

moving/homing: exploring movement, home, and belonging in ESEA communities

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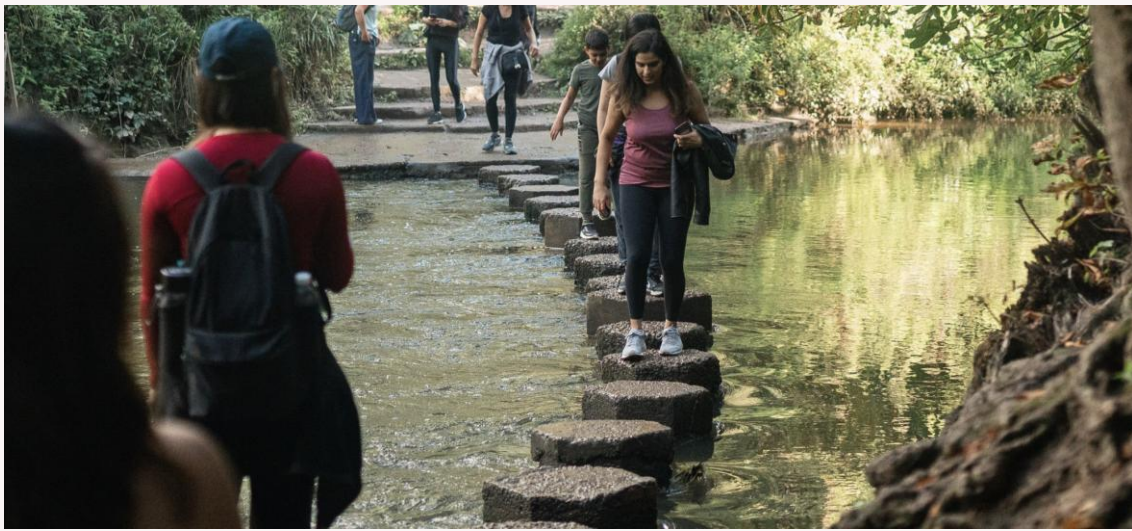


PROJECT SUMMARY

moving/homing was a collaborative project exploring how movement can be a way to find, make, and reimagine “home” for East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) communities in the UK. Co-led by movement artist David Kam (kindredpacket / besea.n), Dr. Wing-Fai Leung (Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries), and Dr. Jonathan Gray (Department of Digital Humanities), the project brought together academic researchers, community organisers, and artists to co-create participatory practices rooted in storytelling, embodiment, and solidarity.

At the heart of the project was a desire to explore how migration, displacement, and belonging are felt and shared through the body, and how collective movement activities can help to facilitate connection and solidarity. Working closely with grassroots ESEA organisations, the team developed two interconnected approaches: “retelling as method” and “walking as method.” These approaches were used to foster collective learning and care, deepen understandings of diasporic identity, and reimagine activism beyond traditional institutional or policy frameworks.

The residency was organised around two workshops. Firstly, a creative workshop on “retelling as method” during East and Southeast Asian Heritage Month in September 2024 – facilitated by artists Angela YT Chan, Bettina Fung | 馮允珊 and Elizabeth Chan – where ESEA storytellers explored different approaches for retelling stories shared with kindredpacket. In November 2024, a second workshop – facilitated by Joyce Mak – brought together ESEA community walk leaders to collectively reflect on grassroots organising and ways to support learning, exchange and care amongst these groups. Beyond the outputs, moving/homing prioritised process, trust-building, and attentiveness to the emotional and logistical labour of activism, especially amongst small and under-resourced groups.



HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT?

moving/homing emerged from ongoing collaborations between academics and activists working with East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) communities during and after the pandemic. Dr. Wing-Fai Leung and Dr. Jonathan Gray had previously co-lead creative projects exploring ESEA identity and anti-Asian racism, while David Kam's work with kindredpacket and besa.n focused on embodied storytelling and decolonising wellness.

The Activist in Residence scheme at King's College London offered an opportunity to bring these strands together in a shared, reflective space. The team co-developed the project through ongoing conversations with each other and with community partners. These included individuals and groups already engaged in ESEA storytelling and walking practices, many of whom were working in voluntary or under-resourced capacities. The project responded to their needs and insights, becoming a process of mutual learning, unlearning, and imagining together. Rooted in trust and co-creation, the project centred the lived experiences of participants and prioritised process over predefined outcomes.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The Moving/Homing project unfolded through a series of workshops, conversations, and collaborative gatherings with East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) community members and organisers. The team explored two key strands: "retelling as method" and "walking as method."

In the retelling strand, participants reflected on personal and collective movement stories—such as migration, displacement, and diaspora—through creative workshops facilitated by artists and performers. These sessions invited participants to reinterpret their stories using movement, voice, drawing, and conversation. The process was grounded in care, encouraging individuals to reshape how they related to inherited narratives and explore how storytelling itself could foster connection and healing.

Parallel to this, the walking strand brought together organisers of nature walks and community hikes within ESEA groups. A focus group facilitated conversations around walking as a practice of solidarity, care, and resistance. Participants shared how walking had become an accessible and embodied form of community building, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. These walks also became informal spaces for sharing stories and exchanging organising strategies.

Across both workshops, the emphasis remained on process—holding space for reflection, slowing down, and building trust across differences, rather than producing fixed outcomes. The event created space for public engagement, celebration, and further reflection on the evolving meanings of home and belonging.



WHAT WAS THE PROJECT'S IMPACT?

The Moving/Homing project had a deeply relational and transformative impact, especially for those directly involved. Rather than aiming for easily quantifiable outcomes, the project prioritised process, presence, and trust, offering participants a rare space for reflection, creativity, and care.

For ESEA community members and organisers, the residency created room to explore personal and collective experiences of migration, belonging, and identity outside of formal or extractive structures. Participants shared that being invited to reflect on their movement stories—through walking, storytelling, and embodied practices—felt validating and healing, especially in contrast to the burnout and overwork common in grassroots spaces. Participants described how the act of walking together—without a fixed agenda—made it possible to share difficult stories in a way that felt less exposed and more communal.

The project also fostered new networks and strengthened existing relationships across a broad range of ESEA groups. Participants from kindredpacket, ESEA Sisters and ESEA Outdoors were brought into dialogue through focus groups, walks, and co-creation activities. These gatherings allowed for mutual learning and the exchange of practices, particularly around care, solidarity, and the challenges of organising in under-resourced contexts.

For the academic team, the project prompted a rethinking of what impact work can look like. It challenged conventional university approaches that often privilege outputs, speed, or control. Instead, Moving/Homing offered a model grounded in slowness, consent, and co-creation, demonstrating how research and activism can be more meaningfully entangled.

While the project included two well-received events, namely the retelling workshop during ESEA Heritage Month in September 2024 and a gathering of walking group leaders, its true legacy lies in the deeper connections, shifts in perspective, and expanded sense of what “home” and “activism” can mean within diasporic communities.

THE TEAM'S TOP TIPS FOR IMPACT

1. Prioritise process over outputs:

Take time to build trust, reflect together, and be responsive to the needs of the people involved. Meaningful impact often comes from how you work, not just what you produce.

2. Value informal and embodied knowledge:

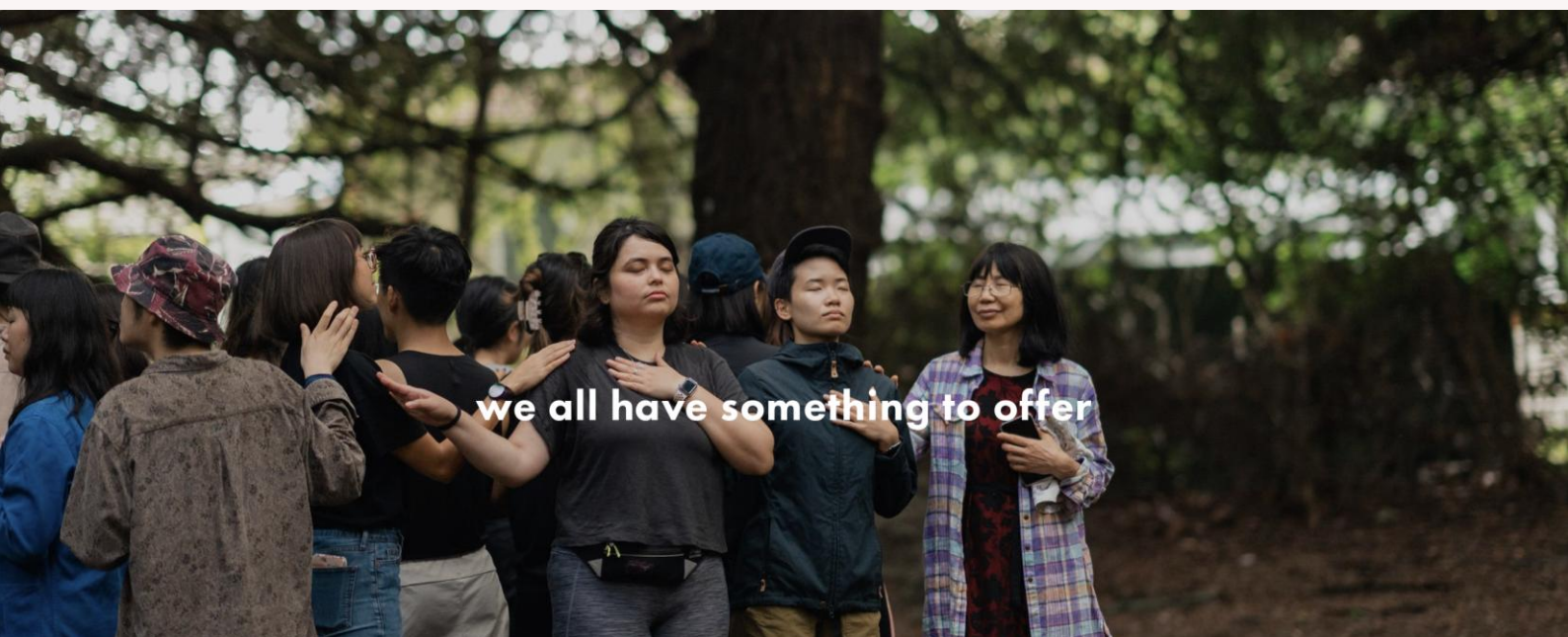
Impact isn't just about publications or policy change; it's also about shifting relationships, fostering care, and creating spaces where people feel seen, heard, and safe. Movement, walking, and storytelling can all be powerful methods of connection and change.

3. Be flexible and let the work be process-led:

Resist the urge to over-structure. Leave room for surprise, for slowness, and for those involved to shape the direction.

FURTHER READING

- *East Side Voices: Essays Celebrating East and Southeast Asian Identity in Britain*, edited by Helena Lee. London: Sceptre.
- [Group Strategies to Prevent Stress and Burnout](#) – *The Commons, Social Change Library*
- [Becoming Forest Toolkit](#) – *Breakwater: Youngsook Choi & Taey Johe*
- Photography credit : Tim Chung



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Or visit: www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/research/impact