'loose interactions' at the beginning of the workshop, where the young people often took on the role of 'host' and were given space to interact with each other, through to the 'transportations' in the workshops.

In the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' workshop, these young people, all of whom are refugees or asylum seekers, were given the opportunity to grapple implicitly and in practice with what it means to be a citizen. They were invited, through their interactions with each other, to become active citizens within the social practice strand. The workshop provided them with a place where they could practice cultivating the tools which would enable them to better cope with being 'New Londoners.'

It is clear that drama creates a space for participants to practice their roles as citizens – through their interactions with each other, as well as by adopting fictional roles and being able to un-fix their identity.

Although this space can encourage positive relations to be formed as well as allowing the young refugees and asylum seekers a space to play with the concept of being a 'New Londoner', I would suggest that drama could provide a much needed opportunity for these young people to grapple and engage with the concept of citizenship. Although it was dealt with implicitly in the Oval House workshops, there may be value in making the concept of citizenship and what it means to be a citizen more explicit.

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Drama as an Additional Language

Making Changes

A case study

Facilitated by STAS SMAGALA and THEO BRYER of A Head Taller in partnership with Lewisham KS4 Access to Schools Programme and Forest Hill School.

The project

This Participatory Theatre and Film Arts Project offered one term working with 13 to 16 year old early stage bilingual learners at secondary school and a second term working with 10 and 11 year olds in local primary schools. The older students made an 18 minute film of a story they had devised about young people embarking on a journey on which they would face significant challenges and danger. We showed the film to the younger pupils as a stimulus for drama work exploring the issues surrounding their own transition to secondary school.

The whole process was filmed and will be made into a documentary presenting the work with reflections on its impact and will be available in October 2008.

We will disseminate the documentary and a short reflection among teacher educators, school heads, funding bodies and others who might envisage how this type of work could reach young new arrivals.[3]

Using our own unique form of participatory drama developed over many years involving spontaneous improvisation,[4] tutor in role,[5] story telling and movement, we wanted to facilitate an exchange of ideas between the secondary and primary groups. They both have to find new ways of being and behaving in unfamiliar environments and to manage the changes in their lives which for any school age person can be daunting. This opportunity to share some of their thoughts, hopes and anxieties about what the future might hold, may offer both groups a forum to gain a little insight into their situation.

Responding to a need

Making Changes came about because the Key Stage 4 (KS4)[6] Access to Schools Programme for new arrivals, based at Crofton School in Lewisham south east London, was about to close. We had been delivering drama sessions for the groups there one afternoon a week almost since the inception of the programme in September 2005. In that time we had worked with over 200 young new arrivals. We were keen to continue to raise the profile of refugees and those at the beginning stages of English acquisition in the context of their everyday environment. When the opportunity to work at Forest Hill School presented itself, also in Lewisham south east London, it meant we could continue to work with new arrivals in the borough as a referred group taking them out of mainstream classes.

Initially we thought that devising and presenting a piece of theatre in education would be an

[3] 'New arrivals' is used here as a general description of people who are refugees, asylum seekers or economic migrants and who may be learning English as an Additional Language.

[4] Dramatic representations or interactions which illustrate characters or describe events without the conventional structures of a dramatic scene.

excellent way for the older students to be seen as co-facilitators and to experience leadership roles. Potential difficulties in getting students released to deliver workshops with us in the primary schools led to the idea of using film, in addition to the drama, so the work could be presented without all the students having to attend the later sessions. Filming the story has offered an additional and very different artistic process that made a permanent record of the work and has created a mobile product. We did in fact manage to get three students off timetable to help deliver the last day's workshops in one of the primary schools.

Once we had agreed a project outline we approached Adrian Hart, an experienced filmmaker who has worked with new arrivals for many years.

Colin Fancy, a fourth artist with experience of theatre script and children's book writing and making films with young people, also agreed to work with us to consult on story, operate a second camera and to help facilitate the process.

The group

There were 14 secondary school participants from countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe who between them spoke 9 different languages. They were all boys aged 12 to 16, some had been in England for over a year and others had only recently arrived. Structured drama sessions of this type were new to many and being involved in filming was new to all but one. Having cameras present in every session emphasised the performance elements of the work but didn't detract or interfere with the process of the drama work. On the contrary, having to work to the anonymous audience of the camera was very focussing at times and when the camera was distant it blended into the background and could capture improvisations and the spontaneity of the work. Using the camera to define turn taking, so people would wait for the camera to be on them before speaking, either as themselves in the sessions or as characters in the story, gave each person a space to contribute.

The processes involved in filming presented a discipline where what was happening in front of the camera was important and so raised the status of the work. The way in which the camera was seemingly everywhere at once, yet not intrusive, was pivotal in helping the group to be relaxed about the filming.

Forming a creative group

Adrian began filming on the fourth session which gave the participants three afternoons to get to know each other first in this new context of a creative drama group. Using participatory drama techniques offered a chance to be creative and reflective drawing on inherent skills of negotiation, judgement and artistry.

We filmed the story over two full days in the school theatre which was very intensive, productive and fun; the demanding nature of the filming process presented the group with clear boundaries and precise working disciplines. One of the central aims of the project was to offer opportunities, for those who might normally view themselves as unable to do this sort of work, to overcome their usual responses, to take a risk and to join in.

Our success in giving quieter participants a chance to be heard and to take a more central position through a graded series of choices became evident. One of the boys who rarely spoke in groups and did not physically engage with the work very often, to start with, chose to speak on camera. Another boy who said he would 'definitely not' take part in the filming of the story later asked not only to be in the film but to be given a role. He also proved to be a very good percussionist and dancer. A third boy whose attendance was erratic and who seemed distracted and reticent in the sessions, recited a short monologue direct to camera and was very pleased about it, smiling for the first time in that session.

These examples of participants becoming uncharacteristically pro-active (by this I mean uncharacteristically within the dynamics of this group) reflected a wider sense of safety and ownership that we noticed and that was

[5] Tutor or facilitator interacting with participants in character, taking on a role as part of the drama.

[6] KS4 is the legal term for the last two years of compulsory schooling in maintained schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

commented on by teachers. Sharon Geer the EMAS Coordinator at the school said *"They can't wait for these sessions each week, they want to get on with their story to see what happens next".*

It's been clear to us for many years, and this project serves to underpin the assertion, that groups function at their best when individuals know and can trust each other. This doesn't mean that everyone has to be friends, simply that certain rules about appropriate support and respectful inter-action in the absence of antagonistic behaviour are consistently maintained.

We wanted to enable an arts process that encouraged participation in a variety of ways, at different levels of engagement, offering access points to the work at different times and for different reasons. Structured play, pretending and joining in without fear of failure, is unique to this sort of work and promoted an environment in which the group thrived, had fun and rapidly progressed in making a story.

Making a story

We demonstrated examples of acting using Teacher in Role techniques, and modelled methods of stepping in and out of character which provided a clear set of skills for the group to use to make their own drama. Over the course of the first few weeks each person had contributed ideas, words, actions and discussion through the seemingly effortless process of play, using artistic and creative ways to access play within dramatic, narrative structures.

As starting point we used a book entitled 'Tales Told in Tents, Stories from Central Asia'.[7] The book's illustrations reflected a story-telling style and the clothes, settings and scenery were resonant with story-telling traditions from many different parts of the world.

Some of the discussions around the possible content of our story included comparisons with home. When we discussed an early idea about collecting water, one boy said that the poor people where he lived take it by hand from the wells but the rich have pumps in their houses. Another boy learnt the word for 'bucket' when he was trying to describe how water is collected in 'boxes' in his home town. A story developed about a group of young men leaving their village to embark on a mission and a new part of the story was created each week.

The ease with which this young group used symbolism in the story representing challenge, change, danger, temptation, division and unity indicated a high level of understanding of the subject and of the creativity of an artistic process. Through a simple physical representation of climbing a mountain for example, they illustrated and later articulated the difficulties of the journey. The three tails of the wolf-man who tempted them were a warning sign that he was not what he at first seemed to be.

Discovering a common symbolic language among a group without a fluent common oral language was liberating and energising. We frequently had discussions, disagreements, made choices and agreed on definitions about hypothetical situations through physical actions, demonstrations, modeling, comparison and discussion. How the wolf-man should move and sound, for example, was physically demonstrated and after several suggestions, and some discussion, a consensus was reached that he should begin on all fours then turn to stand. This system of discussion with demonstrations and action became the usual way of looking at the work and seemed a robust form of exploring ideas, learning new words and phrases along the way.

[7] Sally Pomme Clayton, illustrated by Sophie Herxheimer published by Frances Lincoln Childrens Books; New Edition (1 Aug 2006).

Remaining flexible

Each of the Tuesday afternoon sessions had to be held in two separate rooms. The first half of each session was in a ground floor science classroom and the second half was in a maths classroom on the second floor. We had to move tables and chairs aside to make space to work at the start and replace them at the end, then walk 5 minutes to the upstairs room. To begin with, stopping and then re-starting the work had an unsettling effect on the group. After the second week we decided to plan the work as two separate sessions each time, re-focussing the group in the upstairs room and using the walk up to the second floor as an opportunity to talk.

As artists our work often comments on, responds to, or reflects the circumstances we are in. It is perhaps no surprise that, for this group of new arrivals, the content of some of the work echoed themes of coping with disruptions and the unknown. We were aware of the need for the sessions to remain a safe place for participants to be creative and our responsibility as facilitators was to manage the situation in a calm, deliberate and thoughtful way. During the short walk up to the second space any number of negative comments may have been made by other students in the school, so we watched how people were behaving and noticed the atmosphere at the beginning of each part of the session in order to approach the work in the most appropriate way for that moment.

Although our work is not intended as therapy it did often have a calming effect and the boys were able to express ideas and feelings without being judged.

As arts practitioners we have over many years developed an ethical framework within which to operate in a safe, respectful and sensitive way. We are always conscious of the potential for this work to trigger bad memories of conflict, persecution and abuse so we intentionally keep all the references in the story, and during the devising and improvisations, fictitious. Also setting the story in a fictional time long ago, in a non-specific place and incorporating fantastical elements like 'the three-tailed wolf that turns into a man' kept the work in make-believe. While these fictitious parts of the story kept the content removed from everyday life, the larger themes of cooperation to overcome difficulties and resisting the influence of the wolf-man have direct parallels with life here and now. Space is also opened up for them to contribute artistically in a way that draws on their own artistic impulses.

Whatever the reason for arriving in the UK, whether as an economic migrant, a refugee or asylum seeker, being new to this country requires adapting to a different and often

challenging environment. Adapting to new ways of living and behaving in a country with different cultural perspectives and social priorities requires flexibility and confidence. All young people in our schools are expected to cope with ever-increasing ethnic diversity and to adapt in positive ways to these fast-changing social dynamics.

Resilience is a term that often crops up in reference to refugees, especially in education. Positive self-esteem and a sense of peer support that comes from working in groups through artistic forms may strengthen resilience and help young people to feel more equipped to find the confidence required to adapt to their new environments.

Raising the profile of the group by making the film which presents them as skilled performers telling a story devised by them, may help to overcome some of the isolation new arrivals might experience. The positive impact on the wider school community and on participants in particular of being seen as able, engaged and trusted individuals could have a lasting effect on perceptions of them and their own perceptions of themselves.

Evaluations of success

Finding the terminology to adequately describe the unique dynamic of a particular group where understanding, communication and shared creative experiences combine to advance awareness on numerous levels simultaneously is very challenging. In the terminology of education, participants get a whole range of positive gains from this work and because our arts process takes place in an educational setting, it's perhaps appropriate that we measure and refer to the work using this terminology of learning outcomes.

The importance placed on these outcomes and their order of priority will vary depending on personal and professional outlook. From a social perspective for example, cooperation and mutual understanding would be highly valued.

Then again from a language development point of view acquisition of English vocabulary and the chance to practice speaking would be seen as most beneficial. The fact that learning English is an educational requirement did not make it central to our work, but rather was a positive learning outcome afforded by the artistic and creative engagement. I would maintain that the atmosphere of trust and safety we encouraged made the learning of English, and in particular the broadening of vocabulary, easier than in some other more conventional classroom situations.

One participant commented that *'After this drama I think I can speak with other students and in lessons – I like to see that I am not the only one doesn't speak English.'* Also modelling through Teacher in Role, creating compelling dramatic situations that invited the participants to speak, created real whole group speaking and listening interaction.

Expression of individual personality, through demonstrations of the innate creative skills of play and imagination that help to foster communication and understanding are at the core of our work. The positive interactions that were encouraged throughout the development of the project resulted in many beneficial and unexpected outcomes that helped to facilitate learning and enrichment. Promoting higher levels of thinking, both creatively and artistically, by encouraging communication of ideas and interaction in new ways that overcome social and language barriers, provided pupils with experiences outside the usual curriculum that were challenging and enjoyable.

Offering a unique experience that boosts confidence, self-esteem and expression in a supportive and understanding environment stretched pupils' notions of their own abilities and helped them to discover unexpected abilities and strengths. Working with artistic forms promoted problem solving, creative thinking, self direction, self expression and critical thinking.

There were many opportunities for students to take risks with new ideas requiring different or unusual thinking. The work was inclusive with participation and the engagement of all participants as a core aim, developing cooperative learning skills through small group

work helping to maximise student's interest in their own and in each other's learning.

Annette, the group's EAL teacher noted how cooperative learning skills practiced during the project were applied later in the classroom. Other learning techniques practiced in the sessions, for example group presentation skills, discussions in groups and pairs work, were also transferred to other subjects.

Settling in?

The breadth of experience of education that young refugees and other new arrivals have prior to entering the British schools system can range from very formal to non-existent. I believe that induction programmes are vital in providing a bridge into the British school system and as preparation for the confusing and often challenging world of school life.

The fact that many such programmes are now closed or under threat of closure seems to reflect a wider insensitivity to the many difficulties faced by young migrants and refugees in particular. Isolation and rejection among young people occur for many reasons. I would suggest that large class sizes, time pressures on teachers already doing their best to manage a diverse intake and heavy work-loads, do not allow for the time that is required to address the social needs of any student, not just the refugees.

When early stage bilingual learners are placed directly into mainstream classrooms with only basic statutory learning and language support[8], settling into a new system and coping with an additional language can easily be hindered in the challenging and competitive environment of a mainstream classroom. Frustration at being misunderstood and of misunderstanding can lead new arrivals into conflicts and possibly label them as trouble makers.

Positive experiences of working in groups and expressing ideas are essential in increasing confidence and promoting resilience and therefore should form a significant part of the learning at the start of a school career.

The success of this project is perhaps an example of how a participatory arts process can foster positive experiences, creative thinking and artistic expression as part of social learning which gives rise to confidence, motivation and self-belief. It raises another equally significant and perhaps deeper point that when young refugees feel secure in their surroundings, they practice speaking English more often, enter into social negotiations and interaction more frequently, and maybe consider wider options for themselves as learners and citizens.

I would hope that educators can see the potential for learning and the considerable social value this type of arts process has to offer, and that those responsible for the successful integration of early stage bilingual learners pause to reflect on the negative impact that closure of interim support systems has on the whole school community.

Stas Smagala May 2008

A HEAD TALLER: Drama as an Additional Language

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[8] National Curriculum statutory inclusion statement May 2008. 'Schools must: set suitable learning challenges, respond to pupils' diverse learning needs, overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils'.

Drawing a Line

A discussion of ethics in participatory arts with young refugees

Stella Barnes is Head of Arts in Education at Oval House Theatre in Kennington, South London where she develops partnerships with non arts sector agencies to deliver arts projects with marginalised young people. In 1999 she set up the Voices project for young exiles at Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre and in 2004 set up Living Here at Oval House, a participatory arts project for young people who are newly arrived in the UK.

Stella delivers national training in using the arts with young refugees and asylum seekers for Artswork, the national youth arts development agency. She was also commissioned by Artswork to write their guidance document for using the arts with young refugees and asylum seekers. In 2001 she created Flight Paths, a London-wide arts-in-education training programme for exiled artists to provide training in arts education practice for exiled artists.

I am sitting in the middle of a row, about half way back in a small narrow theatre waiting for a play to begin. The programme says the play is the result of drama workshops with a group of refugee women in east London. One of the two directors steps onto the stage and tells us that we are about to see a dramatisation of the true stories of the two women who are about to perform. She tells us that one of the women escaped from the genocide in Rwanda and the other from persecution in Uganda. The lights dim and the play begins.

On stage a woman begins to tell her story; she describes her life, her friends, her family and the terrible things that happened to them. She moves around the stage showing us through gesture and through movement the most painful events of her life. There is a scene with an English actor playing a character who is searching for the woman, she walks across the stage in a menacing way, shining a torch into the faces of the audience, saying *"Where is she …"*

As the story continues we hear of terrible atrocities witnessed by the two women. They are chased by soldiers, they clamber over dead bodies, and they hide in fear of their lives.

After about twenty minutes one of the women stands in the centre of the stage and begins to speak about the loss of her children. She speaks a few lines of a monologue and then her voice begins to crack, she is finding it hard to speak. She makes eye contact with the director at the back of the theatre and there is silence. I hold my breath wondering what is about to happen. Some unspoken communication passes between them and the woman attempts to continue the monologue. She takes a breath and struggles through the next few lines, her voice cracks again and she begins to weep. I am feeling deeply uncomfortable. The woman stops speaking for a moment and looks at the director again. *"I can't carry on"* she says. *"Yes you can"* says the director, *"You've done it before".* The woman pleads with the director repeating her statement, and then the director speaks to the audience. *"I am sorry about that. She'll be okay, she's done it brilliantly before. We'll carry on with the play in a minute."*

After a pause the play continues. I sit there feeling trapped in my seat, I want to leave the theatre, I want the play to end, I want the director to say *'We are not going to continue the play, we need you to leave'.* I want to have the courage to say something to stop the play myself, to prevent the woman from having to

go through this painful experience, but I don't. I consider walking out, aware that to achieve this I will have to clamber over several people and draw attention to myself. I know immediately I cannot leave, I cannot punish the two women, risk them thinking my disapproval is directed at them. But I do disapprove, I disapprove very strongly. I shift in my seat and look around me to see if other people feel like I do. A colleague sitting next to me looks at me and bites his lip.

The play finishes and I make for the exit as quickly as I can. I wait outside for my colleagues to find me. We gather in a small group stunned into silence by what has taken place. It takes a little time for us to establish that we are united in our disapproval and shocked by what we have just witnessed.

Over the next few days I find myself wondering about what I saw and why it disturbed me so much. The women were not playing characters, they were themselves. What we saw was not fiction, it was life re-enacted. The emotion, the trauma was real. For many days I continue to be troubled by the experience, by my own discomfort at sharing in a woman's sorrow, witnessing her pain re-lived for an audience. I wonder what the theatre company was trying to achieve and how they worked with the women to create the piece. Most importantly I wonder about the ethics of mounting a piece of work like this. I think about my own artistic practice with young refugees, the ethical choices I make and the choices I offer the young people with whom I work.

The experience I have just described

happened in 2004, five years after I began running arts projects for young refugees. I have continued working with refugees ever since and have often come across artistic process that I find ethically challenging.

In many projects for young refugees artists ask the young people to use their life stories as resources in the project. They ask them to play out real life in drama. They call the project – *your story, your journey, memory box.* I wonder whose agenda they are serving by framing projects in this way. The message they give to participants is: *I want to know your story; I want to know something you remember from the past; I want to know what home means to you; I want to know what happened to you; I want to know your journey; I want to know your trauma.* The artists set themselves up as recipients of stories. One artist I met even described herself as a *'story listener'.* This is a strange relationship, where the artist becomes the miner of stories.

The majority of us who enjoy the privilege of living in a relatively safe country have a curiosity to know the hidden stories of refugees, in fact of anyone who has suffered. We have a desire to know what happened to them and we feel privileged if someone chooses to disclose their story to us. However making these stories the focus of participatory arts projects is something that I avoid. Refugee stories make exciting art, they provide powerful material for theatre but I believe that the urge to exploit these stories should be resisted and should have no relation to the delivery of arts projects; the more we resist this urge, the more we are able to shift our perspective and see the participants as equals, partners and as *'us'* rather than *'them.'*

In the ten years since I began my work with young refugees there has been a huge increase in arts projects that either engage with refugee participants or are themed around refugee/asylum issues. This rapid growth is not surprising considering the recent and current global political context, however there has been a predominance of projects that are short-term and only a few that have been sustained over a number of years. Questions about ethics have been neglected partly

because many practitioners haven't built enough experience or enough of a body of work to reflect on and also because there are very few practitioners who have chosen to or been able to sustain their connection to this work long enough to be able to participate in critical debate. In addition there has been a lack of an over-arching national strategy for arts that engages with new communities.

Since 2004 I have managed the education department at Oval House Theatre in south London where I established Living Here, an arts project for young people who are newly arrived in the UK.

Oval House Theatre Ethos/Ethics

In the artistic team of the Oval House Theatre Education Department we have a shared philosophy and methodology for working through the arts; in particular for using drama with young people. We use role-play, person-in-role, forum theatre, story telling and physical theatre techniques to engage young people in an emotional, intellectual and physical way. It is inclusive, enjoyable and highly creative and crucially there are no wrong answers.

We have seen the efficacy of this way of working in many contexts. It has proved successful with young people in mainstream schools and special schools and with those who are marginalised or excluded from formal education. Our methods have been particularly successful with groups of young people who have recently arrived in the UK.

On the Living Here project we work with young people who are new to London; they speak over 20 languages but when they begin working with us many do not speak English or each others' languages; many of them have experienced the trauma of war, separation and loss and for most of them their lives are further complicated by government bureaucracy and poverty.

The results of the work have been inspiring and the young people who have taken part have remarked on how much they enjoy the sessions, how drama has helped them to make friends, to understand and to empathise with each other and to engage with the world around them and with the particular challenges that they face.

At Oval House we have developed a very strong ethical framework for our work with young refugees. We have made a clear choice not to focus on 'refugeeness' or to frame the young participants with an identity that they have not chosen. We have found it especially valuable to acknowledge the young people as who they are now – young Londoners – who have the potential to build a positive future here and have something to offer.

One of our ethical considerations is to make a long-term commitment to the young participants. Young people need quite a long time to develop and build their skills. There are many projects for young refugees that only last for a few months or even a few weeks. We acknowledge that young refugees do not have many opportunities to socialise, feel safe, be themselves, build their creative skills and express their ideas. In our view it is un-ethical to offer this for a short term and then walk away without an exit strategy.

When planning our work we focus very strongly on five elements:

Choice – ensuring that young people are given clear choices about the content of the work and within the process, so that they become partners in the process rather than recipients. This means that the creative outcomes are not defined before we have established a relationship *with* not *for* the group. We do not set themes for the work because we want to do this with the participants. Many other projects theme their refugee project before they recruit participants according to the young people's *refugee-ness.* We don't do this because we believe in young people defining how they want to use the creative process and how they want to identify themselves and be seen by others.

Respect – many of the young people we work with have little or no experience of interactive group work when they join us and many have not had an opportunity to be in cross-gender, mixed cultural groups. We work through the creative process to develop an understanding

of the respect necessary for the work to be successful and as facilitators we model respect for each other. We indicate that we have the same expectations of them as they can have of us.

Equality – many of the participants have lived in contexts where there is little concept of an equality framework, where it is acceptable to be directly racist or sexist, for instance to say that girls do not need to go to school. Often the participants express views that contravene our equalities framework. We have a blame-free approach to this and acknowledge that changes of attitudes can be slow and that the issues are very complex for the young people. We feel a duty to support the participants to gain an understanding of the equalities framework that underpins our work and that they can expect from Oval House and from other organisations/institutions/ individuals – what their rights are. Again we model this through the artistic process. Helping the young people to develop an understanding of and commitment to an equalities framework has been crucial in the development of the work and in the young people's integration into life in London.

Safety – our concern for the young people's emotional and psychological safety means that we carefully assess our work in terms of the creative and personal risks that we might be asking young people to take. We never *require* participants to draw on past experiences as material for the arts process, preferring to focus on the present or future if the work is related to reality; or on metaphor, symbolism, folk tale etc. as a way of protecting young people from accessing potentially painful memories.

Tutor competence

We are acutely aware that our project is an arts project – not therapy – and ensure that the delivery team understands this distinction. (We do however acknowledge the positive therapeutic results of the work we do.) We have made a commitment to disseminating our practice through training days, and we support our artistic team through weekly de-brief sessions, quarterly evaluation meetings and through offering them training opportunities. As a team we regularly assess our work against our ethical framework, share skills and plan new strategies together. Members of the team that deliver the Living Here project have several years experience of working with young refugees.

Oval House support new people to develop skills and expertise through a commitment to co-facilitating, so that facilitators who are new to the work benefit from working with those with more experience. We run a wide range of training courses for arts practitioners, teachers and university students and offer student placements, volunteering opportunities and engage apprentices to shadow the workshops.

The Risk table and how it came about

In the ongoing development of the Oval House Ethical Framework the exploration of safety has become the most significant and possibly the most contentious area for us. At a meeting with other artists working with refugees in 2007 three artists from Oval House, including me, began to ask some questions about risk. We wanted to open some debate about requiring young people to take risks in arts projects, whether artists thought that asking young people to take risk could compromise their emotional and psychological safety. After some wide-ranging discussion an artist said *'Why are you so scared of risk? After all you must take risks to be creative!'* This comment worried me. It prompted me to question my work and wonder if perhaps my recent work with young refugees was too cautious; whether I had actively limited their creativity through my concern to make the work safe.

Later I realised that the artist who made the comment and I were talking about different kinds of risk. He was talking about *creative risk* and I was talking about *personal risk.* I knew that I needed a way to explore this with other people to enable a separation of the two. A few weeks later I was due to run a training day about balancing safety and risk in arts projects with young refugees and devised the table below. The

The Risk Table

5 HIGH CREATIVE RISK	Making and sharing art that is entirely fictional				Making and sharing art that directly references personal stories
4					
3					
2					
1 LOW CREATIVE RISK	Group games Not exposing Fun Laughing Building confidence				Disclosing of personal stories Talking about past trauma
	1 LOW PERSONAL RISK	2	3	4	5 HIGH PERSONAL RISK

table enables us to map our artistic practice against the level of personal and creative risk in each activity and approach. Each planned activity can be placed on the table according to the requirement of risk. For instance an activity that required a young person to tell a story to the group about their journey to the UK is potentially a big emotional risk, however it is not a creative risk, in fact there is little or no creativity involved. This activity might be placed as a high personal and low creative risk.

The table enables us to see that there are many activities where participants can take creative risks, perhaps starting at a low level of risk and slowly building the level of risk as they build their confidence. The level of creative risk can become very high but it is not reliant on personal risk.

I agree with my colleague who said *'you must take risks to be creative'* but I question the necessity to require personal risk – the level of personal risk must be a choice that young people make.

We use the risk table to grade planned activity according to potential risk and to reflect on activities already delivered. We attempt to build **creative risk** slowly and through consultation with young people, starting at a low level of risk when groups are new to the UK, new to group work and new to drama/arts practice, and introducing higher levels of risk when groups have built their confidence. We do not require that groups or individuals take **personal risks,** however they may choose to do so if they wish.

Occasionally when our project team have been running drama projects a group are working together doing some spontaneous drama improvisation and there is a 'spillage' – a whole lot of real life stuff suddenly spills out and we are faced with a moment of high tension and fear in the group.

'The bombs are falling, quick we have to hide.'
'My uncle is dying ...'

It is not our plan for this to happen and how we handle this moment is crucial. It is incredibly complex. Do we say *'Is this an okay moment for you?' 'Do you want to make this into drama?'* Do young people know how to answer? Do they know what we want them to say? Are they answering for themselves or for the person whose moment of real life is 'out there'? These moments of 'spillage' or 'unlocking' happen out of the blue.

It can be very disturbing for a group to hear about other people's traumatic experiences especially if other participants have lived through similar circumstances. In the heat of a moment young people may not be equipped to make choices about what they should or should not disclose about their past. They may not know how to measure the emotional consequences. But we do not ask our young people to step into a space where there is an expectation that real stories will be explored. We act as facilitators – introducing or reintroducing the young person to the joy of working creatively and doing it in such a way that they are able to achieve success before they have learnt much English. Drama processes with young people are not – or should not be – about real fear. We are dealing with fiction and fiction has many features that can distance material and protect us from real pain.

Our intention is to offer opportunities for young people to be themselves, in a safe environment with the support of adults and most importantly to enjoy themselves. A recent study: **The emotional well-being of**

unaccompanied young people seeking asylum in the UK by **BAAF – Adoption and Fostering** in 2008 backs up our approach:

'Research indicated that young people responded better to having social activities that kept them busy and what mattered to them most is to be supported by adults that were approachable, non-judgemental and empathetic rather than just specifically trained councillors and mental health experts.

'Caring adults that featured regularly in their everyday lives were better able to develop supportive relationships that enable them to begin to explore difficult emotional issues and to identify when they need additional help.

'The need to keep busy, distracting themselves from thinking about sad things, came up again and again in the discussions with young people. Many people cited being part of a sport or arts activity as a means of helping them cope with sad memories and anxieties. This was a way of escaping and helping them not to think about their past lives and difficulties.

'Having distractions such as sporting or leisure/arts activities and spending time with friends or studying all appeared to promote a sense of well being and attachment for young people.'

When young people feel safe they may take creative risks and sometimes personal risks; they may explore and play out things that they cannot or have not yet worked through in order to begin to make sense of it. In this instance it is important to ensure the work is focused on **fiction:** fictional characters and contexts; so that the sharing of personal material can occur safely if the young people wish to share or explore it.

Exploring young people's personal trauma has more potential to damage than to empower, especially if not delivered by a trained art therapist (even then they tend not to work with real life stories but work through metaphor and symbolism). We need to make the distinction between fiction and reality, between the literal and the symbolic or metaphorical, the specific and the universal. Metaphor and symbolism allow for a creative transformation. The process of transformation does not water down the work or under-value the real experiences of participants but rather gives them a powerful communication tool that both protects their potential vulnerability and gives them the means to communicate to a broad audience. The process is empowering and deeply creative.

I am interested in working towards a partnership with participants, a context where the balance shifts from young people being *recipients* of the work to them being instigators of the work alongside arts facilitators. We as arts facilitators have knowledge, skills and expertise that are of value, the participants also have this but they have a different set of knowledge, skill and expertise. How we work with what each person brings is crucial in enabling a partnership between facilitator and participants to develop.

I believe we must create a context where the work can be led by the concerns and interest of the young people. The processes must be inspiring and challenging. With challenges and risks agreed *with*, rather than *for* the young people. In a true partnership where each person, whether they are a facilitator or participant, has equal value and an equal stake in the work, there is potential for the arts process to be truly transformative, for participants to make and provoke change through the work.