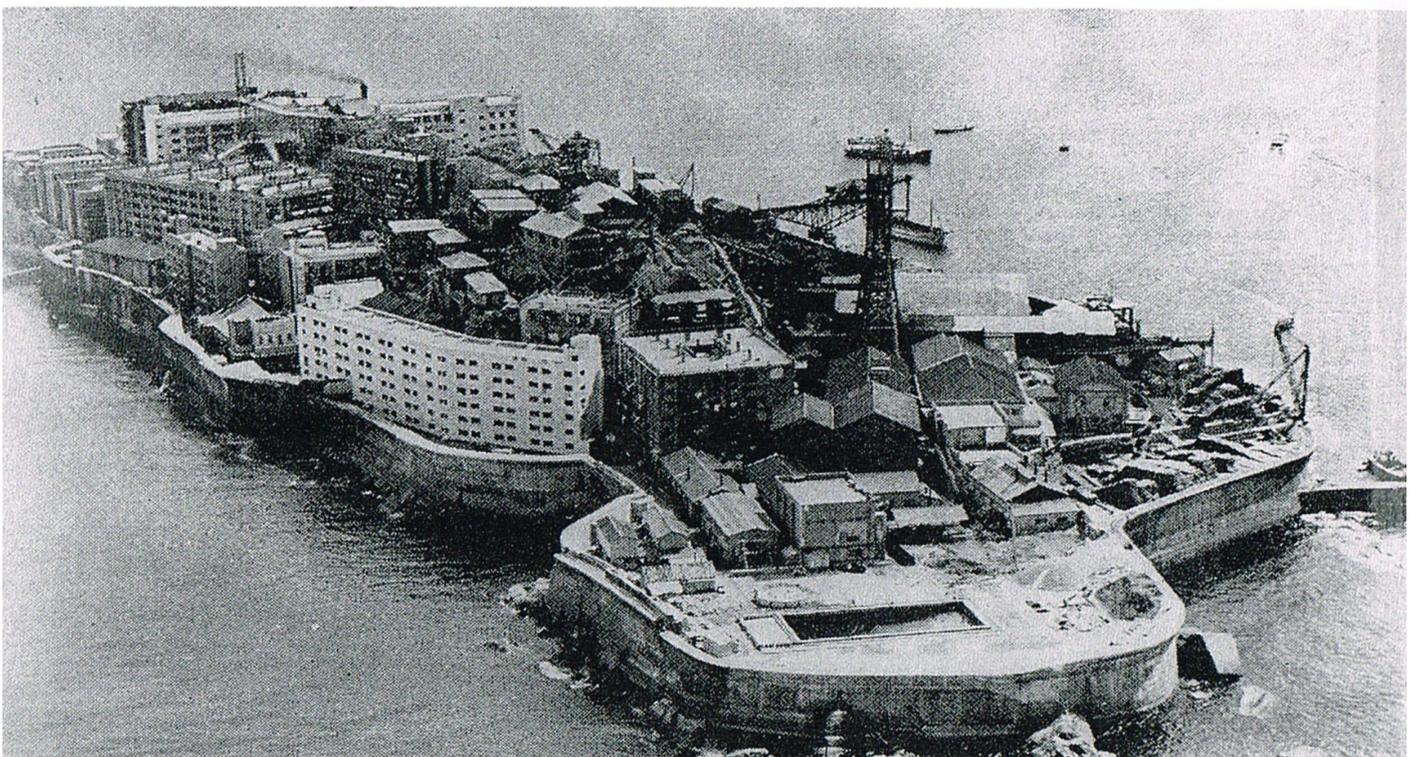


Care for the Future

Future of Ruins:

Reclaiming Abandonment and Toxicity on Hashima Island

Carl Lavery, Deborah Dixon, Carina Fearnley and Mark Pendleton



東西160m、南北480mのこの島に4,800人が住んだ（1960年頃）



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Participants

Prof Carl Lavery (Performance, Glasgow): Carl researches on performance and its relationship with ecology and environment, and is particularly interested in ideas of affect, infection, atmosphere and breathing.

Prof Deborah Dixon (Geography, Glasgow): Deborah has researched art/science collaborations in the UK, US, Switzerland and Australia, focusing on post-human life.

Dr Carina Fearnley (Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth): Carina has participated in collaborative art science research into the sensuous experience of geohazards and risk.

Dr Mark Pendleton (East Asian Studies, Sheffield): Mark is a cultural and social historian of modern and contemporary Japan with research interests in memory and trauma.

Lee Hassall (Fine Arts, University of Worcester): Lee is interested in the grotesque, parody, and notions of sanctified space.

Prof Brian Burke-Gaffney (Cultural History, Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science) is a long time resident of Nagasaki. He has published extensively on the history of Nagasaki in both English and Japanese.

Cover image: Hashima in 1960, from Akui Yoshitaka (1985) *Gunkanjima no kindai kenchikugun ni kansuru jisshôteki kenkyû* [Site Research on the Modern Architectural Forms of Gunkanjima], Tokyo: Tokyo Denki Daigaku.

Summary

The 'Future of Ruins: Reclaiming Abandonment and Toxicity on Hashima Island' Pilot set out to understand how a multi-modal mapping of a specific site – Hashima island (端島), situated off the coast of Nagasaki City in Japan, and once the most densely populated place on earth – might offer an alternative way of thinking about and representing an ecological future.

Bringing together the disciplines of performance studies, geography, geology, and Japanese cultural studies, the primary objective of the project was to investigate, through a joint field trip to the island, how 'human time' and 'earth time' overlap and necessitate an expanded notion of history. This meant that while the specificity of Hashima's location was always respected, we were interested in thinking beyond local and national boundaries. Instead we posited Hashima as a global site, an island that pointed towards the necessity of developing what we called 'a cosmopolitan eco-biography.'

In keeping with recent research in the arts and humanities, there was an important practice-based component to the project, and we were concerned to experiment with traditional modes of data gathering, and with visual and textual strategies for representing and communicating the findings of the fieldwork (<http://www.futureofruins.org.uk/index.html>). This has culminated in the creation of a cross-disciplinary performance piece, *Return to Battleship Island: Future of Ruins*, as well as a short film, topological maps and transects of the island, a website and blog, and academic outputs in the form of articles and a book chapter.



Photo by Carina Fearnley

The Field Site

Bought by Mitsubishi in 1890, and mined for coal, Hashima played a vital role in Japan's 20th century industrial and political revolutions. By 1907, the small rock reef had doubled in size as slag waste was levelled, ready for the construction of dormitories. Within this 1.2 square mile area people lived in and amongst concrete tower blocks, with food, water and fuel all shipped in by Mitsubishi. To provide shelter from typhoons, a steep encircling wall was built giving the island the appearance of a battleship riding the waves. A local newspaper reporter dubbed it 'Battleship Island,' or *Gunkanjima* (軍艦島). In the 1930s, and through to the end of World War Two, Chinese and Korean forced labourers were sent to this labyrinth-like site.

By 1959 the island had reached a population of over 5,000. Hashima was increasingly domesticated with the construction of roof gardens, as well as a school and playground, a hospital, cinema, shops, a pachinko parlour, post

office, a police station, a promenade, and a swimming pool.

The island was closed in 1974 as coal gave way to petroleum. There are, however, currently plans to transform the island into a UNESCO World Heritage site and to exploit its industrial past, and architectural remains, for tourism. If the bid is successful, Hashima will form part of an extensive and controversial Japanese 'post-industrial' heritage site.

This silent, naked and useless site – layered by trauma even as it was shorn of resources – has become viral. In *haikyo* (廃墟) tourism, the landscapes that intone Japan's industrial past become sites for visceral adventure and a pensive melancholia in the form of urban exploration. And Hashima, in similar vein to Detroit and Chernobyl, has become iconic testimony to the modern aspiration for progress, and the modern creation of ruins.



Photo by Deborah Dixon

Objectives of the Project

Working as a cross-disciplinary team our objectives were to:

- Critically interrogate the past and present narratives of Hashima's place in Japanese society, and in particular the rhetoric surrounding Hashima's status as a symbol of Japan's modernization in the 20th century.
- Argue for an alternative form of heritage experience that does not paradoxically hide a violent, exploitative past, but rather seeks to keep the 'wound' of the past open in the hope of producing an expanded and complex relationship with 'natural' and 'human' history.
- Explore how a new ecological future might emerge from a critical and creative encounter with the toxic ruins of Hashima Island.
- Investigate a new, creative methodology for cross-disciplinary fieldwork that would use performance-based methods to devise an eco-biography of a toxic, abandoned site.
- Experiment with alternative forms of communicating historical, geographical and scientific information that would be affective, imaginative and accessible to a wide constituency of possible users and audiences.
- Reflect on the feasibility of expanding this Pilot project and performative methodology to other toxic and abandoned sites on the planet.



Photo by Lee Hassall

Progress of the Project

Prior to the fieldtrip we applied for and secured additional funding from the Japan Foundation, Aberystwyth University and Glasgow University to support the making of a film on the project. The artist Lee Hassall accompanied us to the island and made two films while there. The first film (5minutes) is a short trailer documenting the field trip and is posted on the project's website. The longer film (30 minutes) is shown as the first installment of *Return to Battleship Island*.

Over the course of three weeks in Japan we located and spent time in key archives (including those located at the Nagasaki Prefectural Museum) and heritage/memorial sites (such as The Nagasaki City Takashima Coal Museum, the Gunkanjima Museum, the Oka Masaharu Memorial Nagasaki Peace Museum, and the Atomic Bomb Museum), visited the regional offices of the UNESCO World Heritage Group in Kagoshima, and made two trips to the island. We were aided in our research by our collaborator in Japan, Professor Brian Burke-Gaffney of the

Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science, who provided a lecture on the history of Hashima at the Thomas Glover Garden and Museum site. Professor Burke-Gaffney also arranged the main field trip to the island with the Nagasaki City Hall. Our project blog from this period (<http://futureofruins.wordpress.com>) has to date received over 2,000 page views from 22 countries. We also initiated a twitter feed, @AHRCFutureRuins, and built a substantial following.

On returning from the island we made and performed a collaborative 80 minute performance piece, *Return to Battleship Island*, and have been working on various academic articles and book projects. The performance piece weaves the findings of the researchers on the project, and is designed as a portable, cultural product that can be toured and performed by at least two members of the team depending on availability.



Photo by Lee Hassall

Initial Findings

The findings that emerged from the Pilot project center around the following concepts and methodologies that sometimes combine and at other times rub up against each other.

Futures

The idea of an ecological future is fraught with difficulties and complexities, especially when human history is refracted through earth history (Serres, 1995a; Clark, 2011). The focus that geologists and earth scientists bring to geo-time or deep time has the capacity to produce a kind of historical fatalism as we hurtle, mindlessly, towards ‘a world without us’ (Weisman, 2008; Chakrabaty, 2009). This is seen in various ‘dystopian’ narratives that sometimes appear to celebrate the eradication of the human species with a misanthropic joy. The eco-critic Gregg Garrard has recently called this type of cultural work ‘disanthropy’ (2012). As opposed to the artists and theorists of ‘disanthropy,’ we were interested in imagining a future history of Hashima Island that, while refusing to conform to

human desires, was nevertheless committed to ideas of sustainability, environmental care, hospitality, empathy, and intergenerational justice – what Ghosh terms the claims of the ‘unborn’ (2012). To do this, we have figured a future for Hashima that is always haunted by the violence of the past.

Ruins

As Tim Edensor (2005) has pointed out, ruins are often seen as cautionary or celebratory on account of their dual temporality. That is, the sense in which they look forward and backwards at the same time. Like Edensor, we sought to develop an alternative approach to ruins that would not fetishise or seek to conserve them, but on the contrary would express a posthumanist sensibility. Hashima is currently a part of Japan’s 2015 bid to UNESCO for World Heritage status. This is premised on the need to preserve the buildings and associated landscapes of production associated with Japan’s modernization. In taking a critical approach to

this heritage thinking, and similar preservationist logics, we found the ruin to be an opportunity for reconfiguring our current attitudes to temporality and transience. For us, the ruins of Hashima are futural on account of their materiality; that is, the way in which they show a world in a constant state of autopoietic transformation and movement.

Heritage/History

Our fieldtrip and archival research confirmed that Hashima is a contested historical terrain, both in terms of a proposed industrial heritage site (Kobayashi et. al, 2008; Sakamoto and Gotō, 2009) and a location of unresolved colonial trauma (Nagasaki Zainichi Kankokujin, 2011). This contestation around history and heritage relates to Hashima's centrality in three periods of rapid, national historical transformation - Meiji-era industrialisation/modernisation; colonial and decolonising processes pre- and post-1945; and late twentieth century economic decline. Rapid change disturbs the notion of a settled past and requires, as Brumann and Cox have argued, 'aspects of the cultural environment [to be] separated, reified and exhibited according to the aesthetic and political criteria for evaluating "heritage"'(2010: 3).

In Japan, dramatic changes in earlier historical periods led to an embrace of tradition against the onslaught of modernity. Similarly, the rapid decline of Japan's economic dominance has prompted the separation, reification and exhibition of declining industry and their ruins as heritage. Hashima's 'heritage' value conflicts, however, with the memories (and history) of the island's role in the Japanese imperial project. Through this scoping project, we have sought to find ways of bringing these conflicted pasts into dialogue with each other so to allow an alternative theory and practice of heritage to emerge. Importantly, such a project does not foreclose discussion of difficult histories, but

rather investigates new critical and creative methods for respecting them.

Eco-biography

Our attempt to map the island, to tell its story, showed the necessity of thinking in and through a series of temporal lenses that were attentive to the interpenetrative play of human history and earth history. An eco-biography is not simply about tracing human terraformations of the earth; it is about accounting for the dynamic and agential force of the earth itself (see Clark, 2011). Equally, it is about extending the notion of history outwards to take into account cosmic time in such a way that human exceptionalism is troubled, and that a new aesthetic relationship with elemental forces is developed (see Grosz, 2008).

Cosmopolitan ecologies

In contrast to extant work in literary studies and performance studies, where notions of localism and place-based authenticity have tended to dominate debates about ecologies (Heise, 2008; Morton, 2013), our archival work found Hashima within a nexus of global flows, economic exchanges and energy distributions. Hashima, then, performs a cosmopolitan ecology; it exists in relation to other abandoned and ruined sites.

Geo-Poetics

Importantly for us, all of these de-centering moments provide a sense not only of the complex inter-relations that continually exceed the enclosed geographies of the body, but also a sense of the geo-poetics manifest in the field. In looking to the complex weathering processes acting upon and with the sea wall, for example, we find that, as Myra Hird notes, 'Bacteria are Gaia theory's fundamental actants, and through symbiosis and symbiogenesis, connect life and matter in biophysical and biosocial entanglements' (2010: 54). Clark's concept of the geo is even more far-reaching; here, life evolves

through a 'succession of time-irreversible events which are in turn entwined in the no less-irrevocable movements of the world around it, all the way up to the level of the universe' (2005: 165).

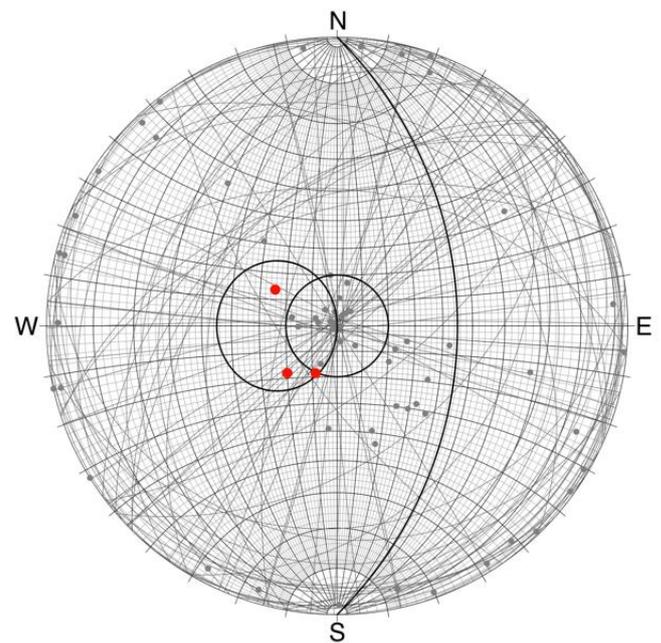
A geo-poetics also extends to the 'world-ly' expression in the *umwelt* of organisms, and their aesthetic expressivity. *Umwelt*, a term associated with the theories of biologist Jacob von Uexhull, is sometimes translated into English as a 'self-centred world.' It captures a sense of the importance of various facets of the environment for a particular organism – whether in the form of food, shelter, threat or navigation point – and the manner in which the interactions of organism and these environmental elements are thus laden with signification, a term more traditionally associated with uniquely human language systems. Hashima's geo-poetics become, in effect, a 'semiosphere' (Kull, 1998), wherein the signifying role of environmental elements – waves, for example – are more than a matter of mass and energy. They are dense with cues and prompts constituting the *umwelt* of ourselves, and the assorted fauna and flora found on the island.

Affective topologies

To tell the story of Hashima is not to stand aside from the materiality of the island and to map it as a distanced topographer; rather, it is to be immersed in an affective relationship with its surfaces and topologies. This research has much in common with the posthuman thinking of Bruno Latour (1993), Graham Harman (2007), Jane Bennett (2010), Elizabeth Grosz (2008), William Connelly (2011), and Rosa Braidotti (2013). Like them, we were concerned to trouble the human centered approach to environment and to highlight our interdependency on and mixity with the earth.

One technique we brought to bear to grasp something of the intricate and time dense surficiality of Hashima was to take a compass

clinometer into the field in an attempt to read the lie of the rocks, concrete and all, on Hashima. A compass clinometer is used to record the dip and slip of layers of rock, sedimented and folded over millennia, and to give some clue as to their condition of origin as, perhaps, a deep sea, a shallow marshy coast line, as well as the tectonic forces that compress and stretch these. By understanding the dip (the angle of tilt from the horizontal) and the strike (the direction of the dip) and modelling these on a stereonet, we can also speculate as to future geomorphologies.



Hashima's Stereonet. Produced by Carina Fearnley.

On Hashima, the buildings cluster onto a central rocky outcrop. None of the measured walls of the buildings are at 90 degree angles. Rather, they lie between 84 and 89 degrees. They are slowly unfurling away from the outcrop; and, they will tend to reach a tipping point together, and fall against the encircling sea wall.

Representation

As we went about our research into how best to create and perform a cosmopolitan eco-biography, and a geo-poetics, problems to do with indigeneity invariably came to the fore. What does it mean for instance to map a place where you don't belong? What gives you the

right to speak on behalf of someone else, particularly the victims of Japanese imperial violence on the island? How to avoid investing in yet another exploitative and neo-imperialist 'mining' of the earth's natural and human resources? While we can't claim to have solved these issues, we were not interested in speaking for or on behalf of the population of Hashima as such. Rather we attempted to place their stories into a larger narrative about the ecological violence inherent in modernity, imperialism, and industrialisation in such a way that our own representational strategies and methodological motivations were constantly questioned.

Creative Methods

The project invites further reflection on how creative methods and practices can be utilised in collaborative cross-disciplinary research. These issues are crucial to investigate since the research impact of the artwork does not reside, we believe, in simply seeing itself as a conduit or instrument for conveying information. Rather the research questions of the project are best served by thinking formally, that is to say, by finding methods for evoking an imaginative engagement with cross-disciplinary ideas and concepts. To use the language of Michel Serres (1995b: 19-21), we

were interested in fashioning an evocative performance that would express an 'ichnography' (the background or atmosphere of the island) rather than an 'iconography' (the stable and recognisable image). Our aim was to give audiences the space to think and to create connection in and through the construction of 'ecological images.'

Fieldwork

An important part of the research was to find methods for engaging in creative fieldwork that would allow the disciplinary affiliations of the researchers to infect each other. This was done by concentrating on the notion of performance, and in demonstrating how disciplinary specific research is carried out in the field itself. This sharing of the methodologies produced a 'contact zone' where team members experienced different practices that 'decentered them.' In the process, a generative space was opened up for arts/science collaboration to take place and to inform the subsequent work that team members produced. This work has formed a methodological prototype for the subsequent grant bids that have been submitted from the project to the AHRC.



Photo by Carina Fearnley



Photo by Lee Hassall

Outputs

Performances and Lectures

To date, we have undertaken 11 performances and lectures, each of which has extended into a dialogue with diverse audiences on the 'work' of the text presented, and mediums deployed. While the presentations have drawn on a collective pool of shared research, they adopt a different focus depending on the nature of the conference and the disciplinary affiliation of the speaker(s).

Responses to these performances can be found at: <http://www.futureofruins.org.uk/responses.html>

- 'Hashima 1,' Performing Monstrosity in the City, Keynote, Queen Mary University, London, September 2012.
- 'Hashima 2,' Association for Asian Studies Conference, San Diego, March 2013.
- 'Hashima 3,' Association of American Geographers, Los Angeles, April 2013.
- 'Hashima 4,' Department of Geography, Exeter University, May 2013.
- 'Hashima 5,' Monsters and the Monstrous Conference, Prague, May 2013.
- 'Hashima 6,' Post-Traumatic Landscapes Conference, Sheffield, May 2013.
- 'Hashima 7,' 'East Asian Societies in Transition: Challenges and Connections, Nottingham, September 2013.
- 'Return to Battleship Island,' Foundry Studio Theatre, Film and Television Seminar Series, Aberystwyth, October 2013.
- 'Return to Battleship Island,' Radical Space Conference, Keynote, University of East London, Docklands, October 2013.
- 'Came Dancing Cross the Water: The Ecological Image in Battleship Island', Performing Ecologies Conference, Central School of Speech and Drama, London, October 2013.

- 'Hashima - History & Heritage,' University of Edinburgh Asian Studies seminar series, November 2013.

We have also been invited to undertake the following:

- 'Return to Battleship Island,' Millennium Centre, Cardiff, December 2013.
- 'Rethinking Battleship Island,' Japan Foundation, London, December 2013.
- 'Return to Battleship Island – Performance,' Gas Gallery, Park Avenue, Aberystwyth, December 2013.

In 2014, we will present our research at seminar series at the University of Warwick, University of Manchester and University of Glasgow, and also at the 'Big Ruins Conference' at the University of Manchester.

Academic Texts

To date, we have produced 3 texts:

- 'Recuperating the Monstrous: Matter and Entropy on Hashima Island,' in the edited volume *Monstrous Geographies*, Inter-Disciplinary press, Oxford.
- 'The Baroque Melancholy of Hashima,' accepted for *Environment and Planning A*.
- 'Postcards from Hashima,' accepted for the *Monsters and the Monstrous Journal*.

We are currently preparing three articles:

- 'The Time That Is Hashima,' for *Cultural Geographies*.
- 'Sakamoto's Route: Material Memories and the Work of Interruption,' for *Memory Studies*.
- 'A Saturnine Ecology: The Monstrous Touch of Hashima,' for *Cultural Politics*.

We have also entered into discussion with the publisher Black Dog for a cross-disciplinary 'mapping' book on Hashima. We anticipate future

articles and chapters on dark tourism, wicked landscapes and site ontologies.

Maps

We produced three topological maps – 'Up,' 'Fall' and 'Wall' – and a transect of part of the island.

Grants

Building on insights drawn from this Pilot we have submitted the following:

- 'Empire's Islands: The Remaking of Imperial Time,' AHRC care for the Future Large Grants scheme.

This proposal extends key conceptual and methodological themes from the pilot project and seeks to use that as a model or prototype for investigating other islands that were caught in the industrialising mesh of global modernity.

- 'The Field of Art-Science,' AHRC's Collaborative Skills Development Scheme.
- Two submission to the AHRC's February 2014 Early Career Researcher Workshop.

Cross-Disciplinary Networks

As well as experimenting with cross-disciplinary fieldwork within the parameters of our own grant, we have sought to create relationships with researchers from different fields and to elicit responses from a wide range of audiences.

Following our presentation of 'Return to Battleship Island' at Radical Space Conference in October 2013, we have been invited by Dr Cecilia Sosa at the University of East London to be part of the British Academy International Partnership and Mobility Grant scheme looking at 'Commemoration, New Audiences and Spaces of Memory in Latin America's Southern Cone: Trans-cultural Dialogues in the Wake of Loss.' In March 2014, we will present our work in Buenos Aires and use our findings to run a series workshops exploring the relationship between ruins,

memory and trauma. We will also give a keynote on ruins and ecological futures at the University of East London, in June 2014.

In line with the stated objectives of the 'Care for the Future Scheme' we have also been successful in forging links with other researchers connected to the AHRC 'Connected Communities' Programme. The presentation of 'Return to

Battleship Island' at the Millennium Centre, Cardiff, for instance, is part of a 2 day symposium funded by an AHRC network grant led by Professor Karen Henwood exploring issues to do with place, sustainability and futures.



Photo by Carina Fearnley

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