

GEOPOETICS

A mindfulness (*sati*) site-specific performance practice

Submitted by

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Abstract

In autumn of 2010 the phenomenon of 'Greek crisis' was aggressively developed to a new experience of Greece. As a theatre practitioner from Athens, the specific historical time pushed me to question big-scale narratives of identity, home and belonging-ness. I relocated my training outdoors. My aim was to create a site-specific performance process that investigates place as a psychophysical experience and the ways through which it integrates with the cultural practices embedded *in situ*.

The thesis builds around a Geographical/Buddhist framework where a cultural landscape epistemology outlined by Mitch Rose and John Wylie (2006) is realised through the practice of *samatha vipashyana*. The accounts of Rose and Wylie organise the examination of space as a body-landscape interrelationship. The Buddhist notion of mindfulness (*sati*) structures the investigation of the experience in space through theatre and dance disciplines *in situ*. The Buddhist concept of selflessness (*anatta*) permeates the performance practice *in situ* as a discipline of presence.

Designated as Geopoetics, the practice of thesis applies meditation practices of breathing and walking to explore site through movement, feeling and activity. It further extends such a process via the disciplines of Somatics, Grotowski-based actor training and Dilley's 'dance.art.lab'. It employs the notions of 'story' from the Six Viewpoints system and 'living myth' of Anna Halprin to formulate a devising process of site-specific performance as an enactment of interrelationship between subject(s) and space.

Geopoetics creates experiential containers within which the participant/ watcher is enabled to contemplate and re-examine her political, perceptual and emotional present. Based on its methodology of mindfulness (*sati*) notions of 'identity', 'home' and 'sense of belonging' are seen as individual or collective modes of attachment which altogether co-formulate the event of landscape.

The practice of Geopoetics suggests an inquiry of place through the body for site-specific devisers and performers. It also relates to the discipline of architects, geographers and planners as a practice which investigates space's contextual paradoxes and dynamics through the body.

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DVDs

This thesis is accompanied by audio-visual material. The DVDs are attached at the back of this *corpus* and are organised as follows:

For Chapter 3

Title: A. The Bridge Project

For Chapter 4

Title: B. The Geopoetics Project

For Chapter 5

Title: C. Performance Topophilia

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This work is dedicated to the *Dralas* of the world.

[bow in: feel-hold-give]

To me this seems beyond belief...if you take the time and look closely all nature has its own beauty...when that natural beauty is there I just loose myself in it...and then as if it is in a dream the scene just paints itself for me...yes I consume this natural setting...I devour it completely and wholly...and when I am through...the picture appears before me... but it is so difficult to hold it inside...

(Vincent Van Gogh in Akira Kurosawa, *Dreams*)

This was not a city. It was something like a firm proof of geometric theorem, like a dogmatic conception of metaphysical contemplation applied onto a dry rock which drew grace and beauty from the lie of a magical light. The light! The great light was radiating all around, going back to its transmitter, the sun, waving over the sunny roofs of the houses, the slopes of the rocks, the foams of the wavy sea. And disappearing to the open waters...

(M. Karagatsis, *The Great Chimaira*)

Preface

I am a Greek theatre artist interested in performances that position the experience of the body at their centre. As a practitioner, I am fascinated by those performance disciplines which investigate psychology through physicality. I work with the paradox of being the subject and the object of investigation converting the process of moving in space to a laboratory of lived experience. As a deviser, I move in the studio, being attentive to my physical and emotional body in order to cultivate an awareness of the meanings that arise in relation to space. I approach the formulation of content as a process of perceiving and being perceived. In this way, I create theatre pieces by setting in space intentions to explore and creating scores of physicality to accomplish them. Throughout my work, three questions continue appearing in my creative process:

- How could performance practice investigate one's own process of perceiving?
- How does content derive from form?
- When does space become a performance site?

Two major streams have been feeding my creative process. The first one involves the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinproche particularly the ones which relate Buddhist meditation to the artistic process. Chögyam Trungpa Rinproche is considered the establisher of Western Buddhism¹. Born in 1939 in East Tibet, he was recognised as the 11th Trungpa, an important teacher of the Kagyü lineage, one of the four main schools in Tibetan Buddhism². In 1959, due to the Chinese Communist invasion, he was forced to leave to India. From there he travelled to England to study comparative religion at Oxford University. In 1970 he moved to North America where he lived until 1987, the end of his life. Chögyam Trungpa Rinproche focused on delivering 'the teachings he had received from the most renowned masters of the East to the largest possible audience in the world' (Midal, 2005: 17). According to his biographer Fabrice Midal, his body of work contains the largest amount of published texts of Buddhism in English (*ibid.*).

¹ Prebish and Baumann state that 'the notion of the West denotes non-Asian industrialized nation states where Buddhist teachings, practices, people, and ideas have become established... [such as] Canada; the United States of America; Brazil; the various states of Europe; Israel; South Africa; Australia; and New Zealand' (2002: 5).

² Hence, the honorific term 'Rinproche' was added to his name which means 'precious jewel'.

In 1973, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche founded Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. Designed to provide education as a contemplative discipline this has now become the Naropa University which aims to ‘cultivate mindful attention and incorporate it to [the students’] lives, their academic education and their relationships with others’ (Hunter, 2008: 12). Independently of the discipline, each academic programme of Naropa incorporates ‘meditation and mindfulness practices, somatic techniques [and] experiential exercises’ (*ibid.*). It is based on a structure which integrates ‘intensive personal exploration with content-based study and community engagement’ (*ibid.*).

Within the contemplative framework of Naropa, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche develops a great body of teachings in relation to the arts and the creative process. He gave lectures and seminars on poetry, photography, filmmaking, visual arts, calligraphy and the theatre practice known as ‘Mudra Space Awareness’³. His main interest was to demonstrate ‘the relationship of artistic creativity, sensory perception and meditative experience to daily life’ (Lief, 2008: ix). Through his courses, each art form was presented as a skillful means of ‘direct expression’ (Hunter, 2008: 11). The creative process was disclosed as a contemplative discipline where one trains herself to use the ‘mind beyond self-consciousness’ (*ibid.*) in order ‘to see and express things as they are...to know oneself more deeply... [and] communicat[e] effectively with others’ (*ibid.*). Most of these teachings are found in the book *True Perception; the Path of Dharma Art* (2008) which constitutes a major source for the thesis⁴.

³ Mudra Space Awareness investigates the interconnection between body mind and space as a meditative discipline and hence it directly relates to the principal argument of the thesis: the exploration via the body of space/landscape as a mindfulness (*sati*) practice. However, it involves a stylized physicality in which I am not trained. Additionally, it has not developed a method of applying its training into a process of devising a non-script based outdoor theatre performance. Therefore, Mudra Space Awareness is not incorporated in the methodology of the thesis. For more on Mudra Space Awareness see Worley, 2001 and Smith, 2016.

⁴ In Buddhism the Sanskrit word *dharma* stands for the nature of all things, containing ‘not only the conditioned things and states but also the non-conditioned, the Absolute, Nirvana’ (Rahula, 1974: 58). The term in relation to the arts signifies “‘norm’ or ‘truth’” (Lief, 2008: ix). According to Trungpa, it concerns ‘the state before you lay your hand on your brush your clay, your canvas—very basic, peaceful and cool and free from neurosis’ (in Lief, *ibid.*). On the other hand, art ‘refers not only to the formal practice of art but to the artistry of life itself’ (*ibid.*). Joined as one term *dharma art* connotes the practice of ‘appreciating the nature of things as they are and expressing it without any struggle of thoughts and fears’ (*op. cit.* p. 2). Hence, Trungpa names it as ‘genuine art’ (*ibid.*) or ‘the activity of non-aggression’ (*ibid.*).

The second stream that informed my practice involves the post-modern performance lineage of American and European disciplines as well as Buddhist meditation⁵. In 2008, I was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to attend the MFA Theatre: Contemporary Performance program at Naropa University. During the two years of vigorous study, under the influence of the daily exercise of *samatha vipashyana* meditation, I was trained in the somatics and the Six Viewpoints technique by Wendell Beavers, Contemplative Dance Practice by Barbara Dilley, and Grotowski-based psychophysical actor training by Steve Wangh⁶.

The programme at Naropa encouraged a laboratory investigation of the creative process. The sitting meditation practice disclosed the process of performing as an interrelationship between the bodily experience and the thinking mind. The somatic and psychophysical training outlined the self as a physical instrument mapped by emotional patterns, personal histories and cultural associations. The improvisational and compositional disciplines revealed the creative potential of a non-linear narrative. These performance practices enabled my artistic process to work without knowing, to explore the hidden as well as the impulsive and to perform from a place of responding rather than doing.

The training at Naropa disclosed a framework for exploring the self with surgical precision and depth. It raised questions about my role as a woman and artist and revealed my cultural background and heritage as a definitive factor of my practice:

It is late in the evening. I am sitting at the porch of my house in Boulder. I am listening to some music as a small closure of my day. It is an eastern instrumental oud piece, a familiar melody that resonates in my ears as a sound coming from 'home' and stimulates in me an embodied sense of a deep intimate but indefinable connection. The music rises a wave of senses, feelings and sites. I am having an almost reflective emotional reaction. It is not (only) a feeling of homesickness but an embodied experience of a particular place. Like a string, literally and

⁵ I use the term 'post-modern' in its chronological sense. I am referring here to the dance and theatre practices which were developed in the second half of the 20th century out in reaction to the art disciplines of the modern era. For more on the specific practices see below.

⁶ These practices will be thoroughly examined in the main body of the thesis.

metaphorically, I feel attuned and synchronized (personal journal, May 2010).

I soon realized that my return to Greece will constitute the second phase of the training. The performance disciplines, newly learned elsewhere, will have to integrate with the cultural practices of my homeland. The occurring question of trans-location and translation appeared to me as the opportunity of a fresh gaze. I saw the training as a process of reflecting upon experiences which construct my cultural context. If the performance act constitutes a space/time continuum where known processes of perception may be suspended, the performance space could operate as an area of cultural inquiry and understanding. I was compelled to investigate Greek place as a performance site and experiment with the performative event as a communal act.

In autumn of 2010 I returned to Greece. I quickly understood that the formerly familiar place was going through major processes of change. The notion of the 'Greek crisis' was being diffused to sociopolitical life like an epidemic. Initiated by the Athenian riots of 2008, the 'crisis' was established two years later by the First Memorandum⁷. The financial bailout arrived with an austerity package of countermeasures⁸. Up to 2014 when the practice of the thesis was completed, there were two memorandums and nine austerity bills agreed upon⁹. The phenomenon of 'crisis' was aggressively developed to a new reality cementing a different, less buoyant, experience of place: 'The number of homeless...[was] risen to unprecedented levels...The crumbling infrastructures; the harrowing stories of foreclosures; unemployment figures reaching stratospheric heights; the emergence of extremist parties: all these events piece together a narrative of a social and economic apocalypse' (Chiotis, 2015: iv).

⁷ In December 2008, 16-year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was shot dead by two police officers in a central neighborhood of Athens. Riots broke across the city in protest. On the 2nd of May 2010 the First Memorandum was validated among the Greek government, the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For a complete timeline of the 'Greek crisis' see: <http://crisis-scape.net/resources/general-timeline> [15 August 2016].

⁸ Among others, the austerity packages involved cuts in the salaries of public employees, reduction of pensions, raising of taxes and reformations in the labor market.

⁹ The research projects of the thesis took place between 2012 and 2014. For more see next sections.

In May of 2011, in *Syntagma* Square, situated in the heart of Athens in front of the parliament, the Greek Indignant Citizens Movement emerged. Influenced by the square occupations of the same year in Spain, the movement was organized by the social media as a call to react to the new austerity measures¹⁰. Every day for a month people were gathered in the square to peacefully make public their resentment for the degradation of their lives. The night before the ballot of the measures, the police authority attacked in order to evacuate the square. Protesters resisted refusing to leave. Demonstrations and police riots clashes constituted the everyday reality of the city for days. People defended the square as their last stronghold. The center of Athens turned into a battle field.

The specific historical time pushed me to question large-scale narratives: what constitutes 'we' and this 'place' that we claim as 'ours'? It conflicted with my performance practice in the studio; how could I stay open to my creative process when everything around me was forcing me to shut down or react; where could my creative self and the reality of the place meet?

Dear Barbara,

Thank you so much for all your thoughts. I had a very weird and interesting experience in the center of Athens last week. I was in Syntagma square which had been a war-like zone for two days. The square was a mess with fires in burnt garbage bins and benches and chemical gasses all over the place... Riots were still happening but both of the sides were tired. You could sense that soon the night was about to end but people wouldn't go away. I was all alone in the square waiting for someone. I recognized that my feelings of fear and terror, even of anger and sorrow had gone. I had a new perception of my outer (that specific outer) and at that moment there, I started to make a little contemplative dance. It changed the meaning of the whole scenery to me. It felt like a cleansing process (Barbara Dilley, e-mail communication, June 2011).

I decided to start practicing outdoors. I went to the nearest mountain, located east of the city. From there, I looked at the city and it felt as if I was looking inside of me. It was the first time that I was able to relate with the reality around me. In this turbulent period of austerity, I saw the landscape as an ally. I recognized it as a genuine but tangible resource of culture which was allowing me to explore

¹⁰ The measures of the Fourth austerity package, the Medium Term Fiscal Plan were signed on the 29th of June 2011. They escalated the recession of Greek economy so rapidly that they were considered as a second memorandum

via direct experience events of connectivity rather than detachment. I became interested in the ways the outer physical space formulates individual and collective narratives of place. I became intrigued by exploring the presence of self, other and space as performative events of communion. I relocated my performance practice outdoors. My goal was to explore the narratives embedded *in situ* by applying my training as a laboratory of the lived experience of the Greek place. The challenge of organizing such site-specific performance practice in order to re-examine Greek culture formulated the research hypothesis of the present thesis.

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the bodily experience of the Greek landscape and investigates performative ways through which such an understanding may re-conceptualize contemporary Greek culture. It suggests a body-landscape performance practice as a way of examining narratives of the cultural present. This research does not aim at cultural analysis of contemporary Greece. It explores the specific locality and conditionality as a case study for building its practice. It uses the occasion of the outdoor theatrical event to demonstrate place as a movement between the experience of site and the cultural constructions embedded in its space. The thesis grounds its research on a phenomenological ontology of landscape and uses the Buddhist notions of selflessness (*anatta*) and mindfulness (*sati*) to explore the notion through a performance practice. It focuses on the following questions:

- How does a performance practice explore the experience of the landscape?
- How does such exploration generate material for a performance; what kind of narrative is formulated?
- How is a meditative movement exploration of the landscape organized as an outdoors performance; how is it associated with the political, perceptual, and emotional present of the place?

The practice of the thesis is located in the field of site-specific performance and argues for a holistic methodological model. The word 'holistic' stresses the intention of integrating cultural constructions relating to place such as identity, home and sense of belonging with the embodied and emotional impact of that

experience¹¹. The thesis claims that such a holistic approach is possible by interweaving a performance method with the practice of mindfulness (sati).

In the following section I determine the field of site-specific performance practice. I discuss key aspects of the work of four researcher practitioners in both site-specific theatre and dance. Through their work, I indicate the differences between these two related but different fields and situate the practice of the thesis. I disclose the salient principles as well as the missing points of these practitioners' processes which I further address with a methodology of a mindfulness (sati) practice of landscape.

Site-specific Performance Practice

Theatre and dance that use space as an organizing principle are usually classified under the label of site-specific. Chronologically, the term 'site-specific' was applied to theatre in the beginning of the 1980s (Wilkie, 2008)¹². It originated in the movements of minimal and land art of the 1960s (Kwon, 2002: 11- 31; Kaye, 2000). The main focus was to expand the object of sculpture into the environment by integrating 'the function of a place' (Carreri, 2002: 130) with 'the function of presenting' (*ibid.*). Minimal Art investigated ways of interaction between the art process and the space (*op. cit.* p.120). Land Art focused on the transformation of the experience of [the] space by creating new landscapes (*op. cit.* p.136,140).

The minimal art movement built a framework of interrelationship between the art object, the environment and the observer. Land artists devised strategies of re-

¹¹ Landscape ecologist Zev Navez defines as holistic inquiry one which examines the connections between components as a whole and is not concerned with the separate parts per se. He states that 'a system is always more than the sum of its elements, thereby becoming an entirely new entity as an ordered whole' (2000:11).

¹² This refers to the British scene of site-specific performances (Wilkie, 2008). In this section I examine practitioners originating in Britain. Disciplines of site-specific performance both theatre-based and dance-based, can be found in North America, Australia and continental Europe (Hunter, 2015).

signifying open space positioned between the urban and the natural, the private and the public, the functional and the deserted. Minimal Art questioned 'what exactly constitutes the work and where its borders can be drawn' (Wilkie, 2008: 90). It argued for an 'audience-specific[ity]' (*ibid.*). Land artwork used the body and its experiential means/capacities as ways of sculpting space. Walking became one of the most essential such means. These findings were appropriated by performance practices to devise activity *in situ*.

The field of site-specific performance consists of theatre and dance events that disengage from their traditional theatre space. It essentially entails the process of devising a piece for a specific site. As the field evolved, different grades of specificity are developed¹³. The common task of the various specificities entails the exploration and performance of an interrelationship between action, site and audience. To outline such a practice, I discuss the work of four site-specific artists. The first two, Mike Pearson and Cathy Turner come from theatre disciplines. They focused on issues of composition and structure. The second two, Victoria Hunter and Sandra Reeve, are movement-based artists. They investigate methods of narrating space through embodiment.

Four Practices of Site-specific Performance

Mike Pearson is considered a pioneer in the British site-specific performance scene. He started in the early 1980s as co-artistic director of the Welsh performance company Brith Gof¹⁴. At that time, Wales was going through a period of major de-industrialization. Pearson and the architect Cliff McLucas became interested in investigating the cultural impacts of such a historical shift by devising performances in non-theatre places. The company, whose Welsh name is translated as 'speckled memory', discovered a process of performance-making in large abandoned industrial buildings as an inquiring practice about 'cultural identities and social relationship' (Wilkie, 2008: 93).

¹³ See Wilkie, 2002.

¹⁴ Pearson initially studied archaeology. Since 1972 he has been practicing theatre collaborating with a series of theatre companies including Brith Gof (1981-1997). From 1997 he has been working in site-specific performance as a solo artist and researcher.

Derived from their practice, Pearson and McLucas argue that the site-specific performance is based on a 'host'-'ghost' relationship (in Turner, 2004: 373-374). The 'host' signifies the pre-existing use(s) of the place and the 'ghost' the generated performance event. Pearson claims that the 'here and now' specificity of the 'ghost' reveals the site as a time-space continuum from which all practices of signifying space become 'apparent and cognitively active' (Pearson, 1994: 152). The performance in situ interrelates with these practices and discloses their process of composing the concept of the 'host'. The performance highlights the site as a system of cultural structures which assign meaning to experience.

To perform within the contemporary city, village or a whole region, Pearson devises interdisciplinary frameworks for elaborating the host-ghost relationship¹⁵. One of his most established such frameworks derives from his book *Theatre/Archaeology* (2001) co-written with archaeologist Michael Shanks. The two authors determine the onsite theatre-making practice as an archaeological process of 'the contemporary past' (Pearson, 2006: 28)¹⁶. They define the performer in situ as the practitioner who works 'on and with traces of the past...in order to create something – a meaning, a narrative, a story' (Pearson in Turner, 2004: 378). Hence they define the site-specific performance as a practice which:

[...] attempts to restore an absent present, challenging 'the "taken for granted-ness" of recent experience', bringing into light that which has been left hidden, unsaid, thereby serving as a critical intervention for re-describing and contesting the exclusions and inclusions of experience that shape modern life (Pearson, 2008: 28).

Cathy Turner, a core member of the Wrights & Sites group, claims that the analysis of Pearson dismisses two important points¹⁷. It disregards the issue of

¹⁵ Some of the fields which Pearson has been integrating site-specific performance with are: social theory (Mark Auge, 1995), anthropology (Michael de Certeau, 1988), geography (Tuan, 1974; Cosgrove, 1984, Cresswell 2004) and environmental anthropology (Ingold, 2000).

¹⁶ The book examines three forms of integration of the two fields. See Pearson, 2006.

¹⁷ Wrights & Sites performance group is constituted of the artists Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith and Cathy Turner. It was created in 1997 in Exeter. The group is interested in exploring 'peoples' relationships to places, cities, landscape and walking' (misguide, 2016). In

embodying 'present, or presence' (2004: 378) and it positions the performer/deviser as being 'outside space, inscribing it, or deciphering [its] layers' (*ibid.*). Turner argues instead for a methodology of 'merging, of relationship, and of the dissolving of boundaries' (*op. cit.* p.389). She claims for a practice which happens 'between subject and object, inner and outer, imagination and reality' (*ibid.*) and considers all elements of place equally co-constitutive and co-productive. Turner recognizes such a practice in the activity of walking¹⁸:

On the one hand, the walker's identity is merged with the city, projected through the same imaginative play which allows the city to be introjected in turn. On the other, the walker emerges from the city, by discovering the boundaries between real and imagined, familiar and unfamiliar spaces. At the same time, new spaces and spatial relationships are produced by the new and unexpected spatial practices (games) that are provoked (2004: 387).

The act of walking materializes the interrelationship between the subjective experience and the cultural 'known' practices imposed in space. It weaves all narratives that are originated not only by 'the individual's experience of space but [also by] the shared mythologies of space that are also part of its significance' (2004: 385). Walking composes an above and overall narrative, a 'by the city of the city' (Smith, 2008: 95) account which the Wrights & Sites group designate as 'mythogeography' (2004: 385). It motivates the practitioner (performer or spectator) to participate in two ways: by physically and creatively integrating personal 'trajectories' (Smith, 2008: 107) with and within the city-scape; by co-formulating an experience in situ with other members of a group.

Similar to these theatre-based practices, 'site-dance' (Hunter, 2015: 1) aims to disintegrate the fixed meaning of a place into multiple ones¹⁹. The difference is that to accomplish this task, it focuses on the body and its experiential means and capacities. Victoria Hunter, a practitioner-researcher of the site-specific dance field, differentiates sites into urban and rural and argues for two processes of site-

this section, I employ Cathy Turner's research on the site-specific field which she grounds on the practice of Wrights & Sites.

¹⁸ Turner incorporated walking as an inquiring tool of space building on the practice of drifting in the city devised by the Situationists (Turner, 2004: 385).

¹⁹ Hunter creates the term 'site-dance' (2015: 1) to address the work and process of site-specific dance performance.

dancing²⁰. For urban environments in particular, she claims that the dance is “about” a place in which it is situated’ (*op. cit.* p.300). It uses ‘amplification’ (*op. cit.* p.302) techniques to uncover ‘site information, themes and histories’ (*op. cit.* p.303) and choreograph them into movement.

Hunter divides the experience of urban place into ‘external and internal “contexts”’ (*op. cit.* p.29)²¹. The external information refers to ‘physical and sensory space’ (*op. cit.* p.30) and the internal to ‘mental, cognitive space’ (*ibid.*). Their ‘two-way interaction’ (*op. cit.* p.29) creates an interrelationship which determines the perception in situ. The movement practice in situ investigates such an interaction. Hence, it takes place between the ‘sensory, kinaesthetic and emotional responses’ (*ibid.*) of the individual and the ‘architectural design, historical and contextual information’ (*op. cit.* 33) of the site. The site-dance is developed as an ‘awareness of “being” or “presence”’ (*op. cit.* p.98) in and with the ‘genius loci or spirit of place’ (*ibid.*).

In rural environments, Hunter claims that the dance is “of” the site’ (*op. cit.* p. 300). She explains that the ongoing transformation of the rural environment creates an ambiguity around its meaning and context. The practitioner has no other option but to move through her phenomenological responses. The rural practice uses “abstraction” processes’ (*op. cit.* p.303) such as improvisation and task to uncover modes of ‘being and dwelling’ (*ibid.*). It explores the ‘new-found experiences of self-awareness and potential ways of being-in-the world’ (*op. cit.* p.298). Hence, the rural site-dance performs movement that is ‘more personalized and less externally referential’ (*op. cit.* p.303).

²⁰ Victoria Hunter explores movement performances both in urban sites and rural places. Her work is based on ‘the body’s phenomenological engagement with space and place through a consideration of the individual’s corporeal, spatial and kinetic engagement with their environment’ (Hunter, 2015: xi).

²¹ Hunter interprets the act of embodying space through notion of spatial theory (Lefebvre, 1974), human geography (Tuan, 1974; Massey, 2005) and phenomenology (Ponty, 1962; Heidegger, 1962).

Sandra Reeve, an environmental dance researcher and practitioner, sees the contextual ambiguity of a rural site as a challenge and a resource^{22 23}. She argues that the changeability of open space is a manifestation of impermanence which connotes an interrelationship: 'by experiencing my changing body as part of a changing environment, I diminish the sense of a rigid boundary between my experience of 'self', others and the environment' (2015: 325). In this context, movement in situ becomes 'an intrinsic part of a wider set of systems' (*op. cit.* p.311) and its performance an experience of 'incorporation' (*op. cit.* p.312). It materialises, what Reeve defines as, the 'ecological body' (2008: 59): the body which 'perceives the moving world through movement and experiences herself as one part of a changing situation' (*ibid.*).

Reeve argues that in order for the dance in situ to become an experience of incorporation, it must manifest a "visceral, transformative and...experiential 'knowing'" (2015: 312). She claims that a movement practice which focuses on 'body mind and feeling' (*op. cit.* p. 310) cultivates a 'somatic awareness' (*op. cit.* p.316) of 'being present in the presence of the place' (*ibid.*) and devises material. Organised into a sequence of detailed actions, the material then formulates the choreography of the performance. Reeve argues that an outdoor dance performance cannot stand as 'a single, monolithic meaning' (*op. cit.* p.314). It needs to evoke 'a multiplicity of unexpectedly selected mosaics' (*op. cit.* p.315) of images, feelings and associations which compose 'patterns of significance and meaning' (*ibid.*). This is how the dance in situ constitutes an embodied narrative of place.

Summary/ Conclusion

Mike Pearson and Cathy Turner determine the 'sited' event as an interrelationship between performance, place and audience. Pearson creates

²² Reeve has developed an environmental movement practice called 'Move into life' through which she teaches and facilitates (2008: 8, 89). The training is inspired by the teachings of the Javanese movement artist Suprpto Suryodarmo (Prapto), the Buddhist practice of mindfulness (*Satipatthana*), and principles of environmental/ecological discourses such as the notion of 'incorporation' of Tim Ingold (1990).

²³ For more on environmental dance see Nigel Stewart's journal article 'Dancing the Face of Place: Environmental Dance and eco-phenomenology' (2010).

interdisciplinary frames in which he positions the sited event. Turner argues for open performative structures in order to experience it as an open system of relationalities. Both of them acknowledge the phenomenological input of the site as essential to their processes. Nevertheless, they encounter it as 'admittedly troubled' (Turner, 2004: 378). They admit to a sense of perplexity in examining place as a sensorial and affective impact.

In order to address this area in her practice, Turner has been elaborating structures of bodily interaction. However, these are organised in relation to the social and cultural context of a place. For example, in the book *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006) the involvement of the body is set either via the form of instructions sets (start, walk, look down, cross) or tasks (take photographs, swamp shoes, navigate)²⁴. They are methods which do not elaborate abstract physicality or emotion as means of exploring a site. Since these mediums are not recognised as manifestations of a place they do not integrate in the process of devising a performance/space interplay.

Without the input of the psychophysical experience, the interrelationship of the site-specific risks being imposed as a concept rather than a found performance/space interplay. This is evident in the site-performances in the rural environments. The cultural context of non-urban places may appear 'open' and abstract. The mechanisms of constructing meaning in them are not so much detected in the projected environment as in the experiential gaze which generates such a projection. Without an exploration of the presence of the site via sensorial and emotional stimuli, the site-performances take place as 'ready-mades' events of interrelationship. To illustrate my statement, I will use the structure of a performance which Pearson devised for the Welsh rural region of Ousefleet²⁵.

²⁴ I do not conflate Turner's practice with the work of Wrights & Sites. However, at this point I consider the mis-guide practice as a strategy that Turner follows as her own methodology as a core member of the group.

²⁵ The work of Wrights & Sites appears limited with respect to performances in rural environments. These projects either use the rural site as a performance space but do not integrate its experience in situ with the performative structure (*North, East, South, West* (2007)). Or, else, they are conceived as applications of the site-specific practices (i.e. drifting) already developed and elaborated in the city (*Possible Forests* (2007), *Forest Drift* (2006)). Additionally, some of the individual projects of the group's members are devised in rural places. However, they employ the

Pearson conceives of a 'large-scale performance' (2006: 213) in order to encounter the vastness of Ousefleet's rural site. He sets a non-reachable distance between the performance and its audience and builds his action as 'the tension between the event and the news of the event' (*op. cit.* p.210). Pearson uses the element of distance as a way of encountering a non-performative, rural space and creating an interrelationship on site. However, and because of his strategy, he excludes elements that formulate the in situ experience both physically and emotionally. His performance/space interplay does not elaborate questions of being and acting in the specific site. In this way, Pearson manages to relate to the topography of the place but not to its lived experience.

By contrast to the site-specific work of Pearson and Turner, the site-specific dance practice of Hunter and Reeve investigates the subject-landscape interrelationship in situ as an act of being present. They acknowledge the experience of the senses and feelings as equally salient components of the event. Nevertheless, Hunter discloses the site-dance field divided along the urban-rural distinction.

Urban dances concentrate on performing the *genius loci* (the spirit of place). Humanistic geographer Edward Relph argues that the term constitutes the third component of the identity of a place along with its physical setting and activity (1976: 47, 48). The concept of *genius loci* applies to the idea that a location is infused by its own inherent essence, independently arisen through its cultural projections and history. In urban site-dances, this implies that space has an intrinsic and innate meaning which needs to be found and captured. It represents place as a situated, fixed idea of a culture.

experience of the site to create a dramaturgy without necessarily incorporating the physicality of the place back to the performance of the narrative (*A Michael Chekhov Mis-Guide* by Persighetti and Smith (2005), *Crab Steps Aside* (2005) and *The Crab Walks* (2004) by Phil Smith, *Of Gardens* (2013) by Cathy Turner).

Stuart Hall finds the understanding of culture as 'placed' (1995: 180) problematic. Our tendency to fantasise a locality as 'a setting...or a 'scene"' (*op. cit.* p.181) derives from our own need to make sense of it and to differentiate 'those who belong from those who do not' (*ibid.*). In this context place 'acts as a sort of symbolic guarantee of cultural belongingness... [and] establishes boundaries around a culture' (*op. cit.* p.180). In that sense, I consider the urban dances based on the performance of *genius loci* unable to recognise the involvement of the mover in the signifying process of a site. They are context-driven and limited in transcribing their task according to *in situ* experiential specifications. They approach space with a cerebral and pre-decided manner.

On the other hand, site-dances focused on the experiential investigation of rural environments, hold the risk of being too subjective and ambiguous. In her account of site-dances in coastal locations, Hunter argues that the practice operates as a phenomenological approach of place (2015: 307). The movement performs 'an immersive encounter' (*ibid.*) with the site and "the individual experiences a temporary cessation of a socially constructed, urban influenced 'self'" (*ibid.*). This is what geographer John Wylie criticises in a phenomenological discourse of place²⁶. It 'neglects or even neutralises, broader critical questions concerning the cultural, political and economic forces' (2013: 59). As the thesis further argues, a subject is not only signified but also signifies a place. Hence, although the rural site-dance practice focuses on the *in situ* experience of the self, it disregards the reciprocity of that process.

Rural site-dances seem overly taken up with the autobiographical/ self-referential experience of place. They do not consider the cultures already embedded in space as practices of the moving body. And even if they do, they fall short of establishing a dramaturgy of interrelationship between the lived experience of the self and the cultural structures of the site. For example, in the environmental dance *Absence* (2010) taken place in St. Gabriel's Chapel in Golden Cap of West Dorset, Sandra Reeve integrates the embodiment of her own experience *in situ*

²⁶ For phenomenology and geography see next section.

with that of dwellers from different periods of the site²⁷. She invites the audience to witness her dance through a participatory structure²⁸. Through the presence of the moving bodies, both contemporary and past, the performance assembles different cultural frames in a common experience. However, beside the interest of a historical illustration of the place, it does not set a question which would justify their shared presence. The performance does not disclose a dramaturgy that will interweave its elements and their cultural connotation into a new disclosure and understanding, an ‘experiential ‘knowing’” (Reeve, 2015: 312) of the place and the present moment.

From the hitherto discussed work of the four site-specific practitioners-researchers, I highlight the points which will formulate the research practice of the thesis:

1. The exploration of the physical, emotional and mental experience of the body (-ies) in situ, grounded on the notion of presence as a dynamic, reciprocally active movement between the self and the environment.
2. The notion of the practitioner-site interrelationship not only as an experience but also as a dramaturgy found between the body and the cultural practices of the site.
3. The investigation of the urban/rural division; the approach of site not through a standardised classification but as an open-ended system of signifiers based on the experience of the present moment.
4. The discovery of a place through events of relationality and connectivity; through the revelation of inter-relational patterns between the self (-ves) and the narratives of place.

²⁷ Reeve’s movement personifies different inhabitants of the life of the site (i.e. a furze-cutter, a smuggler, an old woman ready to die, a bride and a mother) (stantonsaintgabriel, 2016).

²⁸ The score requested from the audience to listen to an MP3 with recorded historical texts about the site while Reeve was moving accompanied by a violin/viola player (stantonsaintgabriel, 2016).

The practice of the thesis integrates dance-based practices within a theatrical process of the site-specific field. Although it locates its hypothesis in the particular research area it does not completely exhaust itself there. The aim of the thesis is to structure an exploration of the body-space correlation as a *discipline of presence*. To that end it builds its outdoor practice through an interdisciplinary framework of Geography/ Buddhism. Concerning the body-space interplay, it uses aspects of Humanistic Geography to organise an examination of space through the body. Concerning the discipline of presence, it employs the Buddhist notions of selflessness (*anatta*) and mindfulness (*sati*) to structure an investigation of experience in space of theatre and dance disciplines *in situ*. The thesis creates an epistemological passage by questioning issues of performance practice through methodologies of Geography and practice as research notions of Buddhism.

Nevertheless, Geography is a western humanistic discipline based on the Cartesian model of observing and measuring a fragmented extraneous world. Buddhism is a system of theory and practice which is developed based on an epistemology of interdependency²⁹. Making leaps between philosophical traditions holds the risk of reducing one field for the sake of the other. It raises also questions of cultural appropriation in order to generate an interdisciplinary framework. However, as I further argue, the thesis does not aim to infuse the ontologies of the two disciplines. It intends to evolve into a methodological bridge interconnecting the Buddhist practice to the ontologies of landscape within the humanistic disciplines of space³⁰.

The theory and practice of the thesis were structured out of necessity to process and understand the geography of a place in crisis. In the years of the research

²⁹ The Buddhist epistemology of interdependency postulates that the process of knowing becomes systematised around the axiom that reality is the product of a being as it organizes itself in the world. Since the 20th Century CE in the West there have been epistemologies of interdependency (such as the Systems Theory and the Santiago Theory of Cognition) which separated themselves from the Cartesian methodologies. Both Frati Jof Capra (1939 -), a reformist of the Systems Theory, and Francisco Varela (1946-2001), the co-originator of the Santiago Theory, were influenced by the Buddhists doctrines.

³⁰ In the same manner, Buddhist notions in the thesis are used as analytical tools for the performance practice and they are not part of its vocabulary as such. For more see Chapter 1.

conduct Greece was found in a state of emergency. Familiar narratives of place appeared dislocated. The thesis built a performance praxis as a process of excavating meanings which still matter and challenging the sociopolitical impasse of the place. It structured a practice to suspend all narratives of place in order to explore (or restore) events of connectivity displaced by its devaluation.

In the thesis, the psychological and emotional impact of Greece in crisis was positioned around the city of Athens. Such a correlation did not happen by accident. I was living in the city during that time and I was experiencing directly all the sociopolitical shifts that this new status was bringing to the place³¹. In each project, there was a repositioning of the research practice in relation to the big city. In the first project, I worked to an island situated geographically opposite from Athens (see Chapter 3). In the second project, I isolated the practice in a small island of Southeastern Greece countryside (see Chapter 4). In the third project, I returned to the city to explore a new interrelationship with it (see Chapter 5). The ongoing examination of my connection with Athens as a geography of Greece in crisis constitutes a narrative line throughout the whole thesis and affects both its conduct and outcome.

The corpus of the thesis is divided in two parts. Part I involves two chapters which establish the theoretical frame of the methodology. Chapter 1 examines a phenomenological research process of place and landscape in the field of Geography and the Buddhist notions of selflessness (*anatta*) and mindfulness (*sati*) in order to propose a contemplative practice as an embodied method for interrogating place. Chapter 2 argues for the performance practices which organise and materialise such a method *in situ*.

Part II presents the three projects undertaken for each one of the research questions of the thesis. Chapter 3 corresponds to the first project. It establishes the practice of embodying landscape as a *samatha vipashyana* (mindfulness awareness) discipline. It discloses it as an inquiry of the interrelationship between

³¹ For more on the Greek crisis and Athens see Introduction and Chapter 5.

the body mind and space in the present moment. Chapter 4 discusses the second project. It delineates the embodiment of space as a psychophysical experience through movement, feeling and action³². It discusses the passage from the bodily investigation of landscape to the devising process of its event. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the practice taken place in rural landscapes.

Chapter 5 examines the third project, a performance practice conducted in an urban environment³³. It discusses the function of an embodied, contemplative performance training in the city. It investigates the *samatha vipashyana* discipline as the participatory structure for a site-specific performance. The concluding section situates the findings of the mindfulness (*sati*) performance methodology in the landscape back to the field of the site-specific performance.

The methodology of the thesis follows a practice as research (PAR) process. It creates new knowledge via the investigation of a praxis. It examines a 'doing-thinking' (Nelson, 2013: 11) through three different kinds of expertise: the creative process in situ, its critical reflection through methodologies of performance and mindfulness (*sati*) practice and its relation with discourses of the notions of selflessness (*anatta*), landscape, place and culture. In so doing, the thesis employs Buddhism to assess the performance training *in situ* and Geography to argue for its devised site-specific performance as an embodied narrative of place.

³² For the notions of 'body mind' and 'psychophysical' see forthcoming chapters.

³³ For the transfer of the practice from a rural to an urban environment see forthcoming chapters.

PART I

A Mindfulness (*sati*) Performance Practice of Landscape

Chapter 1

The Geographical-Buddhist premise

This chapter draws on aspects of Geography and Buddhism to structure a research framework for performing site. It is divided into three parts. The first part examines the notions of space/ place employed by the site-specific performance field. It argues for a phenomenological investigation of landscape in order to approach site as an embodied event. It provides a theoretical context for the performance of landscape as an examination of presence defined as a subject-landscape interrelationship.

The second part discusses the Buddhist notions of selflessness (*anatta*) and mindfulness (*sati*) in order to determine a practice of the subject-landscape interrelationship. It discloses the practice of *samatha vipashyana* as an inquiry of presence and of the interconnection between the experiencer and the space. The third part of this chapter formulates a Geographical-Buddhist premise and structures an investigation of the subject-landscape interrelationship through a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice.

Section I - The field of Humanistic Geography

Humanistic Geography emerged during the 1970s as a reaction to the dominant Marxist trend (Ekinsmyth and Shurmer-Smith: 2002). Hubbard explains the theoretical opposition of these two different styles: '[the one stresses] a distinctive (and bounded) location defined by the lived experiences of people... [and the other] emphasizes the importance of space as socially produced and consumed' (2007:41). The field argues that in order to produce a real account of the world, geography needs to go back to the expression of the 'myriads ways subjects inhabit the world before they represent that world to themselves and others' (Anderson and Harisson, 2010: 9)³⁴. Humanistic geography sets an experiential inquiry of space based on the philosophical notion of the 'lived' body of Maurice

³⁴According to the geographers Anderson et al. (2010) the notion of 'world' refers: 'to the context or background against which particular things show up and take on significance: a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances' (2010: 8). The thesis will be using the notion with the same context.

Merleau-Ponty³⁵. Although it is not the task of the current research to analyze the specific concept, I give a short description of how it is integrated within the discipline of Geography.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty defines phenomenology as follows:

A philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins—as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world (Ponty, 1962: vii in Tilley: 2004).

Through the lens of phenomenology, both the researcher and her object of investigation constitute one 'inalienable presence' (*ibid.*). The inquiring subject 'already there' (*ibid.*) awaits the researcher to reinstate a 'direct and primitive' (*ibid.*) connection with it. As a 'lived' body, the investigator has already experienced and embodied her object. She holds a pre-cognition of it. It is thus her task to recognise that knowledge and express it. In this way, the geographer is unable to obtain a fixed and stable viewpoint of space. She is situated in vital reciprocity to it. She is 'both always already immersed in worldly spatiality, and also creative of that space' (Wylie, 2007: 148, 149).

The notion of the 'lived' body, interprets the geographical quest as an encounter of 'a lived, embodied and affective experience' (Wylie, 2013: 58). Space is re-conceptualized from 'scientific...objective [and]...neutral [to] humanized...subjective...[and] empowered' (Tilley, 1994: 7, 8). In this way, space and place are redefined as different processes of perception while at the same time being conceptually interdependent. Space is 'a set of relations between things or places' (Tilley, 1994: 17). Although space is indeterminate and abstract, it situates the context of places and at the same time obtains meaning from it. On

³⁵Another philosophical notion which frames the practices of Humanistic Geography is the notion of 'dwelling'. In the essay of 'Building dwelling thinking' (1951), Heidegger positions and defines human being-in-the world through modes of home and habitation (in Wylie, 2007: 157). Furthermore, geographers also use the philosophies of existentialism (see Wylie: 2007, Shurmer-Smith: 2002), Bourdieu and his concept of 'habitus' (Anderson and Harisson: 2010) and actor-network theory of Latour and Law (Thrift: 1997).

the other hand, places are complex webs of human experience. They occupy and express human intention not only as a set of conscious actions but also as unintended movements between people and locations. They formulate a sense of who we are in the world and an orientation for us to base ourselves on. While we become familiar with a place, we cultivate a sense of belonging and an experience of 'rootedness':

To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things and a significant...attachment to somewhere in particular. The places to which we are most attached are literally fields of care, settings which...call forth an entire complex of affections and responses (Relph, 1976: 38).

Tuan goes as far as to define the expression of affective attachment to a place as 'topophilia' (1974: 92)³⁶. He designates three types of affiliation through which topophilia emerges; the 'aesthetic' (*ibid.*) aspect of a site, its 'tactile' (*ibid.*) sense and its 'perceived symbolism' (*ibid.*). In the third one, according to Tuan, place is recognised as home: a 'locus of memories and the means of gaining a livelihood' (*ibid.*). As home expresses a 'centre of meaning and a field of care' (Creswell, 2004:24) it consists of 'the most familiar example of place' (*ibid.*). It provides for the individual an environment of intimacy and nurture and for the community 'a mythical space' (Tuan: 1977: 86). In this way, when there is a 'deep association' (Relph 1976: 43) between ourselves and a space, place resonates as 'a vital source of both individual and cultural identity' (*ibid.*).

However, place does not only contribute to one's own identity but it also forms an independent one of its own. Besides the physical environment and the activity of a site Relph determines a third element that formulates the character of a place: 'the spirit of place' (*op. cit.* p.47, 48). The term 'spirit [or] sense of place' (*genius loci*) applies to the idea that a location is infused by its own essence, its own inherent meaningfulness, independently arisen through its cultural projections and history. The word 'sense' does not refer only to the bodily, tactile impression of an environment. It also implies 'the intuitive and imaginative sensing that is active when one is attuned to and receptive towards one's surroundings'

³⁶ I use the notion of topophilia in the third project of the thesis to articulate its research objective. For more see Chapter 5.

(Cameron in Wattchow, 2013: 90). *Genius loci* is not easy to express but at the same time is 'naively obvious' (Relph, 1976: 48)³⁷. Wattchow sees the notion as the object of a phenomenological research of place. He argues that the researcher is mediated by her own 'historical-cultural interpretations' (2013: 90). Hence, in order to achieve familiarity and attachment she needs to explore the *genius loci* of place as a process of 'active sensory participation' (*op. cit.* p.91.).

Humanistic Geographers suggest either an interrogation of the *genius loci* or a phenomenological practice of place as a research frame of culture. These approaches are accommodated by the field of site-specific performance. However, as I have already argued, they fall short of the mark either by being too context-driven or too subjective and ambiguous. I consider them unable to incorporate the subjective experience of the site and at the same time involve existing practices of cultures embedded in space³⁸. The thesis aims to investigate site as a dynamic movement operating between self and environment. Through this, it seeks to examine the relationality and connectivity between the practitioner/researcher and her encompassing space.

For the cultural geographers Mitch Rose and John Wylie that is what distinguishes the phenomenological research of landscape. It is grounded on experience but it elaborates an idea of interrelationship. In 2006, Rose and Wylie edited a special issue of the *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* journal named 'Animating Landscape'. The issue included four papers, two written by the editors. Its aim was to recognize the ways landscape enlivens namely, how it is performed, embodied and materialized. Rose and Wylie position the notion of landscape within a frame of interrelationship between the experience of the subject and the physicality of the place. They claim that its phenomenological practice must focus on the elements which formulate such

³⁷ Particularly for public places, Relph uses the term 'placeness' to signify the spaces that are 'understood in terms of community by [their] physical or symbolic qualities' (1976: 35) like a different historical era or the life of an individual.

³⁸ See Introduction.

interrelationship. Rose and Wylie argue that this is nothing more than a question of 'presence' (*op. cit.* p.477). It is an exploration of the 'tension of being 'of', 'in' and 'on' the world all the same time' (*ibid.*).

In the following section I examine the essays of Rose and Wylie in the specific journal issue. Both of these discourses analyse an examination of landscape based on the premise of interrelationship. But each one frames its investigation in a different way. Rose argues for a research practice of 'attachment' (*op. cit.* p.543) between the physical and the affective. Wylie conceives such a discipline as a process of 'attunement' (*op. cit.* p. 527) of the subject to the space in order to claim that their synchronization narrates landscape as a 'eventful actualization' (*op. cit.* 522).

Landscape As Presence

In the essay 'Gathering 'dreams of presence': a project for the natural landscape' (2006) Rose advocates that 'landscape and subject are co-constitutive' (2006: 538). He argues for a research practice which investigates culture at the points where subject and space interrelate with each other. He begins from the fundamental question of what culture is. He claims that based upon our scientific inheritance culture is approached as "a 'something'-something that, if conceptualized correctly, can be stopped, captured, and accounted for" (*op. cit.* 541). Culture is considered as a solidly structured system and landscape as its documentation: a 'representation of the system... symbolizing and expressing culture's hidden essence' (*op. cit.* p.542). He argues that for cultural inquiry to enhance 'the potential for reinvention and change' (*ibid.*) it needs to be formulated 'between the received and the practiced' (*op. cit.* p.540) and thus to direct attention towards the human activity in the landscape.

Rose conceives of an ontology of a 'dream of presence' in order to validate a practice as research of culture and landscape. The notion of 'dream of presence' shifts the focus from the inquiring object to the initiating force which begins such an investigation. Rose designates this driving urge as a 'call of care' (*op. cit.*

p.543). He determines care as 'an inclination...to invest in, cultivate, and nurture' (*ibid.*). He defines call as a 'direction...towards attachment' (*ibid.*). Expressed via practices of embodiment and performance in space, the term contextualizes 'the desire to associate and attach' (*op. cit.* p.544) within landscape. The 'call of care' (*op. cit.* p. 543) formulates the mosaic of intentions towards connection which Rose designates as the 'dream of full presence' (*op. cit.* p.544). An aggregation of 'impossible possibilities' (*op. cit.* p.542) which although they are impossible to be materialised, they exist as possibilities 'in the horizon of our being' (*ibid.*):

In every effort to determine, delimit, name, or categorise life, whether it be through science, myth, or our own idiosyncratic imagination, we can find a dream of presence-that is an effort to dream the world as whole (2006: 545).

In Rose's system of thought, culture as a 'dream of presence' becomes a system of 'moving towards' and not of 'arriving'. Its inquiry evolves into an exploration of the ways the individual strives to be fully present in the world. In conceiving of cultural investigation as an inquiry of becoming, landscape stands as the manifestation of such a process:

Understanding the landscape as a dream of presence means developing an awareness of how the landscape engenders becoming. It means exploring the landscape not as something that represents or reflects identity but, rather, as something that makes identity possible (2006: 548).

Landscape is seen as the arena where the experience of the subject takes place in the world. By 'attaching materialities to affectivities and perceptions to places' (*op. cit.* 549) such an experience returns back to space and manifests the landscape itself. Landscape inscribes our ways of attending with and to our bodies and at the same time it "orients 'a way' of living' them" (*ibid.*). In this context, a practice of landscape includes the interrogation of the modes via which 'landscape initiate[s] and provoke[s] a way of seeing ourselves' (*op. cit.* p. 550) and of the ways 'we cultivate those visions through nurturing and investing [them back] in the landscape' (*ibid.*). It becomes an exploration of the processes through which experience and space relate to each other to formulate the perception of the present moment as presence.

Landscape as Event

John Wylie in his essay, 'Depths and folds: on landscape and the gazing subject' (2006), uses the act of gazing as a paradigm for determining landscape as a 'perceptual actualization' (2006: 519). He uses the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty to claim that perspective in the landscape comes as a point of view before being constructed as a view-point. Wylie names this process 'the perspective construction' (*op. cit.* p.524). The subject gazes upon landscape and the world is revealed. But as the world will always go beyond 'what is seen', its revelation transcends its sensed meaning. Gazing happens 'through an attunement with the landscape' (2006:527) and thus it becomes part of the visible world. Vision and the visible become intertwined as they are unfolding.

On the other hand, Wylie uses Deleuze's concept of the 'fold' to substantiate the world of 'beyond the reach of thought' (*op. cit.* p. 527) as an 'immanent plane' (Colebrook cited in Wylie, 2006:528). In this 'infinity of points and curves' (Deleuze cited in Wylie, 2006: 529), of 'unfoldings and enfoldings' (*ibid.*) gazing upon landscape becomes an act. It evolves into a descriptive performed event which is actualised by one of the streams of the 'immanent plane' (*op. cit.* p.528) and at the same time unveils a percept already existing. The gazing subject perceives 'the unfolding world as landscape' (*ibid.*) and landscape 'occurs and takes place as a relation of knowing, perception and apprehension within the embodied situation of gazing' (*ibid.*).

If landscape is seen as an 'eventful' (*op. cit.* p.533) perceiving, then its practice becomes an investigation of perception of the present moment via the experience of self and space while they happen as one single act. Its narrative incorporates three factors of the subject-landscape interrelationship. It is framed by 'the agency and autochthony of surfaces, reliefs, textures, and tones: materialities' (*op. cit.* p.533); it 'foreground[s]...the performative and eventual nature of sensibilities' (*ibid.*) and finally it becomes 'attentive to the ways which these [the former two] are emergent from and indeed constitute ongoing, refracting visual cultures' (*ibid.*). All of the above compose the 'vocabularies and grammars' (*ibid.*) which perform landscape as a 'perceptual actualisation' (*op. cit.* p. 519). Wylie designates such an experiential process of weaving 'biographies, events, visions,

and topographies into landscape' (*op. cit.* p. 533) as 'geopoetics' (*ibid.*).

Rose and Wylie both acknowledge landscape as a 'tension of presence' (2006: 477) located both in the body and in the space. They argue that landscape constitutes an inquiry of presence and of the processes through which it takes place. Wylie determines presence as a perpetual movement between 'self and world' (*op. cit.* p.478) and conceives of landscape as its 'actualised situation' (*op. cit.* p. 478). Rose designates that processual movement as a 'call of care' (2006: 543) and determines landscape as its 'effect' (2006: 479). The work of the two geographers frames the practice of landscape as an examination of the experience *in situ* taking place in the present moment between body and space. Rose frames such an exploration not only as embodied but also as affective. Wylie argues for its manifestation as an event. Based on Rose's premises, I structure a psychophysical training of landscape and following Wylie I organize a devising process for its performance event *in situ*.

Summary

The inquiry of the thesis focuses on Greece in a period of crisis. Its intention is to go beneath what is being conceptualised and claimed as critical. By seeing landscape as presence, the practice of the thesis is framed as an interrogation of perceiving *in situ*. By acknowledging landscape as a 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543) it focuses on the pre-cognitive and the affective situated in space. By framing landscape as a 'perceptual actualisation' (Wylie, 2006: 519) it performs site as an open-ended system of signifying reality. In this way, it seeks to release a conditioned conception of the present moment and create for the practitioner a space of openness and inquisitiveness to reconsider narratives of culture. The practice of the thesis examines the critical cultural present of Greece as presence. It acknowledges the embodied practice *in situ* in order to re-frame cultural notions embedded in place.

For Anderson et al. this is the purpose of all phenomenological geographies: to challenge the ways we have come to understand and perceive spaces and at the same time create them anew. They argue that such accounts have the task of

cultivating 'interconnections through which new kinds of humanity can be realized [and] so expanding what can be thought, felt and done – into the silence' (*ibid.*). Those 'experimental' (2002:8) geographies introduce new ways of understanding space and its cultural ambience hoping 'to produce new visions of place, or more accurately, space-time, which are able to operate on preconceived notions by articulating actors, most especially, in the collective register' (*ibid.*).

Within that theoretical context, the thesis employs geographical concepts of landscape to create a site-specific performance practice. There have been an increasing number of methodologies that incorporate notions of place and landscape with a performance process. Practitioners of the artistic discipline and researchers of Humanistic Geography share a common interest on the ways 'landscape, identity and memory both personal and collective' (Wylie, 2013: 61) interrelate with embodiment and affect and formulate each other³⁹. For example, site-specific artist Mike Pearson employs performance as a 'mechanism for enacting the intimate connection between personal biography, social identities and the biography of place' (2006: 17). In his performance trilogy *From Memory* (1992) he integrates with his practice the work of Ingold (2000), Relph (1976), Tuan (1974) and Thrift (2000) among others⁴⁰. Performance scholar Carl Lavery and dancer Simon Whitehead research in practice the notions of 'location, ecology and embodiment' (2012: 111) as expressed by the cultural geographer Nigel Thrift in 'Steps to an ecology of place' (1999).

At the same time, Geographers have been investigating the ways that bodily practices generate and perform time and space. For example, Nigel Thrift recognises place as an encounter of 'embodied affective dialogical practices' (1997: 128) and argues for dance as a radical means of exploring its 'non-denotative meaning' (*op. cit.* p.147). Derek P. McCormack (2003) participates in

³⁹Such a tendency is particularly developed after the establishment of non-representational theory (nrt) as a methodology in the discipline of Human Geography. For more on nrt see Anderson and Harrison 's book chapter 'The promise of Non-Representation Theories' (2010).

⁴⁰The two other pieces of the trilogy were *A death in the Family and Autopsy; The Man Who Ate his Boots* (1998) and *Bubbling Tom* (2000).

sessions of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) in order to disclose an embodied practice as a methodology of space and argue for the significance of emotion in shaping such a process. John Wylie (2005) performs a single day's coastal walking to generate a spatial narrative through the embodied experience of landscape and evokes performed methodologies in the geographical discourse.

As my own contribution to this field of a connection between Geography and performance practice, I am additionally using aspects of Buddhist theory and practice to explore landscape through an embodied and performative process. The specific field provides a practice-as-theory inquiring frame of presence. As I further discuss, the Buddhist concept of selflessness (*anatta*) analyses the landscape as a 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543) at the empirical level of the individual and enables the use of mindfulness (*sati*) as a methodology of the interconnection between subject and space. Once interrelationship is explored then landscape can be performed as a 'perceptual actualisation' (*op. cit.* p.519).

The overall practice to which these theoretical elements contribute, I designate as Geopoetics. I define Geopoetics as the technique of performing landscape as an interrelationship between subject and space. The word 'poetics' refers to the chosen methodologies of performance practice. The prefix 'geo' refers to the process of the inquiry which informs and derives from the body-landscape interrelationship. Geopoetics constitutes the main key feature of the present thesis as well as its original contribution to the field. It will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2.

Section II - Buddhism; a practice as research methodology

What is broadly known as Buddhism is the assembly of various religious traditions derived from the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama known as the

⁴¹ Buddha . However, Buddhism is also a field that integrates practice with philosophy. For the scope of the thesis, much of its main background is excluded: historical facts, religious frames, scriptures (*suttas*) and discourses of the various Buddhist philosophical schools ⁴² . Rather, I concentrate on the specific notions of Buddhism that relate to my own concerns regarding performative practice as a research methodology. I use these notions to contextualise the subjective experience *in situ* and organise a practice out of the event of its interrelationship with landscape.

The Buddha aspired to discover a way to liberate (*nibbana*) oneself from the ceaseless cycle of conditioned existence (*samsara*). By questioning his own experience of ‘knowing and seeing’ (Rahula, 1974: 9) he developed a way to overcome suffering and realise freedom. The doctrine of Four Noble Truths unfolds the process of such an endeavour. It includes four realisations about suffering which Buddha encountered after his awakening. These relate to suffering (*dukkha*), the origin of suffering (*samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*) and the way leading to the cessation of suffering (*magga*) ⁴³ . Hayward and Varela (1992) convey the doctrine as follows:

(1) Existence is characterized by suffering (2) the cause of suffering is desire or grasping (3) the cessation of suffering is possible (4) the path of meditation and intellectual understanding taught by the Buddha leads to the cessation of suffering (1992:36).

The Four Noble Truths disclose the twofold discipline of Buddhism: a field as a philosophy of knowing and as a practice of understanding the ‘immediate and everyday experience’ (Varela et al, 1993:264). Buddhism constitutes a framework which allows the practitioner to inquire the ways in which she structures her

⁴¹The name is translated as the ‘Awakened One’ but the word is often used by itself signifying ‘awakening’.

⁴²The Buddhist terms are bilingual. They exist both in Pali and Sankrit language. In the present thesis I will be using all the terms in Pali. If otherwise it will be stated. Additionally, I will not include any pronunciation marks that the terms may disclose.

⁴³In Buddhist thought, suffering (*dukkha*) does not solely correlate with physical discomfort and pain. Rahula recognises three aspects of the term: ‘*dukkha* as ordinary suffering...as produced by change...[and] as conditioned states’ (1974: 19). He phrases it as follows ‘whatever is impermanent is *dukkha*’ (*op. cit.* p. 18).

experience of the world⁴⁴. It is 'an inherently embodied scientific system of investigation into the nature and formulation of the "self" and phenomenal experience' (Daboo, 2004: 12). I turn to Buddhism to indicate an inquiring practice of the *in situ* perception to question the interrelations made between subject and space that formulate landscape.

There are mainly two traditions of thought and practice in Buddhism. The earliest one is named Theravada which means 'the teachings of the elders' (Varela et al, 1993; Daboo, 2004) and the subsequent Mayahana which is interpreted as 'Great or Bodhisattva Vehicle' (Dalai Lama, 1995: 112)⁴⁵. As one derives from the other, both of these traditions incorporate the precepts of Buddhism, i.e. the doctrines of Four Noble Truths, Three Characteristics of Existence, Five Aggregates and the practice of Mindfulness⁴⁶. Nevertheless, they are distinguished by two main points of differentiation. The Theravadin teachings demonstrate the absence of an innate self in relation to the object of the experience. The Mahayanian philosophy positions the individual experience into a non-inherent/objective world. It extends the doctrine of selflessness (*anatta*) into the doctrine of emptiness (*sunyata* in Sanskrit). The former philosophy is known as 'the first turning of the wheel of Dharma' and the latter as 'the second turning of the wheel'⁴⁷. His Holiness the Dalai Lama determines the two traditions as the Individual and the Universal Vehicle⁴⁸:

The Individual Vehicle expounds the view of selflessness only in relation to person or personal identity but not in relation to things and events in general whereas in the Universal Vehicle, the principle of selflessness is not confined to liminal scope of person but

⁴⁴ The undertaken thesis is a practice as research methodology thus it is identified with the epistemology of Buddhism.

⁴⁵ The two traditions have also been discriminated as *Hinayana* and *Mayahana*. Coming from the word *yana* which means vehicle these two terms are translated as the Lesser and the Great Vehicle. This kind of distinction, made by the Mahayanian 'younger' philosophical schools is disputable by the Theravādin.

⁴⁶ For an explanation of these notions see below.

⁴⁷ Dharma in Sanskrit (*dhamma* in Pali) in this context is translated as the body of the Buddha's teaching. However, it is a complex term with a variety of interpretations dependently to its contextual frame. For more on the different understandings of dharma see Analayo, 2003; Varela et al, 1993 and Rahula, 1974.

⁴⁸ The two traditions are also differentiated in the purpose of the meditation practice (Daboo, 2004: 390).

encompasses the entire spectrum of existence, all phenomena (1995:10).

This section focuses on the experience of the subject. Hence, it discusses the teachings of Theravada. It examines the theory of selflessness (*anatta*), and the Five Aggregates (*skandhas*) to contextualise the process of perceiving space. It discloses mindfulness (*sati*) as the method of investigating the act of being present. It analyses *samatha vipashyana*, the practice of mindfulness (*sati*), and demonstrates its different techniques. As will be explained in the following section, these Buddhist notions integrate with the geographical frame of landscape to create an embodied methodology of its event.

The Doctrine of Selflessness (anatta)

Buddhist philosophy states that all physical and mental things are 'momentary' (Dalai Lama, 1995: 37). Everything which arises into an existence will dissolve into an end. The Dalai Lama describes the principle as a 'mechanism of cessation built into the system itself' (*ibid*). Dzongsar Khyentse explains that everything subordinates into the structure of beginning, middle and end. The comprehension of the impermanence of phenomena uncovers the impossibility of their being stored and secured. It resolves into 'a sense of no one home' (Varela et al, 1993: 61) receiving the experience of the world. In Buddhism, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering or un-satisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*) constitute the three characteristics of habituated existence. Analayo refers to them as a 'progressive pattern' (2003: 103), where the understanding of the one introduces the other: 'from awareness of impermanence via acknowledging the unsatisfactory nature of what is impermanent to appreciating the selfless nature of what is unsatisfactory' (*ibid.*).

Anatta indicates the absence of an enduring receiver of the experience of the moment. It states that there is no self, soul, ego or individual that is 'a permanent everlasting and absolute entity [...] behind the changing phenomenal world' (Rahula, 1974: 51)⁴⁹. The doctrine of selflessness (*anatta*) does not state that

⁴⁹ Although *anatta* is translated into a noun-term ('non-self', 'selflessness', 'egolessness') etymologically is ascribed as an adjective. Daboo explains the significance of conceiving the

there is nothing there, a nonexistence of a 'mere self' (Dalai Lama in Hayward and Varela, 1992: 118). But it argues that there is no '*inherent existence* of the self' (*ibid.*), no self 'existing *by its own nature*' (*op. cit.* p.41).

The notion of self is defined as 'a combination of physical and mental aggregates, which are working together interdependently in a flux of momentary change within the law of cause and effect' (Rahula, 1974: 66)⁵⁰. Since there is no ground which constitutes a self, the subjective experience emanates from five 'basic components' (Analayo, 2003: 201), unrefined and perceived as one, known as the five aggregates (*skhandas* in Sanskrit). These distinct categories compose the process of experiencing the present moment and of structuring the sense of a constant and consistent receiver. Regarding the name of the aggregates different versions are found. I follow the labelling of Analayo (2003) as the most fitting for a practice of landscape. According to him the aggregates are discriminated as: material form, feeling, cognition, volitions and consciousness (2003: 202)⁵¹.

The aggregate of the material form (*rupa*) concerns everything that comes from the physical environment, such as 'solidity, fluidity, heat and motion' (Rahula, 1974: 20) and is experienced by our sense-organs as objects (e.g. as an image by our eyes, as a sound by our ears). The aggregate of feeling (*vedana*) concerns the affective impact, the sensation which the experience of the present moment creates through our six senses⁵². The sixth sense is the mind (*manas*) and the

notion as a modifier: Since the whole meaning of the term is absence or emptiness, for the word to be a noun would imply that it is some-thing, or conversely no-thing. As an adjective, however, it is a description, not an independently existing 'thing' (2004: 43).

⁵⁰ In Buddhism, the principle of cause and effect or interdependency analyses the sense of continuity which one experiences during one's life course and which confirms the existence of a self. The Buddhist law of interdependence combined with the principles of relativity and conditionality (Rahula, 1974) are illustrated by a sequence of patterns known as the doctrine of 'co-dependent origination' (*paticca-samuppada*).

⁵¹ The second aggregate is named as 'sensations' (1974: 21), by Rahula. The third aggregate is defined as 'perceptions/impulses' (1993: 66) by Varela et al. These alternative names will be further used in the performance training of the thesis.

⁵² Therefore, this category is being also labelled as sensations. Daboo translates the second aggregate of feeling (*vedana*) as 'the psychophysical sensations experienced as contact through

thinking process is its sense-object. Buddhism 'does not recognize a spirit opposed to matter' (Rahula, 1974: 21) therefore it considers 'ideas and thoughts [...] produced and conditioned. These aggregates differentiate feelings as: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

The aggregate of cognition (*sanna*) or perception considers the recognition and categorisation of the sense-objects coming from the environment through the six senses. It is an 'act of identifying raw sensory data' (Analayo, 2003: 204) in two movements. The first is the 'gathering 'together' of all the sense experiences under a conceptual label' (*ibid.*). The second is building a hierarchy according to 'memory and associative thought process' (Daboo, 2004: 46). Varela et al. acknowledge as part of the mechanism a 'basic impulse for action' (1994: 66); an instinctive reaction to ignore, move towards or away from the specific sense-object. The aggregation of volitions (*sankhara*) or mental formations, considers the intentional reactions that result from the perceived sense-object. It is the volitional responses which formulate through time the 'habitual patterns' (Trungpa, 1984: 132) or 'the personal traits' (Varela et al, 1994: 67) of the self.

The fifth and final aggregate is the aggregate of consciousness (*vinnana*). It concerns the awareness, the 'being conscious of' (Analayo, 2003: 205) the existence of the sense-object. There are six different types of consciousness related to each sense organ: the consciousness of seeing, hearing etc. The aggregate of consciousness includes all the feedback from the previous ones. It encloses all physical and mental responses from and to the environment into a bundled united construction of the I/perceiver.

The five aggregates disclose the experience of the present moment as an act of interrelationship between the experiencer (sense-organs) and the space (sense-objects). If one considers that the present moment encloses also the presence of a specific place, then the five aggregates become a tool to examine perception

the sense organs' (2004: 46). This identification will be used to analyse the training of the second research project of the thesis.

in situ. They present the experience of place as a sequence of interconnections between the subject and the space. They disclose site as a mosaic of intentions manifested either as ‘materialities’ (Rose, 2006: 549) or ‘affectivities’ (*ibid.*). Interrogating space through them one can examine the direction ‘to invest in, cultivate, and nurture’ (*op. cit.* p. 543). The aggregates operate as objects of questioning landscape via its ‘call of care’ (*ibid.*).

Buddhist meditation investigates the experience of the present moment via the points of interconnectedness between the sense organs and their objects. The examination takes place on the spot both in body and mind as a never ending process. Hence it is rather considered as ‘culture or development’ (Rahula, 1974: 68). Meditation practice is known as *bhavana*. The term *bhavana* derives from *bhu* which means ‘to be’ (Daboo, 2004: 59) and *bhava* which signifies ‘becoming, existence and continuity’ (Rahula in *ibid.*). *Bhavana* indicates a culture of attention to one’s own being and at the same time an awareness of one’s becoming. As Buddhist meditation consists of the practice of the five aggregates, I consider that it constitutes a practice of landscape. In the forthcoming paragraphs I examine its principal notions mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samadhi*) and *samatha vipashyana* practice to suggest their integration to the inquiring of performing space.

The Practice of Mindfulness (sati)

The word *sati* (mindfulness) derives from the verb *sarati* which means ‘to remember’ (Analayo, 2003: 46). The etymology does not imply *sati* as memory but an attention to (or awareness of) the presence ‘which facilitates and enables memory’ (*ibid.*)⁵³. Attention is the central activity through which we formulate a knowing based on our experience in and with the present moment. Nyanaponika Thera claims that it is during this process where the illusion of an inherent nature

⁵³ However, awareness and memory are originally interconnected as notions. One is able to recall of something which she was aware of.

of things (an objective world) and the existence of the subject as a perceiver, arises (1962: 25). By practicing right mindfulness (*samma sati*) one overcomes the deceptive effects of the perceiving process, and may see things as they really are (*op. cit.* p. 26).

Right mindfulness (*samma sati*) implies to perceive the present moment through 'a togetherness' (Analayo, 2003: 74) of a 'bare attention' (Nyanaponika Thera, 1962: 29) and a 'clear comprehension (*sampajana*)' (*ibid.*). Bare attention is a 'choiceless awareness' (*op. cit.* p.58) arising from a 'detached receptivity' (*ibid.*) of the present moment. It is 'an alert but receptive equanimous observation' (*op. cit.* p.60) which provides the mind with 'clarity and depth' (*op. cit.* p.59) to 'see things just as they are' (*ibid.*). Examining an object of experience 'in a bare and exact registering' (Thera, 1962: 32), means 'slowing down the transition from the receptive to the active phase of the perceptual process' (*op. cit.* p.35), creating space for the mind to observe its ways of identification and positioning. The practice of 'processing the input gathered by mindful observation' (Analayo, 2003: 42) and uncovering the three characteristics of its existence (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, selflessness), is the 'clear knowing' (*sampajana*): to see things in their ultimate truth and experience them in their wisdom (*prajna*)⁵⁴. *Samma sati* 'allow[s] things to speak for themselves' (Thera, 1962: 32). It provides us ground to perceive them anew and understand how to interact with them accordingly.

The establishment of right mindfulness (*samma sati*) is the 'part and parcel' (*op. cit.* p. 26) of right concentration (*samma samadhi*). *Samadhi* derives from the verb *samadahati* which means 'to put together or to collect' (Analayo, 2003: 72). It is described as 'collecting oneself in the sense of composure or unification of the mind' (*ibid.*) hence it is translated as concentration. *Samadhi* is the necessary partner for the mindfulness (*sati*) to perform its deciphering task and reveal things 'as they really are'. It provides a calm and stable mental ground to receive

⁵⁴ The notion of *prajna* is translated as 'wisdom' (Dalai Lama, 1995:24), 'embodied wisdom' (Daboo, 2004: 87) or 'transcendental knowledge' (Chögyam Trungpa, 1976: 109).

whatever occurs in the mind as workable. It is the 'self-integration' (*op. cit.* p.87) mechanism which supports 'the destabilising effect' (*ibid.*) of mindfulness. *Sati* and *samadhi* function as the two lenses of the mind; the 'wide-angle lens' (Brown in Analayo, 2003: 63) of *sati* and the 'zoom lens' (*ibid.*) of *samadhi*. *Samadhi* brings the mind into a focus of attention. It is 'the selective function of the mind' (Analayo, 2003: 63). *Sati* enlarges the attention. It is 'the re-collective function of the mind' (*ibid.*). Both of them are cultivated by the *samatha vipashyana* practice.

In *samatha vipashyana*, the word *samatha* derives from *sama* which means 'inner stillness'. It is a 'concentration technique for learning to hold ('tether' is the traditional term) the mind to a single object' (Varela et al., 1993: 24). *Samatha* is a form of practice in which Buddha was trained and developed further. The practice includes sitting still in an upright posture with an object of concentration, such as the breath. Each time that the practitioner's mind wanders, she acknowledges it and returns back to her point of attention. The initial intention of the *samatha* practice was to bring to the practitioner 'states of blissful absorptions' (Varela et al., 1993: 24).

The notion of *vipashyana* signifies 'insight into the nature of things' (*op. cit.* p.68) by seeing and experiencing them via their impermanence, un-satisfactoriness, and selflessness (Thera, 1962: 44). The development of *vipashyana* is structured on the basis of *samatha*. It aims 'to observe the successive occurrences of seeing, hearing and so on, at the six sense doors' (Mahasi in Analayo, 2003: 95). However, the task is highly complicated if someone has not developed mental concentration. The practice of *samatha* provides access to the cultivation of insight. It is the tool for 'the mind [...] to be present with itself long enough to gain insight into its own nature and functioning' (Varela et al, 1993: 24). Hence, *samatha* expands the ground of concentration (*samadhi*) whereupon *vipashyana* develops mindfulness (*sati*) through bare attention. This is the culture of *samatha vipashyana* known as the practice of Buddhist meditation.

The notions of mindfulness, concentration and the practices of their development are represented in the *Satipatthana Sutta*; a 2,500-year-old scripture which was created as a manual for practicing right mindfulness in all aspects of life (Thera, 1962: 7). The *sutta* is formally translated as ‘The Foundations of Mindfulness’ (Thera, 1962: 10) and subdivides the discipline into the practice of four foundations: the body, the feelings, the mind and the mental objects (*dhammas*). For the scope of the thesis I discuss the contemplation of breathing from the first foundation of mindfulness of the body^{55 56}. The specific practice will create the base of a mindfulness methodology of landscape. The mindfulness of breathing is known as *anapanasati*, which is translated as the ‘mindfulness of in-and-out breathing’ (Rahula, 1974: 69). One sits with legs crossed and back erect. The task is to be attentive to the breath in the area of the nostrils but not change its flow; to notice the experience of breathing in its continuity and in its detail⁵⁷. The contemplation of the breath encloses the observation of two processes: the quality of the breath (long, short, deep, and shallow) and its expansion in time (beginning, middle and end).

If the practitioner keeps refining the mindfulness of her breath without paying attention to the obstructions of the physical or mental environment, she continues to develop ‘tranquillity’ (*samatha*) (Thera, 1962: 111). Whilst if the practitioner adds an awareness of the objects sensed by the environment she develops both her knowing of the breath and her awareness of the present moment (*vipashyana*) (Thera, 1962: 112). Analayo explains the practice which is focused on *vipashyana* as an ‘emphasis on various phenomena related to the process of breathing [...] [which] stays in the realm of variety and of sensory experience and

⁵⁵ Contemplation derives from the verb *anupassati* which means ‘to repeatedly look at’ (Analayo, 2003: 32). In *Satipatthana Sutta* it signifies to examine the observed object (e.g. breathing) through its process of arising, existing and dissolving, to notice its impossibility of maintaining pleasure (or un-pleasure) and its function of constructing a self. Contemplation will be a central notion in the practice of the thesis.

⁵⁶The Foundation of Mindfulness of the body includes the contemplations of breathing, walking, the four postures, everyday activities, the bodily anatomical parts, the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air) and the corpse in decay (Analayo, 2003: 17). The contemplation of walking is used in the performance practice of the thesis. It will be presented in a forthcoming chapter.

⁵⁷ There are a lot of variations concerning the observation point of the breath (see Daboo, 2004 and Analayo 2003). The practice of breathing which I will integrate in the practice of landscape is based on the *Shambhala* tradition and gives focus on the outbreath.

thus it is more geared towards the development of insight' (2003: 134-135). The *vipashyana* practice becomes an experiential platform for investigating the present moment. It cultivates a knowing of the subjective experience on the spot and an insight in formulating such an experience as a way of becoming.

Samatha and *Vipashyana* cultivate a twofold awareness. The mind focuses on a point of attention (i.e. the breath) while noticing the overall experience of becoming (arising, being and dissolving). Theorists of theatre claim that acting is a process of such a double awareness. Zarrilli asserts that the performer is occupied by a series of instructions while she accommodates the present moment: she is simultaneously 'attuned and engaged' (2013: 45). He, thus, determines the task of the performer as a 'double consciousness' (*ibid.*). Grotowski gives an ontology of the performer as an experience of the 'I-I' (in Schechner and Wolford, 1996: 378). He claims that the task is not 'to be cut in two but to be double' (*ibid.*). He explains that it is a matter of 'be[ing] passive in action and active in seeing' (*ibid.*)⁵⁸. Below, the thesis builds a definition of performance practice organised as a *samatha vipashyana* practice. As a stepping stone to that definition, I argue that the discipline of mindfulness (*sati*) constitutes a structure and a tool by means of which the subject-landscape interrelationship is explored⁵⁹.

Synthesis - Geographical-Buddhist premise

⁵⁸ My point here is to disclose Grotowski's acknowledgement of a double awareness as a form of being on stage and its use as a principle in his actor training. I do not imply that the 'I-I' Grotowskian term correlates with the Buddhist context.

⁵⁹ Over the last decade there has been an increasing use of the practice of mindfulness (*samatha*) in variant areas of the everyday life (such as teaching, eating, parenting, therapy e.t.c) and in different social groups (such as soldiers, prisoners, students and business executives) for releasing stress, enhancing concentration and developing empathy. The mostly known application of the Buddhist discipline is found in cognitive behaviour therapy where researchers Mark Williams, John D. Teasdale and Zindel Segal developed a Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) in the University of Oxford as an eight week course for preventing depression, anxiety and stress. All of these operations have received strict criticism as they present mindfulness (*samatha*) practice separated from its context in Buddhist philosophy. The sceptical commentators of the diffusion of the practice state that mindfulness (*samatha*) is elaborated as a way to relax (sometimes superficially) rather than cultivating insight (*vipashyana*). It has been appropriated as a marketable therapeutic technique without disclosing an ethical framework for such transportation.

Geographers Rose and Wylie argue for an inquiry of the experience *in situ* realised on the points where 'landscape, perception, and subjectivity' (*op. cit.* p.476) emerge and co-formulate each other. A similar task is found in the centre of Buddhism. The concept of *anatta* uses the practice of mindfulness (*sati*) to investigate an emergent self as an event of interdependencies between its sense-organs and their objects. If landscape is framed as the performed event of an interrelationship, then the thesis proposes mindfulness (*sati*) as the appropriate methodology to explore it. In this way, it constructs an interdisciplinary framework of Geography and Buddhism to indicate a bodily practice of space. It suggests a scheme which researches landscape as a performance imparted by the subject as perception and embedded in space as cultural practice⁶⁰ .

The use of mindfulness (*sati*) as a methodology of landscape structures the practice of the thesis as a *samatha vipashyana* discipline. It organizes it into a discipline of 'attunement' (Wylie, 2006: 527) and 'actualisation' (*op. cit.* p. 521) respectively. *Samatha* is the practice which attunes and listens to the way consciousness is embedded in the experience of the landscape. The practice of *vipashyana* expands the listening into the space and manifests the ways through which such a perception is materialised. As I have already discussed, *samatha* cannot be differentiated from *vipashyana*. However, in the practice of this thesis they are used separately to investigate different stages of perceiving space as a process. The final aim is that it is practiced as a sequence: establishing a listening body *in situ* to perform landscape as a perceptual event. The Geographical-Buddhist premise evolves into a practice. It constructs the practice-based methodological scheme of the present thesis.

The first stage of the training consists of discipline of 'bare attention' (Nyanaponika Thera, 1962: 29). Hence, it is organized as a *samatha* practice. The experiencer observes her sense-objects derived from the environment (what is seen, heard, felt etc.) through a non-hierarchical and unrefined awareness. The purpose is to create distance for uncovering the ways through which the

⁶⁰ See below.

perception of landscape is formulated. This process is organised as an inquiry of the first three aggregates (*skandhas*)⁶¹. It examines the points where the 'sensibilities' (Rose, 2006: 549) of the self, intercross with the 'materialities' (*ibid.*) of the space. Wylie determines such a process as an 'attunement' (2006: 527). Hence, this phase is named as a discipline of attunement.

The second phase of the practice is organised as a *vipashyana* inquiry. From the process of labelling and discriminating the elements that transcribe the experience into a perception the practice returns to a culture of seeing. The practitioner acknowledges patterns of interrelationship as manifestations of the 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543) of the site. These embodied incidents are seen as parts of a whole narrating landscape as an 'eventful actualisation' (Wylie, 2006: 521). Thus, this second phase is named as a discipline of actualisation.

The *samatha vipashyana* discipline structures both the practice of the thesis and the analysis of that practice. It formulates its practice as research methodology which is further elaborated through the operation of three projects. The first one examines a *samatha* training to develop a method of attunement to the landscape. The second one focuses on the *vipashyana* discipline to articulate a way of actualising the landscape. The third project explores the two stages above as a processual sequence of devising a performance on site.

First Note: The Three Aggregates of Performing Landscape

Mindfulness (*sati*) is a practice of discriminating awareness of the five aggregates (*skandhas*). As a methodology of landscape, it differentiates its event into five levels of interrelationship. It identifies a landscape of material form, feeling, cognition, volition and consciousness. These planes compose the distinctive event of the experience of the landscape. For the purposes of the thesis I focus on the first three aggregates (*skandhas*): material form (*rupa*),

⁶¹ See below.

feeling (*vedana*) and cognition (*sanna*). I consider that their derived objects manifested in place constitute fundamental elements of the performance act. Accordingly, I transcribe the inquiry of each of these three aggregates into physicality, feeling and action. In the following section I explain how I translate the aggregate of cognition into an investigation of action.

As I have already discussed, the aggregate of cognition (*sanna*) involves a twofold process of identifying direct stimuli from the environment. The first one involves the collection of the sensory information under the label of a concept. The second one involves its classification within a hierarchy of past memories and future aspirations. When the positioning of the information takes place, it stimulates an instinctive reaction of ignoring the initial stimulus, moving away from it or towards. The thesis argues that the impulse of this responsive act constitutes the seed of devising performance activity *in situ*. The inquiries of the first three aggregates are considered means of the mindfulness (*sati*) methodology *in situ*. They disclose a triple function in the practice of the subject-landscape interrelationship. 1. They operate as objects of its attention (*samatha*). 2. They demonstrate the process of interrelating and thus becoming (*vipashyana*). 3. They are actors of the event of the interrelationship as physicality, feeling and activity. They analyse and narrate the experience of landscape through performative means based on the structure of Buddhist meditation.

Second Note: Levels of Interdependency

Phenomenological accounts of place have been criticised as too personal or too abstract (Wylie, 2013: 59). Even when they approach space as a set of relations they stand in puzzlement before its 'echoing and recurrent effect' (Wylie, 2006: 533) of imposing 'cultures of landscape' (*ibid.*). Mindfulness (*sati*) elaborates the processes through which the subject creates perception *in situ*. Thus, it may be argued that it is methodologically inadequate to accommodate cultural and social structures embedded in space. However, mindfulness (*sati*) does not stand only for the notion of 'non-self' (*anatta*). It is also a practice of emptiness (*sunyata*); a Buddhist ontological notion which neglects any structure of inherent meanings.

The Mahayana theory of emptiness (*sunyata*) claims that during the process of the subject perceiving the world, there are two levels of interdependency. The first one lies between relations and objects, causes and effects and thus it concerns a mutual-dependency. The second one exists between subject and its ways of relating and hence it is a mind-dependency. Experiencer, phenomena and their attachments exist in relation to each other and therefore they have no absolute foundation to stand on, they are 'groundless' (Varela et al., 1993: 224). They are "empty' of an independent existence, for [they are] co-dependently originated" (*ibid.*). Within the geographical premise, mindfulness (*sati*) as a practice of the concept of *sunyata* frames a bodily investigation of the cultural structures *in situ* precisely as a web of interdependencies. Instead of reaching out to landscape as a set of given labels and agendas, it discloses phenomena between their means of being experienced and their meaning. It unfolds social and cultural structures *in situ* as modes of grasping:

Grasping can be expressed not only individually as fixation on ego-self but also collectively as fixation on racial or tribal self-identity, as well as grasping for a ground as the territory that separates one group of people from another or that group would appropriate of its own (Varela et al, 1993: 254).

In this context, mindfulness (*sati*) does not only examine experience *in situ* as a process of the emergent self. It also investigates it as a web of modalities of experiencing and knowing. Mindfulness (*sati*) discloses the cultural structuring of space as a set of pre-decided practices and it positions the subject *in situ* not as a presence captivated by them but as an actor empowered to interact with them. Mindfulness (*sati*) becomes a methodology for investigating space as a set of individual and collective means and standards of interrelating. It unfolds landscape as a mosaic of attachments (whether pleasant or unpleasant) resulting in and shaping the subject-space interdependency.

Buddhism is a complex system of theories and practices. It is difficult to employ one notion without the knowledge of others. Making a leap from one philosophical

tradition to another risks reducing the field. For the scope of the thesis, emptiness (*sunyata*) was not examined thoroughly either in the practice or in its analysis. Additionally, the practice of mindfulness (*sati*) in Theravada has a different purpose from its practice in Mahayana. In the former the mediator aims for individual liberation (*nibbana*). In the latter she practices for awakening mind and heart (*bodhicitta*) and pursues liberation through actions of compassion (*karuna*) for the sake of others. However, the intention of the thesis is to activate a practical framework of landscape. The Buddhist notions, which I have discussed here, contextualise and argue for mindfulness (*sati*) as a research tool of the subject-landscape interrelationship. They operate as lenses for analyzing the practice of the thesis. But they do not constitute part of its vocabulary used with participants in the projects.

Mindfulness (*sati*) examines the ways through which the processes of the emergent self (or selves), alongside with the practices embedded in space, formulate the experience *in situ*. The thesis claims that this is an inquiry of the interrelationship between self and space. It is an investigation of the 'perceptual actualisation' (Wylie, 2006: 516) that delivers landscape as presence. In other words, mindfulness (*sati*) constitutes a methodology of examining landscape as an event.

The following section of this part constitutes the second and last integration of the methodology of the thesis. It defines performance practices as disciplines of mindfulness of moving, feeling and acting *in situ*. It uses mindfulness awareness (*samatha vipashyana*) to structure a practice of embodying and narrating landscape. It establishes perception of place as a listening/doing (*samatha*) and organises a framework for performing landscape as an experiential knowing (*vipashyana*).

Chapter 2

Geopoetics; a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice of landscape

The thesis designates a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice of landscape as Geopoetics⁶². 'Geo' comes from the Greek '-γεω' [geo] which means 'relating to or coming from the earth'. 'Poetics' derives from the word 'ποιητική' [poiitiki] which means the practice of fashioning a product. For the purposes of the thesis, I determine Geopoetics as the amount of chosen performance practices to explore landscape as an interrelationship between the subject and space. Geopoetics practice is examined as follows:

- A discipline of attunement: a performance practice which explores perception in situ as movement, feeling and activity⁶³;
- A discipline of actualisation: a devising process which organizes the above as co-creative elements of the performance event of landscape.

The discipline of attunement introduces perception *in situ* as a mechanism of interrelationships between the subject (sense-organs) and the environment (sense-objects). It begins by grounding mindfulness (*sati*) on site, based on the practices informed by the contemplations of breathing and walking. The practice discriminates the experience *in situ* based on the first three aggregates of material form, feeling and cognition. In this context, it expands mindfulness (*sati*) in space and examines the subject-landscape interrelationship as physicality, feeling and action.

⁶²I initially borrow the term from Wylie who names as Geopoetics the practice of narrating the body-landscape interrelationship: it is 'about working explicitly with expressive vocabularies and grammars in order creatively and critically to knit biographies, events, visions, and topographies into landscape' (2006:533). Geopoetics is also an interdisciplinary field established by the Scottish writer Kenneth White in 1989 where different disciplines from the sciences and the arts 'converge in a common concern about the planet' (geopoetics, 2012). Writers, film artists, social scientists and environmentalists have been coalescing around various projects and conferences of Geopoetics <http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/> [2 November 2012].

⁶³ The initial aim of the research was to build a site-specific performance training: a repeatable set of practices which would support the development of a non-habitual, unstandardized and creative process in the landscape. However, as the outdoor work was new to me the research practice became limited in exploring and experimenting exercises from different performance lineages that could provide me with the desired outcomes. The experience of that process created the structure for the initial wanted training. For more see Conclusion.

In the field of performance practice such a method may be determined as psychophysical. According to theatre theorist Phillip Zarrilli, psychophysical acting is the 'dialectical engagement of the actor's bodymind in 'inner' and 'outer' processes' (2013: ix) where the inner indicates the 'psycho-' (*op. cit.* p. viii) and the outer the 'physical' (*ibid.*)⁶⁴. For the psychophysical exploration of site, the practice of the thesis draws exercises from the fields of Somatics, Grotowski-based actor training and Dilley's 'dance. art. lab'⁶⁵.

I choose these practices because they consider the moving body as a means of investigating perception. They differentiate its inquiry into inner and outer intentions. Hence, they involve practices which emerge from the experience of the I and/ or from the placement of the body in the environment. They set a zone of examining the inner-outer negotiation between sensing and acting. They mainly elaborate physicality as non-stylized movement. They explore action through impulse and use improvisation as the living register of the psychophysical process. Particularly, from the Somatics tradition, I explore the spinal patterns of Body-Mind Centering®; from the Grotowski-based actor training, I focus on the *plastique* exercises; from Dilley's 'dance.art.lab' I employ Contemplative Dance Practice.

⁶⁴ Zarrilli defines 'bodymind' as the prerequisite integration of the physical operation with an engaging mind in order to perform an action (2013: 9). In the thesis, I will be utilizing the term as '*body mind*' based on the work of Barbara Dilley. According to Dilley, the notion not only expresses an integration of the body with its inner life (feeling, thoughts, associations). But it also articulates an ongoing interplay between the physical and the mental processes. Hence, the practice becomes a means of investigating the different schemes of such an interaction: the 'moving body moving mind, still body moving mind, moving body still mind, still body still mind' (Dilley, 2012, unpublished scripts). For more on the body mind interrelationship see Chapter 3.

⁶⁵ Somatic derives from the word 'soma' which is the Greek word for body. It was first used by Thomas Hanna. It characterises the practice which designates "the experienced body in contrast to the objectified body. When the body is experienced from within the body and mind are not separated but are experienced as a whole [...] 'Somatics' also names a field of study – the study of the body through the personal experiential perspective" (Cohen, 1993: 1). The Grotowski psychophysical actor training includes physical and vocal exercises which were initially developed by the actors of the Polish Laboratory Theatre and Jerzy Grotowski. Among them the most known are the bodily exercises of the cat, the corporal and the *plastiques*. Grotowski also used these practices in later phases of his work. These disciplines and their interpretation are dependent on the idiosyncrasy of the tutor who teaches them. Hence, I prefer naming them as Grotowski-based. The 'dance.art.lab' is a body of movement and composition practices. Generated by Barbara Dilley, it integrates contemplative awareness and movement improvisational disciplines. The laboratory includes the CDP as well as other exercises such as the Corridors, Red Square and Aunts/Menus.

Through the investigation of attunement, the practitioner devises activity *in situ* as a manifestation of her interrelationship with the landscape. The found movement patterns are identified as material that has ‘worked’ and are organised as a score of an ordered and layered action. The practice of embodiment evolves into the creation of the performance event of the landscape. For such a development, I examine the notion of ‘story’ from the Six Viewpoints system to employ structure as a narrative. I discuss the concept of ‘living myth’ (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 107) of Anna Halprin to disclose the site-specific performance as an enactment of an interrelationship between subject and landscape. This is what I designate as a discipline of actualisation⁶⁶ .

The thesis suggests a synthesis of practices taken from different lineages of performance. Zarrilli claims ‘theatre making is a mode of socio-cultural practice’ (2002: 1). Each training emerges as a response to the contextual frame in which it was born. The thesis combines two legacies of performance culture: Grotowski and Halprin. The former is developed during the state censorship of the Communist and Soviet dominated Poland of the 1960s. The latter originates within the counterculture of the West Coast of the United States of the same era. Both practitioners explore the performer as a ‘whole nature’ (Padulan, 1997: 214) and aim to “awaken the ‘universal body-memory’, activate the witness [and] demystify the creative process’ (*op. cit.* 216). However, they represent two different schools of training. The process of Grotowski is based on a vertical structure of power. The director has the role of an omniscient master with a patriarchal indisputable gaze. Halprin investigates the horizontal hierarchy of creating with the purpose of facilitating, not conducting, the process. She elaborates a method of collective creativity to raise the voice of communities through movement.

⁶⁶ At some point, the process of actualisation may also be enriched by other material beyond movement (i.e. objects, texts, songs, music) either originated on site, inspired by the place’s context or brought in as a response to the practiced experience of the landscape. Chapter 5 discusses more about the devising process of the event of the landscape and the ways it can be integrated with other performative elements beside the body and the site.

In the practice of the thesis there is the concern of transplanting the practices from the contexts of their origins to the processes of creating theatre in Greece. The issue of cultural translation raises a question of ethics. Does one stay devoted to the ways to which the conduct of a practice is originally set or does one appropriate the tool according to the moment, the space and the people one addresses? The issue of presence lies at the centre of the thesis. Its practice has to challenge what is considered as Grotowskian training or a Halprin performance. Practice *in situ* does not require a specialisation in the specific lineages but, rather, 'embarking on the creation of an alternative theory' (Zarrilli, 2004: 345) of performing on site. I acknowledge the issue in the choices of approaches and exercises I have undertaken for the conduct of the methodology of the thesis.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the spinal patterns of Body-Mind Centering[®], the *plastique* exercises of the Grotowski-based actor training and the Contemplative Dance Practice of Barbara Dilley as explorations of landscape through the body mind. The chosen psychophysical exercises are used as objects of attending to the experience *in situ*. Each one of them explores landscape through a different plane of its interrelationship with the perceiver: the somatic spinal pattern practices explore space as movement, the *plastiques* space as feeling and the CDP space as acting in order of presentation. Thus, the section is organised into three sections of space as movement, space as feeling and space as action.

The second section of the chapter explores notions of devising and dramaturgy towards the creation of a site-specific piece. It discusses the story/logic correlation of the Six Viewpoints in order to assimilate the performance event with its structure. It examines the 'living myth' (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 107) of Anna Halprin to determine the site-event as a structure of enactment. This section determines the performance of landscape as the score of accomplishing an interrelationship between the experiencer and the site.

Section I - The embodiment of landscape

Space as Movement

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, movement researcher, therapist and founder of Body-Mind Centering® Association (BMCA) argues that the inquiry of perception is a 'process of embodiment' (1996: 4). She explains it is a practice of 'mindfulness' (*ibid.*) to notice how 'feelings, sensations, emotions, memories, dreams, images, insights' (*ibid.*) are ascribed to 'breath, movement, voice, awareness and touch' (*ibid.*). Cohen designates such an inquiry as 'psychophysical mapping' (*ibid.*). Since 'what we perceive is what we...reproduce or control' (*op. cit.* p.5) Cohen argues that such a process must involve actions which take place prior to their registration within our field of understanding.

She categorises movement in four different types: spinal, homologous, homolateral and contralateral⁶⁷. She acknowledges in each type two different patterns: yield and push, reach and pull. She orders both the types and the patterns according to the evolutionary development of the perceptual-motor act⁶⁸. Her aim is to demonstrate in each phase 'where the movement is initiated from and how it sequences through the body' (1993: 100). The spinal motion is the first movement of the developmental process of perception. It is the base which

⁶⁷ Cohen designates the four types as 'Basic Neurological Patterns' (1993: 5) and argues that they set the individual's way of 'spatial orientation and body image' (*ibid.*). The spinal pattern (f. e. rolling) 'differentiates the front of our bodies from the back of our bodies and gain ability to attain' (*ibid.*). The homologous one (f. e. push-ups) 'differentiates the upper part of our bodies from the lower part of our bodies and gain the ability to act' (*ibid.*). The homolateral pattern (f. e. crawling) 'differentiates the right side of our bodies from the left side and gain the ability to intend' (*ibid.*) The contralateral one (f. e. walking) 'differentiates the diagonal quadrants of our bodies and gain the ability to integrate our attention, intention and action' (*ibid.*).

⁶⁸ Cohen advocates that even from the utero, movement is 'the first perception of learning...establishing the baseline of our concept or process of perceiving' (1993: 115). She defines such a process as motor-perceptual neurologic pathway. Cohen asserts that as it is the first one to be set, each sensory stimulus that we subsequently respond to is the unconscious result of our own 'active decision of what stimulation [we] will take in' (*op. cit.* p.117), responding to it right afterwards through moving. Hence, it is the 'interweaving of both sensory and motor components' (*op. cit.* p.114), through which the body formulates the perception of the reality it lives in: 'perception is about how we relate to what we 're sensing... [it] is about relationship - to ourselves, others, the earth and the universe' (*ibid.*).

'underlies all movement and perceptual activity' (Hartley, 1995: 53).

The spinal push pattern cultivates the "mind' of inner attention" (*op. cit.* 53). It is the rotation of the body around its vertical axis by pushing the ground from the prone position. The spinal push cultivates an awareness of the 'inner sensations of weight, gravity, balance and movement' (*op. cit.* p.70). It creates a feeling of 'yielding to gravity' (*ibid.*) and of 'bond[ing] with the earth' (*ibid.*). When support is structured the attention shifts out into the environment and the spinal push evolves into to the reach and pull pattern. Rotation takes place by reaching through the head, hand, foot or tail to a stimulus in the space which results in pulling the whole body and moving it through. The reach and pull pattern cultivates "'the mind' of outer attention' (*ibid.*). The progression from pushing to reaching alters the focus from inner to outer awareness. Cohen claims that this is the beginning of 'activating perception' (1993: 102) through movement⁶⁹ .

The practice of the thesis uses the spinal rotation to investigate space as form. It constitutes the inquiry of the first plane of the subject-landscape interrelationship. Through its interplay of awareness towards oneself and towards the space, spinal rotation traces the ways through which the 'materialities' (Wylie, 2006: 533) are registered in the body mind experience prior to their interpretation of what there is. The somatic pattern cultivates a way of looking the space before labelling it. It is a technically simple and easily repeatable sequence which develops *in situ* the double awareness of the *samatha vipashyana* practice of listening to the space while experiencing it. I studied the spinal, homologous, homolateral and contralateral patterns as organised by the Body-Mind Centering® (BMC) into movement training and practice of experiential anatomy for two years (2008-2010) at the MFA programme of Contemporary Performance of Naropa University⁷⁰ . The course was taught daily by Erika Berland, Cohen's student and

⁶⁹ Cohen explains that the evolution from the push to the reach pattern is the act of 'establishing... [in] breaking through your kinesphere' (1993: 102). Kinesphere is the first spatial zone which someone occupies. According to Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) it is 'the sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extended limbs without stepping away from that place which is the point of support when standing on one foot' (1966: 10).

⁷⁰ See preface.

certified practitioner of BMC and Wendell Beavers, head of the programme who has structured the Body-Mind Centering® material into a new moving method named Developmental Technique™.

Space as Feeling

Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999), the Polish theatre director and theorist, argues that to explore the experience of the present moment, we must focus on what 'is alive in ourselves...simply in the body' (Grotowski cited in Kumiega, 1985: 230). We must elaborate 'a being-to being experience' (*ibid.*) which take place in 'the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction' (*op. cit.* p.31). Lisa Wolford, practitioner of Grotowski's final projects, defines impulse as 'a seed of living action born inside the actor's body which extends itself outward to the periphery, making itself visible as physical action' (Wolford, 2000: 199). Impulse is considered the gateway of the inner life of the body. It is the carrier of affects, memories, associations and images which are not yet fully conscious as thoughts but are manifested via movement. Grotowski elaborates a 'psychophysical training' (*ibid.*) to amplify and explore such inner unprocessed life taking place in physicality. The *plastiques* exercise constitutes one of the main practices of that training.

The *plastiques* are isolations in different parts of the body. They operate as physical containers to elaborate impulses in the exact point where the physical action intersects with the inner life. Steve Wangh provides a technical definition: 'movement explorations of one body part at a time in every direction that part can move' (Wangh, 2000: 75)⁷¹. These are rotations and undulations of central body joints: ankles, knees, pelvis, rib cage, shoulder blades, elbows, wrists, fingers and head. Wangh adds in the vocabulary the face muscles and the eyes. He claims

⁷¹ Lisa Wolford and Stephen Wangh were acquainted with Grotowski and his work in different phases of his life. Wangh did a four-week workshop with him and Ryszard Cieslak at N.Y.U. in 1967. This period is determined as the Theatre of Production phase (1958-1973) where Grotowski was operating as a theatre director in the Polish Laboratory Theatre. Wolford was a participant in Grotowski's Objective Drama program at the University of California-Irvine from 1989-92. In the 'Objective Drama' phase Grotowski was interested in the work of oneself through the distilment of practices coming from different cultures and disciplines (Schechner and Wolfand, 1996: 213).

that every movement could operate as a *plastique* as long as it 'is specific..., is filled with life, and...is related to an image' (2000: 84).

Wangh recognises the *plastiques* as a device of 'emotive gestures' (*op. cit.* p.76) in the acting process. They either operate as an 'initiator' (*op. cit.* p.108) of awakening 'your voluntary muscle system to turn on or to alter your image and emotional world' (*ibid.*); or as a 'container' (*ibid.*) which permits you 'to disclose your private imagery to the world more specifically' (*ibid.*). Wolford recognizes three simultaneous tasks taking place during the practice: precision in the articulation of the movement, ongoing engagement with personal impulses and connection with the outer either as a partner or a spatial stimulation (2000: 203).

The *plastiques* exercise is completed when it is practiced in an open form improvisation. Grotowski considers improvisation a fundamental practice to access the 'hidden' (in Schechner and Wolford, 1996: 39). It is free from aesthetics, structure and style and it is non-goal orientated: 'a method through which we cannot possibly foresee the forms we shall arrive at 'themes' to whose temptation we shall fall, facts which will follow next' (Grotowski in Schechner and Wolford, 1996: 39). The aim of the improvisation is to experience a continuous flowing relationship with the inner impulses of the body. Referring to Grotowski's words, Wolford determines it as the flow of the 'body-memory/ body-life' (2000: 204). Erica Berg, trainee of Ryszard Cieslak in the United States names it 'emotional river' (personal notes, November 2008)⁷².

As I have already discussed in relation to Buddhism, feeling (*vedana*) is the second aggregate which precedes form (*rupa*). It is the point where the space and its sense-organs interrelate as psychophysical sensations (Daboo, 2004: 46). The emerged sensual information stimulates an 'impulse to act' (Varela et al., 1993: 67) towards (or away) from the sense-object. Grotowski's training operates

⁷² Ryszard Cieslak (1937-1990) was an actor and core member of the Polish Laboratory Theatre which was founded by Jerzy Grotowski.

reversely. It elaborates movement with accurate and detailed precision to trace the impulse through which the psychophysical sensation is revealed. It functions as a container where inner subtle life is uncovered as it interrelates with space.

Buddhist philosophy refers to feeling and sensation. Wylie determines these as 'sensibilities' (2006: 533). Wangh uses the words of image, feeling, sense and idea (2000: 86) and Wolford refers to association, personal memory or even body-life (2000: 202, 204). The practice of the *plastiques* generates a double awareness. The execution of the systematised movements constitutes an object of attention in space. The listening of the derived impulses and psychophysical impacts consists of an overall understanding of the experience *in situ*. The *plastiques* exercises practice the interrelationship between the subject and the site manifested as a pre-cognitive psychophysical sensation. I was taught the *plastiques* and other exercises of the Grotowski-based actor psychophysical training for two years (2008-2010) under the guidance of Steve Wangh at the MFA programme of Naropa University. For one term I was also trained with Eric Berg. At the end of the second year I studied the training as a staging practice through the Shakespeare play of *King Lear* and under the direction of Steve Wangh.

Space as Action

Contemplative Dance Practice is an individual and group improvisation practice. It uses the dance studio as a space of contemplation to investigate the body mind. It was developed by Barbara Dilley at the end of 1970s. As a dancer of the New York scene in the 1960s and 1970s and a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Dilley integrates practices of the American post-modern dance lineage with Trungpa's teachings⁷³. Dilley was interested in combining the two disciplines into one which led her to a 'Dancer's Meditation Hall or a Meditator's Dance Hall' (Dilley, 2015: 137), what she eventually named Contemplative Dance Practice (CDP).

⁷³ See Preface.

CDP is structured in five parts: 'opening circle, sitting meditation, personal awareness practice (PAP) ending with meditation (short), Open Space ending with meditation (short), closing circle and conversation/discussion' (2015: 140). The first part involves ways of the body mind's arriving in the space. The second one entails sitting meditation practice. It elaborates the body mind in stillness. Dilley teaches meditation with simple movement instructions: 'relaxed posture, the sensation of breath moving, letting thoughts come and go' (*ibid.*). The personal awareness practice integrates meditation with movement. It cultivates 'the voice of the body mind' (*op. cit.* p.141) through personal movement in space. Open space extends that kind of exploration to the others and the studio.

In the section of Open Space, one moves with the self, the other and the space while being aware of the body mind. The practice elaborates each moment through observing, researching and directly connecting. Dilley states: 'Open space holds each one of us as we are. It is rigorous because awareness is moving between our inner and outer noticing' (2015: 141). We cultivate a listening of time and space through which 'we mingle [its] unconditional openness with our kinaesthetic sensibility' (Dilley, 2012, unpublished). We set a body mind interrelation in order to perform 'what the space is asking us to do' (*ibid.*). Hence, Open space is not a performance making device, it is a practice which follows two rules: 'take responsibility for yourself and don't cause harm' (*ibid.*).

In CDP the performer acts in space by noticing whatever arises in the body mind and returning to the present moment. She practices inhabiting the experience in time and space to 'listen from messages from this place' (*ibid.*). Sometimes movement and thinking are interrelated into a form of synchronisation. Dilley designates it as 'kineasthetic delight' (2015: 59). It is a 'felt-sense of body mind in balance' (Dilley, unpublished scripts, 2012). She considers it 'a touchstone for all exploration through improvisation' (personal e-mail communication, 2016) in CDP. When the body mind is synchronised it meets everything in space, 'thoughts, feelings, impulses, sensations, the named and the un-named' (Dilley, unpublished scripts, 2012) equally welcomed and 'with acceptance' (*ibid.*).

Organised as a body mind practice, it is more evident to see CDP as a *samatha vipashyana*. It develops an attention to the self, the others and space and an awareness of what the experience in situ signifies. It cultivates a listening to the space while interrelating with it. CDP encounters space as action and operates supplementarily to the hitherto practice of the thesis. It is a body mind awareness practice throughout space. It includes all previous planes of interrelationships already identified as 'materialities' (Wylie, 2006: 533) and 'sensibilities' (*ibid.*) and explored as movement and feeling.

CDP devises activity as an outcome of investigating the interrelationship between the body, the mind and the space. It may either elaborate them as a negotiation and/or as a synchronisation. CDP becomes a practical frame within which the interrelationship among the body mind and space may take place and be performed. CDP not only investigates but also produces the subject-landscape interrelationship. It evolves into a devising mechanism for the 'perceptual actualisation' (Wylie, 2006: 519) of the landscape. In this way, CDP creates the passage from becoming attuned to the landscape to performing it as an event. I was taught the Contemplative Dance Practice and other disciplines of 'dance.art.lab' (DAL) by Barbara Dilley for two years at the MFA programme of Contemporary Performance at Naropa University⁷⁴.

Section II - The performance event of landscape

Story as Logic

Mary Overlie deconstructs the performance event into a sequence of six viewpoints: space, time, movement, shape, emotion, story. She sees story as the 'process of ordering and prioritising information' (2006: 206). She argues that in the performance act, story is the 'logic' (*op. cit.* p.188) according to which all previous elements of space, time, emotion, and movement interweave the fabric

⁷⁴ For 'dance.art.lab' see footnote no. 64

of the event. Overlie claims that for a performance story to emerge from its structural forms, it must be elaborated based on 'the horizontal' principle. The term of 'the horizontal' signifies an 'inclusiveness and equality of information' (*op. cit.* p.190). It is derived as a reaction to the vertical structure of text-based theatre where the written piece is founded on the top of an order under which all other elements of a performance follow: directing, set and costume designing, acting, light designing ect. Overlie also refers to it as 'the release of the hierarchy' (*op. cit.* p.189).

The horizontal devising process involves two preconditions. Firstly, it needs to 'isolate the practice material of theatre from languages and conceptual frames' (*op. cit.* p.190) and become dependent only on 'physical and mental practices' (*ibid.*). Secondly, it operates as an 'act of...witnessing' (*op. cit.* p.189). It is a noticing of the ways in which the spatial and the psychophysical material communicate to one another, creating systems of meaning. Overlie claims that, for the practitioner, the horizontal process becomes 'a practice of not knowing'. The artist changes 'from creator/originator to observer/participant' (*op. cit.* p.188) to develop an alertness that is unbiased by her agenda:

It demands concentration beyond the self and a constant vigilance that you keep your own knowledge under strict control, so that you can be receptive to what the materials or events are actually trying to communicate, beyond what you think you already know (Overlie, 2006: 189).

Overlie defines story as the 'perceptual ability to see and understand logic systems as an arrangement of collected information' (Overlie, thesixviewpoints.com, 2015). This is what Versenyi determines as dramaturgy in theatre: 'the confluence of components of a work and how they [are] constructed to generate meaning for an audience' (in Turner, 2008: 18). In the horizontal theatre the dramatic event is devised by all elements of the performance event (f. e. light, performers, text, objects etc.) and hence is identified with its performance structure⁷⁵. Overlie suggests 'contemplation – redefinition - the accidental

⁷⁵ In opposition to Overlie's horizontal theatre I designate the vertical one. It encloses a given text and dramaturgy which a director interprets, a set designer materialises and a group of actors

incidental - [and the] everyday' (2006: 189) as strategies to contextualise performance material within a composition.

The thesis argues for the story/logic correlation of Overlie as the appropriate structure to perform the presence of landscape. On the one hand, it allows all components of the experience *in situ*, such as a psychophysical activity and cultural practices to be disclosed in their own genuine voice. On the other, it creates space for interconnections to take place between them. Organised as a whole they accomplish an act of interrelationship among 'materialities...sensibilities [and] visual cultures' (Wylie, 2006: 533) and thus they perform landscape as an event of 'perceptual actualisation' (*op. cit.* p. 519). The thesis refers to the event of the landscape as narrative in order to ascribe to the performance structure a sense of recounting via experiencing. I was trained for two years in the practice and teaching pedagogy of the Six Viewpoints technique by Wendell Beavers at the MFA programme of Contemporary Performance in Naropa University. Beavers has been a close collaborator of Mary Overlie with whom he danced from 1977 to 1985.

Performance as Structure of Enactment

Cathy Turner determines the story/logic correlation as a 'dramaturgy of the process' (2008: 193). It is a structure which 'makes us aware of the mechanisms of communication and the artificial construction of imaginary (real) worlds even while we are moved and engaged by them' (*ibid.*). It re-frames the roles of the actor and the spectator. The performer needs 'to unfold rather than interpret' (*ibid.*) the material. The spectators become participatory 'watch[ing] themselves as subjects which perceive acquired knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition (Sugiera in Turner, 2008: 194). The performance of such a dramaturgy 'deliberately forces itself into a live engagement with space and audience rather than attempting to predict and dominate the encounter' (*op. cit.*

perform. It is a creative process that encompasses a specific order of creation initiating from the writer down to the performer. Hence I determine it as vertical. Nevertheless, between vertical and horizontal theatre, the differences on the hierarchy of the form are not always that distinctive. There is a range of performances where elements of organisation of the former are integrated with the latter.

p. 197). Hence, its conduct becomes 'to some extent uncertain' (*op. cit.* p.198). The form/content correlation, the participatory aspect of performer and spectator and the open assignment of meaning to the material are attributes met in the 'living myth' (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 107) dance of Anna Halprin.

Anna Halprin (1920-), pioneer of the American post-modern dance, argues that movement is a vehicle to enact one's own life issues. She claims that when the physical practice is organised based on an 'intention and theme' (1995: 195) of the movers, it becomes the 'symbol' (*ibid.*) of their 'feelings...images...[and] content' (*ibid.*). Form and meaning formulate an embodied experience which signifies the 'myth' (*ibid.*) of those included:

I try to have people understand that the symbol of their myth... is their own body, on a personal level. And that what they experience in their body, how they experience their body, is going to be their story. And that story is their myth and...How they perform it as their ritual (1995: 203).

The collective dance brings a new perspective for the group identity. It evokes an emotional and intellectual shifting where 'the group [comes] together in a new way... [and discovers] a sense of their own community' (*op. cit.* p.55).

Halprin attributes such a performance as a 'living myth' (Worth and Poynor, 2004:107). It is living because it is 'unique to that [specific] moment in time and space' (Halprin in Pedulan, 1997: 253). It is a myth because it is a 'narrative pattern [that] give[s] significance to our existence whether we invent or discover its meaning' (1995: xvi). For a performance to operate as a living myth it needs to be structured as 'an audience participation event' (*op. cit.* p.50). Performances need to be built as 'structures that [are] free enough to allow everyone to become involved in his own way' (Halprin in Padulan, 1997:233). Hence, Halprin argues for performance frames devised in the form of scores.

A score designs 'the structure of the experience' (1997:235) of the living myth. It operates as 'a starting point to stimulate and channel the group's expression in

the direction of an overall intention but without determining the result' (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 113)⁷⁶. A score constitutes a set of instructions which 'defin[e] activities...tell[ing] people what...to do [and] not how to do it' (Halprin, 1995:202) and is differentiated into open and closed. The open one 'contains a minimum instructions leaving the participant free to explore' (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 74). The closed one 'consists of detailed, precise directions predetermining much of the action and severely limiting the freedom of the participant' (*ibid.*). To operate as a guideline throughout the activity but also allow space for creative input Halprin suggests that a score must be situated in the middle of the open-closed scale (*ibid.*). In a living myth, a score engages the audience members in three ways: they 'filter through the material on their own terms' (1997: 386); they connect with 'a group-body-mind-spirit' (1995: 229) and they lead themselves in 'discovering a sense of their own community' (*op. cit.* p.55).

For the enactment of a living myth, Halprin recommends an additional component that consolidates its character: the natural environment⁷⁷. She considers that nature is 'inherently connected to content and personal meaning' (in Worth and Poynor, 2004:89). She sees movement in the environment as a way 'to experience a sense of identification' (*op. cit.* p.90). Halprin is not interested in 'imitat[ing] the outward forms of nature or use [it] as backdrop' (1995: 216). She considers 'the natural world as a reflection on human experience' (*ibid.*). She conceives of the dance in nature as a resource for the community to explore how it understands the world and formulates that comprehension:

Although this work is generated primarily by a kinaesthetic connection, it also includes the feelings, associations, personal and communal images and life scripts that are part of our human nature. In that way

⁷⁶ Halprin uses the process of scoring not only as a performance structure but also a method to explore and devise movement around a topic. The process of scoring constitutes the second stage of the RSVP cycles; a methodology of creativity which she creates with her husband and architect Laurence Halprin in 1969. For the purposes of the thesis, the notion of score is used as a performance structure.

⁷⁷ This does not imply that living myths must take place in outdoor space but that a natural setting empowers the performance and the intention of their score. Great examples on that direction were Halprin's score of *The Mountain Performance* (1981) where the myth was affiliated with a specific theme in situ; and *the Planetary Dance* (1987) which was designed for outdoor environments all over the world.

the interface between the human ways and the ways of nature are integrated (1995: 216).

Moving in and with the natural environment develops an awareness through which collective myths emerge as “‘recognised’ rather than ‘made’, ‘discovered’ rather than ‘created’” (*op. cit.* p.218). The practice of the thesis argues for a narrative of landscape that performs an interrelationship between the experiencer and the site. As its devising logic, it proposes a process of accomplishing an event of interconnection *in situ*. And for its performance structure, it suggests a score of an audience participatory experience.

Geopoetics draws practices from different performance disciplines: somatics, psychophysical actor training, movement improvisation and devised theatre. This kind of diversity does not take place by accident. It is based on my experience gained after an intense period of practicing them. During the two years of my rigorous training at Naropa I was able to elaborate them in depth and understand their common underlying principles which I have already determined in the beginning of this chapter. Hence, I considered them as suitable methods to explore space and its perception through the body and organise their findings into process for creating an outdoor performance.

Conclusion

This thesis argues for a site-specific performance structured as a *samatha vipashyana* practice in order to become a medium of re-examining culture. It advocates for a performance which operates as a spatial contemplation *in situ* and creates a zone of suspension of all processes which signify place. In this way, existing cultures on site are disclosed as pre-decided sets of practices and individual and/or collective narratives are enabled to be re-considered and re-defined. The site-event as a *samatha vipashyana* practice creates a ‘meta-narrative’ (Smith, 2008: 95) of place and becomes a means to re-examine culture.

To that end, the thesis conceives of a site-specific practice which elaborates the performance/site interplay as a discipline of 'presence' (Rose and Wylie, 2006: 477) in the landscape. It conceptualises experience *in situ* as an interrelationship and suggests a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice for materialising it. The practice of the thesis does not exclude the contextual frame of a place. It prioritises its somatic experience before becoming integrated with the cultural practices embedded in the site. It aspires to organise a methodology which explores the experience of landscape psychophysically and performs a site-specific event as an enactment of the interrelationship between the experiencer and the space. In this way, the thesis proposes mindfulness (*sati*) as a systematic way to investigate the interrelating processes through which the experience of landscape is formed as perception *in situ*.

The *samatha vipashyana* discipline constitutes the foundation of the practice of the thesis. It develops an experiential listening of site (*samatha*) upon which an awareness of the processes of knowing and understanding installed in space (*vipashyana*) is cultivated. The use of the *samatha vipashyana* practice as a method to embody and perform these processes as landscape constitutes the main argument of the thesis. It forms the research objectives of the projects which are undertaken for the PhD.

The first project in particular, establishes the practice of embodying landscape as a *samatha vipashyana* discipline. It articulates it as an inquiry of the interrelationship between the body mind and space in the present moment. It determines the training in situ as a practice of selflessness (*anatta*) and argues that its derived narratives manifest landscape as a 'dream of presence' (Rose, 2006: 539).

The second project delineates the embodiment of space as a psychophysical experience through movement, feeling and action, based on the first three aggregates (*skandhas*). It determines the performative actions in situ as the 'taskscape' (Ingold, 1993: 159) of the landscape. It analyses their devising

process as a practice of 'selflessness' (*anatta*). It argues for the *samatha vipashyana* discipline as the structure of an event of the body-landscape interrelationship.

The third project investigates the performance of landscape as a participatory site-specific event. It discloses its dramaturgy as an experiential practice of 'Dreaming' (Ingold, 2000: 57) of landscape and argues for its performance score as a *samatha vipashyana* discipline. It demonstrates the role of the watcher as a practitioner of selflessness (*anatta*).

Ethics and Research Conduct

The inquiring field of the thesis consists of three projects which took place in Greece between 2012-2014⁷⁸. The first two are residencies in the islands of Aigina and Nisyros. The third one is developed as a performance in Athens. The hypothesis of the thesis to structure a mindfulness (*sati*) outdoor performance practice in order to explore Greek culture *in situ* raised three issues of ethics.

The first one involves the use of the Buddhist practice as a performance practice. It emanated questions of conducting a 'spiritual' practice outside its context and original purpose: how are notions of Buddhism appropriated by another cultural frame (Greek) and discipline (performance); how could a practice of self-development such as Buddhist meditation be used for the creation of an artistic product; would it shape a system of aesthetic and conceptual biases; could presence *in situ* practiced via the *samatha vipashyana* technique be assessed in order to devise a performance?

The second ethical issue which the landscape practice raised is the dispute of who in relation to the site is suitable to devise a narrative of place. I designate this matter as the insider-outsider dynamic taken by the term of 'insideness' (1976:50) of Edward Relph. Geographer Relph uses the term to express different

⁷⁸ For the historical and cultural context of the specific time period in Greece see Preface.

levels of attachment with a place. He differentiates the role of insider from outsider as follows:

to be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place...it is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure or simply here and there. From the outside you look upon a place as a traveler...from inside you experience a place, as surrounded by it and part of it (1976: 49).

If the performance of the landscape aims to uncover narratives in situ, then the 'insideness' (*op. cit.* p.50) or 'outsideness' (*ibid.*) of its contributors filter such a process by re-conceptualising it. The question of who generates an event of landscape and to whom she addresses it, becomes principal throughout the overall conduct of the training. This issue was especially stressed in the first two projects of the thesis where the participants were outsiders of the specific environment or place. Hence, the development of a connection with the local community became a necessary part of the research project.

The ethical issues which derived from the use of Buddhism as a performance methodology *in situ* and the positioning of the participants in relation to place are examined throughout the three projects of the practice later in the thesis.

Finally, the third ethical issue involves the transition of the practice from the rural landscape to an urban one. The thesis develops its methodology in the countryside of two Greek islands and then creates a performance in Athens. As I have discussed in the preface, my urge to examine performance practices *in situ* was created by my need to explore narratives of place that still matter by moving away from the conditionality of the 'Greek crisis'. I considered the rural place where its practices do not necessarily impose a sociocultural behavior as the appropriate starting point⁷⁹. Hence, practitioners were trained in the rural and

⁷⁹ Firstly, I regard the rural sites available and pleasant to be explored through experiential disciplines of listening. Hence they are more appropriate as environments for developing a contemplative somatic practice. Secondly, I consider the cityscape as a space which reinforces or re-confirms a specific way of interrelating to it. In this way, it is more difficult to create space and allow silent hidden and implicit narratives to appear into the surface.

performed in the urban landscape⁸⁰. My aim was to examine the narratives which a contemplative performance method would devise in a place in an emergency. In this way, the thesis performs the transition from one environment to the other by transferring the practice in a different setting and examining the ways it influences the contemplative somatic experience. It does not exhaust a critical analysis of the urban space in relation to the rural one. The issue of trans-location is merely discussed in the section of the Athenian training in chapter 5.

An area of inquiry is not only formed by what it is determined to be studied but it is also shaped by its 'historical or ethnographic sources' (Buckland, 2006: 11). In the preface, I outline the historical conditions which activated and formed the investigation of a performance practice in the landscape. These circumstances are further discussed in the practice of each project as emotional statuses of the practitioners' presence in situ. The ethnographical processes of the thesis are formed by my journal as a participant-observer, the interviews of the practitioners who participate in the projects, the feedback of the audience and the video recordings. Lynn Maners states that an ethnographical report includes 'the facts as they appear on the ground... [and the] fictions essentially pleasant and entertaining memoirs from our time in the field...' (Maners in Daboo, 2010: 42). The following section delineates the ways the ethnographical practices enclosed the research practice and discusses the complications arisen from their conduct and interaction with the inquiring fields of Geography, Buddhism and Performance Practice.

Participant-Observers/ Practitioner- Facilitator

Dance anthropologist Theresa Buckland states that the role of the participant-observer is to use her own 'body as a means of access to information...the 'I' persona as a source, dancing and reflecting on sensation' (2006: 13). She stresses that the goal of the researcher is "to gain rather to 'bracket out' cultural understanding' (*ibid.*) and explains such a process where 'the individual's

⁸⁰ Within an ideal structure I would prefer to explore the performance structure in the rural environment before moving the Geopoetics practice to the city. This was slightly tested as experiments/ presentations at the end of the residencies in Aigina and Nisyros.

potential location in relation to the parameters and associated values of time and space operates within a largely consensual framework of meaning' (*ibid.*).

During the practice of each project I held a different role of participation. In the first project I worked mainly as a facilitator. In the second one, I was involved with the individual and group training as a coordinator and performer. In the third project I participated as a deviser, director and performer. For a theatre artist, the twofold process of observing while doing lies in the heart of her practice: 'for the actor/ doer...perceptual knowledge is practical knowledge. One knows how and one comes to know the 'feel' of the how' (Zarrilli, 2013: 27). Hence, as a performance practitioner I find myself familiar with the process of the participant-observer in terms of examining my own practice *in situ*.

As a facilitator-practitioner I adopted a strategy during the training which was clearly differentiating the operation of the two roles. I was guiding the practice in the beginning and then leaving the practitioners free to make their own discoveries about the process⁸¹. According to Dilley, in Open Space practice there is only one rule: 'not causing harm to our self and to others' (e-mail communication 2013). Dilley takes it from the Buddhist concept of *ahimsa* which means 'not to injure' and 'compassion'. On the other hand, she acknowledges the necessity of a non-intrusive facilitator: 'we have to give each other lots of room to be who we are...Each person must take responsibility for themselves'. In the same sense, my aim as a facilitator was to allow space for the practitioners to make their own realisations through the practice and develop their own process of self-development. In the indoor sessions, my interference would only rely in acknowledging the effect of one's activity in the overall situation of the room.

In the outdoor training, the facilitator-practitioner differentiation became more distinctive particularly in the second project of the thesis. On one hand, we were

⁸¹ I am referring to the inner process of the psychophysical training and the contemplative improvisational practice. In the former, one needs to encounter and elaborate emotional motives in the body. In the latter one needs to process the mental patterns through which she has been relating to her experiences.

working on vast open sites which were impossible for a person to supervise overall. On the other, my intention was for the practitioners to work without an outside eye so they could strengthen their muscle of self-reflection in relation to the research. I acknowledged to the protection of themselves from injury or trauma as another feedback mechanism of listening and responding to the needs of their own body. Nevertheless, there were moments where my role as a facilitator was quite missed. Issues arose that I could have encountered only if I had been an observant and not a participant of the practice. I further discuss them in the projects of the thesis. Hence, in the moments when the practice was becoming too intense there was a methodological choice to be made: how much do I push the participants' process in order to arrive at an outcome and how much do I let them structure their own exploration between the self and the enquired performance practice? What does the role of the facilitator exactly correspond to in a contemplative outdoor performance laboratory? Is she an initiator of a performing direction or is she a teacher and pedagogue? These issues are further discussed in relation to the first and the second projects of the thesis.

Furthermore, it was impossible for my role as a participant-observer to not be influenced by my social, cultural and psychological gaze embedded in the Greek landscape. As a person growing up in Athens, the biggest urban centre of the country, rural open spaces appear to me as a commodity. The initial question of the thesis, the exploration of the 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543) of a site, alters in relation to who each time practices where. For example, when I set a performance practice to investigate the psychophysical experience of a rural site, whom this experience concern? How different and in what way will it be if it has been devised by a woman practitioner raised in a peripheral environment of Greece? The issue of positioning the practitioners in relation to the landscape is discussed throughout the whole practice of the thesis.

Finally, when one investigates a practice in one's own country, the question arises of what one's own place of culture signifies. There is an ambiguity in framing when (or where) one is an insider or an outsider: 'how [does] one know when one is at home [when] the grounds of familiarity and distance are shifting

ones?’ (Strathern in Katsouba, 1999: 189). For the ‘native researcher’ (Katsouba, 1999: 193) there is a tension created by a ‘paradoxical sense of simultaneous distance and closeness, otherness and oneness’ (Danforth in Katsouba, *ibid.*). For performing research at ‘home’ one ‘has to transcend an a priori ascribed social position in the society’ (*op. cit.* p.32). As the thesis will argue the mindfulness (*sati*) framework of practicing landscape waives all conceptual binaries. It suspends in space all individual and collective narratives and determines them as practices *in situ* which are enabled to be explored.

Participants

In each project, a different group of people was engaged since it was logistically impossible to collaborate with the same participants throughout the whole practice. In this way, six participants were involved in the first project, seven in the second one and two in the last one. One member participated in all of the three projects. Participants are Greek and are from Athens and Thessaloniki. Their age ranges from late 20s to early 50s and half of them are women. Two thirds of them are theatre performers on an early stage of their career. Only three of them (including myself) have experience in performance training but all of them are interested in devising and performing in outdoor space. Two musicians and a singer, practitioners of Greek traditional and eastern music, were invited to supplement the practice with another art discipline. However, they mostly participated as movers. One participant was not affiliated with the research as a performer but as a Buddhist. He integrated with the investigation by virtue of his knowledge and experience of the Buddhist context.

Before each project I organised preliminary meetings in Athens to present the research objectives of the practice. I introduced the *samatha vipashyana* technique and shared an outline of the themes which each project would investigate in three categories. The first one included the nature of the practice *per se*. The second one involved cultural or historical topics of the specific place which the project aimed to explore. The third one set individual or collective themes of the group they could integrate with the cultural practices of the

particular landscape. In these meetings, the members of the group signed an agreement that their data will be used for the purposes of the thesis in the form of text or video; the produced performative material will be copyrighted and that myself and the university is released from any liability in case of damage or injury⁸². In the thesis, each practitioner is referred to by an alias and at points she/he is described by appearance in order for her/his action to be distinctive in the video footage.

In each project, the group presented a range of skillfulness in performing. However, it was not the artistic diversity that constituted a challenge for the conduct of the research. The residential character of the first two projects conditioned the contribution of each participant based on their competence in living and working with other people in an outdoor setting. Participants, experienced as performers, were unable to recognise the interpersonal tensions which such a condition evokes and to elaborate them as part of their individual process. As the inquiry focused on group training, such a lack influenced the whole practice. On the other hand, the Buddhist methodology of the practice preconditioned an inquisitive interest of one's own experience. Practitioners needed to develop a personal involvement in order to explore their processes of sensing, perceiving and acting *in situ*. The residential as well as the contemplative conditionality of the practice raised questions of availability and preparedness for its practitioners. These issues are discussed in relation to each project.

Moreover, the group of participants encapsulated an urban middle-class identity whose presence in Greek rural sites evokes an insider-outsider issue⁸³. In the rural landscapes of Greece practices are habitual and fairly circumscribed (e.g. agriculture or tourism). Any activity which moves beyond these restraints is considered suspicious or out-of-place. As the activity of the projects of the thesis

⁸² For the process of documenting their participation (video and interviews) see below.

⁸³ I do not claim that these challenges take place only in rural sites. Tensions due to subjectivity (class, gender, ethnicity etc.) can take place when working in urban places as well. Here I am referring only to the process in rural landscape because it revealed challenges which affected the practice the most.

was undefinable by the local gaze and performed by a group of Athenians it was seen as privileged. There were points where such cultural disparity created an insider-outsider dynamic between the practitioners and the elaborated sites. Just by the presence of the group *in situ*, there was an intensity being developed which could not be ignored during the conduct of the practice per se. This is discussed in the projects of the thesis.

Audience Members

Two presentations took place throughout the whole practice. The first one happened in the first project to an audience group of twenty-five members. The spectators were either inhabitants of the island invited by the community of the residency or relatives, friends, and collaborators invited by the participants of the project. The second presentation involved a site-specific performance in the center of Athens as the third project of practice. It took place twice and each time it had approximately fifteen to eighteen spectators gathered by an e-mail invitation to friends and the artistic and performance community of the city.

Each presentation began by introducing the piece as part of a PhD research of a contemplative site-specific performance practice with the aim to explore narratives *in situ*. It was explained to the audience that their feedback will contribute to the conduct of the research and requested their written response after the performance. Their consensus was asked for using their testimony and the video documentation of their experience as data of the doctoral thesis. The feedback questions of each piece are mentioned in the chapter of each project.

Video Documentation

For recording the practice of the thesis, I had the privilege of collaborating with three filmmakers, one of whom was the editor of the footage as well⁸⁴. From the

⁸⁴Two filmmakers participate in the first project (a man and a woman), a woman in the second and the two women were the ones which documented the performance of the third project. The reason for not having the same people documenting throughout the whole practice was due to their availability.

recordings of the practice we realised that a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice *in situ* requires a somatic and meditative process of documentation⁸⁵. The videographer needs to be alert and engaged with what arises in space in order to make choices in the present time. She has to embrace an attentive presence in the space, in order to relate with the experience of the performers. In this way, the process is embodied. She needs to recognise the action *in situ* as a signifier which formulates meaning. However, exactly because activity is devised on site and has no predefined theme, the videographer must become attuned to the present moment and listen to the story occurring on the spot. In this way, the process is meditative. These issues are discussed in relation to the specific videos of each project throughout the thesis.

The editing of the video material took place based on two tasks⁸⁶. One was to provide evidence for the research inquiry of the praxis. The other was not to disrupt the rhythm and sense of the experience which a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice cultivates *in situ*. Arranging the material into an order becomes a practice of elaborating a way of looking at it. It suggests a viewing of the material as a gaze of looking at the specific practice. In this way, it devises a narrative as a result of the material experienced in its actual time. For example, the video 'rock meditation II' is edited with the purpose of transmitting a sense of the *in situ* embodiment through the duration of the frames and their ways of interrelating. The thesis presents video extracts from the training to support the methodological stages of the practice. It demonstrates the site-specific performance in Athens in one video to disclose the structure of an overall event.

Audio and Written Documentation

To report the impact of the practice to the practitioners, I adopted the form of a free flowing interview, much like a conversation. My purpose was to create space for them to communicate their own points of relevance with the practice. These

⁸⁵This is initially demonstrated by the improvisations in the landscape which appear as the most challenging form to record. All other exercises of the training are more static and thus easier to be recorded. The documentation of the site-specific performance in Athens was planned for a two camera shooting. For more see Chapter 5.

⁸⁶I am only referring here to the videos of the practices. For the editing process of the site-specific performance in Athens, see Chapter 5.

discussions were recorded in Greek and transcribed into text and translated into English by me. For the spectators of each performance I created written questionnaires. This was a fairly problematic form of gaining feedback for two reasons. Firstly, articulating in written form one's own experience of a performance is not customary practice for a Greek audience. Thus, people are either ill prepared in offering critical reflection or do not care to respond at all. Secondly, it was problematic to phrase questions which would relate the effect of the performance experience *in situ* in the research frame of the practice. For example, I find it difficult to assess the notion of the body-landscape interrelationship as an experience. To document my own experience as a practitioner, I used the form of a journal. These written sources are used as data to argue for the structural stages of the practice and to analyse the performance narratives *in situ* as events of the body-landscape interrelationship.

PART II

Embodying and Performing Landscapes

The Projects

The practice of the thesis takes place in three research projects. The first one is a two-week residential laboratory on the island of Aigina. Its aim is to bring together exercises from different performance lineages to structure a mindfulness performance practice of landscape. Thus it is named the Bridge Project. It takes place both in the studio and in outdoor space and finishes with a presentation to an audience group.

The second project is a three-week residential project on the island of Nisyros. It is considered the heart of the inquiry thus it is named with the name of the practice, the Geopoetics Project. It takes place entirely in an outdoor rural environment. It investigates individual and group practices of the psychophysical exploration of a site. It creates the passage from the somatic investigation to the devising process *in situ*.

The third project involves the production of a site-specific performance in Athens. The project is entitled Performance *Topophilia* to indicate its aim of collating the experience *in situ* with past and present Athenian narratives embedded in space. The following three chapters examine correspondingly each project.

Chapter 3

The Bridge Project

[DVD A]

Introduction

The first project of the thesis set the platform upon which the body-landscape 'co-emergence' (Rose, 2006: 538) is practiced. It transcribed the experience of a site to a *samatha vipashyana* discipline *in situ*. Growing out of my own performance lineage and training, the project drew on practices from the fields of mindfulness (*sati*), movement training and movement composition. By working both indoors and outdoors, these practices laid the foundation of a *samatha* discipline of landscape as an interrelationship between body, mind and space. This is what I designate as a discipline of attunement aiming to embody landscape. As my intention was to integrate my performance training with the investigation of the experience of a place, I named the whole endeavour the Bridge Project.

Additionally, the Bridge Project aimed to interrelate with the circumstances of the time when it took place. It began in the middle of the procedures of the Greek government for the second memorandum (February, 2012). The new development further fostered a sense of disintegration in social life, escalating the insecurity and anxiety which had been developing over the past four years. I felt the necessity to remove myself from this, in order to examine what is still valid and important in relation to my cultural milieu. To this end, I had to reconnect with my own sense of presence *in situ*. With the goal of creating an experience with and in the landscape in order to recover and repossess what can still be designated as 'ours', I invited a group of people to participate in the project.

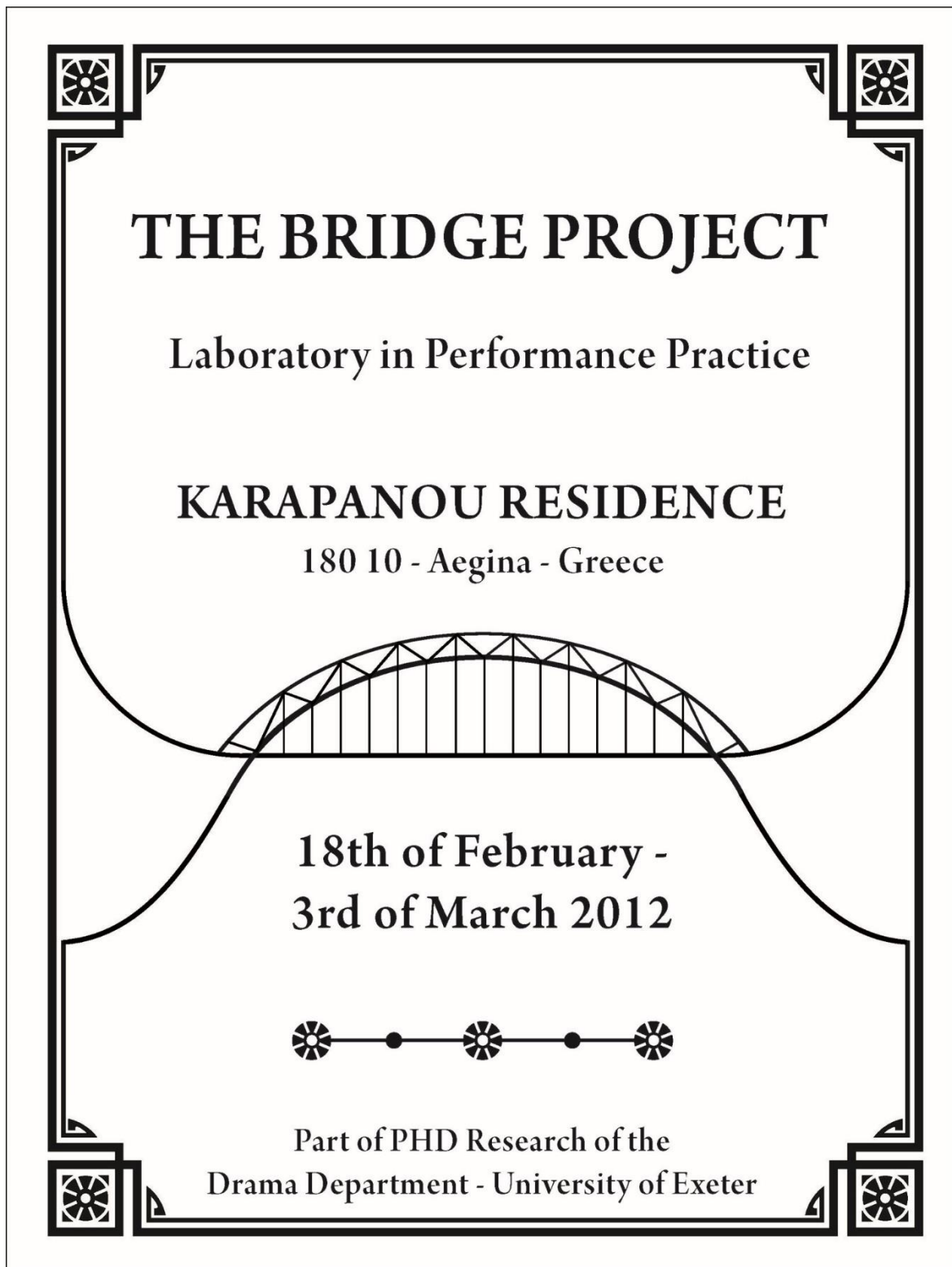


image 1: the poster of the project

This chapter analyses the practice undertaken during the Bridge project by examining the following three questions:

1. How could I develop a *samatha vipashyana* movement practice in the studio and in the landscape?
2. How can these practices generate the beginnings of performance material?
3. What kind of performance could be devised from these practices?

Each part of the chapter corresponds to a question. The first section determines the experience of space as an interplay of body, mind and space and defines the investigation of landscape as their synchronisation. The second section examines the experience of a body-mind-site interconnection as the narrative event of the landscape. The third section examines a performative structure through which such an event may be performed.

The practice for the Bridge Project focused on interrogating the physical presence on site as a state of being. For such a task, it employed meditation practices of breathing and walking, movement patterns of Body-Mind Centering®, sensory exercises and the Contemplative Dance Practice of Barbara Dilley (CDP).

Description

The Bridge Project took place on Aegina island, situated in the Saronic Gulf 27km south-east from Athens. Its triangular shape consists of plains in the north-west and rocky mountainous areas in the centre-south, reminders of the island's volcanic origin. In ancient Greek mythology Aegina was one of the God Asopo's daughters with whom Zeus fell in love. The first settlements of the island are recorded from the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C. In the archaic and classical years, due to its strategic geographical position, Aegina played a central role in the sea trade and became a strong maritime force.



image 2: map of the island

During Byzantine times the island suffered from pirate invasions and continuous occupations by the Venetians and the Ottomans. In 1826, Aegina became the first capital of the newly established Greek state and made advances in infrastructure and public services as it evolved into an administrative, political and intellectual centre. Nowadays, the island functions as an Athenian suburb and tourist leisure resort developed mostly around its coast-line and plains. However, the south-eastern side which is rocky and with poor road networks, still maintains the characteristics of the natural environment of the island.

The Bridge Project was based at Oikia Karapanou, situated 4 km outside the town of Aegina. This is a 19th century mansion with direct access to the sea, surrounded by pine and palm trees and a pistachio orchard. The property was built around 1850 and has a distinguished history. Presently, Oikia Karapanou runs a curriculum in alternative education and holds movement and meditation workshops.



image 3: Oikia Karapanou

The island and the residence seemed ideal for the purposes of the Bridge Project. Both of these places created a zone where the perspectives of the insider and outsider were at interplay. Aegina is a rural landscape though infused by the capital's bourgeois culture. Oikia is a community house with studio spaces and at the same time access to the most rural and intact sites of the island. It enabled us to isolate and work with our body mind experience, indoors and outdoors, without forgetting the mentality of the city from which we were coming. In this way, Oikia became the ideal base to observe ourselves from an appropriate distance.

The Bridge Project started on February 18th and finished on March 3rd 2012. Due to the fact that Oikia had no activities at that period of the year the residence was offered as a working and living space for the project in exchange for the participants doing everyday maintenance work. The group consisted of four performers: two women (including myself) and two men. In the video footage of the project on the accompanying DVD (A) the tall man is Jacob, the other one is Michael and the woman is Dora. In the second week, two musicians were added in the group: Gregory and Maria. The filmmakers came out on two weekends to document the work.

The life in Oikia included the household responsibilities of cooking, cleaning and heating, the daily, three-hour maintenance work of scrubbing the wooden shutters of the residency, the opening and closing rituals in the beginning and the end of the day and the practice of silence as a residential condition. The opening and closing rituals were *Shambhala* bowing in and out, *samatha vipashyana* sitting meditation practice and the 'talking stick'⁸⁷. Twice during the project, the ensemble was in silence for a whole day⁸⁸. Their daily repetition quietened the

⁸⁷ The 'talking stick' practice is a group council process, in which participants sit in a circle and one at a time speak from their heart to the center of it, holding a stick or special object until he or she is done talking. In the Bridge Project, the practice took place when there was a request or a need from the group to process a topic or an issue which derived from the experience of that day.

⁸⁸ The silence practice is taken from the Buddhist meditation discipline and is used as a contemplative exercise. In the Bridge Project, the first time silence was used as a practice of the residential conditions. The second time it helped the group to process and overcome a conflict between its members.

mind in terms of 'how to be' in the residence. It involved a process of suspending one's own habitual patterns of relating with the other and with the space. The everyday rituals formed a container which enhanced the act of being present in the space and at the same time facilitated the transition from the business of everyday life to the training of the project.

The schedule of the project was mainly formed in terms of practicing in the morning and maintenance work in the afternoon. However, this was changeable according to weather conditions, and the needs and the energy of the group. On the fourth day, the group started working outdoors. We practiced in sites accessible by walking: the island's highest peak of Elanion Oros (584m) and an ancient olive grove situated at the foot of the mountain. We also worked with the landscape of Oikia's residential area which later on formulated the project's final presentation.

The *samatha vipashyana* movement practice of space and landscape

The training of the Bridge Project began intentionally indoors. I considered the empty studio a confined space with less stimuli to process than an outdoor setting. I saw it as the ideal site for the practitioners to elaborate a method of listening without being overtaken by the impact of their experience. The studio training involved sitting meditation practice, the rotation patterns of Body Mind Centering, the '4 Distractions Walk' of Leeny Sack and Contemplative Dance of Barbara Dilley⁸⁹. These exercises disclosed physicality as a tool for listening to the present moment. They structured a range of kinetic attention from stillness to activity. In this way, the investigation of 'now' was evolved into a practice of the experience of being in space.

⁸⁹ The '4 Distractions walk' is a slow walking which entails a soft breathing, center and gaze. Each time that the mind wanders the practitioner labels his/her distraction according to four different kinds: sound, thought, emotion, sensation.

In the following section, I discuss the practices of sitting meditation and Open Space, the fourth section of CDP, to disclose the process through which the *samatha vipashyana* discipline was established as the structure for interrogating indoor and outdoor space through the moving body.

Sitting Meditation Practice

Mindfulness of breathing constitutes the primary technique of *samatha vipashyana* practice⁹⁰. In the Bridge project, I led the practice on the basis of the Shambhala tradition⁹¹: sitting in an upright posture, focus on the outbreath, each time that the mind wanders label it ‘thinking’ and return gently to the breath. In the beginning, the erect and still bodily posture amplifies the thinking process of the practitioner: ‘thoughts were coming to my mind like a storm...there were times where I felt as if I was screaming from within’ (Jacob, personal interview, May 2012).

As meditation was practiced, it increasingly started to work as a projection mechanism. That is to say, it demonstrated the distinctive components which formulate the experience of the present moment. There were elements originating in the body such as sensations and feelings, in the mind such as thoughts and memories and in the environment such as sounds and light. Meditation practice cultivated an awareness of the shifting focuses among these three originators of experience. The present moment was disclosed as a correlation of these alternate points of attention: ‘I observed an intriguing connection between the workings of the mind and the corresponding body reactions and vice versa’ (Gregory, personal interview, May 2012).

The *samatha vipashyana* practice calmed the mind and brought a certain degree of inner peace cultivating ‘a sense of acknowledging and accepting oneself’ (Dora, April, 2012). Sensations, feelings and thoughts obtained their own

⁹⁰ For more on the *samatha vipashyana* technique see methodology chapter.

⁹¹ Shambhala practice constitutes a secular meditation training organised by the Buddhist teachings and meditation practices taught by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Shambhala has been my own meditation lineage since I graduated from Naropa University (2010).

corporeality in the space. Meditation practice established the experience of the present moment as a body mind, time and space interrelationship. It constituted the body mind correlation as a discipline of presence. The practice of Open Space expands such an inquiry further in space through movement.

Open Space Practice

Open Space constitutes the fourth part of the Contemplative Dance practice of Barbara Dilley. The practice of Open Space is a group improvisational movement practice which aims to cultivate 'the voice of the body mind' (Dilley, 2015: 141) among the self, the others and the space⁹². I consider the whole structure of Contemplative Dance Practice a training of mindfulness (*sati*) in motion. As I argue below, Open Space entails a double form of listening. It attends to the body mind interrelationship by moving both with oneself with others and space.

In the studio practice of the Bridge Project, Open Space came after sitting meditation and individual movement practice (usually a warm up or the personal awareness practice of CDP)⁹³. It maintained the physical vocabulary of the previous phases adding the disciplines of tempo, duration, spatial placement (how far or how closed) and the group instructions of coping and being influenced by other(s). In CDP, there is freedom in the way of being and travelling through space. In the Bridge Project, practitioners were instructed to move on a grid in order to release them from any anxiety about how to orient themselves in the space.

Video 1 labelled 'Studio practice' which demonstrates the practice of Open Space is taken in the middle of the project, when the group is already familiar with the practice. It is also the second day after the musicians joined the project. This is the first session where we all practiced together in the space. One of the

⁹² See previous chapter.

⁹³ The movement vocabulary of Personal Awareness Practice (PAP) consists of sitting, lying, standing and walking, the disciplines of stillness, repetition and slow motion and the eyes practices (closed, peripheral, direct, negative space, infant eyes). PAP may also elaborate maps of space (f. e. parallel corridors, quadrants, grid).

newcomers chose to watch and the other one to participate. Thus, in the video one participant is practicing for the first time. Additionally, this day is the first time that we moved in front of a camera with the filmmakers present in the room. As I discuss at the end of this chapter, these conditions revealed the problematic points of using a meditative discipline as a performance practice [see video 1].

Open Space practices movement as a form of listening and responding to space. Each time, the practitioner chooses a physical discipline (f. e. stillness, repetition, slow motion etc.) which becomes a means of attending and returning to the present moment (*samatha*). Movement cultivates an awareness of the experience of space (*vipashyana*). However, while the practitioner listens to the body mind, physicality manifests a response as an understanding of the experience. In this way, movement appears as a discipline of listening to space which is materialised as a response through activity.

In the video 1/ 0:05- 1:30 we see the action of Jacob (long hair, wearing a white top) being created by his moment to moment process of listening and responding to space. Each time he moves based on his body mind experience and in relation to what is formulated around him in the present moment. He performs in space from a sense of interrelating and not of acting: 'I was following what was happening to me without deciding it' (Jacob, personal interview, May 2012). Jacob moves in space in order to listen to his body mind experience and generates action as a way of understanding it.

However, in Open Space the practitioner does not only move by herself but also with others. The discipline of listening and responding is negotiated between the needs of the body mind and the manifested experience of the present moment. An ongoing questioning takes place throughout the practice as an extra discipline of contemplation: do I stay with my 'body mind voice' (Dilley, 2015: 56) or do I respond to what is happening in the space and the others? Within this context, activity is being originated neither from the self nor from the space but from the dialogue taking place between them. It materialises the experience *in situ* as an

interrelationship. The *samatha vipashyana* movement discipline forms a feedback loop where one 'side' informs the other and in tandem they manifest the moment to moment experience.

Within this context, space is materialised through different forms of interrelationship. The experience of the indoor training discloses three kinds of interconnection between the body mind and the space. In the first variation, the body mind attunes to the experience of space but desists from evolving activity as its response. I name it the interrelationship of the perpetual questioning. For example, in the video 1/ 3:15-4:15 there is the movement pattern of a swinging hand and a crawling leg. It is introduced by Jacob and picked up by me. At some point Dora is influenced by it. Jacob soon drops it and as his imitator I struggle to maintain the activity by myself. He revisits it and I move into something else. We move in space by 'beginning again and again' (Gertrude Stein in Dilley, 2015: 40). Our continuous asking of what is the present moment disallows us from developing an understanding of it and formulates the experience of space as a group of unfinished sentences or abrupt endings.

In the second form of interrelationship discovered in the studio training, the discipline of listening does not lead to any movement as a response and the practice falls in the gap of 'not knowing what to do'. In the video 1/ 1:38-2:15 the group stays still listening to the experience of space. There is a tension from questioning what the next moment will be. However, as it is prolonged, it creates a further expectation. Each one waits for the other to respond but nobody moves. The practice is interrupted by this anticipation. There is a sense of a vacuum within which the feedback loop process between body mind and space falls and dissipates.

Finally, in the third type of the body mind interrelationship, the devised activity materialises space as a synchronisation. Dilley argues that it is when 'mind and body are sensed in the same field of awareness' (2015: 9) and everything in space 'thoughts, feelings, impulses, sensations, the named and the un-named'

(Dilley, unpublished scripts, 2012) is equally welcomed and 'with acceptance' (*ibid.*)⁹⁴. The video 1/ 4:23-4:53 presents each practitioner following her own process of listening to space. However, every devised activity in relation to the overall experience manifests a synchronised and complete whole. The meditative physical discipline composes a moment with a beginning, middle and end. The sequence seems choreographed demonstrating resourcefulness in tempo, rhythm and movement variation and composition in space. It starts with me running up and down in a corridor in front of the window. My activity stimulates Michael to crawl. At some point I stop to look outside. Michael imitates me and influences Dora's action. An expectation is developed in space which is enhanced by the stillness of Jacob and Maria. Each participant's sequence appears as an abstract exploration of her/his moment to moment experience of space. However, as an overall they manifest an event derived from the conditionality *in situ*.

The experience of the body mind, space interrelationship as a synchronisation will be further used as a guideline in the process of generating a narrative from the experience of landscape. However, in the context of the Bridge Project, in order to transfer the meditative movement practice from the studio to the landscape my initial task was to empower the discipline of listening to the body mind in the site. In the next section I discuss the ways somatic practices expanded and established the *samatha vipashyana* movement discipline in the landscape.

Somatic practices in situ: Group Walking and Rolling Practices

The studio practice set the investigation of space as a discipline of listening to the body mind space interrelationship. My next goal was to apply such a practice outdoors. I set the somatic exercises of group walking and rolling to explore the body mind *in situ* and develop an awareness of the experience of the landscape. In the Bridge Project, I practiced them in sequence in a site of an ancient olive grove. In the next projects of the thesis, this sequence was kept as an experiential strategy for introducing a new site. The walking and rolling exercises have simple

⁹⁴ For more in the notion of synchronization see following section.

and repetitive instructions. Their skillfulness lies in the quality of being opened and attentive to the experience of the place. For some participants the task of not having to achieve a specific goal was challenging. For others, it was liberating. It allowed them to expand their body mind experience *in situ* without the feeling of being judged.



image 4: walking practice



image 5: rolling practice

The group walking exercise is based on the contemplation of walking in the

*Satipatthana Sutta*⁹⁵. In the project, it followed a more open structure. The discipline for the group was to walk in a line an equal distance apart, to maintain the gaze on the horizontal level, in silence and to pay attention to thoughts, associations, ideas and images arisen while passing through the landscape. The attentive performance of the walking instruction expanded the perception of the site as a somatic metaphor: 'I had the sense that we are connected by our centres through an umbilical cord...[which] was being projected to the infinity both forwards and backwards' (Dora, personal interview, April 2012). It disclosed site as an image in space of 'walking along with my antecedents and their descendents' (*ibid.*). It revealed feelings of 'connectiveness and expansion' (*ibid.*). It ascribed a signified meaning in the *in situ* presence of the practitioner: 'I was aware that it is the group of the project which performs the exercise but at the same time I was feeling as if we are believers going on a pilgrimage' (*ibid.*).

The rolling exercise was based on the spinal rotations of Body-Mind Centering®. It entailed rolling on the ground with a sustained slow tempo initiating the roll from the movement of the eyes exploring the site through a 360° circle. This instruction expanded the timing of the practitioner's perceiving process giving her time to notice and discern the information coming from the environment. In my own practice, the widening of awareness derived as an image-task which gave me new 'unknown' information and meaning in my presence *in situ*: 'the ground became a big embrace; I talk to the earth and she listens to me; I speak to her ear and she answers me back; we share our secrets; I sense my heart being held and I cry' (personal journal, February 2012).

As I discuss in Chapter 1, the Buddhist doctrine of selflessness (*anatta*) claims that the concept of self as an inherent entity does not exist. Instead there are five levels of connectivity which relate the sense-organs of the experiencer with the

⁹⁵ The *Satipatthana Sutta* is organised into Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Walking is a practice of the First Foundation of Mindfulness of the body. It is one of the contemplations of the four bodily postures (lying, sitting, standing and walking). According to the Shambhala tradition walking meditation practice has the following instructions: walk in a normal pace, place your hands in front of your solar plexus; keep your eyes open with a soft focus on the horizontal level; notice the moments when the foot touches the ground as it arrives and departs from it; each time that the mind wanders bring your mind back to the feet connecting with the earth.

environment. The objects of their interconnections are the pixels that compose what the experiencer understands as her perception of the specific time and place. In Buddhist thought they are differentiated into five aggregates (*skandhas*): material form (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*), cognition (*sanna*), volitions (*sankhara*) and consciousness (*vinnana*). The practice of *samatha vipashyana* dissects the points where the sense-organs and the environment meet and formulate the different objects of contact. Buddhist meditation develops a 'detached receptivity' (Analayo, 2003: 58) for the practitioner to experience the site. It 'slow[s] down the transition from the receptive to the active phase of the perceptual process' (Thera, 1962: 35) and creates space for the mind to observe its ways of identification and positioning *in situ*.

The walking and rolling exercises in the Bridge Project operated in the same way. They evolved into somatic objects of attention (*samatha*) through which the practitioners became able to differentiate the elements which co-formulate the perception of the specific site (*vipashyana*). The exercises demonstrated feelings, images and associations as objects of interrelationship between body mind and site. They introduced a *samatha vipashyana* practice in motion as an investigational tool disclosing landscape as 'a flux of momentary change' (Rahula, 1974: 66).

Furthermore, they made evident an intermediate zone where the outer physical space meets with an inner experiential one. In the studio it was examined through a discipline of negotiation: attending to the body mind voice or to what the manifested moment requires. In the outdoor setting, it was seen through the discourse of inner and outer landscapes. The outer stresses the meeting points which are stimulated by elements of the environment such as sounds, shapes, tastes, smells, textures. But also the ways they are organised as cultural systems such as architecture, agriculture, historical heritage, landscape planning etc. The inner concerns all objects of interrelating the *in situ* experience with oneself such as sensations, feelings, associations and meanings. I employ this metaphor to illustrate the inquiring points of the two ends of the practice of the thesis.

Concluding, the indoor and outdoor exercises of the Bridge Project establish the practice of the body-landscape interrelationship as a *samatha vipashyana* movement practice. It explores landscape through activity and investigates its meaning as the new, implicit or forgotten ways through which the body interconnects with the site. These objects of interconnection are differentiated into distinct categories of experience such as sensation, feeling, association and they disclose an intermediated space where the impressions of the inner meet the attributes of the outer. In the following section, through the *samatha vipashyana* movement discipline, I investigate the site as a synchronisation where the experience of the body mind attunes to the space. In this context, I will argue that an experience of interrelationship between body and landscape constitutes the narrative of such an event.

The experience of the body-landscape interrelationship

At the end of the first week, the indoor and outdoor practice set the body space inquiry as the examination of the meeting points between the body mind and the site. My next goal was to organise a session which would include the exercises that had worked so far and deepen the experience of the body-landscape interrelationship. For that reason, I planned a training day on the remote site of Ellanion Oros, the highest pick of Aegina (532m). The session included a one hour ascent using the group walking practice, outdoor CDP and descent. We started in the dark maintaining a condition of silence already prior to our departure. At the Oros pick we found a small church surrounded by a fenceless cement-made courtyard. On its north side we could see the expanded urban tissue of Athens and to the south, a few of the Saronic islands, designating the site a natural passage from the Greek mainland to the sea.

This section includes two kinds of video footage. The first one demonstrates extracts from all of the practices of that day. Its aim is to depict the specific day as a complete practice session in a site [see video 2 'Oros practice (extracts)]. The second video involves a documentation of the Open Space improvisation

practice *in situ*. I will discuss moments from this footage as instances of both personal and group narratives of the interrelationship between the body mind and the landscape [see video 3 'Oros (landscape improvisation)']. The video material was shot by two cameras. Its angles and frames were chosen by the moment to moment involvement of the two filmmakers with the derived activity in *situ*. In the second video, the material is edited tightly to the order and the tempo through which the improvised actions took place.

Personal Narrative

After our arrival at the summit we started exploring the site through CDP. The specific session included a sitting meditation discipline and integrated the personal awareness practice with the collective one. From our contemplative movement practice, our experience *in situ* evoked in us a psychophysical reaction. Jacob noticed developing an 'embodied understanding' (Jacob, personal interview, May 2014) of the site. Sitting with his back on the wall of the church he found himself engaged with feelings: 'deriving not so much by meanings or thoughts...but from the experience of where I am' (*ibid.*). It was a surprise and revelation for his performing process to have 'an inner activation from the simple form of sitting and looking across'. Without "'doing' anything" (*ibid.*) he had 'an awakening of images and associations from [his] particular positioning in the site' (*ibid.*) [see video 3/ 4:17-4:27 and 9:15-9:57].

Through her contemplative practice in the site, Dora devised an activity which evoked an inner impact on her. When it became repetitive, the sequence started imbuing her experience with meaning and formulated for her a personal narrative throughout the whole practice. Specifically, in the beginning of the improvisation Dora created the sequence of standing with her arms up, looking far away, bringing them down in slow motion (Dora, personal interview, April 2012) [see video 3/ 2:00- 2:20]. She noticed that the posture stimulated in her a response: 'the sequence recorded a psychophysical experience of surrendering in my body which I could access each time I was revisiting it' (*ibid.*) [3/ 5:55- 6:20]. The affect of her devised score was coming back as a 'personal story' (*ibid.*) ascribing in this way 'a meaning' (*ibid.*) to her experience in the site: 'there was something

there...a sense of surrendering...to God... [and the movement turned] to a prayer...an invocation' (ibid.) [see video 3/ 7:15-8:16].

Dance practitioner Anna Halprin defines an exploration of movement as the 'experiential understanding of the interconnection of the physical, emotional and associative levels of awareness' (in Worth and Poynor, 2006: 60). She sees natural environments as spaces 'inherently connected to content and personal meaning' (in Worth and Poynor, 2004:89). Hence, she claims that to move in nature is "to explore and express...personal 'mythology' in relation to [the environment]" (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 90.).

In Oros, the contemplative movement discipline of listening to a site was further explored as a process of responding to that listening. Furthermore, it embodied ways of manifesting such a response. The *samatha* discipline already examined in the previous days of the project in Oros, gave rise to the development of *vipashyana*. It revealed an 'experiential understanding' (*op. cit.* p.60) of what constitutes the site by investing it with 'a personal mythology' (*op. cit.* p.90). These outcomes resulted from the practice as an individual process. In the next section I discuss the effects of the meditative movement practice in Oros as a group process.

Collective Narrative

Mary Overlie argues for the story of the performance as the 'logic' (2004: 188) according to which the elements of space, time, shape, emotion, and movement interweave the fabric of the event. According to Slavoj Zizek, an event is the disruption of 'the usual flow of things' (2014: 2) with no 'discernible causes' (*ibid.*). He argues that an action becomes an event when it defines or alters 'the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage with it' (*op. cit.* p.10).

On the other hand, Halprin conceives of a group movement event as a living myth: 'a narrative pattern giving significance to our existence whether we invent

or discover its meaning' (in Worth and Poynor, 2004: 107). She argues that a living myth takes place as a dance when it follows the specific attributes: '[it] emerges spontaneously from the group... [it] is unique to that moment in time and space... [it] has never happened before with only one life...[it] symbolise[s] the spirit of the collective psyche of the group... [and it] is unpredictable' (Halprin, 1995: 128).

In the group improvisation of Oros, story was manifested by the abstract movement disciplines performed in the site. These evoked a psychophysical impact which enabled the practitioners to create connections between who they are and how they relate to the world. The movement, derived thereby, formulated a sequence where each moment was interrupting the established order of the preceding one and creating a narrative effect. As I demonstrate below, these attributes constituted by means of the contemplative movement practice, the narrative of a body-landscape interrelationship.

Already established from the studio practice of the Open Space, we were moving in the site of Oros being attentive both to our own body mind correlation and to what was emerging by the others and the space. As I have mentioned, the specific site operated as a natural passage from Athens to the Saronic Gulf. The fact that we could see our place of origin from afar charged our movement *in situ* with an impact which enhanced our commitment to the meditative discipline⁹⁶. We became courageous in staying open in the present moment and begun to enjoy listening [see video 3/ 00:00- 2:19]. We were not anticipating 'doing' even when there were moments of not knowing what to do [video 3/ 4:12-4:43]. We started trusting that our improvisational practice would lead us to a sense, a feeling or an understanding of our experience *in situ*. In the video extract 3/ 5:54-6:20 activity is devised from the performers' exploration of their body mind with the present moment. It begins with Jacob setting a question. Michael reacts by dragging his chair and turning his back. He and, I lying with my eyes closed, seem unavailable to what is happening. However, a trio-solo relationship is formed in

⁹⁶ See below.

the space coloring the *in situ* presence of the group with meaning. It concludes with the movement of Dora. The practice developed an awareness not on what we were doing but on how and cultivated the confidence in allowing the moment to disclose the performed event.

Furthermore, as we were improvising in an outdoor space for the first time it was impossible not to involve material elements. We used pebbles, a chair found in the courtyard, grass and the iron lid of a basin situated in the middle of the space. The use of the objects and our persistence in returning to them displayed movements as tasks and created soundscapes. Sometimes, our interaction with them was converting our body mind movement exploration into the display of a persona. For example, in video 3/ 5:31-5:52 the presence of the objects and their use signified our movement practice of listening to a situation of four characters: a man hitting the stones on the iron lid setting the tempo of scene, another man sitting in the only chair taking a role of a patriarch and the two women who found their place by reference to the 'enthroned' man.

In this way, a variety of generating activity *in situ* was developed. On the one hand, there was our listening process taking place through movement instructions and creating abstract situations. On the other, there was an ordinariness deriving from the interplay among the two men and two women and the materials of the specific site. Each occurring instance was operating like the introduction of a new word. Our exploration of the site evolved into the moment by moment unfolding of an event. The video 3/ 6:47-9:15 demonstrates a flow of improvised actions which evokes involvement, meaning and text. The use of language (the meaning of the specific extracts and their timing in relation to the derived activity) results by the moment to moment choices of each practitioner⁹⁷. All of the components

⁹⁷ There was no instruction of using text that day in the practice. Both of the extracts were derived by the activity *in situ*. The first one was provoked by the place. A verse from the poem *Maria Nefeli* (1978) of Odysseas Elytis was written in the chair found in the site. Michael recognised the passage and performed another verse of the same poem when he felt it appropriate. The second extract came from a text which Jacob was working on during the project as performative material to supplement his studio and landscape practice. It derives from the film *Ulysses's Gaze* (1995) by Theodoros Angelopoulos. All participants worked with supplementary material in the project. For more on this topic see next section.

(movement, object, word and space) compose a sequence *in situ* which shapes a narrative and discloses the contemplative movement practice in the specific site as an event.

When we finished our practice, we felt released. We sat for a few moments on the north side of the church looking at Athens. The actuality of the last month of the city came to the surface: the second memorandum, the tear-gasses, the riot police and the burning of the city centre; along with it its emotional impact of anxiety, anger, depression and precariousness. The distance between our Athenian selves and our experience in Oros empowered the psychophysical container of our practice and the way of seeing ourselves as a group [revisit video 2/ 1:40-2:10].

For each member, the practice *in situ* formulated a different variation of a collective story. Michael saw a narrative of 'return and reinvention' (Michael, personal interview, April 2012). For him, the discipline of redefining the present moment evolved into a process of rediscovering humanness: 'like the myth of the first inhabitants of Aigina whom Zeus made by transforming ants to men...in the same way we became from little people to humans again' (*ibid.*)⁹⁸. For Jacob, our practice signified an event of 'reclaiming what is still ours' (Jacob, personal interview, May 2012): 'as if we were these representatives being sent away - literally happening since we were having Athens in our back - to return with an

⁹⁸ Aeacus was the first king and habitant of Aegina. According to the myth he was the son of Zeus and Aegina from whom the island took its name. Aegina was the daughter of river-god Asopus and Metope. Zeus was attracted to Aegina, thus he transformed himself to an eagle and led her to the /Saronic Island. From their lovemaking, Aeacus was born. When Hera learned about the new born son, she sent from anger a snake into one of the island's rivers. The snake spawned thousands of eggs and snakes infested the entire island. In addition, a hot and dry wind scorched all the land and all the inhabitants of the island died. Aeacus alone was left wailing. In his prayers and laments, Zeus, his father, answered with a lightning bolt from which an oak tree grew. On the trunk of the tree a number of ants appeared holding seeds. Aeacus begged his father to give him subjects, as numerous as the ants. Indeed, that night Zeus transformed the ants into the new inhabitants of Aegina. They were known as Myrmidons. <http://www.livepedia.gr/index.php> [14 February 2013], my own translation.

oracle...to enliven a connection...to recall what was there and why it was so important" (*ibid.*).

The contemplative movement practice re-signified our presence *in situ* and affirmed its experience as a living myth. It was devised for the first time by the whole group. Our continuous effort of interrogating our on-site body mind correlation resulted in the formulation, or the occurrence, of a common present among the selves, the group and the landscape. The experience of an interrelationship released the ensemble from its known narrative and enriched it with a different perspective.

In Chapter 1, Rose determines landscape as a 'dream of presence' (2006: 539), a movement or a tendency to 'dream the world as a whole' (*op. cit.* p.544). To that end, he advocates for a research practice which does not disclose outdoor space as something fixed and but develops an awareness of "the 'again and again' desire for full presence that never arrives" (*op. cit.* p.545). Our improvisation in Oros was grounded in the task of listening to the body mind correlation in the specific site. It uncovered senses, feelings and meanings through which we (both as an individual and as a collective) dreamed of, cared for and envisioned the world. The contemplative discipline practiced landscape as a 'call of care' (*op. cit.* p.542), revealed the site as an interrelationship and manifested narratives as its 'dream of presence' (*op. cit.* p.539).

Conclusion: The Event of Interrelationship as a Body Mind Synchronisation

In this section, I have claimed that for the contemplative movement practice to manifest an event of interconnection between body and landscape it must carry three specific traits. It must be set as a movement practice of mindfulness (*sati*). It must have an impact and it must operate as an event of re-signifying the bodily presence(s) *in situ*. Interrelationship derives as a narrative by the continuous effort to integrate self, other and the site into a meaningful whole. When all factors

succeed in becoming attuned to one common present the practice in situ evolves into a performance of their interrelationship.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche designates the experience of a physical, emotional and associative attunement as a body mind synchronisation: 'it simply means being accurate and absolutely direct in relating with the phenomenal world by means of your sense perceptions, your mind, and your sense of vision' (1984: 42). Although he does not indicate the element of space he implies it as part of the world. Dance artist Dilley transcribes the task of synchronising the body mind in space as a 'kinaesthetic delight': 'an inner experience when by not thinking too much, just the necessary amount, and sensing body aliveness in the moment we feel this 'goodness' or 'rightness'" (Barbara Dilley, e-mail communication, July 2016). Jacob gives a similar account in describing his experience of interrelationship from the practice in Oros:

there is a connection with something that is evidently so much bigger than you, like the mountain... but this does not mean that it is more significant from you...it does not stand against you as a signifier of authority...but as part of your own projection...and like a projector which receives a small image to amplify it I am the mountain...and the mountain is compressed in me, it exists within me... (Jacob, personal interview, May 2012).

The Bridge Project Presentation

Although our practice in the landscape had not been developed sufficiently to create an outdoor performance, we decided to organise a presentation for an audience group on the last day of the Bridge Project. Our intention was to investigate the ways through which the outcomes of our training could form an audience event and perform a narrative *in situ*. The structure of the presentation derived from one of our sessions where we were practicing the group walking exercise and the condition of silence in the residential area. Along our walk, we stopped at different sites and performed short contemplative movement improvisations. The exercises shaped the participatory instruction set for the

audience⁹⁹. The improvisations *in situ*, formed the performative actions along the route of presentation. With the hope of creating an overall narrative, some of these actions were enhanced with contextual material. These were texts and songs which had been supplementary elements of our hitherto process.

The video of the presentation was shot by the two filmmakers of the project. They arrived on the same day of the showing. Thus, there was no time to design a shooting plan. They did a quick walk through the performance area and organised their documentation with one taking close-ups and the other one wider frames. As they were not aware of the exact actions *in situ* they did miss some of the material. Particularly the text on the beach and the songs are filmed with gaps. Throughout the performance, a friend and member of the audience, carried a microphone to record the sound. Hence, whenever she is found away from the action, the sound is recorded poorly.

Based on these technical deficiencies the video was edited with the aims of disclosing the performance route of the presentation and displaying its generated mindfulness (*sati*) experience and its collective/participatory character. The duration of the walk transitions in the video which are analysed below are cut to maintain an appropriate time-length. Hence, their psychophysical effect in the experience of the spectators is not demonstrated by the documentation. These issues, arisen from the process of filmmaking an audience participatory event, are also discussed in Chapter 5 of the thesis [see video 4].

The performance began at noon and was structured as follows: beginning at the residence/ introduction of the instructions, transition/ the barking dogs, on the sea/ the poem of Nanos Valaoritis, titled *Meta-Etymology*, Saint Basil's courtyard/ polyphonic singing, on the beach/ outdoors group improvisation, return to the residence/ singing, in the Oikia/ indoors group improvisation, exit and feast¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ See below.

¹⁰⁰ The performed texts and songs had been supplementary elements in the improvisational training of the project. They were brought either by the practitioners or were derived during the

We had twenty-five spectators, some of them were natives of the island, others were invited by the community of the residency or they were relatives, friends and collaborators of the project participants.

Before the presentation began I introduced the audience to the Bridge Project including its research aims and our intention of elaborating them with the material and structure of the presentation. At the end of the event, the audience was invited to write or draw feedback to the following questions: 'was there any kind of narration that was revealed to you, was the way you have been experiencing the landscape affected and how, were you led to reconsider your role as a watcher and if so, in which way? The extracts of their feedback that I quote below are taken from these responses. As the writings are anonymous, I am referring to them by numbers.

process of the practice. In the presentation they were chosen with the aim of enhancing and supporting the psychophysical experience *in situ*.

8



Ερωτήσεις για ανατροφοδότηση

Αν κλείνατε τα μάτια σας και σκεφτόσασταν αυτό που είδατε, πώς θα το περιγράφατε;

Αναγνωρίσατε κάποια αφήγηση κατά τη διάρκεια; Αναγνωρίσατε κάποια δική σας "προσωπική" αφήγηση; Με ποιούς τρόπους έγινε αυτό και σε ποιά σημεία;

Πώς επηρεάστηκε ο τρόπος που βιώνετε ένα τοπίο;

Πώς θα ονομάζατε αυτό που είδατε (μια παρουσίαση, ένα θεατρικό συμβάν, μια κοινή δράση, κάτι άλλο); Επηρεάστηκε ο τρόπος που βιώνετε ως θεατές κι αν ναι πως;

Σχολιάστε ό,τι άλλο θέλετε.

Ευχαριστούμε για τη συμμετοχή μας

Wow!

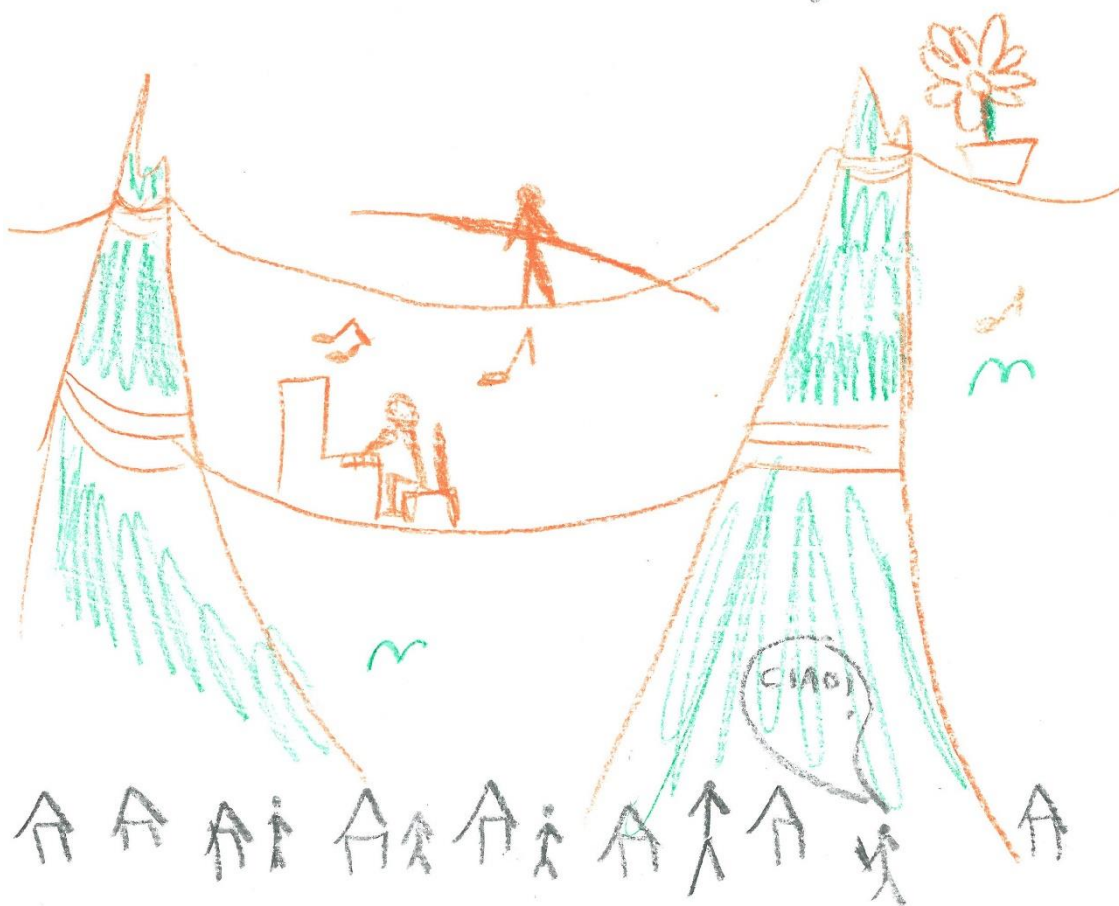


image 6: drawn feedback (front)



image 7: drawn feedback (back)

Audience Participatory Event

Our first concern was to discover ways which would encourage our audience to expand their sensory and somatic experience in the landscape. To that end, we devised for them a discipline of walking in silence by instructing them as follows: walk at a normal pace, gazing softly at the horizon, moving individually yet with a sense of the whole group. The instructions urged the watchers to become present of their physical experience: 'my posture begun to change...I started being a spectator of myself as well as of the others and the performed actions' (watcher 4). It actively placed them in relation to what is happening in the landscape: 'I felt as if I am participating as well and not just watching the performer' (watcher 2). Silence amplified the senses of the spectators and expanded their experience of time and space. An audience member noticed: '[it] made me feel a deeper relationship between what I was experiencing and what there was around me; it moved me away from our everyday patterns of viewing reality as a lifeless space' (watcher 7) [see video 4/ 4:07-4:33].

In one of the stations, the performers improvised based on the *samatha vipashyana* movement practice which they had been working in the project. The watchers were invited to freely move among the performers as if they were within a gallery going from one painting to another. The improvisation urged the audience to become more attentive to the ways bodies and site relate to each other [see video 4/ 5:46-6:05]. Walking freely within the performance space erased the distinction between doers and watchers and enhanced the latter 's response to the site somatically and impulsively. For example, the extract 4/ 6:27-7:03 discloses an improvised moment within which only two of the four bodies are performers: the woman lying down with a scarf in her hair and the man with a blue jumper around his waist. One of the spectators noticed: 'I felt that we, the audience, were performing with you...my presence was influencing the dance and that stimulated my interest about almost everything' (watcher 7).

The physical instructions converted the spectators to participants: 'the landscape became us and I sensed a quality of quietness among us which revealed more space...It was a ritual...I felt a participant and at the same time responsible as a

spectator” (watcher 12). Participation became a process of signifying space as a reciprocal activity between the watcher and the environment and hence operated as a performing tool in the mechanism of the body-landscape interrelationship. In Chapter 5, I elaborate the participatory process of the spectator as a *samatha vipashyana* discipline and argue that its performance operates as a contemplative experience of place.

The physical directives succeeded in composing a structure which everyone could follow and engage with. They formulated the outline of a score: a set of instructions which ‘defin[e] activities...tell[ing] people what...to do [and] not how to do it’ (Halprin, 1995: 202). The outcome of ‘participating and experiencing directly the emotional and communal effects of doing a score’ (1995: 50) signifies a ‘living myth’ (in Worth and Poynor, 2006: 107). According to Halprin, such kind of participation evokes a psychophysical engagement with the spectators: they ‘filter through the material on their own terms’ (1997: 386); they connect with ‘a group-body-mind-spirit’ (1995: 229) and they lead themselves to ‘discovering a sense of their own community’ (1995: 55).

A communal quality of the presentation was recognised by the performers of the project. By exploring the hitherto practices of the project within a larger group, they witnessed the performed structure develop a collective aspect. Jacob noticed the raising of a group awareness by walking in a line on the street: ‘I was the last one and I could sense the entire group up to the first person in line...I noticed that by being alone together even over such a big distance, we behave as a collectivity’ (Jacob, personal interview, May 2012) [see video 4/ 1:25-1:41]. Regarding his status in the presentation, Jacob saw his performance as one of a facilitator rather than an interpreter who was contributing in constructing an experience rather than performing a story: ‘when we were singing in the church and the watchers were sitting outside the courtyard I realised that I am supplementing an image and I am not its centre... my goal was not to express an idea or a message but to compose an experience’ (*ibid.*) [see video 4/ 2:47-3:54].

Michael observed that the group moments of walking and pausing created a sense of closeness: 'I was feeling that we were kinaesthetically transmitting [to the watchers] a psychophysical situation which then was returned to us by them' (Michael, April 2012) [see video 4/ 7:39-8:35]. Dora had a feeling of collectivity arisen by the unexpected participation of the audience during the group improvisation: 'it was as if we were talking to each other without words' (Dora, April 2012). In the same practice, as a performer/participant I noticed a group awareness arising out of being attentive and listening to others and to the space: 'I sensed that there was a complicity as well as a responsibility, which was making us feel that we are all engaged' (personal journal, March 2012).

The collective participatory structure encouraged the participants to engage psychophysically with the landscape. But it did not provide a contextual frame for ascribing a meaning to the performed experience. The chosen material of texts and songs did not succeed in signifying an overall theme. Two of them managed to formulate a link with the experience of the site. The poem of Nanos Valaoritis set the interpretive tone for all the activity that followed¹⁰¹. As it was the first text to be heard, for many spectators its subject, a man who feels emotionally isolated, coloured the whole presentation: 'a myth of Ulysses...a journey of return into the self, in space and in time with a sense of completion' (watcher 13) [see video 4/ 1:48-2:24].

The song of Manos Hatzidakis, *T asteri tu voria* (1963), was another activity which evoked a psychophysical engagement with the landscape. Initially, the song was designed to be sung only by the four practitioners. But as they were dispersed within the audience group their performance urged the spectators to sing along with them. Additionally, the *in situ* condition was not pleasant. The site was adjoining with a private property full of dogs. The group ended up singing on a

¹⁰¹ The poem in English: 'As far as I remember/I was always an immigrant/ I immigrated interiorly/ when I was a child / I shut myself up in myself/in books and my dreams/ But many catastrophes arrived/ the country became impossible to live in/everywhere dogs barked/ from the radio and loudspeakers...and I returned to where I had grown up/ to become as in the beginning... interior immigrant' (Rlgopoulou Calliope (ed.) (2010)Exiled in our skin: 'Meta-Etymology', Nanos Valaoritis, Athens : Laboratory of Arts and Cultural Management, Department of Communication and Mass Media Athens University, Topos Books.

line amidst hostile barking executing a kind of procession. The action was further signified by the context of the specific song. Taken from Elia Kazan's film *America America*, the song is about a young man saying goodbye to his country as he becomes an immigrant. In this way, the derived activity linked with the theme already introduced with the poem: being a stranger in one's own land. The interrelationship which took place among the performed and *in situ* elements succeeded in creating an experience. A spectator describes her own impact of the overall moment: 'the pathway full of thorns, the nasty dogs and the long concrete wall with the fence along us... we passed a 'dark' experience' [and then] the sweet familiar song and the affection of the residence garden' (watcher 7) [see video 4/ 7:39-8:35].

However, there were two performed actions which did not succeed in interrelating with any element of the participatory event. The first one was the singing of a polyphonic traditional in the courtyard of the church of Saint Basil¹⁰². It did not create any connection with the previous or the following experience of the presentation for three reasons. The content and the style of the song was irrelevant to any other element of the performance. As a group we felt inadequate in public singing it. Hence our performance was not able to deliver the pleasure which derives from listening live to a polyphonic song. The activity was misplaced in relation to the site and the audience. It kept the spectators outside the performance space (the courtyard) and used the church as a background scenery. The specific choices prohibited the witnesses to develop an engagement with the *in situ* experience. They did not allow any interrelationship to take place between the performed and spatial elements of the action [see video 4/ 3:00-3:45].

¹⁰² Greek polyphonic singing comes from Epirus, a highland region in Northern Greece. This traditional type of singing has a very strict structure and is performed by at least four singers. Each singer has a specific role in the song. For the project, we chose to work on the song of 'Perdika kai Peristera' (Partridge and Pigeon). This song could be practiced with the simplest polyphonic structure: the turner and the vocal drone keepers. We practiced its singing throughout the whole project as a somatic **practice** of listening and responding to each other.

Finally, we set an improvisation in one of the rooms of the residency as the last station of the presentation. The action positioned the audience in a proscenium view. Hence, it organised a seeing which ran counter to the, so far, participatory nature of the experience. The improvisation was chosen for two reasons: to perform an action inside the Oikia and to try our contemplative movement practice in front of an audience. We used objects and text from Katerina Aggelaki Rouk, a woman poet of the island. The action was too long. It created an expectation and made the performers struggle to produce a result. The attitude of waiting for something to happen conflicted with the open process of signifying experience through a somatic engagement with the landscape. It created an opposition which disorientated the spectators [see video 4/ 8:43-15:40].

As performers/practitioners of the Bridge Project, we were focused on creating a participatory event for an audience. The consideration of a dramaturgical frame which would interrelate the material to an overall intention was a secondary task. Hence, we called the event a presentation and not a performance. For some watchers the somatic participatory nature of the event was adequately satisfactory: 'a history of the land, here-there, many personal narrations... [a] contemplating a situation from a distance... [a]therapeutic collective performance' (watcher 14). For others, more trained as spectators, it was disappointing not having a specific context to relate to: 'I was witnessing all these nice images and I was wondering what it could be, apart from a witnessing of cinematographic seeing; how could the pictorial of the landscape create an inner psychological experience' (oral feedback, March 2012).

The process of devising and dramaturgically structuring a performance of the body-landscape interrelationship occupies the forthcoming projects of the thesis. The Bridge Project presentation explored and set a participatory frame through which such an interrelationship is organised as a performance event. As I argue in Chapter 5, it is a performance structure which enables a contemplative psychophysical engagement with the site but also enacts an interrelationship

between the subject(s) and the landscape as a living myth. Maria framed the participatory event of the project as a practice of surrendering:

the performance was an act of dropping all separations: us and them [the watchers], us and the landscape, us, them and the landscape. If there was a common ground as an ideology that enabled the spectators to operate in this way, it was their willingness to let go of separation... it is a matter of cultivating such a perspective...you have to be inclined to let it happen and breathe into it (Maria, personal interview, May 2012).

In the next and final section of this chapter, I designate such a development as a practice of 'non-self' (*anatta*) and argue that it constitutes a discipline of attunement to the landscape, the first phase of the practice of the thesis.

Conclusion: A mind training as a landscape performance training

In the Bridge Project, practitioners used somatic and movement improvisation exercises as objects of attending (*samatha*) to the site. They practiced listening to their body mind in order to become aware of the ways perception is embedded in the experience of the landscape (*vipashyana*). Geographer Wylie postulates: 'the self perceives through an attunement with landscape; selfhood is reciprocally solicited and conducted by the levels of sense in the landscape' (2006: 527).

The mindfulness (*sati*) movement practice disclosed the experience of the site as a psychophysical complex of relations. The subject was presented as an amalgam of connections between its sense-organs and their objects. From her process in the Bridge Project, Maria notices:

The self was revealed as an instrument... The whole resembled a collection of many little things while I was being a beautiful empty thing but not hollow...I had a sense of a transparent density...My-self had become the landscape by illuminating it (Maria, personal interview, May 2012).

The discipline of *samatha vipashyana* in the landscape revealed the absence of an enduring receiver of the experience of space. It underlined the subject *in situ* as a non 'inherent existence' (Dalai Lama in Hayward and Varela, 1992: 118). It

indicated that to be in tune with the experience of the landscape signified to act from a position of abandoning the self. Hence, it indicated that the practice of attunement to the landscape is a practice of selflessness (*anatta*).

However, the incorporation of a Buddhist meditative discipline into a site-specific performance training raises questions about the politics of such integration. How does one explain and facilitate Buddhist notions in order to devise and perform an artistic product? Would this signify that such a performance discipline focuses on practitioners who are aware and familiar with these traditions¹⁰³?

This chapter incorporated the Contemplative Dance Practice of Barbara Dilley as a training of meditation in motion. It presented the Personal Awareness and Open Space sections of the practice as *samatha vipashyana* movement disciplines. Although Dilley recognises and addresses the affiliation of CDP with Buddhism, she refuses to use Sanskrit terms either in her teaching or writing of the practice^{104 105}. She chooses to do that for two reasons. Firstly, she has concerns in projecting her Buddhist identity as a teacher: 'I always felt that Buddhist language could separate me from students, make me seem like I know something about these special words when in fact I, too, am travelling on a path' (e-mail communication, 2016). Furthermore, she understands that a Buddhist vocabulary could make the practice exclusive: 'CDP is meant to be open to all whether you have Buddhist training or not' (*ibid.*).

¹⁰³ These concerns also address the role of the spectator and how a contemplative performance *in situ* integrates within a wider theatrical and cultural context. These themes will be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁴ In an e-mail communication she described the different sections of the practice as disciplines of the three Buddhist schools (*yanas*): 'I sometimes thought of Sitting as Hinayana, Personal Awareness Practice as Mahayana and Open Space as [both] Mahayana and Vajrayana' (e-mail communication, 2016). Furthermore, in her book also *This very moment* she depicts the development of her movement training as a correlation of the two worlds: American postmodern dance scene and the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and the Western Buddhist community which he started in the late 1970's in the States.

¹⁰⁵ Although she does give out 'some readings/text in classes that quote Trungpa Rinpoche or other teachers and let students use these to ask questions if they are interested' (e-mail communication, 2016).

In the documentation of the indoor training, Maria practices Open Space for the first time. She is not familiar with meditation nor with movement training. We notice her holding a sitting posture for a long time from where she becomes a passive witness of the activity which takes place and finally she completely withdraws [see video 1/ 0:11, 0:45, 3:25, 4:00]. For Maria, it is not her physical unskillfulness or her unawareness of the Buddhist context which prevents her from participating. It is her difficulty of allowing herself to investigate space without having a reference point of her role in the specific activity. This does not signify that all other practitioners have conquered such a task. The practice as a meditative one is a cultivation. It can never become fulfilled. However, Maria's process of restraining herself by not listening to the present moment is evidently outlined in the video. In this way, the practice is not blocked by the absence of a contextual translation by a lack of a personal engagement to its contemplative discipline.

Moreover, since the meditative discipline structures the practice of the thesis there is the question of creating a performance act by a mind discipline such as samatha vipasyana. In the indoor training of the Bridge Project which took place in front of watchers and cameras, the practitioners evinced a subconscious anxiety to demonstrate the practice. In video 1/ 3:12- 4:07 this is noticed in two ways. Firstly, they do not listen to the present moment but demonstrate the discipline per se. This is evident by the stable rhythmic pattern of moving in space and the fixed facial expression and bodily energy. In this way, the activity devised in the practice becomes consolidated within the aesthetic style of a non-emotional robotic form. Secondly they become busy by demonstrating their way of responding making many 'things' in the space. Their action expresses a vagueness which is unable to connect with others and creates a feeling of isolation in the space.

Dilley expresses scepticism about using a Buddhist language inside the studio, which as a facilitator and practitioner I embrace. I do not consider myself an expert in Buddhism who could adequately explain any of these notions and,

moreover, there is the danger of displacing the focus of the movement practice into a Buddhist inquiry. Nevertheless, the thesis uses the practice of mindfulness (*sati*) as the methodology of a site-specific performance. Hence, there is a question of translating and trans-locating the Buddhist terminology to another contextual and cultural frame f. e. a performance training which takes place in Greece. In the Bridge Project, in the studio, I facilitated the notion of *samatha vipashyana* as a discipline of a double awareness between a narrowed attention (to the breath and movement) and a wider attention (to the space). In the landscape I transcribed the discipline into a practice of a somatic listening *in situ* and responding to site. Such a translation of the practice enabled me to differentiate the experience of the landscape from the different versions of its interpretation. This will be thoroughly examined as the devising process of Geopoetics in the following chapter.

Finally, as Dilley argues, I do not consider that the meditative movement practice preconditions either a practical experience or a knowledge in Buddhism. Nevertheless, it is a performance practice which is based on the structure of a mind discipline. The former conditions activity and the latter conditions a process of being. There is a contradiction in weighing the practice down with the expectation of an artistic result. For example, what happens to the creative process when the practitioner drops out of the meditative discipline; or how can the practice of being in the present moment be assessed for structuring a performance event? These tensions will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

The Bridge Project established the discipline of attunement upon which the 'perceptual actualisation' (Wylie, 2006: 519) of the landscape is explored and performed. It formulated the basis of the body-landscape interrelationship practice which is the subject of the thesis. In this Chapter I have established the practice of attunement to the landscape as a *samatha vipashyana* movement practice. In Chapter 4 I examine the practice further by analysing it into the examination of the first three aggregates (*skandhas*) of material form, feeling and

cognition. I elaborate the meditative discipline as an organising principle to devise activity in the landscape. I investigate the narrative that a mindfulness (*sati*) site-specific performance strategy produces. Furthermore, in the Bridge Project I explored the notions of living myth and audience participation event as structures for performing a narrative of landscape. I will further examine these concepts and the way they compose a mindfulness (*sati*) landscape performance in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

The Geopoetics Project

[DVD B]

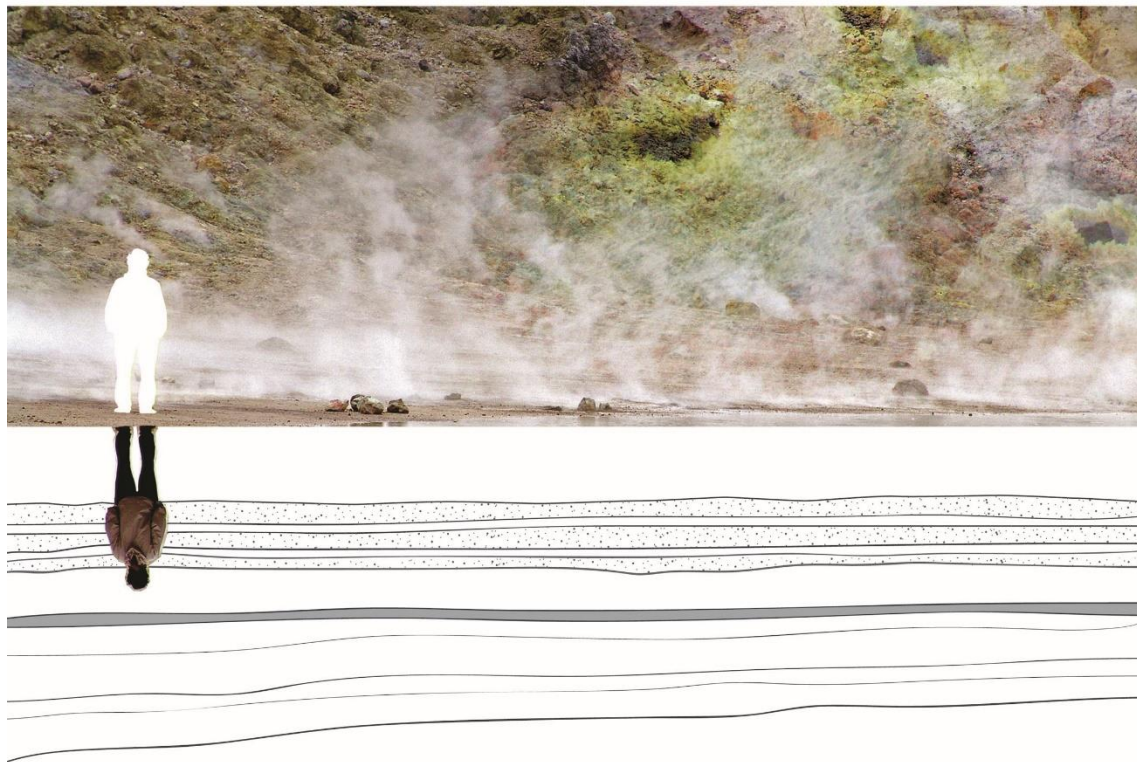
Introduction

The first project of the thesis established the act of embodying landscape as a *samatha vipashyana* movement practice. It disclosed the training as a platform upon which the process of perceiving space is suspended in order to be experientially re-examined. The experience *in situ* was revealed as a web of interconnecting points between the practitioner and the site where sensations, feelings and thoughts were seen as objects of that interrelationship. The practice of the listening to the landscape through the body mind was identified as a discipline of attunement and formulated the first phase of the practice of the thesis.

The second project of the thesis sought to fathom the psychophysical examination of landscape. It interrogated the experience *in situ* as an interconnection analysed by the first three aggregates (*skandhas*) of material form (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*) and cognition (*sanna*) and manifested respectively by physicality, feeling and action. Additionally, the second project made the passage from practicing in the landscape to devising with the landscape. It examined a performance *in situ* as an understanding through the body mind of the way site is being perceived. This chapter determines the creative process developed in the landscape as a discipline of its 'actualisation' (Wylie, 2006: 519).

The second project of the thesis is central to its research inquiry and thus it is named after the practice of the thesis: Geopoetics. The chapter analyses the practice undertaken in the Geopoetics project by addressing the following three considerations:

geopoetics project: nisyros



the body is
THE GROUND UPON WHICH WE WALK

body-landscape performance practice laboratory

PhD research in performance practice, Anna Tzakou
Drama Department University of Exeter

Nisyros - Greece, May-June 2013



image 8: poster of the project

1. How the practitioner engages with the landscape physically, exploring the site based on the aggregate of material form (*rupa*).
2. How the practitioner engages with the landscape emotionally; exploring the site through the aggregates of feeling (*vedana*) and cognition (*sanna*).
3. How does the encounter of the practitioner with the landscape devise a narrative and what does it communicate?

The Geopoetics project explored strategies of generating performance material in and with the landscape. It operated cumulatively with the practice that was developed in the previous project. The disciplines of sitting meditation, group walk, outdoor somatic exercises and CDP were again employed. Geopoetics expanded the practices of the 'dance.art.lab' of Baraba Dilley and introduced exercises from the Grotowski-based actor training. Specifically, it elaborated the practice of Red Square to examine the body in situ as a form and used the *plastique* exercise to interrogate site as affect. The project employed the CDP of Barbara Dilley as a devising performance platform of the landscape. The chapter argues for the performance of the body-landscape interrelationship as a *samatha vipashyana* activity in space. It is divided into three parts. Each part corresponds to a research question. The chapter concludes by discussing issues arising from the practice of a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice in a rural landscape of Greece.

Description

The Geopoetics project took place in Nisyros. The island is located to the south-eastern part of Greece and belongs to the Dodecanese archipelago. Covering approximately forty-two square kilometres, Nisyros constitutes the youngest active volcano in Greece, situated in the eastern part of the south Aegean volcanic arc. The island was formed by a series of volcanic explosions some 150.000 years ago, before it finally stabilized into its present structure: the volcano lost its summit and obtained its characteristic funnel shape of a height of

600 m., with a caldera four kilometres in diameter. Since then and until modern times hydrothermal explosions have taken place, traces of which one witnesses as craters in the caldera. Amongst them, the biggest and most imposing, named Stephanos constitutes one of the island's main tourist attractions.



image 9: map of the island

The first evidence of human activity in Nisyros goes back to the Neolithic Era and is 'older than the 5th millennium BC' (IGME, 2014)¹⁰⁶. Since then the cultural character of the island has been formulated by the continuous successions of settlers and invaders through the course of the island's time. A visitor who crosses the island on foot could easily notice the remains of the Minoan, pre-classical, Roman, Byzantine and Latin ages either within its towns or in the fields. Nowadays, Nisyros numbers four towns through which its 1000 residents are dispersed. The island has two main sources of income. One is the pumice quarry on Yali, five kilometers north-west from the capital, Nisyros and the other one is tourism. Due to the position of the island between the two touristic colossi of Kos and Rhodes and its inadequate infrastructure of transportation, Nisyros has been

¹⁰⁶ There is an episode in ancient Greek mythology which explains the creation of the island. During the Gigantomachy, the battle between gods and giants, Poseidon was chasing the giant Polyvotis into the Aegean Sea. With his trident he dragged a piece of land from Kos Island (situated to the north of Nisyros) and threw it onto Polyvotis. Each time the volcano is activated, it signifies Polyvotis' resentment underneath the land.

promoted as an alternative touristic destination which has so far saved its particular environmental and cultural character.



image 10: photo of caldera and crater of Stephanos

The Geopoetics project was finally confirmed to take place in Nisyros after my association with Chloe, my local ‘informant’ (in Buckland, 1999: 48)¹⁰⁷. She was an Athenian woman in her late twenties who was already living on the island for three years with her partner. During my preliminary research she became my ‘local expert’ (*ibid.*). She guided me through the locations of the island and assisted me in making food and accommodation arrangements for the project. Chloe is also an architect and photographer interested in the relation of the body to a landscape narrative through the use of multimedia. She undertook the documentation of the practice as the only videographer of the project. She had to cover the technical needs of the shooting and at the same time be certain that

¹⁰⁷ I initially became acquainted with the landscape of Nisyros as a visitor in August of 2011. I stayed a little more than a week and became completely captivated by the island. I was mesmerised by the volcanic landscape: the wilderness of its sites and the particularity of its caldera. I was moved by the cultural landscape of the island which, left in peace by the tourist industry, was emitting the fascination of its scattered historical *strata*. Arriving from the Athenian city, devastated at that time by the social and political changes, Nisyros gave me the impression of something old, known and forgotten which, as part of my cultural heritage, was still engaging me deeply. I knew I had to return and explore that place more. At that time my performance practice was being orientated towards the outdoors. A year later and as my body-landscape research practice was progressing, Nisyros became my choice of destination for deepening that practice.

the practice in situ is filmed. This task was highly demanding and will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

The project lasted from the 12th May until the 6th June in 2013. It was divided into three working periods. The first ten days, I practiced by myself. I needed to become familiar with the living conditions. I also needed time by myself to experiment with the performance exercises and the Nisyrian landscape. The following seven days, three collaborators joined and over the last seven days three more members were added. The practice was expanded from a group of four practitioners to seven due to logistics. It was impossible to set a starting date which would have been convenient to all.

From the group, five members were theatre performers. Only three of them (including myself) had experience in actor training and two of them had already practiced in rural environments. The sixth member of the group was a music player of bouzouki and he also participated as a performer¹⁰⁸. The last one was affiliated as a Buddhist and a *Shambhala* practitioner interested in participating in a performance practice project. The age range of the group was between late twenties and early fifties. All of its members were coming from Athens where they were living and working. Most of them were already experienced in camping in outdoor settings¹⁰⁹.

A traditional Nisyrian farm located two kilometers from the nearest village was granted as our residency on the island. The historian of architecture Richard Economakis explains that a typical Nisyrian farm consists of a *spiladi*, a cistern and a threshing floor. The *spiladi* which 'literally, [means] cavernous building' (2001: 104) is the place where 'farmers - often an entire family - spend the night

¹⁰⁸ Bousouki is a musical stringed instrument which came to Greece with the immigrants from Asia Minor in the beginning of the 20th century. Bouzouki became the central instrument to the music genre which was later known as *rebetika* and influenced the following modern Greek music scene. In the project, the instrument was used either to accompanied movement improvisations or through its sound as a compositional element *in situ*.

¹⁰⁹ About the living conditions of the project see below.

during harvest' (*ibid.*) and it is usually 'constructed with broad arched walls' (*ibid.*). The cistern is 'a subterranean hollow...the roof of which serves as a catcher for rainwater' (*ibid.*). During the project, we were sleeping in tents set in the fields of the farm and used the *spiladi* as our storeroom and kitchen. Hence, we did not have electricity and the use of the water was very limited as it was a dry season.



image 11: the spiladi

The landscape of Nisyros appeared different from the one of Aigina during the first project of the thesis. Its volcanic structure in combination with a sparse habitation offered vast areas of rural open space to elaborate. These sites and their practices were not familiar to relate and interact. As I discuss further in this chapter, such a particularity enhanced the goal of the project to build strategies of devising performance material *in situ* based on the experience of the present moment. The landscape of Nisyros orientated the practice of the site as an investigation of individual and collective psychophysical events and built its structure around the process of the performer and not of the spectator¹¹⁰.

The practice of the Geopoetics project was developed exclusively outdoors. The nearest flattened field to the farm, surrounded by terebinth trees, became our 'studio'. The work of each day was structured with movement and voice training in the morning and driving or walking to a different site to practice in the afternoon.

¹¹⁰ However, at the end of the project the participants were willing to open and share their process with the community of the island. They organised a sequence of practices which were presented to six spectators in one of the volcanic sites. This presentation is not included in this chapter as issues of spectatorship of the practice will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5.

In the forthcoming sections I will refer to the practices taking place in the following locations: Korakospilies, a north-eastern black sandy beach; two sites in the caldera, one near its oldest craters, Kaminakia and one next to Stephanos; the Nymfios monastery and a 19th century abandoned summer house of a sulfur industrialist on the western side of the island.

The residential character of the practice challenged each participant based on their competence or willingness in living and working with others in an outdoor setting. It set the issue of availability as the main prerequisite for participating in the project. The conditions of working outdoors raised questions of the positionality of the project in relation to the culture of Nisyros. These issues will be further discussed at the end of the chapter.

Materiality: physicality/ task/ game

The Still Shots

In the Geopoetics project, the quest for the landscape's materiality was shaped as an examination of the first aggregate (*skandha*). *Rupa*, the aggregate of the material form concerns everything that comes from the physical environment and is experienced by the six sense-organs as objects (i.e. an image by the eyes, a sound by the ears). In the first project, elements of space were elaborated both indoors and outdoors mainly by the Contemplative Dance training (CDP). Additionally, the architecture of the site was introduced and presented as a potential element of physical interaction with the specific locale. In Geopoetics, material form (*rupa*) was investigated as a spatial awareness practice and constituted one of the research focuses. It was directly addressed by the 'still shots' exercise and was elaborated through the CDP sessions taking place in different sites of the Nisyrian landscape.

The 'still shots' exercise is based on the Red Square practice taken from 'dance.art.lab' of Barbara Dilley¹¹¹. It cultivates spatial awareness through the formation of physical shapes with and within the site. It trains the performer in the perspective of both the doer and the watcher. To conduct it, a specific direction of the landscape is chosen and set as a performance space. The practice is organised by a movement vocabulary of standing, sitting, lying and stillness, each time allowing physical variations to take place. The instructions include: enter the frame, select a posture, inhabit the formulated body-landscape image, offer it to the watchers, dissolve it and exit. In taking a posture, it is important for the doer to consider the relations which her body establishes with the natural elements and how they respond back to the image. The practitioner enters the frame either by envisioning or by deciding at the very last minute, through listening to the present moment, on a bodily posture. The 'still shots' practice is not about presenting a pre-decided image. It is about working with impulse and slowing down one's own perceptual experience of the site in order to explore its spatial dynamics and behaviour.

In the project, the 'still shots' exercise was divided into solos and duets. Initially, moving in and out of the frame was practiced with clear entrances and exits. But as the exercise progressed, the tempo of transitioning became also part of the practice. The solo practice enabled the doer to examine the materiality of the site as shapes, colours and textures, creating opportunities to notice and interact with the found objects *in situ*. The Kaminakia site, where the practice on the DVD takes place, is situated on the northern side of the caldera and combines the

¹¹¹ Red Square Practice is a visual, kinaesthetic and compositional awareness training. It is set by a square made of a red thick twine laid out on the empty floor of a studio space. The instructions of the practice are to envision a bodily shape of lying, sitting, standing or walking inside the square, to go and uncover it in stillness, offer it to the witnesses, dissolve it and leave. The Red Square begins with solos and continues with duets and trios. It introduces objects, costumes, movement patterns and text. Finally, it becomes a 'free flowing' (2005: 44) improvisation where the postures alternate at a faster tempo. The practice exercises two disciplines. Firstly, the act of being present within a fixed form and the experience of it as an 'abode' (Dilley, *op. cit.* p. 43). Secondly, the act of letting the others witness the 'kinaesthetic' (*ibid.*) feeling of the bodily shape. When the additional elements are included, the principle of relational-ity is being underlined: 'you see yourself in the space because of that shape and immediately there is a relational situation' (*ibid.*). Dilley analyses this interrelationship through two aspects: one is the abstract form of physicality, 'the design' (*op. cit.* p. 44); and the other one is its 'emotional/ relational' (*ibid.*) attitude which creates meaning.

vastness of the volcanic landscape with the scenery of an old rural settlement. Through the solo exercise, we were able to recognise scale and volume as the prominent spatial attributes of the site. By interrogating them with our bodily experience, we discovered the properties of foreground-background, near-afar and appearance-disappearance as parts of a possible performance language in the specific site. The solo exercise becomes a mechanism of uncovering the spatial narrative lines of the site namely the ways through which the site recounts its particularity [see video B 1.i. (Materiality: Still Shots Solos)].

The narrative potentiality of the place was further examined with the duets practice. The two bodies, positioned within the same frame, functioned as a magnifier of when and how a 'logic' (Overlie, 2004: 188) which might ignite a narrative is formulated in *situ*. The following examples demonstrate some of these conclusions. In the first one, Tim stood in front of a rock as if he was carrying it and Matthew placed his head behind another one as if he was buried under it. The physical forms were used 'as if' to create characters [see video 1.ii 0:10-1:00]. In the second one, Andrew was standing on a rock looking up and Isabella was standing far away behind him looking at him. The spatial relationship of the bodies formulated an expectation of something taking place [see video 1.ii 1:08 - 1:28]. In the third one, Tim and Isabella performed a fast sequenced of shots taking different postures in the same positioning which concluded into a dialogue of action-reaction through space. The latter example demonstrates the potential of the practice to function as a useful passage from being still onsite to being actively attuned [see video 1.ii 1:32-2:50]. Exercising the still shots at a faster tempo, adding the instructions of walking and running, the practice operated as a primary score to act in the landscape [see video 1.ii 2:52-4:35 and 4:45-6:20].

The Task-Based Practice

Building on the CDP training discussed in the previous chapter, the participants devised the task and game-based practices as exploratory tactics of being with the materiality of the landscape. Tasks are actions with the clear intention of performing a job. In the CDP sessions, none of them had been set. They were all improvised. Sometimes tasks explored physicality by embodying a specific

object. A CDP session took place in a field of the Nisyrian caldera. The field was vast and did not hold distinctive spatial features to relate to. Tim devised the activity of carrying stones. With a ritualistic walk, he carried them from one side of the field to the other, to place them underneath a stake. The stake was decorated with other objects from the plane, an animal's skull and some feathers: 'something pulled me there to build an altar...not to worship it nor stay with it [it was] something like care for the space... care for what was over there' (Tim, personal interview, September 2013) [see video 1.iii 0:15- 2:05].

At other points the purpose of the task was to embody the architecture of the site. In the 19th century summer house site, the holes of the ruins of the mansion generated for Michael the task of exploring the spatiality of the place with his body: 'since my arrival at the house, I wanted to fill every trace of its windows and doors with my body' (Michael, feedback talk, June 2013) [see video 1.iii 2:11- 2:58]. Quite often and within the improvisation, by performing the activity with the disciplines of repetition, duration and/or influence, the task was formulating a state of being in the site. In the mansion site, during a three-hour improvisation, Matthew performed a task of writing on the walls of the house. He used stones from the site to generate a scripture whose letters and designs resembled hieroglyphics. With his invented language, he wrote on every wall of the house. His performance formulated an activity of being with the site and at the same time its duration enriched the idea of what may constitute a task: 'when he was drawing the wall for three hours...I thought [he is] not participating...and then in the long way I saw that it was giving me the freedom to do something totally unexpected and bizarre... [it] instigated something' (Kelly, personal interview, September 2013) [see video 1.iii 3:03- 5:04].

The Game-Based Practice

During the CDP improvisations, playing a game became another way of relating directly to the materiality of the site. Games were also improvised. They were devised through a CDP's discipline (e.g. copying) or simply by exploring spontaneously details of the site. Games were easily recognisable by the others as such, hence they were useful in creating an interaction. Usually, in the outdoor

setting they included an element of danger, such as the performance of a risky activity. In the field of caldera Tim and Matthew were throwing stones as a game of hitting a target. At some point Michael approached them. The pair made him their new target and Michael tried to react. There was an element of 'violence as fun' which blurred the boundaries between playing-being and real-being¹¹² [see video 1.iv 0:11- 2:00].

In the same improvisation, in another moment, Matthew and Kelly found a timber lying on the ground. They generated a game of balancing on it with their eyes closed. Although the risk was small, it was an activity which connected them to each other and the place through a sense of achievement [see video 1.iv 2:04-4:44]. A similar game-challenge was devised by Kelly on the ruined mansion site. There was a pipe hanging half a meter above ground which was crossed width-wise from one side of the house to the other. Kelly started singing to encourage herself when she found herself crossing the pipe. The game forced her to let go of her thinking process and openly relate to the environment. Kelly observed that the task of accomplishing a challenge operated for her as a practice to relate directly to her experience:

...It is something that I would never do in my everyday life and it guides me somewhere else...like a personal training or pattern... I realised that [working in a site] I need to find the materiality onsite which will engage me with such an opening (Kelly, feedback talk, June 2013, Nisyros).

[see video 1.iv 4:54-5:54]

Conclusion

The still shots, task-based and game-based exercises developed the practice elaborated in the Bridge project in two ways. Firstly, they elaborated the body mind-site interrelationship by focusing on one of the aspects of the landscape: the material form (*rupa*) or 'materiality' (Wylie, 2006: 533). Secondly, they developed the discipline of listening to the site through the body into a strategy of responding to it. Their instructed embodiment in the form of stillness, assignment

¹¹² There is also a disengagement of the practice which is noticeable in the embodiment of the practitioners. For this reason, this video is further discussed at the end of the chapter.

and play constituted the *samatha* discipline *in situ* upon which activity was developed as an 'experiential understanding' (Halprin in Worth and Poynor, 2004: 60) of the materiality of the landscape (*vipashyana*).

The still shots, task-based and game-based practices manifested landscape as a 'taskscape' (Ingold, 1993: 159). Tim Ingold argues that landscape is a process of embodiment, a set of movements being specified by the 'business of dwelling' (*op. cit.* p. 159). He designates them as the indispensable assignments necessary to live in a specific landscape and names them 'taskscape' (*ibid.*). The movement of taskscape, Ingold argues, can be witnessed and accessed only in the present moment (*op. cit.* p. 159). It encloses a sensual experience of the space and generates activity by its doers as they "reciprocally 'act back' in their process of their own dwelling' (*op. cit.* p.163). In the Geopoetics project, the practices of still shots, tasks and games regarded the notion of dwelling as a process of being present and examined the 'taskscape' (1993: 159) of the landscape as a performance act and through performative means. The elaboration of landscape as a materiality through activity disclosed the psychophysical nature of the act of being *in situ*: physical, as a mode of relating with the configurations of the space and psychological, as the inner impact evoked by the experience of the new environment, formulated by the bodies-in-the-landscape. This section focused on the former as a strategy to act on site. The following section explores the psychological, what Wylie designates as the 'sensibilities' (2006: 533) according to which we perceive landscape, as an entrance to produce activity *in situ*.

Sensibility: the *plastiques* exercises

In the Geopoetics project, the notion of feeling was examined as the second and third aggregates (*skandhas*). The aggregate of feeling (*vedana*) concerns 'the psychophysical sensations' (Daboo, 2004: 46) which occur between the sense-organs and their objects. It distinguishes the sense-objects into pleasant, unpleasant and neutral and activates the twofold process of the aggregate of cognition (*sanna*). The first part gathers all sensed information under the label of

a concept. The second positions such a classification within a hierarchy of past memories and future aspirations. The process stimulates an instinctive reaction of ignoring, moving away or towards the initial stimulus. Hence, it encompasses an impulse which devises activity.

In Nisyros, the aggregates of feeling and cognition were examined by the *plastique* exercises. I chose a practice taken from the Grotowski-based psychophysical actor training for two reasons. It materialises in space the practitioner's inner life as 'imagery' (Wangh: 2000, 86, 97) and articulates the pre-existing sensibility of an action as impulse¹¹³. Through the continuous and flowing process of the exercise, sensations, feelings, images and impulses are intermingled. Physicality in space becomes not just a matter of moving one's body but as Wangh argues, of 'someone or something... doing something *to you*' (*op. cit.* p.97). Within the body-landscape context, this 'something' is being regarded as the site. In the Geopoetics project, the *plastiques* exercises evolved into the means of examining the inner effect of the landscape and devising activity on site based on that experience.

Before undertaking the project, I had not examined the specific practice outside the studio space¹¹⁴. In my training process, I had experienced the ways it accesses feelings, impulses and imagery and shifts the perception of space. However, I did not know how the practice would work in an outdoor setting. In an e-mail conversation, Erica Fae expressed the view that 'the *plastique* work is so deep and internal, that doing it outdoors can be distracting' (e-mail communication, April 2014). Nevertheless, she assumed that 'the world of nature [could] offer a beautiful kind of image exploration' (*ibid.*). In the Geopoetics project, the *plastiques* exercises began with rotations and undulations of central body joints: ankles, knees, pelvis, rib cage, shoulder blades, elbows, wrists, fingers and head, adding the face muscles and the eyes. At some point, they evolved into an open form improvisation in the site. The practice was elaborated

¹¹³ An imagery does not only signify something seen but it includes 'all kinds of sensations' (Wangh, 2000: 86) such as 'a feeling, a sense, even an idea' (*ibid.*). For more on the *plastiques* exercises see Chapter 2

¹¹⁴ For my experience in the *plastiques* see Chapter 2

as an individual process within the group. This section discusses the ways the *plastiques* exercises created imagery *in situ*, manifesting the sensibilities through which one could understand landscape.

The *plastiques* exercises *in situ* produced 'emotional imager[ies]' (Wangh, 2000: 97) of the landscape. They poetically materialised associations initiated either by the experience of the practitioner or by their performance in the site as they take place. *Plastiques* manifested inner impressions of the landscape devising two kinds of activity *in situ*. I designated the first one as choreography. Wendell Beavers defines choreography as 'a sequence of body events: a task, a gesture, a kinaesthetic response, a shape-form, an impulse' (personal notes, spring 2010). I determine a structured dance in the landscape in the same way. It is anchored in the material morphology of the landscape and the physicality of the practitioner. It involves movement which captures the inner impact of the site and makes it repeatable within a sequence. For example, in one of my individual sessions, as a practitioner I moved in the 'studio' field next to the farm residence of the project. The site has visual contact with Emporios, one of the mountainous villages of the island. At that time, the field was dominated by wild barley and scattered dead tree trunks. The day of the training was windy, forcing the barley to move in a very intense, almost dramatic way. I explored the practice in the middle level (sitting) and the top (standing). This gave me the possibility to focus on one specific area at a time. While sitting, I worked with the *plastiques* of my upper body, fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders and head incorporating also my face muscles.

My movement came into dialogue with the elegant golden barley of the field. Their integrated action generated an image of woman who is genuinely beautiful but humiliated and silent, engendered by the specific site. Standing up, I added the *plastiques* of pelvis and knees. The wind was getting forceful, evoking in me a feeling of aggressiveness and I started worrying about being seen by the nearby village. The dried trunks became a presence of something which dries from the

inside out. I felt as if I was one of all the women standing there throughout time, depressed and compassionate, and this filled my eyes with tears:

The wild barley...reminders of an oppressed femininity and the trunk... a suspended 'I am here' gesture... a sense of grace which dried and froze over time...a meaning of being a woman in this land...elegant like these barley and suppressed by this wind...all these generations of women... compressed within their own identity (personal journal, May 2013).

[see video 2.i.]

Plastiques became the physical containers to materialise or activate impulses, impressions and associations generated by our interplaying with the features of a site. For example, in Nymfios, a valley plateau below the highest peak of the island, the group practiced the *plastiques* with the intention for each of us to follow his/her 'kinaesthetic delight' (Dilley, 2015: 59)¹¹⁵. Andrew had the impulse of standing under a tree. He moved with the *plastiques* of pelvis and head which devised for himself the instruction of 'being underneath [the tree] and looking up and away' (Andrew, feedback talk, May 2013). The instruction allowed him to feel 'comfort and support' (*ibid.*) which led him into a personal association and a relationship with the trunk of a tree: '...sensing the bark of the tree brought a memory of touching my grandmother's hands...triggered me to use my body as the extension of the tree [as if] being snake wrapped around its core' (*ibid.*) [see video 2.ii 0:05-2:40]. In another side of the place, I was practicing with the burned trunk of a tree. I was sitting on it with the impulse to sense its history; how it got burned and what its initial shape was. The *plastiques* of hands, shoulders and head supported me in materialising my initial impulse of imagining the remainder of the tree and devised the instruction of embodying its form [see video 2.ii 2:45-5:35].

¹¹⁵ As I have already explained in Chapter 3, the notion 'kinaesthetic delight' is conceived by Barbara Dilley. It stresses a quality of being while training. It is a 'felt-sense of body mind in balance' (Dilley, unpublished scripts, 2012). When body mind is synchronised it meets everything in space, 'thoughts, feelings, impulses, sensations, the named and the un-named' (*ibid.*) as equally welcome and 'with acceptance' (*ibid.*).

The devised sequenced actions either in the form of choreography or instructions set were manifesting inner impressions of the landscape deriving from the experience of the practitioner. For example, in the Nymfios session, I had an impulse of positioning myself between the dried branches of a tree. Moving with the *plastiques* of hands, torso and pelvis among the thorny limited space, the branches started resembling for me the dendrites of neurons. I had the thought of being in between my thinking patterns generating the image of moving inside my brain. At some point my jumper got caught on one the branches and through my movement I invented the task of pulling it out. As I was performing the instruction I had the impression of undoing my mind. Although not perceptible from an outside eye, the associative imagery created for me an emotional engagement and became a reference point for generating material [see video 2.iii 0:05-1:58]. On the other hand, *plastiques* were materialising landscape as an inner impact from the perspective of the watcher. For example, in the barley field, I was practicing on the low level lying on the ground. The improvisation of the hands, legs and pelvis *plastiques* with the wind was creating for the outside eye the image of an animal. The exercise formed a spatial composition that was shaped by the inner impact which the site had on my movement body [see video 2.iii.].

Conclusion

The imagery produced by the *plastiques* exercises manifested the 'taskscape' (Ingold, 1993:159) of the landscape as 'sensibilities' (Wylie, 2006:531). When the practice progressed to an in flux improvisation, the experience of the landscape was integrated with feelings, impulses, associations, memories and images of the practitioner in the present moment. After a point, it was impossible to recognise whether these manifestations of inner life were coming from our own impulses or the outer setting. The materiality and conditionality (i. e. the weather) of the site and the moving body were assimilated into one activity, transforming every sensed perception of the place (f. e. the sound of an animal, a shadow) into an 'emotive gesture' (Wangh, 2000: 76). The whole landscape became a *plastique*.

The *plastiques* practice in the landscape operated as the carrier and demonstrator of the inner effect of the site. It worked as an initiator, manifesting the individual impacts of the place as feelings (*vedana*) and expanding its perception as imagery (*sanna*). Additionally, it functioned as a physical container materialising impressions and impulses of the space as activity. The landscape *plastique* evolved into a tool for exploring and actualising an inner engagement with the space as the body moved through it, by releasing its psychological and social connotations. The cultivation of such a direct experience uncovered something 'forgotten...so old that all distinctions between aesthetic genres are no longer of use' (Grotowski in Schechner and Wolford, 1997: 376). At the same time, it interrelated with 'what [it] did not receive from others, what did not come from outside, what is not learned' (*op. cit.* p.377).

During the *plastiques* sessions of the project I was instructing the movement vocabulary in the beginning and then participating as a practitioner. Such a choice was letting the participants to deal with their process on their own. For those who were unexperienced, it was difficult to stay open both to the experience of the site and the personal emotional 'reserve' coming out and being disclosed¹¹⁶. Either the practice was becoming frivolous, a set of repeatable moving structures, or overwhelming impulses were giving rise to an unbearable experience and transforming the site into a hostile environment. For example, in the beach site of Korakospilies, Isabella had to drop out when the site was revealed to her as a vast and frightening inner space: 'I felt entering a deep internal steep landscape where the sea appeared as a lake at the end of my mind' (Isabella, personal interview, September 2013). Isabella needed a facilitator to hold space in order to process her 'not friendly' imagery. Such an experience disclose for me that the *plastiques* exercises operate as a psychophysical investigation of landscape when there is openness and availability from the practitioners. Thus, they constitute indispensable the presence of a facilitator guiding the whole process especially when the group consists of beginners.

¹¹⁶ From the seven participants only three had been already experienced in Grotowski-based actor training. For the rest of the group, the practice was new.

Moreover, in the Grotowski-based actor training the *plastiques* practice is further developed as an interacting exercise between two practitioners. In Nisyros, although the exercise was manifesting landscape as an inexhaustible source of inner impulses, it made it extremely challenging to connect with others and create a common experience in situ. It created an atmosphere of isolated introversion where strong individual impulses could not be inclusive to others. Michael in the Nymfios session, felt as if he was 'thrown into a ditch after a car-crash... having amnesia...seeing the rest of the group without being able to recognise it... leading into a profound immobility...probably to some kind of autism' (Michael, feedback talk, May 2013). In a future elaboration of the *plastiques* exercise I will initially practice the discipline as a solo but focus on developing it as a group discipline. This will enable me to investigate landscape as collective imageries as well and search for their possible manifestations in situ.

The event of the body-landscape interrelationship

Hitherto, I have been elaborating a being with/-in the landscape as a doing. I have determined being *in situ* as a psychophysical activity of 'dwelling' the place initiated either by the materialities or the sensibilities through which it is perceived. In this section, I discuss the transition from the investigation of the experience of the landscape through the body mind to the devising of a performance narrative *in situ*. In the Geopoetics project, Contemplative Dance Practice (CDP) constituted the basic tool for such a task.

In the first project, CDP was practiced both indoors and outdoors to explore the body-mind-space/landscape interrelationship as a somatic experience. In Nisyros, CDP was examined exclusively in the landscape. With the objective of 'meeting the moment without any preconceptions' (Dilley, unpublished scripts,

2012), CDP sessions required from the participants to use all the techniques at their disposal as their resource. This enabled them to integrate all of the so far distinct practices of the training and develop them into strategies of exploring the body-landscape interrelationship¹¹⁷. In this way, the CDP sessions became a platform for devising performance material with/-in the landscape¹¹⁸.

Each CDP session lasted for at least three hours and was usually divided into two parts. The first one included a direct examination of the disciplines of the practice with the features of the place. This was a phase of becoming familiar with the site. The second one involved a flowing stream of meetings with the others and the place. As the residency progressed, the process of the CDP sessions became more fluid, generating fewer gaps and more coherence between these found moments of togetherness. The improvisations started to reveal a 'logic' (Overlie, 2004: 188) of being onsite, disclosing a landscape experience as a performance.

Such a potentiality had been already glimpsed through the training of the discussed exercises. However, compositional formations and psychophysical engagements in the vast Nisyrian sites were not sufficient to initiate any meaning *in situ*. As I argue below, for a moment in the landscape 'to work' as performance material, it needs to manifest an experience of a body-landscape interrelationship and to be organised as a *samatha vipashyana* practice.

CDP in the landscape operated both as an originator and an anchor. It introduced a gateway to relate to space. When a flow of associations and impulses were developed, the practice was dropped in favour of pursuing it. And when that flow was decreased, then one returned to the disciplines of the practice again. In the

¹¹⁷ The task-based and game-based practices which I have discussed in the previous section were developed during a CDP session. The *plastique* exercises were not used directly in the improvisations. However, they enriched the movement vocabulary *in situ* and cultivated a process of receptive sensibility in the landscape.

¹¹⁸ This refers to the Open Space section of the practice as it contains both individual and collective disciplines. For more on CDP see Part I Chapter 2.

following paragraphs, I highlight the CDP moments where the event of the interrelationship takes place. I analyse their performance process to outline a devising practice in the landscape. These moments constitute the turning points from practicing the experience of the landscape into performing it¹¹⁹.

The videos of this section were shot while the practice was taking place. The filmmaker did not know where and how the group practice would evolve in the landscape. Hence, the frames and angles of the shooting are improvised according to the space and the devised action of the practitioners. Additionally, the material was edited with the purpose of demonstrating its meditative and somatic quality and disclosing a narrative which the practice embodies. The process of documenting will be further discussed at the end of the chapter.

'Inter-being'

The first derived structure of experiencing an interrelationship appeared as a sequence of responses between two performers. During our improvisation in the caldera, Michael and I were elaborating the four postures of the CDP practice and the instructions of influence and copy. Together we improvised a series of actions. I lay next to him. Michael gave me his shirt. He made a circle of stones around me and lay on its periphery. We stood up and started to separate mirroring a movement of running on the spot. I felt comfort and relief. Michael recalls: 'we were like roses within a steppe; I felt reclaiming my power by becoming more transparent in the space, not interested anymore into my own thinking process' (personal interview, September 2013). I thought: 'we exist because of others... I am realising my being-ness through the gaze of him' (personal journal, June 2013, Nisyros) [see video 3.i.].

Within the 'theatrical' context of action-reaction, nothing from that incident happened out of a direct answer to the other. The activity derived from continually returning to the present moment of the experience *in situ* and at the same time,

¹¹⁹ One of the examples is taken for my individual practice and thus it concerns a session of Personal Awareness Practice (PAP). For the individual sessions of CDP see Part I Chapter 2.

cultivating a sense of being attuned with the other, the moment and the place. Based on the Buddhist concept of selflessness (*anatta*), Thich Nhat Hanh designates such an experience as the absence of a separate intrinsic self and determines its process as 'inter-being' (Hanh in Daboo, 2004: 49): "to be' is to inter-be. You cannot be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing" (*ibid.*). My experience with Michael in caldera disclosed interrelating with the other and the landscape as an act of 'inter-being' (*ibid.*), a manifestation of selflessness (*annata*). It demonstrated the precondition of the meditative nature and effect of the activity *in situ* in order to enact an interrelationship between bod(ies) and landscape. It disclosed the necessity of devising in the landscape from a place of listening and responding and not of doing.

Rock Meditation II

When practicing individually, the landscape becomes the partner with whom the performed activity manifests an 'inter-being' (*ibid.*). During my personal process, I practiced on a rock cliff site named Korakospilies meaning Crow-Caves. I worked with the mindfulness awareness posture of lying-down of CDP. Starting from the top of the rock and descending towards its ground, I developed an activity of repetitively resting on the rock. Its surface was steep and harsh so each time I had to be very attentive in my way of yielding on it. This with-the-cliff action transformed the rock into an object of mindfulness and for the duration of the performance, my awareness became expanded of and in the specific site. I became attuned with the presence of the site, acting from a point of listening and not imposing. My practice became a process of 'abandoning ego' (Kimsooja in Baas et al., 2004: 216), not by rejecting it, but by 'going along with it and letting it wear itself out' (Chögyam Trungpa, published talk, 1972) [see video 3.ii.]¹²⁰.

The repetitive activity was transformed into a site-specific meditation which at the same time organised my experience of being with the landscape. As a

¹²⁰ Here the term 'ego' is not identified with the correspondent notion of Western psychology. In Buddhism, ego does not exist. It is a mental projection, 'an accumulation of habits and confusions, a set of hopes, fears and dreams' (Midal, 2012: 21). It is a mechanism where 'our entire relationship with the world passes through this filter, which checks out whether what is going on is advantageous to us or not' (*ibid.*).

practitioner, it provided me with a 'logic' (Overlie, 2004: 188) by means of which I recognised my associative, emotional and mental responses. It enabled me to arrange them under an idea or theme and structure them with a beginning, middle and end. The practice became a process of making the unknown landscape into a known and allowed me to create a meaning interlinked with the place through my experience: 'woman who yields as if surrendering to a man... a study of the grains of the rock; sculpted passages of the wind, the sea and the rain...the rock's mentality; standing on the edge enduring...' (personal journal, May 2013). I built an activity of mindfulness (*samatha*) through which I could abandon the self and opened my awareness to the ways I relate and formulate my perception in the specific site. This process constituted my devising process. The landscape became the other and the derived activity a mindfulness act to listen to the meeting point of our interrelationship.

Yet, when one works within an ensemble onsite, the process of unfolding an interrelationship becomes more complicated. It takes place simultaneously at three levels: the individual, the collective, and the worldly. In the framed sites of the practice, it was easy to generate moments of togetherness such as duets and trios. But it seemed impossible for a common activity to derive from the whole group.

The Elia Narrative

In the last week, one of our improvisations evolved into an experience of a group-landscape synchronisation. The CDP session took place in the field of caldera located on the western side of the Stephanos crater. It was an open and vast plain having as background the surrounding mountain-walls of the caldera, creating the impression of a closed ring or an immense embrace. Starting the session, everybody was dispersed throughout the plain applying the disciplines of CDP in the space. The task-based and game-based practices which I have analysed, were devised at this part of the improvisation as well as the paradigm of inter-being analysed above.

Quite from the beginning of the session, Andrew had the impulse of abandoning the working site and disappearing behind the surrounded hills. Although we were quite scattered, Andrew's leaving enhanced our group awareness. At a given moment, under the drive of looking for the missing one, all members of the group joined together into unison like 'streams coming together into one river' (Anna, feedback talk, June 2013) [see video 3.iii]. Our improvised action disclosed a ritualistic narrative. As I will further argue it enacted an interrelationship between the group and the specific nature of the landscape which was ascribed by three kinds of attributes. Firstly, it disclosed a logic organised into the following score: ascend the hill - carry objects (a stick, a dead branch, a cloth) - reunite - create a wind dance - make a figurehead - face the crater- sing - leave.

Secondly, it caused an affective shift to the whole group. In our feedback discussion we admitted to each other our experienced 'spiritual' and 'ritualistic' feelings: carrying the stick became a crucifixion, ascending altogether the hill was a procession, holding objects (sticks and stones) the liturgical fans, natural elements (the wind, the crater) became spirits and Andrew the biblical figure of Moses descending from Mount Sinai (feedback talk, June 2013). In the book of Thomas Richards *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (2004), Grotowski confirms that in participatory improvised events there is always a category of actions which would unavoidably appear as clichés. He labels them 'universal human banalities' (in Richards, 2004: 20) and gives a list of examples: 'to carry someone in the air as if he is dead; to throw yourself down on the ground in a pseudo-crisis; to scream; to herd up in a close bunch, singing...' (*ibid.*). Grotowski believes that inexperienced practitioners need to 'vomit out all these banalities' (*ibid.*) as a necessary preparation 'before any real work would begin' (*ibid.*).

In the Nisyrian improvisation, it was impossible for some of us not to criticise the ritualistic clichés appearing in the material. When witnessing herself performing the carrying of the stick, Kelly felt as if she crucified someone: "a voice in my head was saying: 'am I really doing this? Yes, I am doing it!'... I wanted to start making fun of it, to mock it but on the other hand, I was very serious about it." (feedback talk, June 2013). Nevertheless, she did not cut her impulse as she did not want

to confine herself. She decided to stay open to what was arising and acknowledged her need of performing a ritualistic, cliché-like activity (*ibid.*). Matthew justified the banality of the group's improvised actions as something being liberated from cultural oppression: 'there were a number of rites repressed within us...as we were opening into the landscape, a greater necessity of re-joining with them appeared...and hence we created a ritual from scratch' (*ibid.*).

Our non-judgmental performance of our ritualistic impulses had two results. It evoked our affective involvement with the site and therefore it enacted an interconnection between the group and the volcanic environment. The improvised activity of the caldera session released the 'logic' (Overlie, 2004: 188) of an unspecified ceremony and formulated the experience *in situ* as a narrative. The group followed a non-relational and impulsive stream of responses to the landscape which suspended the intellectual plane of the who, what and why. The improvisation resulted in a process of not only abandoning the self (*annata*) at the psychological level but also releasing a sense of identity at a social level. Michael describes the effect of the action on him: '...all my individual, social and religious convictions became ideas that evaporated at each moment...and this was giving me a tremendous relief' (feedback talk, June 2013).

Furthermore, an interconnection between the group and the site took place which revealed itself as an event disclosing the activity *per se* as the container and the narrator of the whole experience. Michael notices from his experience: 'I had this feeling as if everything was all that needed to be...there was an equanimity which was deriving from a feeling of permanent presence...things were palpable and existing' (feedback talk, June 2013).

Concluding from the examples of this section, I argue that for an experience *in situ* to operate as an event of the body-landscape interrelationship, it needs to meet two requirements. Firstly, it needs to suspend the known ways of perceiving the specific site. This is the *samatha* discipline of the body-landscape practice¹²¹.

¹²¹ The *samatha* quality is a practice and not activity. Hence, for the landscape **practice**, it is not considered as a certainty. For more see the next section of the chapter.

It keeps the body mind attuned with the experience of the site and hence it creates a container to let go the standardised identities of the self in situ both as an individual and as a collective. Secondly, from the mindful listening, all cultures of landscape can be elaborated as practices and hence they can be further processed. This is the arising and cultivation of the *vipashyana* discipline. The body mind experiences the place directly and develops a new understanding *in situ*. The *vipashyana* quality develops a 'transcendent awareness that comes from simultaneously attending to details [in the space,] without and to what is happening within' (Dilley, 2006: 44). The performance of attending becomes the narrative of the landscape. This is the mindfulness (*sati*) performance event of the body-landscape interrelationship: the enactment of a sequence of responses to the site which disclose the world as a symbol signifying nothing but its own self¹²².

Conclusion

Samatha becomes the centre through which one attunes and listens to the ways consciousness is embedded in space. The practice of *vipashyana* expands the listening by actualising a direct experience with the space. Hence, the performance of an onsite *samatha vipashyana* activity is the event of a body-landscape interrelationship. The inner and outer are synchronised in 'the ground of nowness' (Chogyam Trungpa, 1984: 105) revealing the present moment as a secret or hidden, and thus 'exceptional', reality¹²³.

¹²² The notion of 'symbol' here emanates from the vajrayanian tradition of *mahamudra*. Buddhism recognises two kinds of symbolism: the theistic and the nontheistic. The first one such as the Christian one, requests for a 'constant self-existing confirmation; that is whenever symbolism exists you exist and your world exists' (Chögyam Trungpa, 2008: 33). In the second one like Buddhism 'you don't exist, symbolism doesn't exist and the universe doesn't exist' (*ibid.*). Its purpose is not to remove from reality but to relate with it as directly as possible: 'It is a very simple level-eye relationship...there is no Big Brother, watching you' (*ibid.*). Chögyam Trungpa refers to it as 'the symbolism of experience itself' (*op. cit.* p.32).

¹²³ Here there is the risk of exclusively performing landscape as something 'holy' and 'sacred'. This is a very typical paradigm of creating landscape performances resembling shamanistic ceremonies; performing deifications of nature and embodiments of its spirits; or of hippiedom events expressing a nostalgic return to the healthy, pure and authentic source of the mother-nature.

To devise a performance in the landscape, one needs to investigate the activity that evokes a surrendering of one's own self to the experience of the present moment in order to see things as they really are. In this way, devising in the landscape is about revealing and not conceiving, responding and not acting. It entails a doing by not doing. The *samatha vipashyana* quality becomes the objective and the organising principle of the body-landscape performance. The meditative action releases the mind from its habitual ways of perception and uncovers 'the world as a symbol' (Trungpa, 1976: 156). This is the event of the body-landscape interrelationship. Andrianna describes her own experience of interrelating with the landscape of the island in the project as follows:

...you create the landscape and it creates you at the same time... and this is really happening... it is not constructed or virtual...what I was seeing was what I was carrying within me ...it is a circle...you receive [the landscape] with your senses...you plunge it in you and then you put it out there...you bring it inside you and it opens you up... ...the landscape is activated by what you leave in it... [and] the landscape activates what you leave behind (personal interview, September 2013, Athens).

The use of the *samatha vipashyana* discipline to perform landscape urges the practitioner to abandon notions of the self and its cultural environment. Meditation becomes a supporting structure to meet the place afresh. At the same time and as a result, meditation cultivates equanimity and benevolence as means of relating to the world and raises the opportunity for the world to be reconsidered it anew. The meditative discipline elaborates a container of receptivity and non-aggressiveness within which place is performed as an interrelationship. The contemplative performance is either created as a devised embodiment to be translated into an experience or as an experience to be performed as a sequenced meditative activity.

Conclusion; the performance of landscape as a discipline of its actualisation

John Wylie sees landscape as the illustrator and the carrier of the ways we understand the world. On the one hand, it 'names the materialities and sensibilities with and according to which' (2006: 520) we perceive. On the other, it is manifested as the 'eventful actualisation' (*op. cit.* p. 522) of them. In the

Geopoetics project, a practice of landscape as materiality and sensibility was organised. It disclosed that to perform a landscape signifies to enact its 'actualisation...as a relation of knowing, perception, and apprehension within the embodied, material situation' (op. cit. p. 522, 531). Such a process which I determined as a discipline of actualisation was organised into a *samatha vipashyana* strategy of devising *in situ*.

However, the use of meditative practice for performing landscape raises questions of the validation of such a process. If the activity *in situ* is not based on the *samatha vipashyana* discipline, does it mean that it is not valid; what happens when contemplation is dropped?

In the practice of materiality, I discussed a video of the three practitioners throwing stones to each other as a game-based strategy. However, their action does not arise from being contemplative in space. They do not hold any object of attention to develop an understanding of the place in the present moment. Their meditative practice is being dropped out. Barbara Dilley argues that the act of 'developing an awareness' (1990: 43) does not contain a right or false logic. Its culture does not concern only moments of the body mind synchronisation. It also involves the process of 'recognise[ing] and understand[ing] one's ignorance' (1990: 43). Awareness also requires that we acknowledge when activity takes place by 'the spacing out, the turning away from and losing away' (*ibid.*). It additionally involves a discipline of 'appreciating those moments when there is not any awareness, making friends with that experience and being gentle' (*ibid.*).

The *samatha vipashyana* discipline in the landscape training is not used as a guarantee. The practice of being *in situ* does not involve a matter of succeeding or failing. It is a cultivation, a perpetual doing and not an action, something set. The choice of the meditative discipline as a strategy for performing and devising in the landscape is based exactly on the logic of the non-duality of the practice. It involves the acknowledgement of the shifting points of awareness and the

willingness of the practitioner to return to the here and now. It is 'the drop out and pick it up again' possibility of the technique which enables the performer to uncover the events wherein space and herself are attached to each other and to formulate landscape as a consciousness.

Nevertheless, the activity of the three practitioners throwing stones to each other challenges the role of the facilitator and her responsibility to step in to the practice and ensure security. The specific session in the Nisyrian caldera took place halfway through the project. Hence, the practitioners were already familiar with each other and the practice. As a facilitator, I decided to trust their experience so far and allow them to fully follow their impulses without me overseeing their process. This was something chosen also by the nature of the site as it was too vast and impossible for me to have an overall supervision. I consider that these decisions enhanced the training process as in that session, it was the first time that the group succeeded in devising a collective experience *in situ*. However, I could have reminded to the group the *ahimsa* principle of the Open Space practice and the physical dangers that the site of caldera could enclose¹²⁴.

The meditative discipline of the landscape practice creates not only a culture of doing but also of witnessing¹²⁵. The Geopoetics project disclosed the documentation process of the project as a contemplative practice in the presence of the camera on site and in the way of recording. In the video of the Elia narrative there are shots which occur synchronized with the derived action. Although their frame and angle are improvised, they seem as if they are directed. On the other hand, there are shots which take place based on Chloe's idea about what the activity *in situ* signifies. In this way, they influence the gaze of the viewer and impose or stress a narrative in the action.

¹²⁴ *Ahimsa* in Sanskrit is a Buddhist term which signifies 'not to injure' and 'compassion'. Dilley uses it as the only rule between the practitioners of the Open Space practice. For more see Chapter 2.

¹²⁵ Here I discuss about camera as a witness of the practice. For the role of its spectator see chapter 5.

Furthermore, the camera needs to operate as an extension of the moving body and at the same time as a discrete eye-witness of the body's exploration on site. If it is too far away, it fails to record the somatic experience of the performer. If it is too close, it affects the working process of the practitioner. Kelly explains: "...each time that Chloe was coming near me I was getting more excited about my practice but then I was thinking; 'what am I doing? Am I practicing because of the camera?'" (feedback discussion, June 2013, Nisyros). Kelly's feedback demonstrates how the presence of the camera was validating her exploration as a result. It was interrupting her examination of being and signifying her devised activity as a product to be captured.

The Geopoetics project was a contemplative, environmental and residential enterprise. Its attributes functioned as values of the research process. When one of them is not recognised as such the research conduct becomes problematic. For example, in Nisyros one of the performers had problems in adjusting to the outdoor conditions of the work. This created a polarisation between the practitioner and the others, both in the training and in the residence. As the residency leader and facilitator, I decided for the group to perform a hike on the top of the island and camp there for three days elaborating the contemplative practices of breathing and walking. My aim was to urge the practitioners to discover their reason of their presence both in the project and the island. The three days evolved into a process of discovering the group's common intention of the project. On the last day, each other's needs became integrated into one collective motive. The specific incident marked the first week of the project as preliminary. From that moment onwards the research process evolved gradually.

The contemplative residential character requires from the facilitator an ability to let go of the ideas of what the work is, its intentions and how they will be accomplished. On the other hand, it urges the trainees to enhance trust and confidence in a process which may seem unrecognisable as a performance training and to continually question their necessity of undertaking a practice within the particular conditions. For these reasons, for a contemplative outdoors residential

project I consider mandatory either well-articulated statements of participation from the interested or a preparatory period of the practice.

Moreover, the particular identity of the Geopoetics project resulted in evoking a narrative of its own in the Nisyrian sites. The casual local observer could not be recognised as either theatrical, scientific or touristic. As the activity was indefinable, performed by a middle class group of Athenians, it was positioned as privileged and whimsical. Such cultural disparity created an insider-outsider dynamic for the project which could not be ignored. For example, when I was working by myself as a practitioner in an isolated site of the crater, for the local passersby, mostly men, I was seen as a woman all alone performing an activity which could not be contextualised by my presence *in situ*. The tension of being noticeable as different had to be integrated in the exploration of my experience there.

The insider-outsider dynamic resulted in a limited integration between the local community and the practice. However, as the leader researcher of the project, I considered a contemplative performance practice in the landscape impossible without a sense of exclusion. In this sense, I organised the project as a laboratory and not as a performing process. My aim was to explore the cultural practices of the island through the disciplines but not to integrate with them. Nevertheless, some friends of the collaborators criticised the project as being exploitative both to the landscape and the culture of the island: going there, taking the data and leaving. The project could have included an artistic enterprise or volunteering work for the community. However, as the time of our residency was restricted none activity was possible to be planned. This fact presented us in the island as an Athenian group of 'specialists' who use the local resources for their own goals without offering something back to the place.

As long there are outsiders visiting a place with the aim to conduct a research practice *in situ* the question of exploiting and romanticising the landscape is always an issue. It makes it mandatory for the initiator of such an enterprise to be aware of the way she asks or uses resources of the specific community and she

offers anything in return. In the case of Nisyros which is an isolated Greek island with limited access in cultural life, the creation of a theatre piece with the local community would have been ideal. However, this would have required a double time of stay in the island or half of the practice performing there. From my experience in the project as the lead researcher I understood that when someone organises such an endeavour she needs to keep asking the following questions: how do living practices constitute part of the examined landscape and how do they integrate with the meditative movement practice of the performing process?

The Geopoetics project demonstrated that the dynamic of the insider-outsider positioning affects the examination of the 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543). It stressed the importance of who practices what and where. As I discuss in the next chapter, it is exactly the meditative structure of the practice which allows all positions to be examined equally and in non-hierarchical manner. The practice does not argue for an exclusivity or authenticity of the performed event of the landscape. It aims to uncover the interrelationship which is present and in effect each time in *situ*. The following chapter examines the mindfulness (*sati*) methodology of the thesis as a site-specific performance. It focuses on how the *samatha vipashyana* structure creates a narrative that incorporates the experience of the audience and enacts an interrelationship between them and the place.

Chapter 5

Performance Topophilia

[DVD C]

Introduction

Hitherto, I have used the Buddhist concepts of selflessness (*anatta*) and mindfulness (*sati*) to build a performance practice of the body-landscape interrelationship organised in two phases. The first one builds and grounds the mindfulness practice in the site and explores the psychophysical experience of the environment. The second one devises activity structured as a *samatha vipahysana* discipline through which it enacts the narrative of the landscape as an interconnection. The two phases of the practice were the research objectives of the previous projects of the thesis, taking place in rural environments as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 (The Bridge Project, The Geopoetics Project).

The third and final project focused on applying the practice of the thesis organised thus far, with the aim of creating a performance. The piece took place in the Athenian landscape for two reasons. As a practitioner, I wanted to investigate the body-site interrelationship from the position of an insider. In the previous projects, the landscapes under investigation were unknown to us. We had to consider our positioning in the place as visitors. In this project, all of the practitioners have been living in Athens for the last five years. Thus, our lived experience of the city was being integrated with the practice. Additionally, the practices would have to be elaborated for an urban landscape with which, as inhabitants of a city, we were more familiar.

The second reason for situating the project in Athens was that the city had been the spatial map of the recent cultural shifts in Greece. Over the last five years it has been a city in humanitarian crisis¹²⁶. The effects of the austerity measures applied to the Greek economy were firstly visible in the capital of the country. The

¹²⁶ I am referring to the time frame of the research of the thesis from January 2012 to January 2014. For more on the timeline of the Greek 'crisis' see preface.

Athenian streets became a home for the socially weakest, creating a city center of restricted areas for health and safety reasons¹²⁷. On the other hand, they operated at every opportunity as a political arena where the public could express its frustration and anger for the new financial developments. For long time periods demonstrations and riots constituted the everyday reality of the city.

The transformation of the city was rapid and irrevocable. As an Athenian, its sight was devastating. It directly affected my personal experience evoking a sense of displacement¹²⁸. In this context, creating an event of interrelationship with Athens became essential. It signified a way of re-discovering where the city and I/we could become (or are) connected. To underline the creative motive of the project, I titled the performance using the neologism 'topophilia'¹²⁹. As I have already discussed in Chapter 1, the term refers to 'the manifestation of the human love of place' (Tuan, 1974: 92)¹³⁰. The notion of topophilia aimed to reassess the degraded landscape of the Athenian 'crisis' through an open heart and mind and devise from that experience an event of interrelationship.

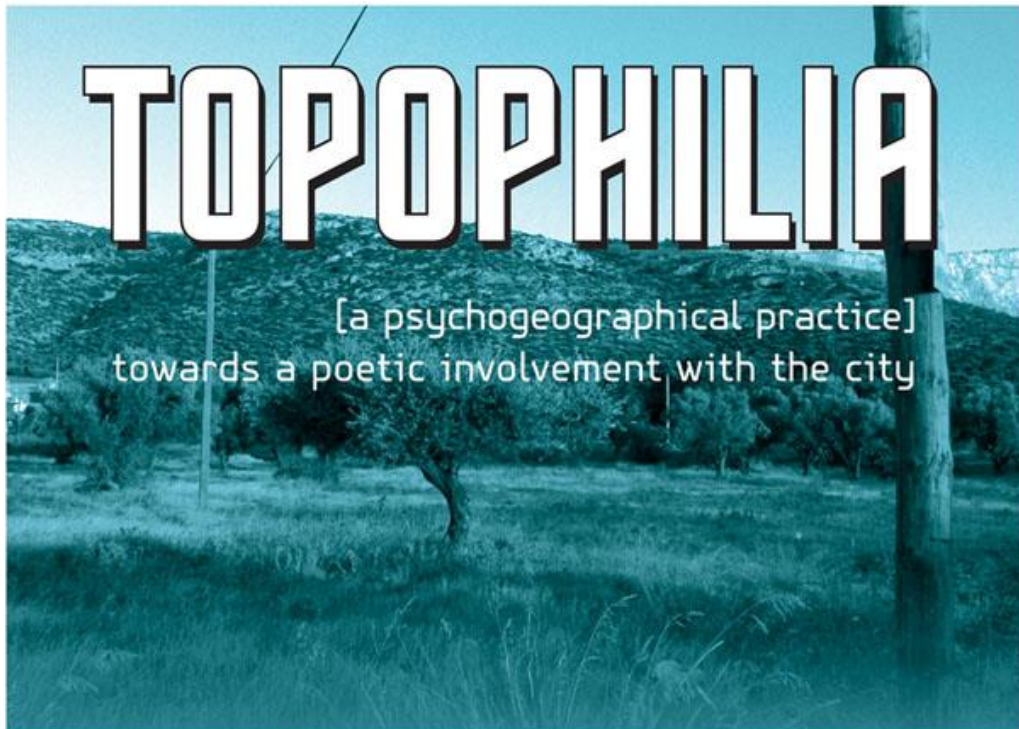
The Topophilia performance links back to the initial objective of the research of the thesis: to re-examine Greek culture through a site-specific performance practice. It focuses on a meditative performance structure to elaborate site as a 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543) and reconsider narratives, individual and collective, that still matter *in situ*. The chapter analyses the performance addressing the following questions:

¹²⁷ Enri Canaj's black and white photographs of his project 'shadows in Greece' express thoroughly the city's atmosphere at that period of time [on line] <http://www.enricanaj.com/shadows-in-greece> [15 July 2014].

¹²⁸ For example, the period after the elective results of 2012 the fascist party of Golden Dawn had received its biggest rate-winning 18 seats in the Greek parliament. At the same time, I was reading more and more in the newspapers and the social media about attacks in the city's streets or in means of transportation to people of diversity, meaning race, gender and religion. I remember having friends scared of being in the streets by themselves at night. There was a hidden feeling of the basic constitutional rights being under threat.

¹²⁹ The notion derives from the Greek word of 'topos' which means place, and 'philia' which means the love of. It firstly appears in the introduction of John Betjeman's poetry book *Slick but not Streamlined* (1948) written by W.H. Auden. Topophilia is also used in the discipline of sports geography to argue for the 'topophilic' function of the football stadium (Bale, 1998).

¹³⁰ According to Tuan, there are three different aspects which may cause topophilia; the site's 'aesthetic' (1974: 92) aspect, its sensed 'tactile' (*ibid.*) experience and/or its perceived symbolism (*ibid.*).



Sunday 29th of December 2013, Monastiraki square, 12pm
ticket price: 1,40€ - booking at topophilia@yahoo.gr



image 12: the poster of the project

1. How is the urban environment, as opposed to the rural one, explored by the somatic and contemplative practice?
2. How does one devise a body-landscape performance through a contemplative and somatic experience of the city?
3. How does a *samatha vipashyana* action become a body-landscape performance; what kind of narrative did the performance Topophilia create with/in the Athenian place?

The chapter is organised in three sections. Each one investigates one of these questions. The first section examines the effects of the discipline of attunement to the urban landscape of Athens. It is focused on the mindfulness (*samatha*) and somatic methods of the group walking and rotation exercises which were developed in the first project. It also uses the 'still shot' practice from the second project.

The second part argues for a devising process of the body-landscape performance. It examines the creation of a site-specific event through an embodied practice of memory¹³¹. Based on the exercise of Open Space practiced both in the first and the second projects of the thesis, the section discloses *in situ* improvisation as a tool to interweave the experience of the present moment with the known narratives of the place through action.

The third part examines the *samatha vipashyana* discipline as an organising principle of a site-specific narrative. Based on the outcomes of the presentation of the first project and the Open Space group improvisation of the second, it

¹³¹ Memory in the landscape does not consist of individual experiences or cultural narrations; rather it is a combination of both. Memory exists in the bodily experience of relating with the landscape and at the same time it narrates the perpetual movement of interconnecting with the land. In this way, the practice of memory resides in the point where the somatic experience makes sense of the world and at the same time meets the precedents' effort of performing that so. For more see below.

determines the performance narrative of the body-landscape interrelationship. It demonstrates the *samatha* discipline as a score to enact its event. It establishes its derived narrative as a *vipashyana* seeing of the place. The chapter concludes by discussing the outcomes of a mindfulness (*sati*) practice as a site-specific performance in the tormented city of Athens.

The Performance: Context, Concept, Scenario

The conditions of creating the performance *Topophilia* were affected not only by the specificity of the site but also by the season and the circumstances of making the work. The project was developed between the 21st and the 28th December 2013 and presented twice on Sunday 29th in the city centre. Two practitioners (Michael and I) and two women filmmakers (Tonia and Chloe), all of them participants in the previous projects of the thesis, joined together for the creative process. We had nine days to devise and perform the work. It was the period of the Christmas holidays. Hence, we had to familiarise ourselves and operate amidst the frenetic rhythm and overall consumerism of Christmas.

We worked together as a group at the beginning and the end of the process. We started by discussing our 'topophilic' experiences in Athens. Our aim was to find interconnections between our own memories and the history of the place in various Athenian sites. We investigated performing material (texts, song, or places) which could support or enhance the sense of interrelationship. In the last four days, we arrived at a performance structure and a plan for its documentation¹³². In the four days in between, during daylight hours, the two performers investigated body-landscape practices in the city centre of Athens.

With the aim of creating an experience of interrelationship, I searched the Athenian map to discover a site where I would love to have a moment of being. In one of my walkabouts, I discovered the expositional site of the Heridanos riverbed inside the metro station of Monastiraki. Thus, the idea of organising the performance around the presence of water was generated. Heridanos has been

¹³² For the documentation of the performance see below.

traversing the centre of Athens since prehistory, passing through some of the most significant historical and cultural landmarks of the city: Syntagma Square, Monastiraki and Kerameikos. It consists of one of the three major rivers of Athens however few Athenians (including myself) are aware of its existence. Since the Roman period (2nd century AD.), most of its riverbed has been covered by a brick arch and become a closed sewer-pipe. Only in the archaeological site of Kerameikos is a part of the river still visible.

In the early 1990s and through the excavations of the Attiko Metro at Monastiraki square, the river forcefully revealed itself again. Nikos Kazeros, a member of the architectural group which was commissioned to design the restoration of the river, recalls witnessing Heridanos for the first time during the excavating operations of the metro¹³³:

When the 'mole' [the tunnel boring machine] hit the river the worksite overflowed by its pouring water. I felt the city fading out, disappearing and myself standing in a peaceful magical place, within and so close to the earth. This experience made me realise the self-evident: the conservation of the river's site (personal interview, December 2013).

Due to the pressures he and his colleagues exerted, the final architectural plans of the station left part of the river uncovered to be accessible and witnessed by the everyday users of the metro. Opened for the public in 2007, the site offers two viewpoints of the river. The first one is located on the Monastiraki square viewing the river from above. The second one is situated inside the metro station where the riverbed is exposed as an archeological site. From a glass footbridge, the metro passengers are able to look onto traces of the riverbed from the late Classical Period (380-323 B.C.) and the era of Hadrian (2nd AD.) when the river was incised as a drainpipe. On both sides, one notices fragments of workshops and warehouse buildings displaying the commercial use of the area since then. A few meters in front of the footbridge, a board shows the exhibits found on the specific site such as pottery, coins and metal as well as bone objects.

¹³³ The group was composed of the architects: N.Kazeros, V. Manidaki, Z. Kotsopoulou, Ch. Parakente, and El. Tzirtzilaki.

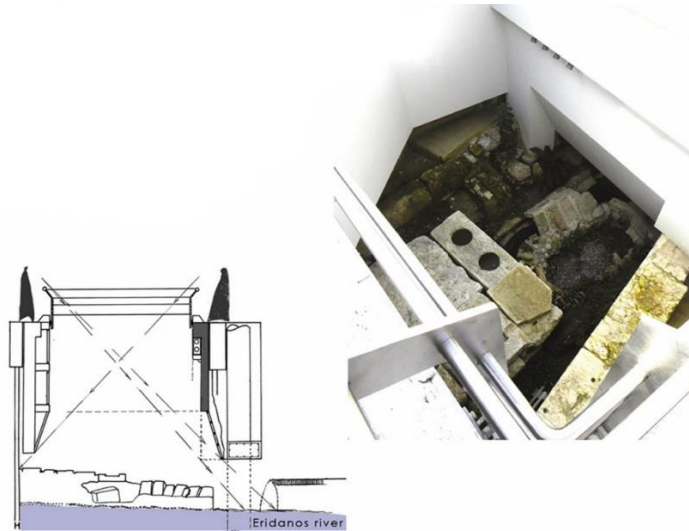


image 13: Heridanos from Monastiraki square

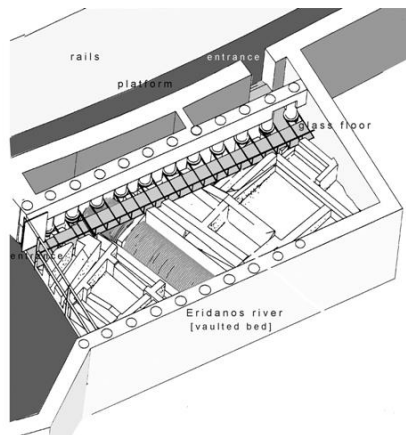


image 14: Heridanos from Monastiraki station

The idea of geographically exploring the traces of a buried river shaped the spatial route of Topophilia performance. The visible sites of the river, Monastiraki station and Kerameikos, became the beginning and the end points of our practice,

framing the performance area of the project¹³⁴. The route started next to Heridanos site in Monastiraki Square and moved inside its adjacent metro station. It extended by train to Thission and moved along the train lines further west, to a pedestrian bridge crossing them. It encompassed the site of Keramikos and stopped at one of its eastern viewpoints. The course stayed on the borderline of the tourist district of the city visiting a tract of land and moved parallel to Keramikos from its western side. The final event took place on Iera Odos Street. At each site of the performance route there was an action happening. The overall performance route was shaped as follows:

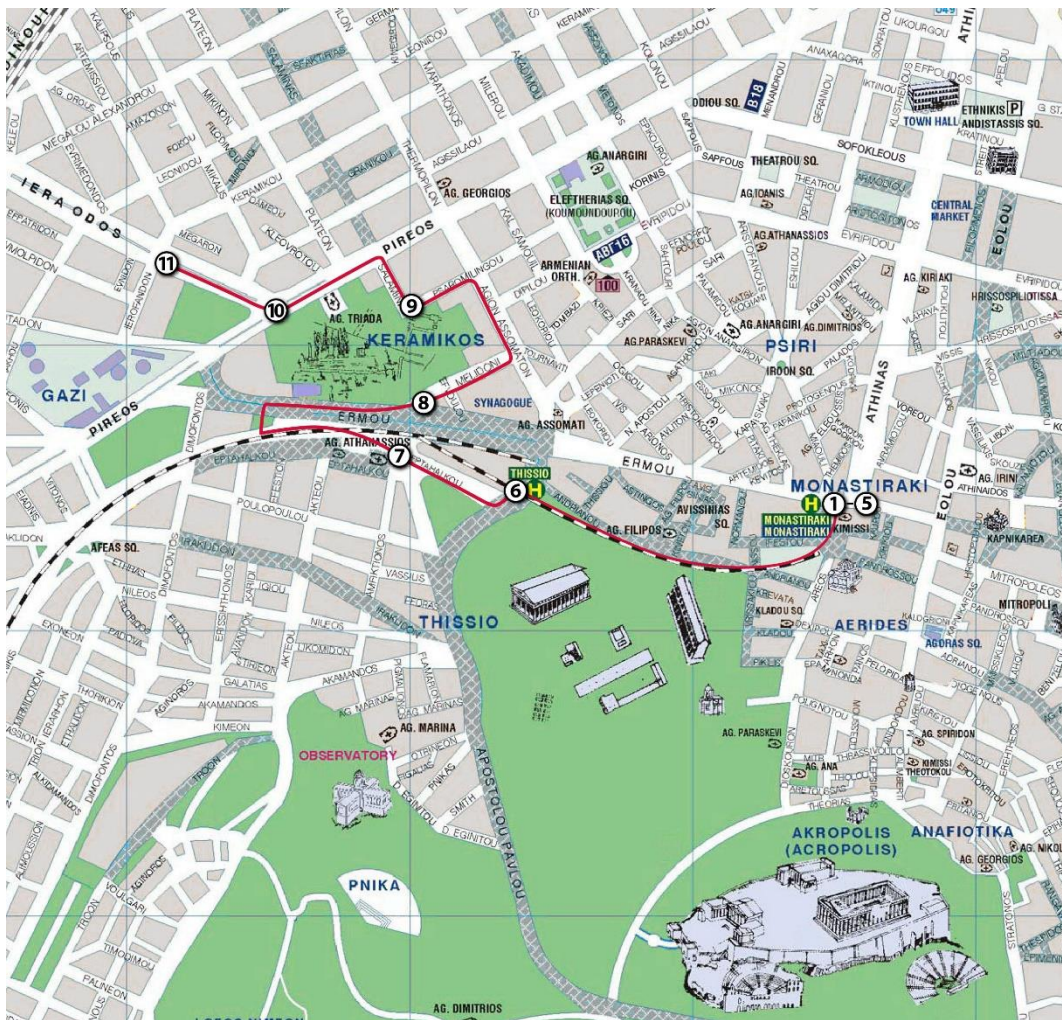


image 15: The city and the route of Topophilia

1. Monastiraki square;
2. The platform - Monastiraki station;

¹³⁴ Monastiraki and Kerameikos are part of the commercial, archaeological and tourist district located in the larger northwest zone bordering the Athenian Acropolis

3. The river - Monastiraki station;
4. The footbridge - Monastiraki station;
5. Catching the train - Monastiraki station;
6. Lecture - Thission station;
7. The absent memory - The pedestrian bridge;
8. Sightseeing- Keramikos;
9. The confrontation act-The tract of land;
10. The outcry - The traffic junction site;
11. Exit.

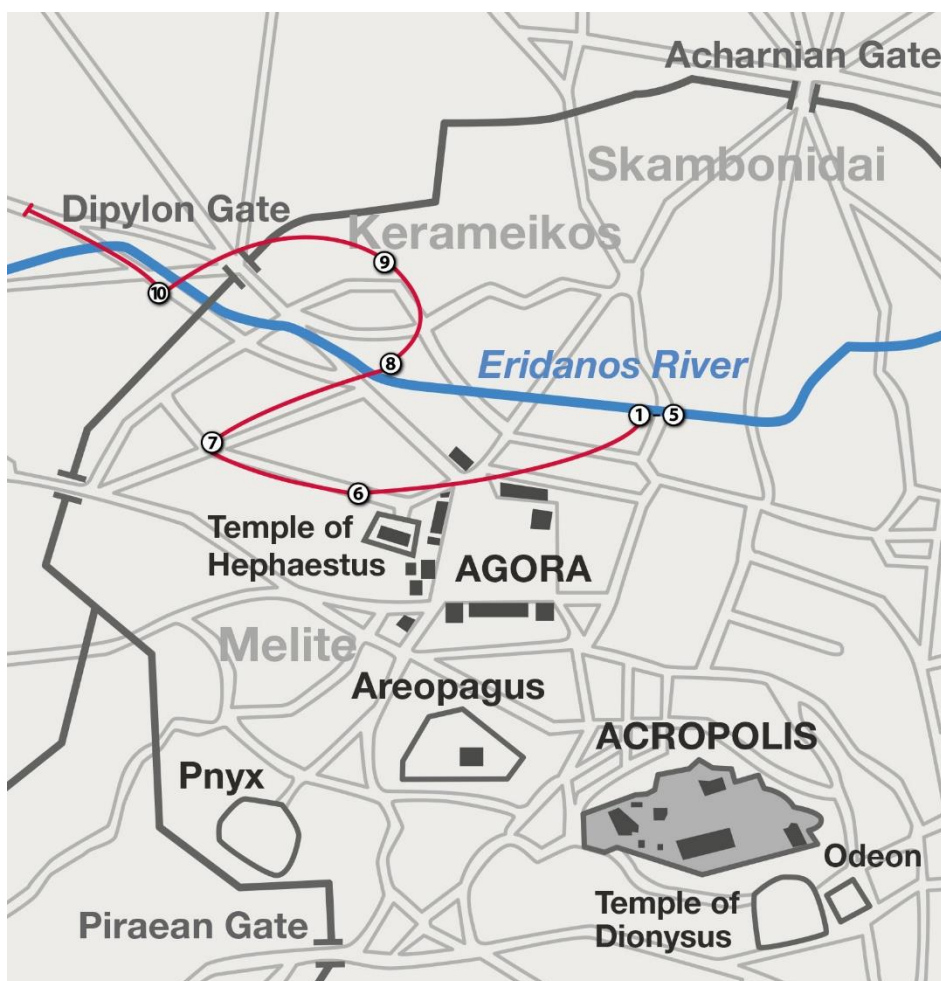


image 16: Heridanos in the ancient city and the performance route

Each section of this chapter refers to one video documentation of the overall performance. The video was shot by the two filmmakers who had already participated in the other projects of the thesis. Thus, they were aware of the objectives both of the practice and of the performance. The recording was organised in two ways. One camera documented the subjective experience of the watcher. The other shot the intervention of the performance event within the wider landscape of the city. In some sites, the presence of two cameras interrupted the lived activity of the city. They created in the passerby an expectation of a performance. Thus, they were moments when they prevented the meditative discipline and the development of a collective experience between the performers and the spectators. The video addresses an audience who is not necessarily familiar with the research frame of the performance. Thus, it begins by introducing a context. The video is edited on the basis of the stations of the performance. For the analysis of each section I refer to the relative action by its timecode. At this point, I suggest watching the overall video of the performance if there is such a preference.

The practice of the body-landscape interrelationship in the city

The first phase of the practice of the thesis, a contemplative and through the body exploration of the site, is determined as a discipline of attunement. It creates distance between the experiencer and her object of experience, to uncover the ways through which they interweave and formulate the perception of space. It consists of a *samatha* movement practice where the practitioner observes her sense-objects derived by the environment via a non-hierarchical and unrefined awareness. In the first project, it was practiced through sitting meditation, walking, somatic practices and CDP. In the second project, it was further enriched with the 'still shot' and the *plastiques* exercises.

We started exploring our discipline of attunement in Athens through the disciplines of stillness, rotation and walking. Our aim was to explore the cityscape without interrupting its activity. Thus, these exercises enabled us to investigate

sites through movement without signifying our action as performance. They formulated the *samatha* movement practice of the city. Due to the limited scope of this section, I discuss the practice of stillness. In our process we used stillness to explore interrelationship *in situ* in two ways. In the first one, we created interruptions of the rhythmic flow of the site. Hence we elaborated interconnection as an intervention in the cityscape. In the second one, we worked with the prescribed operation of the site to examine a strategy of elaborating its fixed meanings. In the former, stillness is seen as a movement discipline, while in the latter as a mindfulness practice. Although it encloses both a somatic and contemplative function, in this section the two properties of the practice are examined separately.

Stillness as Movement

We initially practiced the discipline of stillness through CDP. Barbara Dilley defines the movement as ‘a small discipline of body-mind synchronisation’ (personal notes, October 2008, Boulder CO), where ‘the mind has time to catch up with the experience perceived through the body’ (*ibid.*). Additionally, in the Geopoetics project, stillness was further elaborated through the exercise of ‘still shots’ where the practitioner was creating still postures using as frames different sides of the landscape.

In Athens we combined stillness in the posture of standing with the ‘still shots’ exercise discussed in the previous chapter. Occupied by the Christmas delirium of the city we decided that such an integration would be an appropriate method to work with the active landscape of the place. We chose different parts of the Monastiraki train station as frames of the practice. However, we did not maintain the tempo of the ‘still shot’ exercise. In order to observe the effects of inactivity in the site, each time we were elaborating a single frame for a long time. Monastiraki station is a conjunct location of a subway and a railway stop. The former is nearly fifteen years old and the latter has existed since the late -1800s. As a practitioner, I chose to use as a frame one of the exits of the station leading from the new to the old one. I stood with my back on the railway station using its aesthetic code, which clearly refers to another era, as my background [see action 2/ 3:04-4:08].

I practiced stillness with the arrival and the departure of people and trains. My static posture forced me to stay open and absorb the activity of the site. It amplified the action of the bodies *in situ* releasing the place from its proclaimed functionality and meaning. A spectator describes the impact of the discipline in the station: 'the immobility and the silence [derived from the practice] were creating a motionless frame which powerfully and critically intervened with the automatic operation of the site' (aud. feed. 9)¹³⁵. Stillness shifted the focus of attention from the performance of the doer to the one of the site. It structured a tool of disclosing place through the process of its embodiment.

In the rural landscapes we had worked with stillness and 'still shots' to detach the landscape from its conventional notion of a background and activate it through our performative action. Practicing in the city, our working condition became quite the opposite. We found ourselves amidst active and dynamic spaces which we had to acknowledge and incorporate in order to be attuned to them. In the rural sites, the movement of stillness interrogated the experience *in situ* as a state of being. In the city, it uncovered site as an embodiment:

The actions taking place on the site, as accidental as they may appear, have to be considered as parts of an enlivened landscape; they must not be avoided, that would lead us in utilizing the cityscape as a décor; nor may they be explored through interaction, that would make us 'street performers'. We need to work with these actions not against them but *with* them, supplementarily, as associates (personal journal, December 2013).

The movement of stillness incorporated the everyday and accidental to our practice. It disclosed the physical activities of a site as the molecules of an organism in constant change. The place of the station was transformed to an experience of a liquid landscape.

The release of a site from its signifying process was a revelation for our practice in Athens. The city was not a place 'always already too full of itself and the others' (Wylie, 2006: 465). It could be seen beyond its 'invested...meaning' (Cresswell,

¹³⁵ For a profile of the audience group of the performance see next section of the chapter.

2004:15) as a spatial non-stop reflective mechanism between the space and practices. Similarly, Nigel Thrift argues that the meaning of places cannot be determined. He defines them as “passings that ‘haunt’ us” (1999: 310) elucidating this double open-ended process in their way of being signified. Places are made as they are being passed:

Whilst places may be designed to elicit particular practices (including particular, subject positions and emotional responses) all kinds of other practices may in fact be going on within them which they were never designed to admit (but which may become a vital part of those places’ intelligibility) (Thrift, 1999: 310-311).

As the action of passing is a practice, it creates a new experience in the settings of the place and returns to it by shaping it. Thus, place could be examined as a constellation of practices happening or that already have happened.

The movement discipline of stillness positioned against the practices of a site disclosed the city as embodiment within an open-ended system of signification. It dictated a discipline of attunement to the city-scape formed by the interrelationship between the physical presence of the practitioner and the bodily practices of the site. In the next part, I look at the practice of stillness as mindfulness situated within a site in accordance to its practices.

Stillness as Samatha

In the rural landscape in the previous two projects, mindfulness (*samatha*) was the pillar upon which we built our somatic practice of landscape. Integrated with the performance practices, mindfulness managed to cultivate a somatic understanding of site in two ways. It revealed space as a psychophysical complex of relations between the sense-organs and their sense-objects. And it expanded the space awareness of the practitioner reinforcing her to act onsite through a *vipashyana* understanding¹³⁶. Stillness consists in the bodily posture of the initial *samatha vipashyana* practice of breath. However, as the cityscape is an environment full of stimuli I considered that breath as a point of attention is too

¹³⁶ As I have already discussed in the previous chapter this is the process of the *samatha vipashyana* activity through which the experience of interrelationship takes place in the landscape. It allows the practitioner to enact the landscape’s narrative as ‘the symbolism of experience itself’ (Chögyam Trungpa, 2008: 32). Further along this chapter I discuss more about the *vipashyana* practice as the performed narrative of the landscape.

subtle to follow. To further enhance the mindfulness aspect of the practice I created the instruction of using the eyes and ears as cameras¹³⁷. The metaphor of a camera is based on an analogy of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche through which he explains the meditative discipline as a practice of the body mind synchronisation:

The body can be linked to a camera and the mind to the film inside the camera...When the aperture and the shutter speed of the camera are properly set, in relation to the speed of the film inside the camera, then you can take good, accurate photographs, because you have synchronized the camera and the film. Similarly, when mind and body are properly synchronized then you have clear perception (1984: 39).

We initially practiced stillness as *samatha* in the riverbed of Heridanos inside the metro station. The specific site is organized for the passengers to have a moment of pause in their journey throughout the city. Hence, our practice incorporated the operation of the site. The exercise disclosed to us a place as three co-existing and different 'presents'. The first one was the natural environment of the river, its waters and animal life. The second one was the archaeological exhibition of the site encompassing its continuous use since the Mycenaean period and Hadrian's era until modern times. The third one was the presence and the activity of the Monastiraki train station [see action 3/ 4:10-5:44].

These three separated realities appeared as indicators of different 'fields of care' (Relph, 1976: 38) of the city. The practice created to us the impression of lifting the 'cultural carpet' of Athens and noticing its bare land where thousands of years ago everything began. A spectator of the performance offered us a similar response: 'the river inside the station made me think of the dimension of eternity's 'long duration' within which every personal narrative is only a drop... I felt [the river] being a condensation of the human experience throughout time' (aud. feed. 2). Stillness as *samatha* practice manifested the cultural substratum of the Athenian landscape. From the action of the riverbed site, a spectator had the following understanding about living in the Athenian city: 'each layer of the upper

¹³⁷ It was also enhanced by the maintenance of silence. As I have discussed in Chapter 3 silence has been incorporated in the body-landscape practice since the first project of the thesis as a discipline to support the movement mindfulness discipline.

[modern] and the lower [ancient] maintains a powerful identity exerting pressure on the present; their relation constitutes a Gordian knot for the psycho-geography and future of the city' (aud. feed. 8).

The somatic mindfulness discipline allowed us to 'read' place through its different systems of practices and within a non-hierarchical horizontal deployment. We were able to differentiate the experienced image from its projected meaning. The somatic aspect of the city as a living organism expanded the experience of the place from its materialistic confinement. Its mindfulness aspect released the perception of place from its contemporary and temporal prescription. Both of them constituted the discipline of attunement as a basis for exploring the experience of the city. It formed a platform upon which we were able to explore place through actions. As I discuss in the following section, in Topophilia performance, these actions devised an event of interrelationship and delineated its score.

The devising process of the body-landscape performance

The practice of the thesis organises an exploration of landscape through the body mind to perform its narrative as an interrelationship between the subject and the environment. Chapter 3 claims that the event of the body-landscape interrelationship constitutes a somatic and contemplative experience *in situ* which evokes individual and collective narratives. It determines it as a 'living myth' (Halprin in Worth and Poynor, 2004: 107). Chapter 4 structures such an experience as a *samatha vipashyana* discipline. It argues that to perform an interrelationship is to devise the enactment of such a meditative action on site.

In Athens, we determined the exploration of the body-landscape interrelationship between our somatic contemplative experience *in situ* and the practices embedded in the cityscape. Our devising process evolved into an embodied

practice of memory that revealed the city as a mosaic of strategies of remembrance. Initially we elaborated the idea of the space-event interplay (in Pearson, 2010: 238) of Bernard Tschumi to investigate through action the narratives which were in disclosure¹³⁸. We sang in the platform of the Monastiraki station to de-familiarise the space's operation and create an event of intimacy for the attendees [see action 5/ 8:04]¹³⁹. Having the Parthenon as a background we read extracts of a modern Athenian ethnography to contrast with the 5th century BCE formal narrative of the city [see action 6/ 12:40]¹⁴⁰. We performed a memorial event to insert the unacknowledged death of a young Senegalese immigrant on the exact site where it took place ten months ago¹⁴¹ [see action 7/ 17:56].

¹³⁸ Tschumi argues that the narrative of a place constitutes its 'event' (in Pearson, 2013: 238) and its interrelationship with space formulates its reality (*ibid.*). He distinguishes three modes of the space-event interconnection: 'reciprocity...indifference... [and] conflict' (*ibid.*). The architect further recognises the notions of 'repetition, superimposition, distortion, dissolve and insertion' (in Pearson, 2010: 238) as strategies to elaborate the reality of a place through the space-event interchange.

¹³⁹ We sang the song *The Waiting Room* taken from a Gianni Rodari's (1920-1980) poem and adopted as a song by Anna Margaritopoulou in lyrics and Lena Platonos in music (1987). The song recites the life about an unemployed homeless man who during the day unintentionally travels by train throughout the city, and during the night falls asleep in the stations' waiting rooms. Due to its melodic tune and context -- the life of a homeless, a central figure in the Athenian city of crisis, the song became an engaging musical entourage among the station's activities.

¹⁴⁰ The extracts were taken from the book *Fragments of Death, Fables of Identity: An Athenian Anthropography: New Directions in Anthropological Writing* (1996) where Neni Panourgia gives two major historical events which formed the contemporary city-scape of Athens. The first one involved the 19th century European travelers who entitled Athens as the living continuity of Ancient Greek culture, provided the city with a myth and transformed it 'from a shipyard village to a capital city' (1996: 37,39). The second one included the big waves of urbanisation of the period of 1970-1980. The Greek immigrants still related to their origins (geographically and emotionally) were unable to develop an urban citizenship. They demonstrated incompetence to cultivate any sense of community and responsibility for the city's natural and cultural resources (*op. cit.* p.58). Panourgia argues that this urbanised mentality can be noticed as 'a feel of anarchy...in [the city's] architecture, in the way the public services function [and] in the constant appropriations of public space for private profit' (*op. cit.* p. 57).

¹⁴¹ The internet site for refugees in Greece 'Infomobile' reported the day after the incident:

A big operation of Municipal Police started [in 1st February of 2013] on the tourist area of Thissio, in central Athens, to remove immigrants from the streets, who work as peddlers. During this operation, Cheikh Babacar Ndiaye a 37 years old immigrant from Senegal, was chased and died falling from a height, on the rails of the subway in Thissio [...] Meanwhile his friends gathered at the station, together with other people from Senegal...When they saw the stretcher with the dead body they began to shout and protest... Riot police arrived immediately and attacked the gathered people' [on line] <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2013/02/02/senegalese-street-vendor-died-during-police-operation-in-athens-by-demotix/> [28 July 2014].

The space-event interplay disclosed the narratives *in situ* as strategies of remembrance or as tactics of oblivion. We delineated our creating process by practicing our interrelationship with them. This is how we formed the last three stations of the performance route. We employed the improvisational Open Space practice to explore a narrative of interrelationship between our experience *in situ* and the presence (or absence) of Heridasos river. Our effort each time to relate within space was creating an emotional impact and devising an activity. These last three actions were the ones which interweaved the subjective experience with the landscape of the river and formed a narrative structure for the performance. In the following paragraphs, I discuss their creating process thoroughly.

The Dramaturgy of the River: Recognition, Confirmation and Outcry

During our practice in Athens, we were introduced to a poem by Nikos Fokas (1927-) 'Ygrotos' (1997) specifically written for Heridasos¹⁴². The poem identifies the flowing waters of the river with the mythological time of the land. Fokas sees in its degradation the tragedy of the city and its inhabitants. He looks for evidences of the life of the river in the stagnant waters of the city streets and appeals for a ritual as a 'signal of [its] recognition' (2010: 39). The poem contextualised our mindfulness (*samatha*) experience of the riverbed site in the train station which presented Heridasos as mediator of the different cultural *strata* of the city. It became a frame for elaborating the reality of the river alongside our own and creating an event of interrelationship.

Michael and I situated our devising practice around the archaeological site of Kerameikos, the second place where Heridasos is visible¹⁴³. Our practice focused on the ways in which the river makes its presence felt from which a sequence of three acts was devised. The first one took place on the western perimeter of the site. Through our effort to locate the river geographically, we

¹⁴² The title means wetland and discloses a double meaning: a natural environment (a moor, a swamp, a river bed) and a fabricated humid one (a puddle, etc.).

¹⁴³ Kerameikos was the most ancient and largest cemetery known in Attica, extending both inside and outside the city walls of ancient Athens. We had been told that inside the site, there is a 190m expanse of Heridasos river bed exhibiting an interesting system of flora and fauna. Instead we found a plastic pipe gushing water. As it was bureaucratically unfeasible to work inside the site, we decided to use sites outside its perimeter.

detected the sound of running water coming from a drain. Michael described his experience of discovering traces of the river in mud and litter¹⁴⁴:

The small frame gave me a sense of a funnel. The intermingled water with dirt seemed magical. How was it possible from something so powerful to emerge from such a small opening?... I felt awe and the necessity to honour it, to praise it (personal interview, April 2014).

The drain image revealed to him the river as sacred and prompted him to perform an act of recognition. He took out his wallet; he picked a coin and threw it in the drain. With the urge 'of saying a prayer' (*ibid.*) he started whispering the poem of Fokas. He realised that the poem was articulating what he has been experiencing (*ibid.*). The image of the absent but audible drained waters in front of the official tourist site, led us to a parallel place of contrast: the highlighting of a memorable past and the imprisonment of a mythical present [see action 8/ 22:51-27].

The second event took place in the north side of Kerameikos. We discovered a fenced tract of land which looked half like an abandoned archaeological site and half like a junkyard. Among trash and half buried boulders of an indeterminate period, the land was covered by dense vegetation. It made us imagine that this could be a secret passing of the river. Experienced in the previous action as the sacrament of the city, the river here was hardly visible. In the view of the neglected land, Michael received an 'archetypical image' (personal interview, April 2014) of the history of the city. The lot operated as an indication of all the layers and hierarchies developed throughout time. Michael started reciting the poem of Fokas. But this time, his voice was clear and stable. The verses evolved into a statement which enacted the narrative of the observed landscape:

Could this dampness be what remains of who-knows-what antique river/
Worshipped here from time immemorial, some fluid deity/
Which permeates the asphalt as mere moisture [...] What do you expect an
outlandish city to answer/
A city landed on us from elsewhere/
With light that would be beautiful without the things it has to illuminate (2010: 37).

¹⁴⁴ The devising process was shaped by the input of both of performers. Here I am referring to the experience of Michael as it mainly formed the specific events *in situ*.

The lot transformed into a monument of contemporary remembrance¹⁴⁵. The activity of Michael reinforced himself and his listener to a testimony of the ways we have been relating in time and dreaming of the present [see action 9/ 27:05-29:10].

Finally, the third event took place in Iera Odos, the far west point of Keramikos where the river is considered to traverse the land thereunder¹⁴⁶. Michael used the poem to acknowledge the hidden existence of the river. He was performing it to the cars, trucks and motorbikes of the street. Following the urge to rival the impetuosity of the 'urban rivers' (Solnit, 2008: 176) he started repeating the words louder and louder until they became a scream. The poem evolved into a public requisition of recognizing the river as this landscape's 'Dreaming' (Ingold, 2000:57). Like a ritualistic action, his outcry expressed the desire to re-empower the river's presence in the centre of urban turmoil. Michael describes his experience as alchemical:

I was insisting on a metamorphosis. I was claiming space for the river to be and at the same time I was demanding from the cars and the motorbikes (my spectators in motion) to acknowledge the river's existence. I wanted for them who were coming from a landscape of reality to have a glimpse into another, a mythical one. This switch of perspective held for me an alchemical aspect (personal interview, April 2014).

Using the river as an axis, the devised sequence of the three actions became our somatic way of relating to the practices of remembrance of the place. In the

¹⁴⁵ Land artist Robert Smithson refers to the ruined landscapes as the 'new monuments' (1979: 10). Smithson uses the term entropy to determine the movement which as a 'disorder' interrupts the linear progression of time. Instead of developing, the tendency is forgetting:

both past and future are placed into an objective present. This kind of time has little or no space; it is stationary and without movement, it is going nowhere, it is anti-Newtonian, as well as being instant and it is against the wheels of time-clock... Rather than saying 'what time is it?', we should say 'where is the time?' (1979: 10).

¹⁴⁶ Iera Odos (in English Sacred Way) was an ancient road along which, according to maps of ancient Athens, Heridasos flowed. Starting from the Akropolis hill and the Parthenon it connected Athens with Elefsina where the possession of the Eleusinian mysteries was performed once a year. Nowadays, on exactly the same site, the street exits the archaeological site of Kerameikos and crosses Pireos street as a paved avenue surrounded by a post-industrial commercial zone of the city's retail and wholesale trade.

site of the drain, the action manifested the drained river as the mythical present of the city and hence we titled it the 'moment of revelation'. In the abandoned lot, in the image of the buried desolated river, it confirmed our ways of relating to our own myths. In the traffic junction, the action defended Heridanos as the mythical carrier of the city. Hence, we titled it the 'outcry' moment [see action 10/ 29:12-33:00].

The three actions performed an interrelationship between our experience *in situ* and the river. They enacted an embodied practice of memory materialising landscape as a narrative. The practice deciphered fixated spatial orders of reality, unveiling what Tim Ingold defines as the 'trans-historical Dreaming' (Ingold, 2000: 57) of the landscape¹⁴⁷. Ingold borrows the term from Aboriginal culture for the sake of differentiation from the western approach to the landscape. In Aboriginal tradition, people do not determine themselves the fate of their land through development and domestication (*op. cit.* p.58). Aboriginals are entrusted with securing its Dreaming. The experience of living becomes a part of 'an eternal moment of creation' (Ingold, 2000: 57), of 'the becoming of the world' (*ibid.*) and landscape appears as 'life's enduring monument' (*ibid.*). The embodied practice of memory resides at the point where individual or collective experience makes sense of the world and, at the same time, meets the effort of preceding generations performing the same task. Ingold advocates this as the way through which 'the landscape tells - or rather is - a story' (1993: 152) and he continues:

To perceive the landscape is...to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past (1993:152).

¹⁴⁷ Dreaming is a mythological time where the Aboriginal ancestors '[sung] the world into existence' (Chatwin, 1987: 2). The time of Dreaming was narrated by every ancestral story which was a path inscribed on the land and sung throughout time. These 'path-stories' (Careri, 2002: 44) are known as 'Songlines'. These stories are not only sung mappings of the land but also formulators of the aboriginal 'personal and social identity' (Ingold, 2000: 53). As each Aborigine relates his or her selfhood to a specific site, he or she is considered the continuation of the site's ancestor and his/her Dreaming (*ibid.*).

In Topophilia we used Heridanos as an axis to psychophysically engage with the place. We employed our contemplative movement practice to explore the river in the city-scape through practices of recognising, caring and dreaming. In this way our process created an act of remembrance *in situ* and formed a narrative of landscape. The embodied practice of memory disclosed place through different planes of time and space. It uncovered its cultural layers via the ways they connect, create synapses and diverge from each other. It outlined the 'nervous system' of the city. The practice of memory became a platform upon which we explore how we interrelate with that 'system'. It created an act of re-discovering where and how our interconnection with the city lies. In this way, our enactment of remembrance *in situ* formed the narrative of the performance.

We experienced the city as two modes of being. The first kind involved a slower-paced past which was praising its environment in an almost metaphysical way. The second kind included a hectic and disorientated present of abandoned ruins. The two modes of being were fighting each other for space and their conflict was taking place within us: 'the two cities as opposite currents were passing through me: the curved city which I have been practicing in being [through the project] and the city which I force myself not to see but I cannot avoid' (Michael, personal interview, April 2014).

At moments, this antinomy was operating like an emotional dead-end, manifesting a deep sadness for something that is lost forever. At other times, the ruins (modern or past) within their truculent ambience was creating space to think and imagine, manifesting the city on a 'threshold'. Our practice of memory enabled us to receive the city in its rawness and at the same time become aware of its 'Dreaming' (Ingold, 2000: 57). And in this borderline we felt empowered to re-place ourselves into the city. As Carreri states it is 'at the margins [where] we find certain dynamism and we can observe the becoming of a vital organism that transforms itself' (2002: 183). Our next aim was to generate a performance structure which would enact such an experience *in situ* for its audience.

The narrative of the body-landscape performance

In the first project of the thesis, I argued that an event of the body-landscape interrelationship is a 'living myth' (Halprin in Worth and Poynor, 2004: 107). It constitutes a psychophysical experience which evokes individual and collective narratives *in situ* charged by the present moment. In the presentation of the project, I explored a contemplative somatic score to evoke such an experience to spectators and I concluded that a landscape performance operates as an 'audience participation event' (Halprin, 1995: 50). In the second project, I argued for the event of the body-landscape interrelationship as a *samatha vipashyana* activity. Based on the experience derived by an Open Space group improvisation I argued that the mindful (*samatha*), psychophysical performance of activity *in situ* enacts and at the same time manifests landscape as a narrative. It raises an understanding of the ways the 'I' 'we' relate to the world. I determined it as the *vipashyana* seeing which results from the meditative action in the land.

In the following section, I examine the performance Topophilia as a *samatha vipashyana* activity. I argue for its participatory structure as a container of mindfulness (*samatha*) which enabled the performing of acts of interrelationship between the watchers and the city. As I discuss in the conclusion of the chapter, the performance did not succeed in forming one clear event of interconnection and to operate as an enactment of a living myth. Nevertheless, it managed to relate the individual and collective experience with its encompassing space and to create re-conceptualisations of what has been claimed as critical in the Athenian landscape. As I will describe below, the meditative performance structure evoked a new understanding of place as a *vipashyana* seeing and a landscape narrative.

The performance took place twice with each run having approximately fifteen to eighteen spectators. Our watchers were gathered through an e-mail invitation to friends and the artistic and performance community. The ones who responded to the call were geographers and architects with an interest in the Athenian urban fabric. Although the performance lacked a dramaturgical focus, these spectators

felt enabled to devise interrelations with the cityscape. The somatic participatory aspect of the performance integrated with their specialised gaze and enhanced the impact of the performed experience *in situ* even though it was not clearly organised. At the end of performance, I asked from the spectators to respond to the following three questions: how did you experience the landscape of the city; how was your personal memory interrelated with the memory of the place; what did you discover in your walk? I received feedback only from half of the watchers. I realised that their lack of response was not due a lack of interest but to the unfamiliarity of the Greek spectator articulating the experience from a performance.

The Samatha Participatory Aspect of the Performance

The final form of the performance took place as a route of ten actions. At each station the audience was instructed to relate to the performed activity in a specific way. Simultaneously, there were: 1. the instructions of the eyes and ears as camera, 2. silence and 3. walking with an awareness of the overall group. The directions were given at the beginning of the performance, the former in writing and the latter verbally¹⁴⁸. The assembly of the instructions functioned as an audience score. As I have already discussed in Chapter 3, a score is a set of instructions to evoke a physical and emotional participation within a performance. Anna Halprin argues that a score operates as ‘a starting point to stimulate and channel the group’s expression in the direction of an overall intention’ (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 113). However, Halprin differentiates the performers of the score from its watchers. She argues for a participant-witness field (1995: 271) without considering the latter less active than the former (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 144). In Topophilia performance, the score was applied to both performers and watchers. Hence, the role of the spectator combined the double aspect of the participant-witness. I discuss about this more explicitly in the conclusion of the chapter.

The score of Topophilia formulated a contemplative container within which the city was experienced. For example, in Monastiraki square, the instruction of

¹⁴⁸ In the video footage the verbal instructions are explained by me in the introduction of the performance and the written ones are displayed before each action.

rotation evoked for the spectators the sensation of 'warming up of the gaze' (aud. feed. 2) creating the 'entrance to a journey' (aud. feed. 1). It shaped a zone of 'expanded time' (aud. feed. 6), provoking 'a sense of disorientation' (aud. feed. 5) and creating a feeling of 'travelling in time as well as space' (aud. feed. 1). The score became a frame within which it became possible to alter the experience of the city. Grounded in the body, it motivated the spectators to suspend their process of signifying place and allowed them to 'redefine one's relationship with the urban landscape according to what one sees, moves and is being affected by' (aud. feed. 7). [see action 1/ 1:34-2:45]

As the audience group became familiar with its presence in the space, the conduct of the instructions started to provide 'protection' (aud. feed. 11) and 'liberation' (aud. feed. 10) from and among the activities and norms of the city. Their performance gave rise to 'a feeling of complicity' (aud. feed. 2) developing a sense of participating in a common experience. In the fifth action the spectators were scattered among the passengers of the train platform. When the performers started to sing, the presence of the watchers as a group was enhanced by their secret involvement in the activity: '... [we] became a collective without the need to be 'lined up'...but through [our] self-sufficient movement... [we]connected to a common course or orbit...' (aud. feed. 2). The contemplative and physical engagement of the group created a zone of trust and proximity within which the process of perceiving the city was shifted: 'I discovered [the city] ...in emotional and intellectual ways... [and] in communion with other co-citizens and this was also very important that it was not a solitary experience' (aud. feed. 13) [see action 5/ 8:08-10:25]¹⁴⁹.

The instruction set focused the attention of the audience on the experience of the present moment and revealed the city-scape as an open-ended system of signifying reality. Additionally, the mindfulness (*samatha*) frame presented the city discharged from its known affects. It created for the watchers a space of openness and inquisitiveness in order to re-examine narratives that still matter in

¹⁴⁹ However, the participatory structure resulted in creating two kinds of watchers: the spectators of the performance who were aware of the event and the dwellers of the city who were not. For more on the interrelation of the performance's activity with the city's see the last section of this chapter.

the space: '[the performance] became a new sight and I felt that I was being in the city behind a mirror, or even better, a façade through which I had been seeing the place so far' (aud. feed. 7). The contemplative structure made possible to dissolve proclaimed, fixed, individual or collective, narratives of Athens and demonstrated 'a way of seeing place as if for the first time' (aud. feed. 5). In the following section, I designate this new way of seeing as a *vipashyana* understanding of place and claim it as the narrative of the body-landscape performance.

The Narrative of the Landscape as a Vipashyana Seeing

The experience derived by the *samatha* participatory score created new interrelations, or revealed hidden ones, between systems of caring and knowing in the Athenian landscape. Initially the arisen interconnections *in situ* developed an awareness of personal narratives in relation to the city. For example, the actions inside the train station resulted for one spectator in enlivening memories from her teenage life. They caused an unexpected remembrance of faces and incidents which awakened a specific way of being 'as then'. Her return to a forgotten but intimate knowing of the world transformed her experience in the station as 'a diving invitation to the unconscious, to a mixture of images and events...created by dreams and desires' (aud. feed. 2). She understood that home is the amount of interrelating practices which one weaves by holding together people with places: "in the way we experienced togetherness amidst the business of the station in the same way these moving anchors [people and places] operate as 'home'. We carry them everywhere, shaping who we are and the way we stand in life" (aud. feed. 2).

As the performance score progressed, the awareness arising *in situ* expanded from the perception of the 'I' to the 'we'. In the last three stations, the enactment of remembrance of Heridanos integrated the experience of the watchers with the river and generated a narrative of 'who we are'. It led the spectators into 'discovering a sense of their own community' (Halprin, 1995: 55). For example, in action 8 as a performer I guide the audience in the archaeological site of Kerameikos to disclose the geographical placement of Heridanos. It is the second

time of encountering the river after the riverbed site in the train station. At some point, Michael stands attentively in front of a drain from where comes a sound of flowing water. He starts whispering repeatedly and devoutly the poem of Fokas which is heard for the first time. In silence, one by one, members of the audience group gather around the drain. There is an emotional tension derived by sitting altogether around the drain witnessing a contradiction between what is seen and what is heard: 'I listen to the river inside the drain what I see does not fit with what I dream' (aud. feed. 5). Michael enacts the ritualistic act of flipping a coin [see action 8/ 22:50- 27:00].

The events in relation to the river enabled the watchers to be grounded in their own experience and see the city opening up as a kaleidoscope of different ways of being. They enhanced an understanding of the city as the multifaceted cultural landscape of its 'trans-historical Dreaming' (Ingold, 2000: 57). This new awareness of the Athenian place formulated the narrative of the performance:

We connected with a WHOLE [*sic*] that keeps the pace from ancient times until today and in the future...our souls and bodies come from a very long time ago and move towards eternity...You see the traces of centuries, of the lives...landscapes which still breathe freely in the open air...landscapes which are hidden [and] landscapes which are disappeared...memories of people who born and loved the city...memories of people who came by force... which did not love the city and violated it ... The Acropolis sparkling under the bright blue... and the large factory funnels situated across it...from another time existing together...The ancient waters flowing underneath the asphalted streets. This is the memory of our body... (aud. feed. 3).

The experience of the city as different cultural *strata* of meaning resulted from the meditative discipline of the performance as a *vipashyana* seeing. According to *Mahayana* Buddhism, mindfulness (*samatha*) trains the practitioner to a state of being 'free from reference point' (Trungpa, 2008: 39). By resting 'suspended in space' (*ibid.*) the practice evokes a 'general sense of appreciation' (*op. cit.* p.25) of what is being perceived. The practitioner relates to the world through direct experience and is enabled to respond to it with a new understanding. Chögyam Trungpa describes the process of *samatha vipashyana* as 'the canvas where you paint your pictures' (*op. cit.* p.40). *Samatha* is the blankness, the 'experience of

suspense' (*ibid.*). *Vipashyana* is the 'symbolism of experience itself' (*op. cit.* p.39) where the world is revealed through the narrative of a new knowing.

Ingold advocates that the narrative of the landscape consists of the performance of 'an act of remembrance' (1993: 153). It evokes 'transparency and depth' (2000: 56) in one's own experience of space: 'transparency because one can see to it [the landscape]; depth because the more one looks the further one sees' (*ibid.*). The *samatha vipashyana* practice is the discipline which Ingold claims for the narrative act of the landscape. *Samatha* provides clarity to suspend all stories and relate directly to the experience of the place. *Vipashyana* ascribes insight by witnessing the time and space continuum of the place as a becoming.

During the period of 2012 and 2014 the cityscape of Athens constituted the spatial indicator of the Greek crisis. All kinds of social anxieties and struggles were manifested in its streets. Most of the spectators of the performance had nothing loving to state about their life in the Athenian city. The place was perceived as 'hectic and unpleasant' (aud. feed.1) causing feelings of 'disappointment' (aud. feed. 10) and 'pain' (aud. feed. 7). Explicitly a participant confessed that he was feeling as if the city was looking for ways to 'dismiss and crush' (*ibid.*) him. The enactment of the *samatha vipashyana* structure of Topophilia performance resulted in re-examining the 'significance to our existence' (Halprin, 1995: 4) *in situ*. In the Athenian landscape, it evolved into a practice of discovering loveliness amidst distress. The conditionality of the city in relation to the performance structure and material formulated the living myth of Topophilia:

[The performamnce] was a journey through time and space like a memorial service in the name of a good friend and at the same time an invocation to the city, to water, to the self and to each other for life [and] not for survival. The love for the ancient stone and the sleeping beauty [of the city] were interweaved with the song and the emotion of the present time and deepened. This hidden beauty which we forget and which makes every day more human was valuable [to experience again] (aud. feed.4).

The intention of the performance to find 'philia' for the 'topos' became an exercise of opened mind and heart to address the narrative of our living selves in the degraded ambience of Athens. Our somatic and contemplative practice *in situ* offered us the physical and emotional space to release from what had been conceptualised as the crucial narrative of the city. It enabled us to delve into our experience in the present moment and redefine or re-evaluate the meaning of our encompassing space: 'practicing a relationship with the space was making me fall in love with it – even [with the] things that weren't beautiful' (aud. feed. 1).

Conclusion: the performance of landscape

The contemplative score of Topophilia disclosed an unconventional way of adhering to the action of a performance. It requested from the spectators to release expectations and engage by not knowing a context. The performance urged them to detach or abandon their reference points of the city which had been situating them in the world. It required for them an availability to investigate their personal process of perceiving a space and to reflect on the ways they relate to their direct experience. For some spectators, such a personal involvement created discomfort as well as disorientation. For example, during our route one audience member abandoned us discretely. For others, such a confusion enabled them to open and enrich their experience *in situ*:

I am inside the metro station and I am waiting for something to happen [by the performer's action] but nothing happens...Gradually I am feeling relaxed. Time and reality start to gain another dimension more theatrical. The arriving train becomes a protagonist. Are we getting in?... No. Everything that happens around us is completely random but appears indispensable for our own [as spectators] experience (aud. feed. 5).

The meditating structure of the performance preconditioned the development of an experience which is not captured by any projections. It is based on a discipline of a clear awareness which dissipates the dichotomy of 'this here' with 'that there':

Whenever there is the word 'I', 'me' or 'I am', there is a sense of *thisness*...Therefore our sense of thatness has to be conditioned by whatever is experienced by this we have to abandon *this* so that we become completely *that* (Chögyam Trungpa, 2008: 46).

When the expectations of what reality is, are released, a sense of not knowing appears like an 'empty gap' (*op. cit.* p.43). For most people such experience of space and time is very intimidating. It creates an 'omnipresent anxiety' (*op. cit.* p. 148). If one manages to 'trust and relax' (*op. cit.* 152) within it 'pure insight takes place' (*ibid.*). This is what the meditative discipline cultivates.

In the Topophilia performance, spectators followed somatic and contemplative instructions as objects of attention (*samatha*) in order to become aware of the ways perception is embedded in the experience of the city (*vipashyana*). The discipline of *samatha vipashyana* as a performance structure revealed the absence of an enduring receiver/watcher of the experience of space. It underlined the spectator *in situ* as a non 'inherent existence' (Dalai Lama in Hayward and Varela, 1992: 118). It indicated that to interrelate with the experience *in situ* signifies to witness from a position of abandoning the self. Thus, to watch a performance of the body-landscape interrelationship entails a practice of selflessness (*anatta*).

The mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice of the thesis involves a further cultivation of the watcher. The *samatha vipassana* performance of the doer does not presuppose a relevant stance from the spectator. The mindfulness discipline of an audience group needs to be facilitated in terms of the cultural context of the audience group. The issues raised by incorporating Buddhist notions in the training of the performer in Chapter 3 are posed again for the operation of the watcher. Does the mindfulness (*sati*) site-specific performance address only spectators who are familiar and aware of the Buddhist traditions? What kind of appropriation of the meditation disciplines is valid in order to evoke to someone a contemplative performance experience *in situ*? How does a meditative performance integrate with the wider theatrical and cultural context, in this case Athens of 2013? The body-landscape performance creates a Buddhist frame to generate an unmediated experience among the self, the other and the place. As I explicitly discuss in the final chapter of the thesis, it is in times of political insecurity and social turbulence that such experiences need to take place.

The Topophilia performance disclosed a frame through which all components of the experience *in situ* communicated in their own genuine voice and generated events of interrelationship among them. Story was formulated as a 'process of ordering and prioritising information' (Overlie, 2006: 206). It evolved into a 'logic' (*op. cit.* p.188) of interweaving space, time, emotion and movement in the present moment. The performance encompassed the enactment of an experience unfolding in space a structure of 'the mechanisms of communication and the artificial construction of imaginary (real) worlds' (Turner, 2008: 193). In this way, engaging between site and the performance material the spectators become participants 'watch[ing] themselves as subjects which perceive acquired knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition' (Sugiera in Turner, 2008: 194).

In the project Topophilia the structure of interrelating space, time and action was devised as a *samatha vipashyana* discipline. Mindfulness (*samatha*) introduced a logic of being *in situ* and evoked the participation of the audience. It constructed a frame from which a *vipashyana* seeing of the city emerged and composed the story of the performance. The meditative structure enacted an experience *in situ* as a body-landscape interrelationship but as it was generated within the short period of a week it was unable to be exhaustively thought. Topophilia succeeded in generating a mindfulness (*sati*) site-specific dramaturgical design but it did not evolve into a finished product. The lack of a directional focus created ambiguous points in the performance which are discussed thoroughly below.

For the participatory performance of a living myth Anna Halpin argues for two preconditions: the shared experience of a score (1995: 50) and of the participant-witness field (*op. cit.* p.271). Although she does not consider the witnesses less active than the participants (Worth and Poynor, 2004: 144) she clearly differentiates the former as the watchers of the score and the latter as its executors (1995: 229, 249). In Topophilia, the participant-witness field was addressed both to the performers and the audience. The score requested the exploration of space through physical contemplative instructions applied throughout the whole performance such as the direction of walking with the eyes

and ears as the lenses and the microphone of a camera. On the other hand, the performance included actions which required the doer-watcher division. For example, in the last three stations the spectators followed Michael enacting a ritual of Heridanos. In this way, the score of Topophilia created for the spectators a continuous interplay of exploring and witnessing. The performance positioned the spectators within an experiencer-witness field which enriched their experience of the place into two different ways:

when I was a witness, I saw and heard things that I don't normally see or pay attention to...and when I was a participant - I was noticing the affect that these things were having on me, sometimes emotionally, stirring memories, images, feelings, and sometimes giving me an impulse to want to do something myself (aud. feed. 1).

The twofold role of the spectator affected the conduct of the performance in three ways. Firstly, it resulted in the failure of the audience to respond to some of the instructions structured for specific sites in the performance route. The instructions were not framed properly in order to provide the watchers with guidance on what to look for in the site through activity. For example, in the seventh action of the over ground pedestrian bridge the direction was to 'explore all space's levels'. The audience did not have any context to respond to: which space were we implying and how does one exactly investigate its levels and why? The non-responsiveness of the group shut down any individual impulse for interaction: 'I was looking at the performer hanging a tree and I felt envious of his physical connection with an element of the environment. Suddenly I had the impulse to lie to the inclined protective surfaces of the bridge but I became embarrassed" (aud. feed. 11). In this way, the instructions did not succeed in interfering the spectators with the physical environment of the pedestrian bridge and the performers 'actions *in situ* [see action 7/ 18:00-22:00].

The second effect of the participant-witness role was the deficient performance of some stations. It was based on the lack of acknowledging and facilitating the transitions of the audience from participating to witnessing and *vice versa*. For example, in the first action the audience performs a rotation exercise in the Monastiraki square. Subsequently, the group is found inside the train station and

is asked to 'look at the platform frame'. The aim is to use the stillness of the performer within a spatial frame in order for the spectators to develop an awareness of the embodied practices of the site. The written instruction was simple but vague. The spectators did not understand where to stand. They became disoriented and preoccupied by their effort to find the frame that they were supposed to locate. They were unsupported in becoming calm within the busy site of the station and engaging with its embodiment. Hence, the specific station was not able to function [see action 2/ 2:48-4:05]. In the future, as a director of a relative piece I would clarify the witness-participant interplay to the spectators of the performance from the beginning of the performance and I would make the shifts from the passive to the active watcher more explicit and through dramaturgical choices.

The third effect derived from the fact that Topophilia took place within the performance of the Athenian city. The participant-witness role created two kinds of watchers: voluntary and involuntary. The reaction of the unintentional spectators, the dwellers of the city, was unpredicted. However, it did not evoke any problems to the conduct of the performance. For example, in the fourth action the spectators were situated in the train platform and had the task to look to a frame on the bridge station where Michael was standing still. At a specific moment a man appears and stands in front of him taking a photograph towards our direction. Within moments we were being signified from spectators to performers to spectators again [see action 4/ 6:30-7:08]. The watchers of Topophilia understood that they were also being watched as performers (aud. feed. 5, 10). The reaction of the outer environment to an organised score varies from a complete disaster to an enrichment of the performance event. For future performance as a director I would apply a twofold strategy: predicting as much as I can all possible reactions of the situated environment and cultivating to the performers a state of alertness of accepting and integrating to their activity anything that arises *in situ*.

Performance Topophilia was developed within a week where we evolved from practitioners into devisers and performers. In this short period of time we were

unable to interconnect thoroughly all the components of the performance. We did not succeed in generating the enactment of one single event. This would become evident in the conceptual misconnection of the actions of the song, the lecture and the absent memory with the last three of Heridanos river. Another example was the unclear intention of our action on the pedestrian bridge. There was a reference of the incident of the young Senegalese's death. But we were sceptical about the relationship between the real event and the performed as we did not want to create an action which would take sides or indulge emotionally. Hence, as devisers we neither recited his story nor did we deliver a connection of the event to the site. If I revisit the action in the future, I will simply structure a public memorial service to notify a loss.

Topophilia disclosed the potential of the *vipashyana* seeing as a method for creating meaning and narrative via an experience *in situ*. However, it failed in elaborating one single event of interrelationship. If there was a possibility for the performance to be reworked, I would elaborate the connection of all of its material with an enactment of a ritual of Heridanos river.

Nevertheless, the project succeeded in creating a performance *in situ* as a container to contemplate Athens's 'call of care' (Rose, 2006: 543). In the journal article *The city and topologies of memory* (2001) Crang and Travlou describe Athens as a city of 'spatialized juxtastructures' (2001: 173) and 'inevitable fusion' (*op. cit.* p.175). They argue that through its obsession on its ancient past "the city fabric forms a 'hauntology' rather than a solid grounding" (*op. cit.* p. 174). In this way, always focused on the thing that is gone never observing the thing that it is, Athens becomes 'an absent origin' (*op. cit.* p.162). Crang and Travlou argue for a research process of the Athenian place where 'time can be otherwise' (*op. cit.* p. 175) and space is disclosed as 'a juxtaposition of asynchronous moments' (*op. cit.* p.161). This is what Topophilia aimed for and at some points was succeeded in performing so. It revealed an open space beyond and above all historical eras where all spatial narrative could equally co-exist, detached from emotional charges and cultural validations and hence be explored anew.

Conclusion

Mike Pearson and Cathy Turner determine the 'sited' event as an interrelationship between performance, place and audience. Both of them acknowledge the phenomenological input of the site as essential to their processes. The methodology of the thesis revolves around the axis of the physical, emotional and mental experience of the body (-ies) *in situ*. It is grounded on the notion of presence as a dynamic, reciprocally active movement between the body and the environment. By exploring the presence of the site via sensorial and emotional stimuli, the outdoor performance takes place as an event of interrelationship between the bodies and the place. Geopoetics enriches the practice of the performance/space interplay with a methodology of investigating being and acting in situ.

Investigating space as a psychophysical experience, Geopoetics becomes affiliated with the field of site-specific dance. It elaborates situated, fixed ideas of a culture through physicality. In this way, Geopoetics affiliates with Reeve's concept of 'ecological movement' (2008: 269) but suggests going a step further. It discloses a process of creating a dramaturgy which interweaves the elements of a site and their cultural connotation into an 'experiential 'knowing'" (Reeve, 2015: 312) of the place and the present moment. It seeks the notion of interrelationship not only as an experience but also as a narrative found between the body and the cultural practices of the place.

Geopoetics is a site-specific performance practice which examines the lived experience of a place. It does not exclude its contextual frame but prioritises its somatic experience before becoming integrated with the cultural practices embedded on site. The practice elaborates the performance/site interplay as a discipline of 'presence' (Rose and Wylie, 2006: 477) and suggests a mindfulness (*sati*) performance practice as a method of its inquiry. Mindfulness (*sati*) becomes a method to investigate the ways through which the self (selves) alongside with the practices installed in space formulate the experience in situ. The discipline of *samatha vipashyana* suspends, discloses and demystifies the ways through

which these processes signify a specific place. It develops an experiential listening of site (*samatha*) upon which an awareness of the processes of knowing and understanding in space (*vipashyana*) is cultivated as a narrative. The use of mindfulness (*sati*) practice as a method to embody and perform landscape constitutes the main argument of the thesis.

Concluding, through Geopoetics I propose two developments in the investigation of site in the field of site-specific performance practice:

1. A process to psychophysically explore the experience of landscape.
2. A process to perform site as an enactment of the interrelationship between experiencer and space.

Geopoetics: a site-specific performance training

During the projects of the thesis, I unfolded the practice of Geopoetics in two phases. I set a moving mindfulness (*samatha*) exploration of the site as a discipline of attunement between body and space. I determined the cultivated *vipashyana* quality *in situ* as a manifestation of the landscape which narrates an understanding of the ways the I/we relates with the world. I designated such a process as a discipline of actualisation.

I developed the practice of Geopoetics cumulatively. In the first project I examined the practices of sitting meditation, group walk, outdoor somatic exercises and contemplative dance practice (CDP) in rural sites. I established a method of embodying landscape as a *samatha vipashyana* movement practice. In the second project I enriched the rural training with the Red Square and the *plastique* exercises. I delineated the embodiment of space as a psychophysical experience through movement, feeling and action. I argued for the *samatha vipashyana* discipline as an organising principle for devising in the landscape. In the third project, I applied the practice structured in the two previous rural sites to the urban environment of Athens. I created a site-specific participatory event and claimed for the *samatha vipashyana* discipline as its dramaturgical structure.

The originality of Geopoetics lies in the integration of different performance lineages in order to build an outdoor creative practice. It processes diverse exercises to access a site through its embodiment and build its experience around devised dramaturgies of the body-landscape interrelationship. Geopoetics evaluates the process in situ as a product; it argues for an action in/with the landscape from a position of responding rather than doing and cultivates a non-judgmental curiosity to the place's phenomena. Geopoetics creates the time and space to open up one's own presence in a site and relate beyond standardised storylines. Its structure and organization are repeatable authorising the practice as a site-specific performance training.

Movement in the practice is neither stylised nor technique-based. It operates as a vehicle of listening to the experience of space. Hence, Geopoetics is accessible to all levels of practitioners. Its rigorousness is disclosed in its methodological process and specifically in three ongoing questions.

The first question concerns the methods through which a performer actively listens to a site. Geopoetics training relies on the observation of the ways through which the moving body interconnects with the environment and stimulates meaning. In this context, it correlates a performance training *in situ* with the Buddhist mindfulness (*sati*) practice. However, when the training loses its meditative aspect it drops its exploratory container. For example, in the two projects of the thesis in the rural sites, participants were receiving pleasure from seeing themselves executing the practices in the landscape. However, when they were not employing the exercises as a meditative discipline they were losing interest or feeling lost in the process. The Buddhist disciplines were requiring from them to cultivate a body mind awareness in order to respond *in situ* from a place of being present. Each time they were acting out from their discursive mind or their preconceived ideas they could not interrelate with the place nor devise a creative outcome with it. The *samatha vipashyana* discipline had to always underlie the practice in order to operate as an inquiring tool of site. Such a level of concentration was proven equally challenging with the task of executing a skillful physicality.

The second question involves the process of investigating site through a bodily practice. Geopoetics encompasses a laboratory culture of performance. It cultivates the participant both as experiencer and observer. It requires the development of a rigorous inquisitiveness in space. It necessitates from the practitioner to take charge and confidence of her own creativity, to generate from a place of listening and disclaim the need for validation by an outside eye. Geopoetics trains a practitioner both as performer and creator. For the participants in the projects of the thesis the laboratory culture of training was not self-evident. Each time the practice needed to begin by initiating what constitutes research in performance practice and for an outdoor environment. To that end, I built a three step method: 1. choose a movement discipline to work in the landscape; 2. exhaust all variations of its practice (i.e. an interesting line in the space, an evolving ambience, a meaning); 3. connect consciously the initial discipline with the derived idea in the space through a score.

The third question concerns issues of guiding such a practice on site. The contemplative and laboratory preconditions of Geopoetics requires a distinctive role from the facilitator/ leader of the training. She has to be receptive to the participants' performance allowing space for them to make their own realisations through the practice and develop their own process of self-development. She has to let them work without an outside eye so they could strengthen their muscle of self-reflection in relation to the research. During the practice of the thesis my sympathetic and sensitive stand as a leader invoked two kinds of problems. For some practitioners, investigating personal experience *in situ* and moreover examining how such a practice relates with creativity was not a given. There were moments which I had to become imperative and persuasive causing me conflict with the overall positioning of the facilitator in the practice.

Furthermore, for the participants who had not been experienced in the practice as research, it was overwhelming to stay open to the experience of exercising on site without having an assertive guidance from a facilitator. For this reason, there were times where their practice was becoming unable to disclose any kind of

creative intensity with the space. As a leader I had to take care more of these participants by coaching them and supervising their process.

Nevertheless, I understood that the main task of the facilitator of a contemplative outdoor practice is to cultivate for her practitioners a way of being in the landscape in order to listen to the space through their body. It affiliates with Halprin's idea of witnessing. It involves 'an active and informed engagement' (in Padulan, 1997: 298) and differentiates itself from a process of spectating: 'Spectators often come with their own personal aesthetics. They sit back and watch and judge to see if what is done lives up to their preconceived notion of a particular, very culture – bound idea' (1995: 249). From the three projects of the thesis I concluded to a three step process of setting the laboratory outdoor practice: 1. Transition, to leave behind a social witnessing of space in order to enter to its psychophysical experience 2. Trans-locate, to transfer the performance 'tool' to the site, to rediscover it within the new conditions of space and time 3. Renunciation, to allow the new process *in situ* to disclose where the intensity of the discipline lies.

Geopoetics; an interdisciplinary inquiry

In the thesis, I built a Geographical/Buddhist framework where a cultural landscape epistemology outlined by Mitch Rose and John Wylie (2006) is realised through the practice of *samatha vipashyana*. The accounts of Rose and Wylie organise the embodied examination of space as a body-landscape interrelationship. The Buddhist notion of mindfulness (*sati*) structures the embodied investigation of the experience in space through theatre and dance disciplines *in situ*. The Buddhist concept of selflessness (*anatta*) assesses the performance training *in situ* as a discipline of presence. Through a (post-) phenomenological ontology of landscape the site-specific performance of Geopoetics is analysed as an embodied narrative of place.

The Geographical/Buddhist framework indicates two principal elements of the examination of place. Firstly, it transcribes it as an investigation of the present

moment and of time. Space appears as the mediated factor which interweaves the associations of the past with the repercussions of the future. The presence of landscape does not consist of individual experiences or cultural narration rather it is a combination of both. It exists in the bodily experience of relating with the landscape and at the same time it narrates the perpetual movement of interconnecting with the land. Approaching space through time allows to conceive landscape as narrative.

Secondly, the Geographical/ Buddhist framework discloses the experience of space as a web of interconnections and argues for a narrative of place as the enactment of one of these interrelationships¹⁵⁰. It organises performance material into the score of such an event in order to create a 'meta-narrative' (Smith, 2008: 95) of place:

...songs, stories and designs serve to conduct the attention of performers into the world, deeper and deeper, as one proceeds from outward appearances to an ever more intense poetic involvement (Ingold, 2000: 56).

The event of connectivity motivates the participants to re-position themselves in the world: 'the boundaries between person and place, or between the self and landscape dissolve altogether. It is at this point as the people say they become their ancestors and discover the real meaning of things' (*ibid.*). The Geographical/Buddhist premise employs the theatrical form to create communal experiences *in situ*. It elaborates the reality of a place as the byproduct of multiple interrelationships *in situ*.

Specifically, in the first two projects the practice of *samatha vipashyana* founded the exploration of space as an investigation of the present moment. It disclosed and explored the experience of site as an interrelationship between the sense-organs and their objects. In the third project, the mindfulness (*sati*) practice

¹⁵⁰In the thesis, the practice elaborated the buried river of Heridanos as an event of interrelationship. Such a preference was related with the objectives of the thesis to discover what is present in the landscape but not identified yet. However, Geopoetics is not only interested in manifesting body-landscape interconnections that are implicit or hidden in relation to a place.

situated all narratives of the city into a perpetual present within which the participants were able to creatively redesign their relationship with the place. However, the Geographical/Buddhist frame appeared two difficulties. As a training it was conditioned to the willingness of the participants to let go of their thinking process and stay focused on the felt sense of time and space. As a performance, it needed to be set within a dramaturgical structure which organises inner and experiential insights of a place into a narrative. These tasks constitute the most rigorous goals of the practice of the thesis.

Geopoetics: positioning the practice in a place in crisis

Places, selves and practices are constructed through a course of identifications and thus are established by creating divisions in space. When a subject visits a site to enact an event of interrelationship a series of questions of positioning is displayed:

The issue of people going places...relates to notions of boundary, inside and outside, distance and difference, all of which enter into the construction and renegotiation of the self... the process of identity construction is subject to the 'game' of difference and presupposes the drawing of symbolic boundaries (Galani- Moutafi, 2000: 205)

If Geopoetics created events of the body-landscape interrelationship as performance narratives *in situ* then the question of who generates where and to whom became principal. How much is the performance outcome affected by the identity of the creator and the receiver? Does the cultural and geographical positioning of the participants indicate how a contemplative experience *in situ* should take place? Could it be that a landscape performance is nothing less than a structured experience which aims to alter the perception of a place and thus the interpretation of its reality?

Geopoetics creates the appropriate distance to relate with a place. If the participant is an outsider the practice creates the intimate space to become familiar with it. If she is an insider it creates distance to experience it as unknown.

Instead of reaching out to landscape as a set of given labels and agendas, Geopoetics aims to disclose phenomena between their means of being experienced and their meaning. For example, in Nisyros as practitioners coming from Athens we were outsiders. Our gaze was that of a tourist idealizing the practices embedded in the specific landscape. Naturally, we did not manage to completely drop our cultural conditioning. However, through the practice we were able to become aware of our own perspective and therefore having moments of fresh experience on site. On the other hand, as Athenians, our task in the city became the opposite. The embodied contemplative practice enabled us to de-familiarize our gaze in the city and understand the place not through our known concepts about it but through our felt experience in the present moment.

As a practice which is based on the experience of a place, the training of the thesis develops a performance process inclusive of all environments. It is not interested on stated classifications of a site. On the contrary, it aims to uncover non pre-conceived, experiential meanings of it. In this way, the practice escapes from binary identifications of place and examines borderlines which construct such divisions. Particularly, as the projects were developed from the periphery to the capital of Greece the practice of the thesis built a methodology which explored the urban/rural distinction. It created a process which combined the investigation of the immersive experience of the rural environment with the questioning of the sociopolitical norms in a metropolitan place. As a contemplative discipline it acknowledged identities as socio-cultural practices and created space for them to be explored psychophysically. It positioned the subject *in situ* as an actor empowered to interact with them and not to be educated by them. The performance practice of the thesis does not revolve around identities to devise its event. It elaborates all elements which stand as/ in the present moment in order to enact *in situ* the mechanisms and the processes that establish place as reality.

My urge to develop a contemplative site-specific performance practice derived from my need to process 'Greek crisis' as an experience on site. To that end, the meditative methodology of the thesis created three strategies of elaborating the emergent state of contemporary Greece. Firstly, it created a space of calmness

to stay present and inquisitive with the reality of the place and all its emotional reactions. For example, in the first project the *samatha vipashyana* movement practice in Ellanion Oros which was facing the city of Athens had an alleviative effect. The participants of the improvisation had an experience of releasing anxiety, anger and depression, emotions felt as the actuality of the memorandums.

Secondly, the contemplative site-specific practice elaborated a landscape of conflict, discord and rupture by enacting in space events of rationality and connectivity. It was not a matter of neglecting a reality but of strengthening the heart to accept and understand an intense situation. For example, the performance of *Topophilia* took place in 2013 when the city-scape of Athens was already operating as the major arena of political distress. Most of the spectators of the performance were experiencing the place as 'hectic and unpleasant' (aud. feed.1) causing feelings of 'disappointment' (aud. feed. 10) and 'pain' (aud. feed. 7). The *samatha vipashyana* enactment of an event of interrelationship in the Athenian landscape resulted in discovering loveliness amidst distress. It created psychophysical containers *in situ* which gave the opportunity to its participants to cultivate 'awakened heart' (Varela et al., 1993: 249): the 'innate ability to love and care' (Chödrön, 2001) arisen by the profound awareness 'of belonging to the same family' (*ibid.*)¹⁵¹.

Finally, the performance practice of the thesis waived conceptual narratives of the site in order to restore its meanings through events of interrelationship between experiencers and space. For example, performance *Topophilia* suspended different known narratives of Athens like its ancient legacy in order to enact an event of togetherness around the experience of Heridasos river. In this way, reality was perceived through the 'moving and flowing' (Crang and Travlou, 2001: 168) quality of present tense, space ceased to be a 'guarantee of stability'

¹⁵¹ According to the Buddhist philosophy of *Mahayana*, compassion (*karuna*) signifies the action being developed from all pervasive seeing (Guenther and Trungpa, 1975: 31) and is manifested as 'transcendental generosity' (Varela et al., 1993: 249). The action of compassion (*karuna*) discloses *bodhicitta*, 'awakened heart' (Varela et al., 1993: 249). It entails 'all the positive qualities of mind' (Guenther and Trungpa, 1975: 33) by dropping off all disconnections and developing 'feel[ings] with what is real' (*ibid.*).

(*op. cit.* p. 173) and appeared as the mediated factor that composes the associations of the past and the repercussions of the future. Landscape became the narrator of the perpetual movement of interconnecting with the land and challenged the socio-political impasse of the place.

Geopoetics explores notions of 'identity', 'home' and 'sense of belonging' as 'dreams of presence' (Rose, 2006: 544). Based on its methodology of mindfulness (*sati*) these notions are seen as individual or collective, pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent modes of attachment in space which altogether co-formulate landscape's 'trans-historical Dreaming' (Ingold, 2000: 57). It is possible to examine then as the prevailing tendency of an environment: the conditioned and conditioning experience formulated by 'the accumulated and collective history' (Varela et al., 1993: 121). His Holiness Dalai Lama determines it as the 'collective karma' (Hayward and Varela, 1992: 165) or 'the environmental effects of karma' (*ibid.*) designating it as 'the common effects that we experience together' (*ibid.*)¹⁵². Geopoetics examines place by re-negotiating the bodily presence with the large-scales narratives of history and culture. It approaches space as a continuum within which the performance event attempts to manifest the cardiograph of a perpetual effort to 'dream the world as a whole' (Rose, 2006: 545).

Geopoetics; a rural landscape performance practice

Geopoetics made a sudden turn to an urban practice without exploring dramaturgical possibilities in the country-side due to the limited number of projects undertaken for the practice-based research. It developed a training in the rural landscape and then moved to an urban environment to produce a performance. However, from that development it integrated dance-based practices within a theatrical process of the site-specific field and was able to explore the urban/rural division.

¹⁵² Rahula defines *karma* as the 'volition...whether good or bad, [which] has one force...to continue in a good or bad direction [...] within the cycle of continuity (*samsāra*)' (1974: 32). *Karma* is 'the main condition in the accumulation of conditioned human experience' (Varela et al, 1993: 116).

As a practitioner- researcher I consider the cultural context of non-urban places 'open' and abstract and more challenging to elaborate events of interrelationship. Their mechanisms of constructing meaning are not so much detected in the projected environment as in the experiential gaze which generates such a projection. Hence, in the country side I see the exploration of the site *via* sensorial and emotional stimuli more essential for composing a narrative. As a future development of the practice I would pursue the creation of mindfulness (*sati*) performance structures in the peripheral sites of the county.

Furthermore, I believe that the performance in the rural landscape allows 'an ever more intense poetic involvement' (Ingold, 2000: 56) with the experience of the space and its cultural implications. An embodied rural-based narrative intensifies the interrelation of inner and outer landscapes. It 'immerses [the participant] in the strangeness or otherness of the world...providing [her] with existential sustenance' (Lavery, 2008: 53). In this way, the journey in the space offers a journey to the self. However, there is the danger of romanticizing nature presenting it as something pure, whole and 'sacred'. Examples of such stereotypical interpretations are performances with idealized reenactments of the agricultural life and/or shamanistic elements such as deifications of nature and embodiments of its spirits. They intend to disclose the rural environment as the healthy, pure and authentic source of life for the individual and the community.

Rose argues that landscape is not 'an object whose presence needs to be explained but a presence whose object-like appearance needs to be thought' (2006: 538). To this end, Geopoetics performs contemplations *in situ*. It excavates different 'realities' of time and space embedded in the landscape. It discloses them as cultural apparatuses. It challenges the known, everyday lived sociopolitical structures and transcends interpretations of polarization, sentimentalism and indictment. Geopoetics performs an experiential dialectic of space and at the same time enacts a new memory in the emotional substratum of the landscape. In this way, it is ambivalent whether a participant follows a

course in the land or experiences a deep and dream-like contemplation between bodies minds hearts and their encompassing space. Geopoetics creates journeys in the landscape to perform journeys of the self (-ves). As Rumi poetically explains the latter needs the former to carve its route:

Distance and Nearness are attributes of bodies.
The journeys of the spirit are after another sort.
You journey from the embryo state to rationality
without footsteps or stages or change of place.
The journey of the soul involves no time and place
And my body learnt from the soul its mode of journeying.
Now my body has renounced the bodily mode of journeying.
It journeys secretly and without a form though under a form.
(Jalalad- Din Muhammad Rumi, *The Masnavi*)

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Thomas Richard:

https://www.google.gr/?gfe_rd=cr&ei=EsooWPOWLMev8wethaaADg&gws_rd=ssl#q=at+work+with+grotowski+on+physical+actions+online

Timeline of the Greek crisis: <<http://crisis-scape.net/resources/general-timeline>>

The myth of Myrmidons: <<http://www.livepedia.gr/index.php> [14 February 2013], my own translation>

[bow out: feel-hold-give]