Alone together, the social life of benches: how filmmaking can help to tell detailed and nuanced stories about encounters, exclusion and wellbeing in outdoor spaces.

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The Bench Project - Research Aims

- To test how making a film can tell detailed and nuanced stories about encounters, exclusion and wellbeing in outdoor spaces.
- To record the ways in which different people use, and think about how they use, benches and other small places of outdoor gathering.
- To explore how the interactions between users of benches may be acceptable or may cause problems.
- To find out how spending time outside is good for people, and.
- To understand ways in which public spaces and seating areas are controlled.

On a day such as this, while resting around this park, if you see a thousand faces then it is good for you.
My ancestors used to say that.
- Chad Kurnat, General Gordon Square, Woolwich

AHRF Connected Communities Call
Addressing the Challenges of Disconnection, Division and Exclusion
Innovation Grant - January–November 2015
The Un-Social Bench, and other urban micro-territories of encounter and intermediation
Project partners
Karen McInnes - Reader in Media Arts - Sheffield Hallam University
Cara Rollith - Lecturer in Landscape Architecture - University of Sheffield
Ben Rigby - Professor of Human Geography - University of Sussex
Community group leaders and collaborators
Robbie Jones: The Young Foundation
Dr Judith Street: Inner Cities Evaluation Project
Sanjana Bhalja: Woolwich
Sanjana Bhalja: Woolwich
RESEARCH PROCESS and FINDINGS

To test how making a film can tell detailed and nuanced stories about encounters, exclusion and wellbeing in outdoor spaces.
Filmmaking Approach
- Observational
- Portrai
- Poetic radio documentary
- Social sciences

Capture
Lived Experience
St Heller Open Space
Sutton

She sits sometimes for, oh this bench for some time. It's not as quiet as other places.

That makes them relax. Sitting like this is a place like this.

- Margaret, talking about her daughter, Elise, who has autism

At night, before anyone would be a bit late. They would sit all on each. It's gone. Old-fashioned space to fire chat.

- Meg

It makes me feel happy. Because I'm out with my friends. I'm not alone, like, just playing with my 5 dow and stuff.

- Meg

General Gordon Square
Woolwich

Some big site with a wall and looking, something new designed for there. Two big blocks of flats, inside and outside. We have a car, a space, a place, it come from the
the site.

- Meg

When this is all done, it's lovely. There are11 to 13 kids of.

But when we come here I watch the TV, or just go walking up on people walking and standing about".

- Meg

She's going from next to 13 years.

Mid-edit review sessions

This took place in each location – Sutton and Woolwich. An online link to the rough edit was also available in case contributors preferred this viewing option.

Sutton viewing
Film Grade
RESEARCH OUTPUTS

http://the-bench-project.weebly.com/research.html

http://the-bench-project.weebly.com/film.html