

INNovating: going digital with community performance

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Abstract

This work seeks to explore the opportunities of incorporating digital practices into community performance to produce an audio drama. Starting my research during a lockdown due to Covid-19, I was keen to examine my process as a director and establish a new methodology that adopted the digital tools that were becoming more widely used as a result of the social-distancing requirements of the pandemic. I adapted Berry and Reinbold's Steps from *Collective Creation* and recruited a group of community participants in York who were interested in history and drama. The research tested a hybrid model of online and in-person meetings for historical data collection, devising workshops, rehearsals and recording sessions. The main output of the research is INNovating, a three-part audio drama that evokes the sounds and stories of coaching inns and travellers stopping off on their journey along the Great North Road. The drama can be downloaded via the project's website innovatingaudio.co.uk.

The research into using digital practices to produce community performance as an audio drama resulted in key findings for future productions of a similar nature. These range from the convenience of video conferencing for a variety of workshops, to creating a shared space online for historical research and script development and the dissemination of the audio to a broad reach of audience via a digital platform. Future research is suggested in terms of exploring digital production methods that are less dependent on sophisticated recording and editing equipment, e.g. the advantages of recording on mobile devices. Further to this, an area for greater exploitation of digital practices would be the linking of the audio drama via GPS technology to site-specific locations relevant to the community who made it.

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I am grateful to Bristol + Bath Creative R&D for the New Scholars programme which enabled me to fully fund my creative practice, offering mentorship and inclusion into a great network of other researchers. With their help, I was also able to present my ongoing research at several conferences and INNOvating has been highlighted in an article on their website: bristolbathcreative.org/article/innovating-community-performance

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Finally, thank you also to my family for your understanding of my taking on this journey through the pandemic and for your continued love and support.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Community performance has evolved through sharing stories that often combine heritage, site-specific locations and immersive audience events. As a director of theatre and audio drama, I tell stories from the past of people who may have been overlooked by history. Building on my professional experience, I wanted to develop a tested methodology for producing community audio drama using digital practices. Having had some experience in this field as a practitioner, I was keen to examine my process and that of other practitioners and establish a methodology that could be used by myself and community groups in the future. Just before I started this research in the autumn of 2020, the UK had been in lockdown due to the Covid pandemic and I was not able to continue my planned work as a director. Therefore, it was an ideal time to reflect on my own practice and the research question I sought to address was: what are the opportunities of incorporating digital practices into community performance to produce an audio drama?

The topic choice for a possible community audio drama, through which to explore the use of digital practices in production, has long been one I have been interested in. I wanted to explore the history of travel, and in particular, the golden age of coaching between the 1780s and 1820s in Britain (Mountfield 2003). Coming just before the invention of the train, this was an era when the introduction of tarmac meant the road surfaces improved, slashing journey times between destinations. The city of York was once a vital stopping point and still boasts four of its coaching inns that were functioning in the 1820s (Protz 2017). It became the specific focus of the location for a drama and consequently, I named my creative practice project INNovating, to combine the historical theme and the approach to creating community performance. The use of digital tools in the creative practice tests a hybrid model of online and in-person meetings, historical data collection, devising workshops, rehearsals and recording sessions and is explored in Chapter 3. The resulting audio drama can be accessed by an audience via a digital platform, thus mitigating the risk of cancellation of a theatrical performance due to further Covid restrictions on people gathering

indoors. The main output of the research is a three-part audio drama that evokes the sounds and stories of these vibrant places of hospitality for travellers in the 1820s, stopping off on their journey along the Great North Road.¹

This drama is the result of Practice as Research (PaR) and the journey towards the research focus is examined in Chapter 3.1. To be able to analyse the practice from the perspective of the community participants, there were two points of collection of qualitative data. Initially, participants were invited to share, via an anonymous questionnaire, their previous experience of involvement in other drama projects and their expectations of mixing in-person and online workshops as a method of production. At the end of the project, in semi-structured video interviews, the participants were questioned about whether the project lived up to their overall expectations and how digital practices may or may not have enhanced their experience. In terms of data collection and protection, all material that involved participants' details had been processed by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media of the University of York (now School of Arts and Creative Technologies).

The production methodology was broken into nine steps, as described in Chapter 3.2 and Chapter 4. In total, 32 people took part in INNovating, participating in activities including historical research, performance, facilitation of workshops, writing of the script and recording and editing of the final audio drama. The volunteer participants ranged in age from their early twenties to early eighties and were either living or studying in York and the surrounding areas. An early drop-off in participant numbers was anticipated and the project's design allowed for many of the participants to be only involved in the initial stages of the historical research or to have to stop due to personal circumstances. For the majority of the 5-month duration of activities, a core team of 15 researchers, performers and the production team continued with the project to completion with the help of project partners York Explore Library and

¹ Download audio at: innovatingaudio.co.uk/audio/innovating-audio-drama-route/

Archive.² (See Appendix 2 for a breakdown of participants and Chapter 4.1, Step 2 for further details of recruitment).

The audio drama research output became part of *York Festival of Ideas*³ in June 2022 which encompassed the ability to download the audio drama via the project website⁴ or by using the QR code which we had printed on beer mats and distributed around the city (Fig. 1 below) and in-person audience question and answer session with the cast and crew about the research and production.

The results of the research are discussed in Chapter 5, with reflections in Chapter 6 and conclusions and possible future research stated in Chapter 7.



Figure 1: INNovating beer mat 2022 for downloading the audio drama, design: K Valentine

² York Explore Library and Archive. explore.york.org.uk/york-explore/

³ York Festival of Ideas is an annual event run by the University of York with a diverse programme of free events to educate, entertain and inspire. (yorkfestivalofideas.com)

⁴ Download audio at: innovatingaudio.co.uk/audio/innovating-audio-drama-route/

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Addressing the question of what are the opportunities of incorporating digital practices to produce community performance as an audio drama, this chapter will explore what is meant by the terms *community performance* and *digital practices* in relation to this research, as well as review the roots of audio drama. As both these terms can be applied in a variety of ways and are found in many other art forms, it is their unique combination and the resulting opportunities that this coupling produces which is at the core of this research and is reflected in the make-up of the participants for the creative practice, recruited from communities in and around York and the variety of digital practices incorporated into the production as detailed in Chapter 3.3.

2.1 Community Performance

The act of creating drama-related activity within communities has many descriptors which overlap and are relatively interchangeable: *community theatre*, *community performance*, *community drama*, *community plays* and *applied theatre*.

The term *community* most usually refers to a “body of people who live in the same place” (Oxford University Press, 2003). However, the term will also be used in this Literature Review to include a “group of people who share the same interests, pursuits, or occupation, especially when distinct from those of the society in which they live” (ibid). This duality is supported by Ted K. Bradshaw (2008) who argues:

for a concept of post-place community in which the essential characteristics of community are the social relations (solidarity or bonds) between people. Community so defined has historically shared boundaries with one's geography of residence (town, neighbourhood, city), but today the loss of place identity does not imply the loss of community, since solidarity among people no longer needs to be tied to place. (p.3)

The possibility of a hybrid approach to community activity that underpins this research and widens the scope to explore communities of practice or interest is in agreement with Bradshaw, though the themes of the project are driven by a particular place, namely the city of York.

Helen Nicholson (2005) builds on the notion of community and networks having their roots in shared interests and experiences and certainly, the INNOvating community formed for this research is one that was brought together by a similar interest in the exploration of local history through drama. Nicholson states that “as drama is in itself a narrative art, theatre-making is a good place to explore and represent narratives of selfhood, culture and community”. (p.63)

In her 1987 handbook *Community Plays: How to put them on*, founding community drama practitioner, Ann Jellicoe asked how we should define a community. By class? By age? By common interest? Jellicoe’s company, Colway Theatre Trust, did so geographically by taking the school catchment area as their criterion. Though this may be a geographical boundary that remains the same in the relative long-term, Jellicoe recognised that the people who make up communities are always changing, stating that “community is like a pond: water flows in at one end and out the other, but the pond remains the same” (p.45).

The production of INNOvating was particularly invested in reflecting narratives from the past linked to the coaching inns of York. Nicholson also sees the potential of drama to rediscover lost stories as a way of creating new communities:

The construction and shaping of local communities, a recurring theme in applied drama, is not so much a matter of recovering or rediscovering the lost narratives of a homogeneous past, but of making a contribution to redefining their actual and symbolic boundaries in the present and for the future. (2005, p.84)

In exploring activities linked to community, such as *theatre*, *performance*, *drama*, and *plays*, each suggests a subtle difference in the creative process and the output.

In his book *Community Theatre, Global Perspectives*, Eugene Van Erven states:

Community theatre is a worldwide phenomenon that manifests itself in many different guises, yielding a broad range of performance styles. It is united, I think, by its emphasis on local and/or personal stories (rather than pre-written scripts) that are first processed through improvisation and then collectively shaped into theatre under the guidance of either outside professional artists - who may or not be active in other kinds of professional theatre - or of local amateur artists. (2001, p.2)

This methodology of creating a script from group devising activities is similar to that used to create INNovating, which was a collaborative process (explored in Chapter 3.2). Local stories were researched and interpreted through improvisation, which in turn, were shaped by a professional writer, director and sound designer. Robert Cohen, in his book *Working Together in Theatre*, extracts meaning from the structure of the word *collaboration*, noting it is a compound of “co” and “labor” (sic) - thus indicating “shared work” (2011, p.11).

The term *community performance* is relevant to this research and reflects why editors Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd in *Performing Heritage* (2011) chose the term *performance* because it is an all-embracing term. This is echoed by Petra Kuppers and Gwen Robertson in *The Community Performance Reader* who also state “community performance moves with and through wider contemporary art practices, creating links between different realms, spaces, stories and bodies” (2020, p.1). INNovating, though not physically travelling, links in its themes and narrative the movement of people, goods and ideas, using a blend of devising workshops and recording sessions to create the audio.

In terms of linking *community* with *performance*, Performing Dialogue,⁵ a knowledge-sharing network for practitioners, refers to the term *community performance* as socially-engaged methodologies and strategies that involve the Performing Arts in

⁵ Performing Dialogue supports the capacity of organisations and individuals worldwide who use Community Performance in their work. dialogueforcommunity.com

projects facilitated by, with, and for community groups. Due to INNovating's production process involving professional practitioners (namely a writer, director and sound designer), it is most appropriate to say that the ambition was to create a performance *with* a community group, meaning both professionals and community participants were instrumental in co-creating around a theme and that the final production was reflective of the collective endeavour. One key question of the research was whether the use of digital tools enabled or hindered the ambition of collective community creation.

2.2 Digital Practices

The commonly used definition of *digital technologies* encompasses electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data (Johnston, Kervin and Wyeth, 2022). In this study, the term *digital practice* means embracing using these technologies in the activity undertaken during the research. In their introduction to *Discourse and Digital Practices*, Jones, Chik and Hafner explain:

What we mean by 'digital practices', then, are these 'assemblages' of actions involving tools associated with digital technologies, which have come to be recognised by specific groups of people as ways of attaining particular social goals, enacting particular social identities, and reproducing particular sets of social relationships (2015, p.6).

The intention to incorporate the technology into practice is also echoed by director Maya Chowdhry (2020) who believes what is most important when creating Digital Participatory Theatre is to define the appropriate digital tools and techniques to allow a group to participate fully in this process. In a series of filmed essays and case studies, Chowdhry explores terms such as transmedia, hybrid theatre, and digital performance.⁶ The particular tools and terms used in this research methodology are explored in Chapter 3.3.

⁶ <https://collective-encounters.org.uk/digital-participatory-theatre/>

The possibility of examining the use of digital practices to create community performance tied in with the post-pandemic restrictions happening at the start of this research and it seemed a timely opportunity to try out a hybrid methodology resulting in digital performance. The use of digital technology during the pandemic meant that many people had become accustomed to meeting via video conferencing, working remotely and accessing our entertainment via online platforms. Globally, the numbers of meeting participants per day in 2020 using the three main video conferencing platforms support this supposition: Zoom - over 300 million (compared to 10 million in 2019), Google Meet - over 100 million (3.5 million in 2019) and Microsoft Teams - over 75 million (20 million in 2019).⁷ In this research, there was an opportunity to explore whether this familiarity with digital technology and in particular, video conferencing, could be capitalised on through the process of making drama with community participants. Further assumed familiarity with the use of spreadsheets (e.g, Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets) was also adopted in the production Step 3: Research to collate historical data (explored in Chapter 4). Traditionally associated with their use of formulas for calculation, they have also been recognised for their effective organisation of data collection, in particular structured tabular thematic analysis, permitting inductive, deductive or hybrid approaches to theme development and analysis (Robinson 2022). Though Robinson is using this tool in the field of psychology, there is a parallel here with the research and synthesis steps of INNovating and the ability to organise and develop possible historical themes in a structured way, as seen in Chapter 4.

One of the intentions of the research was that being part of a community project for all participants would be a positive activity, to address the isolation and increased psychological morbidity felt by many during the previous two years (White and Van Der Boor 2020, Jia, Ayline and Chalder 2020). Some researchers question if using technology such as video calling can increase social anxiety (Razo 2020, Ngien and Hogan 2022), though other studies state that using similar digital tools has been reported to help the minds of participants during the pandemic (Ogueji et al. 2022), particularly via participation in group activities such as choral singing (Grushka et al.

⁷ Sources - www.theverge.com/2021/4/27/22406472/microsoft-teams-145-million-daily-active-users-stats & <https://sonary.com/content/100-video-conferencing-statistics-and-facts-for-the-2022-market/>

2021). An awareness of these opposing opinions in terms of how they would shape the activities of this research supported the decision to incorporate a hybrid approach to ensure that connection could be maintained during the creation of a community performance, without inducing digital burn-out. The possibilities of this method of adopting hybrid creative spaces are being reflected in the world of work and education, and the post-pandemic period of the '*new*' *new normal* has been described as *the thoughtful blended phase* and looks to analyse the lessons learnt to understand the effects digitalization will have on culture, organisation and well-being (Gulliksen et al., 2022).

In recent years, various companies working in the arts have harnessed digital practices to create audio experiences and a sample of these can be seen in Appendix 4. Many are linked to a particular geographical area and only available at a certain time through a booking system eg, Eavesdropping,⁸ CONFLUX,⁹ and Wilding the Smart City.¹⁰ However, other geographically linked audio experiences have been developed to be listened to at a time of the listener's choice. One of these, Good Organisation,¹¹ works with marginalised communities in York to reduce social isolation. During the pandemic, they developed a digital app to enable the public to download audio tours narrated by local people experiencing homelessness, navigated by the GPS location capabilities of mobile technology. Another single-voice series by theatre company Tamasha Theatre Company explores the themes of care and connection in crisis and was developed to be listened to at a time and location of your own choice.¹² The creation of community performance as multi-character audio dramas is rare and this situates this research in an under-represented genre, as explored in the next section.

⁸ <https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/eavesdropping-reserve-equipment>

⁹ www.cgtheatre.co.uk/portfolio/conflux/

¹⁰ <https://sway.office.com/afAW1mSvuZPYWMOK?ref=Link>

¹¹ <http://www.goodorganisation.co.uk/audibleyork.html>

¹² <https://tamasha.org.uk/projects/tamasha-directors-audio-project/>

2.3 Audio Drama

In his introduction to *British Radio Drama*, editor John Drakakis explains that from its inception in the early 1920s, radio drama was in direct competition with established theatre, and it has always, implicitly or explicitly, sought to measure its achievements against those of the theatre specifically, and of literature generally (1981, p.1). The BBC initially sought to harness perceived notions of theatricality, as illustrated by the first drama broadcast being three scenes from three separate Shakespeare plays in 1923. Drakakis continues with the correlation of radio drama and literature, which is an interesting comparison, as audio drama is so often referred to as *theatre of the mind* because of the need of the listener to engage their imagination, similar to that of the reader of literature:

In radio, the relationship between text and performance is a close one because dialogue is required to be explicit and it is precisely this fullness of detail, which can be achieved in a variety of ways, that forms the basis of the claim of the text to be literature. Moreover, the ability to preserve recordings has the effect of converting the performance itself into something approaching the permanence of print, whereas in the theatre each performance is unique (1981, p.28).

Though previously known as 'radio drama' because of the medium it was transmitted by, the phrase is starting to lose traction in the UK as other digital platforms become popular in the way people listen. The BBC has been the main producer of professional radio drama due to the high cost of the production of plays and the need for a distribution network. However, this is changing. Producer and academic Lance Dann (2014) recognises that the Internet offers writers and producers of radio drama almost limitless creative freedom and created the potential for a shift in the focus of the production of radio drama away from traditional large-scale broadcasters, removing the creative constraints applied by their multifarious systems of commissioning and scheduling. In the last ten years, Dann's observation has been

borne out in practice, as larger audio production companies make drama for other platforms such as subscription services including Audible,¹³ podcast platforms such as Acast¹⁴ or drama that is commissioned directly by the BBC and available via the BBC Sounds¹⁵ app. Although some of these require a subscription (e.g. Audible), many are free for the listener to access (e.g. SoundCloud¹⁶ or YouTube¹⁷), but they do require a digital device and access to the internet. Many audio dramas are site-specific or time-restricted and further examples of these can be found in Appendix 4.

John Barber (2017, p.7) defines audio drama as an extension of radio drama, in which storytellers look to inform, educate, persuade and entertain through their voice, augmented by sound effects and music to immerse the audience. Audio drama, he continues, can also include ambient soundscapes, environmental and mechanical sounds and can manifest in websites, sound walks, site-specific installations and audio documentaries, amongst other descriptors. INNovating incorporated many of these elements such as an inspiration for an ambient soundtrack created in a community devising workshop, suggestions of places to listen via a map and the surround-sound effect of binaural recording, as explored in Chapter 4. However, for the listener, INNovating sits within the genre of an audio drama that can be listened to anywhere and that incorporates a character driven, lineal narrative common to many current available audio dramas to download or radio dramas of the past, such as one of my own previous productions, *Peace in Our Time*¹⁸ and the classic comedy *Wooden Overcoats*¹⁹.

¹³ audible.co.uk

¹⁴ acast.com

¹⁵ bbc.co.uk/sounds

¹⁶ soundcloud.com

¹⁷ youtube.com

¹⁸ <https://audioboom.com/channels/4865471-noel-coward-s-peace-in-our-time>

¹⁹ <https://audioboom.com/channel/wooden-overcoats>

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

This study adopts a Practice as Research (PaR) method to create participatory community performance, inspired by heritage and incorporating digital practices. Robin Nelson (2013, p.40) proposes that PaR involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, practice is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry. James Bully recognises, in the summary of two reports funded by Research England, the power that PaR has to harness digital practices in public engagement:

In practice research, forms of sensory, tacit and embodied knowledge can be conveyed, and its sharing presents an opportunity for the modernising and revitalising of research communication, uncovering novel dissemination routes in the digital era (2021, p.1).

In my journey as a practitioner-researcher, I have followed Robin Nelson's possible PaR route (2013, p.29). He suggests:

- Specify a research inquiry at the outset
- Set a timeline for the overall project including the various activities involved in a multi-mode inquiry
- Build moments of critical reflection into the timeline, frequently checking that the research inquiry remains engaged and evidence is being collected
- In documenting a process, capture moments of insight
- Locate your praxis in a lineage of similar practices
- Relate the specific inquiry to broader contemporary debate (through reading and exposition of ideas with references)

Nelson's Dynamic Model for Practice as Research explores the triangle of *know-how*, *know-what* and *know-that*, all informing praxis (2013, p.37). Broken down, *know-how* draws on procedural knowledge (both tacit and explicit), *know-what* can be gleaned from informed reflexivity about the process of making and its modes of knowing i.e, critical reflection - pausing, standing back and thinking about what you are doing and *know-that* is the equivalent of traditional 'academic knowledge' articulated in words and numbers:

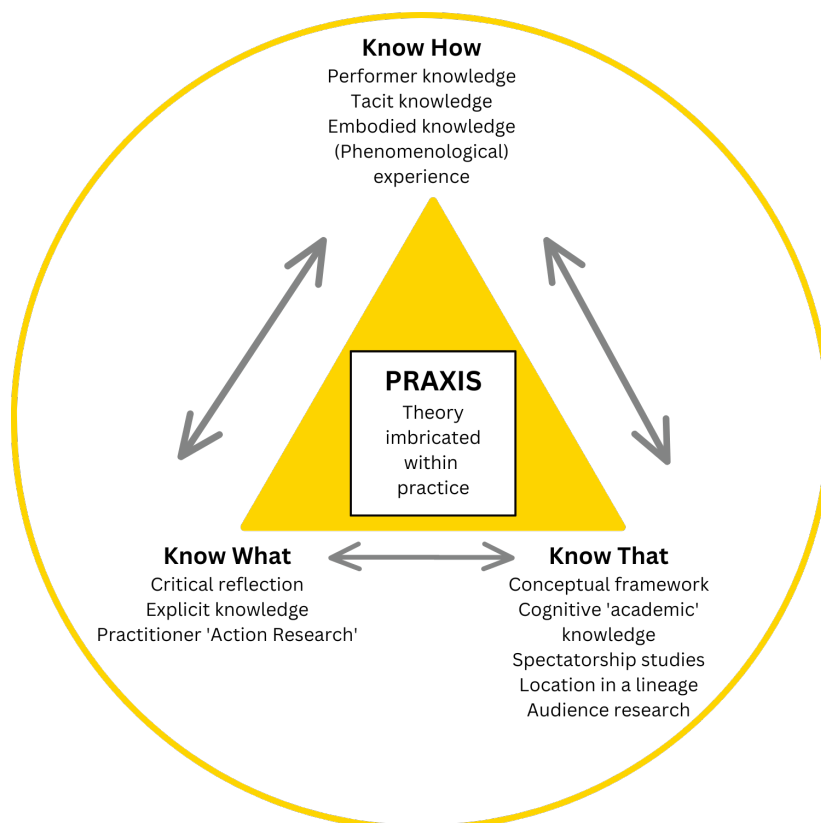


Figure 2: Nelson, R, Dynamic Model for *Practice as Research* (2013, p.37). Author's own re-design

In the case of my particular artistic practice, the *know-how* aspect involves the nuts and bolts of the production of an audio drama - from the early project management activities needed to get it off the ground, through to the technical knowledge of recording, editing and uploading to a digital platform to enable the audience to access the drama. The *know-what* element of the practice relates to the time and deliberation needed to examine, whilst in production mode, what is being achieved, how it fits with original goals, and what can be adjusted as the production progresses

to fit the needs of the research, the activities of the participants and the end goal of creating an audio drama.

Finally, to engage the *know-that* vertex of Nelson's Dynamic Model (Fig.2) it is necessary to take an overview of the whole creative practice to analyse the process and outcomes. Alongside a comparison with other practitioners' findings, the findings of this analysis could be used to create recommendations of methodology for future practice and other productions of a similar nature.

Nelson's method would be most useful if validating one approach and not multiple possible routes of inquiry, as this research had the potential to do, early on in its conception, as presented below. He recognises that artworks are often complex, multi-layered and resonant, pursuing several possible lines of research inquiry. For this reason, and in particular, to recognise the journey towards the main focus of the research question of exploring the opportunities of incorporating digital practices into community performance to produce audio drama, the Daisy Chain Model has been adapted here and used as a method of inquiry. Developed by practitioner-scholar Joanna Bucknall (2017), it is an expansion of the Spiral Model developed by Melissa Trimingham (2002) and Robin Nelson's Dynamic Model for Practice as Research (2013). Its structure has the advantage of recognising the possible meandering journey of creative practice and the generation of multiple research questions arising during the period of pre-production, production and post-production and how ultimately, these may all feed into one final focus.

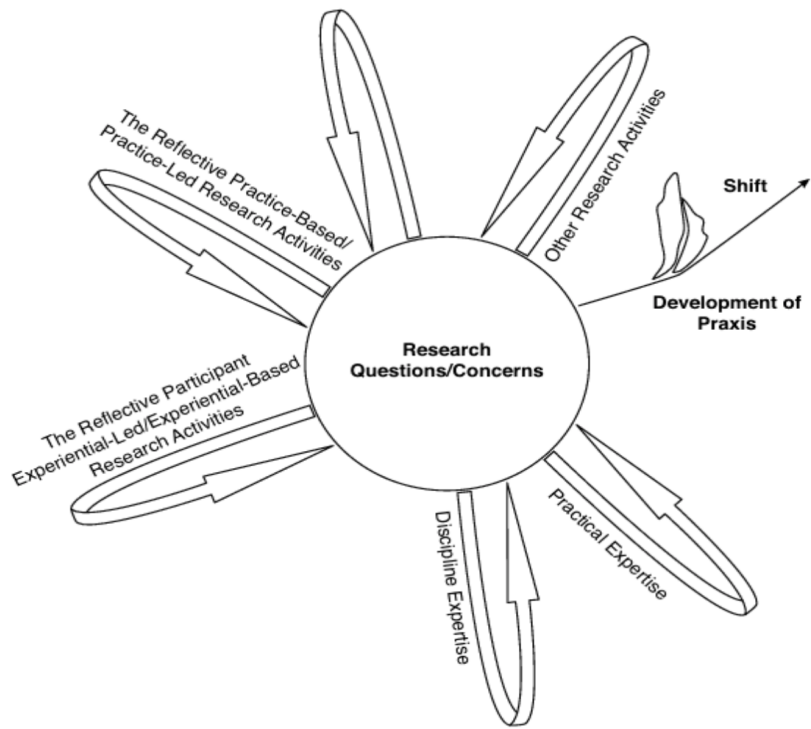


Figure 3: Bucknall, J, *General Daisy Head Single-chain Model*, p.61

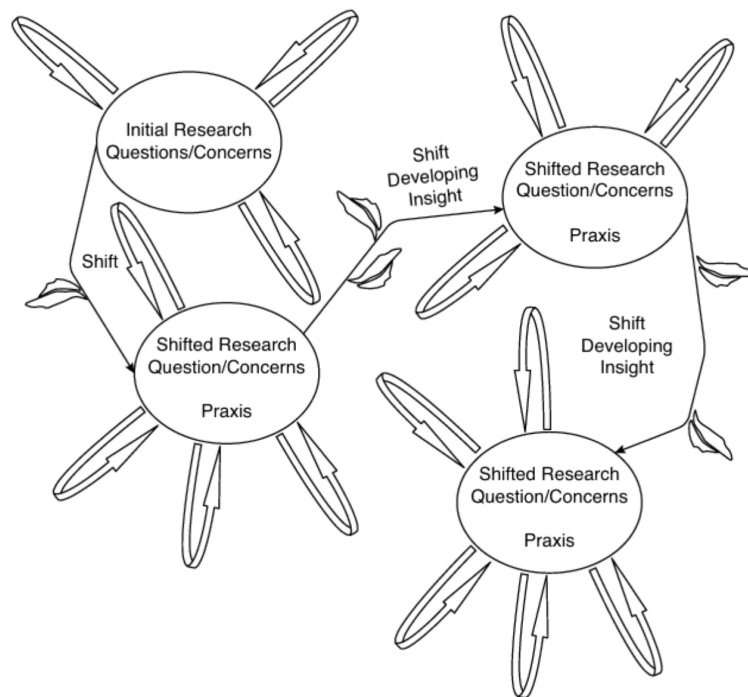


Figure 4: Bucknall J, *General Daisy Head Multi-chain Model*, p.62

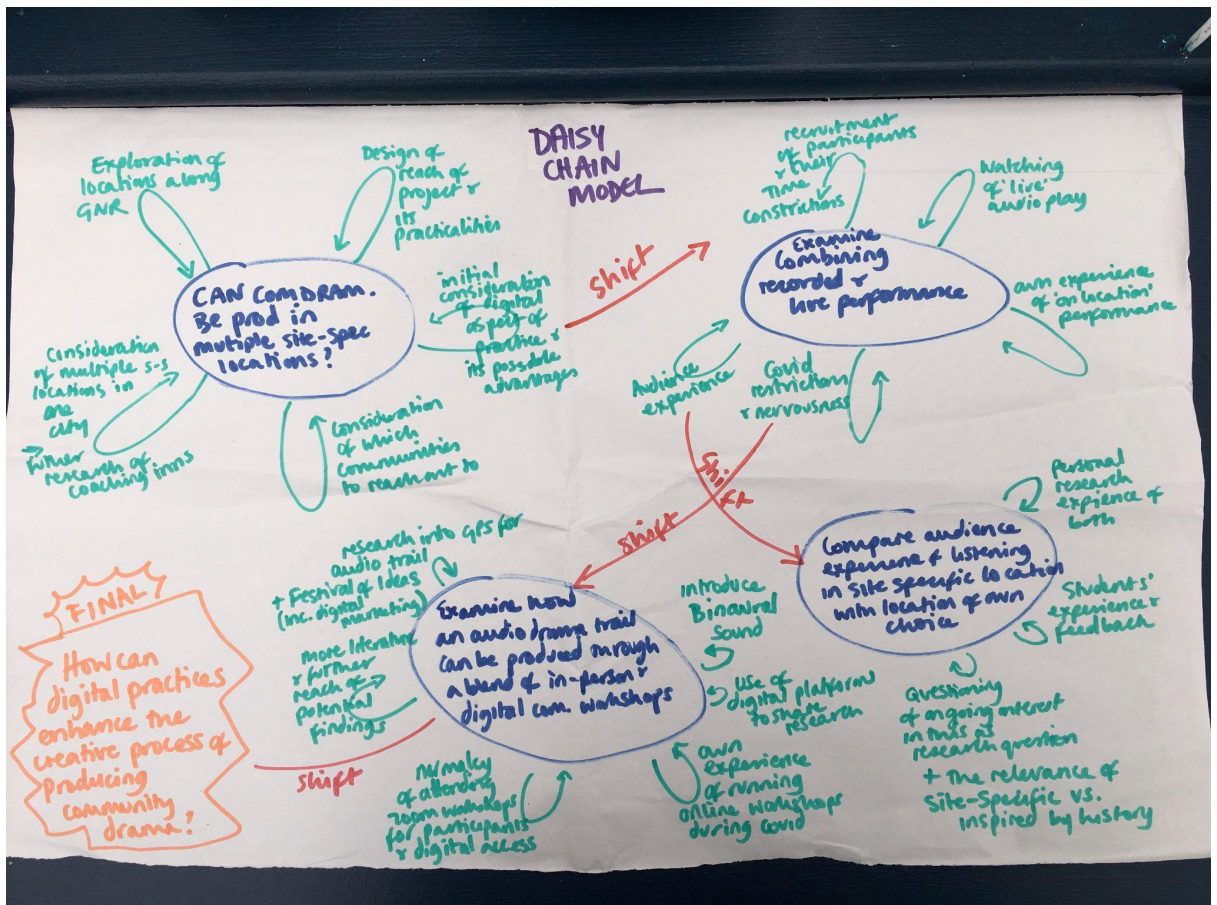


Figure 5: Author's own sketched adaptation of the Daisy Head Multi-chain Model

Figure 5 shows a mind-map of my thoughts reflecting the shift in focus of this research and is explored in detail as separate steps below.

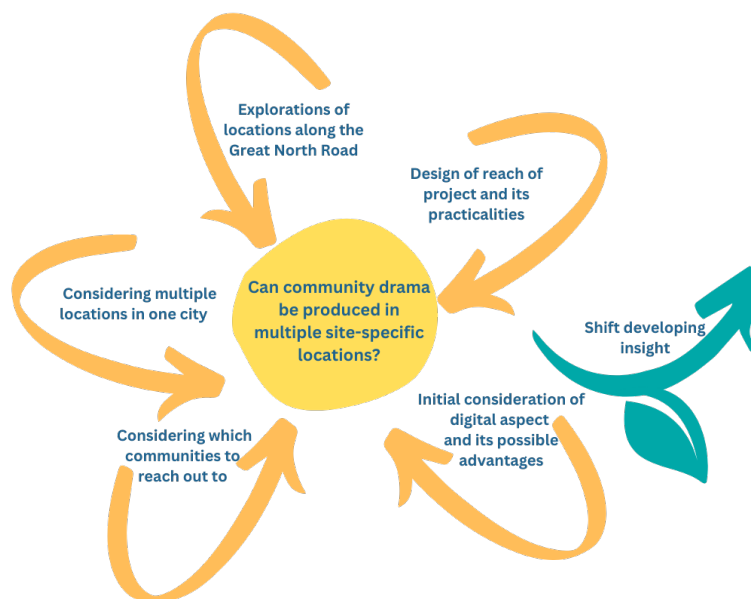


Figure 6: Author's own step 1 of Daisy Chain Model

To start, the aim was to investigate how a linked community drama could be produced in multiple, site-specific locations along the Great North Road (Fig. 6). However, the budget and time that would be needed to expand in this way would have been beyond the scope of the research project. In turn, in such a geographically large reach, there was a consideration of community engagement and how this could be realistically organised. The scope was therefore changed to be multiple locations but within one city, and those locations would specifically be coaching inns that still existed in the city of York, once a crucial stopping point on the Great North Road. As this decision was made, it informed the reach of the possible community participants, if they were to be local. Already at this point, the digital practices that could enhance the creative process were being considered as a way to communicate between multiple locations, share research material and connect local stories.

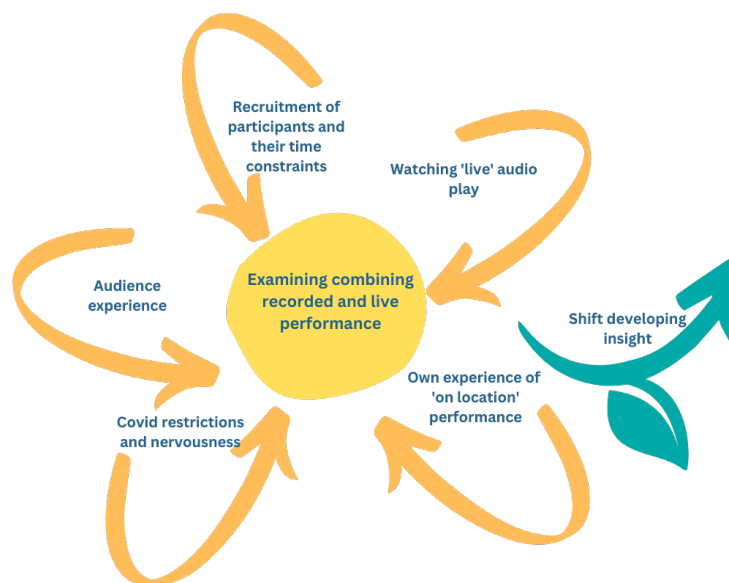


Figure 7: Author's own step 2 of Daisy Chain Model

The next shift in the Daisy Chain Model was towards the examination of combining live and recorded performance as the key outputs (Fig.7). Once again, the digital aspect of production emerged and was then solidified as an approach when it was appreciated that Covid-19 restrictions and a general nervousness coming out of a pandemic, could be aided by incorporating digital practices early on. Specifically, these could be adopted for communication and sharing of resources, to avoid face-to-face activity and ultimately, for an audience to be able to experience the drama

without being part of a large gathering of people. It was due to the potential Covid-19 restrictions that the decision was made to not attempt recording a performance with a live audience and thus there was a shift away from this line of inquiry.

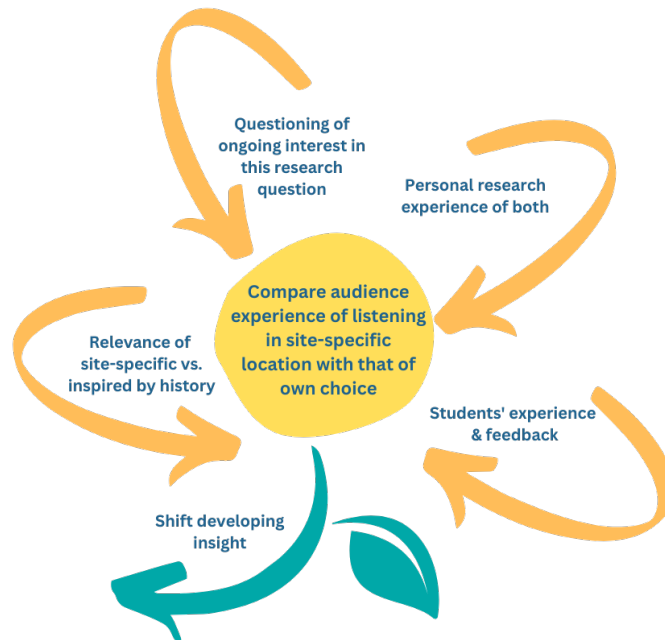


Figure 8: Author's own step 3 of Daisy Chain Model

Once established that there was to be no live recording or performance, another consideration was the merit of exploring an audience's experience of listening to an audio drama in a site-specific location or a location of their own choice (Fig.8). Though this focus is relevant to the researcher, on consideration of listening to other available audio material and taking into account feedback from other audiences of such experiences, I concluded that this focus was too narrow for the scope of the overall study, and did not require new material to be developed as part of the creative practice, which I was keen to do. This type of research could be done with existing location-based dramas, comparing the audience's reaction to listening in two different locations. I was more interested in exploring using digital tools to support the creative practice and thus needed to concentrate on the stages of production. However, it does remain of interest to me and could still be investigated in the future with distinct audience groups to gauge their different reactions to listening in a site-specific location, pertinent to the drama or in a location of their own choice.

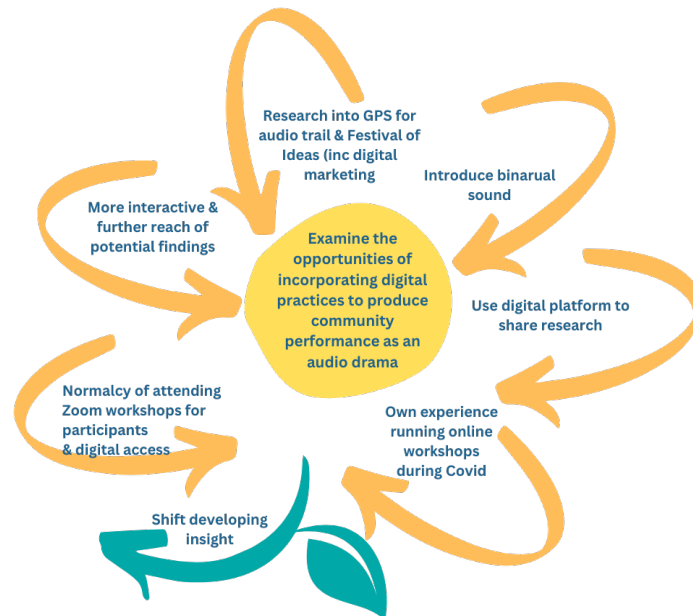


Figure 9: Author's own step 4 of Daisy Chain Model

By this point, the planning of using both in-person and online workshops with participants to meet, discuss and refine the historical material to be used as the basis of a script, was becoming embedded in the production's methodology. This was influenced by my experience of having run workshops during the Covid-19 lockdowns with other community projects. Ultimately, as shown in Figure 9, this led the way to the final research focus becoming one that explored the opportunities of incorporating digital practices to produce community performance as an audio drama.

3.2 Production Methodology

As a director, I would often describe my role as a facilitator who is part of the creative team rather than a leader with a singular vision. Quite often this team will be a mix of professional and non-professional people. Similar to many directors, I seek collective input in the journey of production and I collaborate with everyone in the creative process to ensure their ideas are heard and represented. This reflects a similar approach by community drama practitioner Joe Norris, who states:

Trust is vital in any process of co-creation, and, since all participants are stakeholders, a respect for one another's position is vital. As a director/researcher, one of my duties is to set the tone of our work. (2017, p.21)

A simple explanation of the term *co-creation* is given by Maya Chowdhry (2020) who specialises in participatory theatre. For Chowdhry, it means people from different backgrounds making something together as equal partners.

Norris's inspiration for his structure discussed in *Playbuilding as Qualitative Research* (2017) was the steps used in *Collective Creation*, a specific Canadian theatrical genre adopted by Glenys Berry and Joanna Reinbold when producing drama within community settings, particularly for the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (Berry and Reinbold, 1985). These steps have also been a useful scaffold for the co-creative community performance methodology for producing INNovating. As illustrated below (Fig 11), I have built on Berry and Reinbold's structure and my own adjustments can be seen in green. In particular, these include the additional step of recruitment of the community participants, as well as reversing the steps of refining and scripting, as it was found to be more useful for the writing process to be able to have script readings with the actors and re-write as a consequence of this activity. In addition to this, the key digital aspect of the INNovating project was that the output was an audio drama and therefore this is seen as the *performance* step, which also includes [download](#) so that the audience can experience the performance. This structure will be expanded in Chapter 4 to map the use of digital technologies in the creation of community performance.

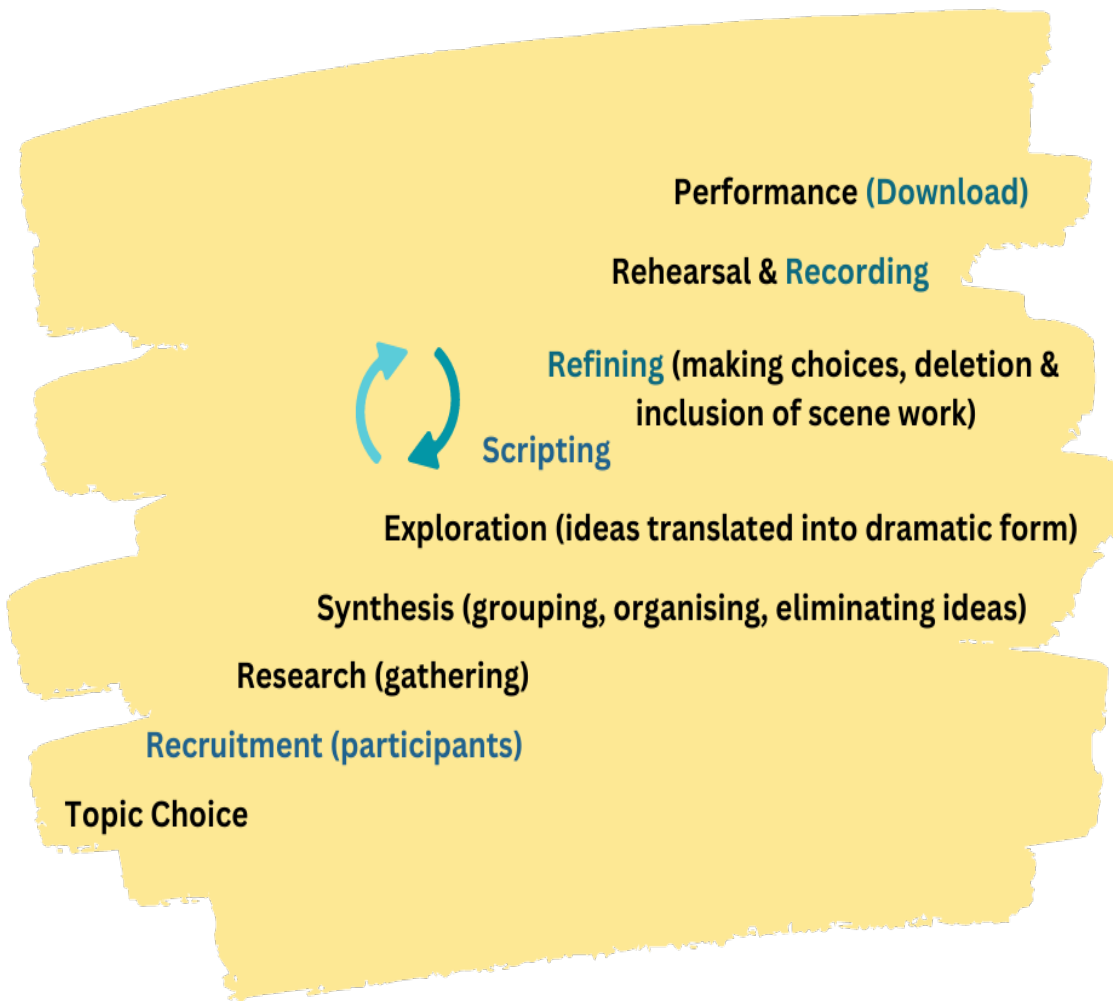


Figure 10: INNovating production stages adapted from Collective Steps (Berry and Reinbold, 1985).
Author's adaptations are depicted in green.

3.3 Digital Practices used in Production Methodology

The digital practices and technologies used in the INNOvating production are indicated below and these shall be explored as to their practical usefulness, their ability to aid creativity and to what extent another production of a similar nature could harness them in the future.

Table of digital tools used in the production of INNOvating:

Need	Digital Tool / Type	Usage	Reference to Berry & Reinbold's Steps
Communication	Email - Gmail	General communication of project details & sending PDFs of scripts - Project partners disseminating recruitment call-out & marketing of Q&A session & audio download site	- All
	Social Media - Twitter		- Recruitment & Performance
Information gathering	Google Form	- Questionnaires for previous experience & project expectations	- Recruitment
	Doodle	- Online polls for availability	- All
Sharing	Google shared folders Spreadsheets - Google Sheets	- Historical research collected into shared spreadsheets and stored in shared folders	- Research & Synthesis
Data storage	Spreadsheets - Google Sheets	- Detailing participants' availability & contact details (accessible only to the author)	- All
Video conferencing	Zoom	- Initial group meeting, research & script workshops, rehearsals, production team catch-ups	- All
Recording	University equipment & director's own pop-up studio space	- Recording of devising workshop & final scripts	- Exploration - Refining - Rehearsal - Performance
Editing	Pro Tools & binaural plugin software	- Editing of final audio	- Performance
Dissemination	Audio platform, SoundCloud & mapping - Google	- Distribution of audio drama for audience download with link to edited map of York & locations of	- Performance

	Maps	thematic interest	
Audience	Event booking & audio download links via Eventbrite	- Audience book free tickets to Q&A session & book ticket to access the audio via download	- Performance
Website	Website host - Wordpress	- Project website for background information, research aims and links to audio download site	- Performance (& sharing of academic research)

Table 1: Digital tools used in the production of INNovating

Chapter 4. Creative Practice

4.1 Production Steps

This chapter is structured using the adapted model of Berry and Reinbold’s Collective Steps, as described in Chapter 3, breaking down the phases of production that relate to INNOvating into 9 steps and detailing the aims for activities and the use of digital practices in the creation of the audio drama. The steps include my reflective notes which documented the process, capturing moments of insight, as suggested by Robin Nelson’s PaR methodology explained in section 3.1 Research Methodology.

INNOvating Production Steps and Activities

Step	Activity	Detail
1. Topic Choice	Topic chosen prior to research starting	Director on application to University of York
2. Recruitment (participants & production team)	Meetings with production team Workshop 1 - Project Introduction	Various dates Date: 08.02.2022 - on Zoom Attendees: 22
3. Research (gathering)	Workshop 2 - Archive Skills	Date: 12.02.2022 - Explore York Attendees: 16
4. Synthesis (grouping, organising, eliminating ideas)	Workshop 3 - Synthesis	Date: 03.03.2022 - on Zoom Attendees: 13
5. Exploration (ideas translated into dramatic form)	Workshop 4 - Devising	Date: 15.03.2022 - Explore York Attendees: 15
6. Scripting	Workshop 5 - Script Feedback	Date: 05.04.2022 - on Zoom Attendees: 11
7. Refining (making choices, scene work)	Workshop 6 - Script Readthrough	Date: 26.04.2022 - Explore York Attendees: 10
8. Rehearsal	Workshop 7 - Script Rehearsal	Date: 09.05.2022 - Explore York Attendees: 10
9. Performance (recording, download)	Workshop 8 - Recording Day Workshop 9 - Listening Session	Date: 14.05.2022 - Explore York Attendees: 14 Date: 10.06.2022 - Explore York Archives - Attendees: 16

Table 2: INNOvating production steps and activities

Step 1: Topic Choice

Aim: To share the prior decision of topic choice of with project partner York Explore and potential project participants

The topic choice has been highlighted in Chapter 1 and to summarise, the narrative of INNovating takes place in York in the late 1820s during the 'golden age' of coaching. From early conversations with York Explore, it became obvious that this topic choice and era would be well supported by material in the Archive for historical research by the project participants. We planned that as part of the research for the project, participants would be able to study historical maps of the route of the Great North Road and of York, the timetables of the coaches and the buildings associated with running the local inns. This intention was that this would lead to the location influencing the formation of possible plot lines and becoming a vital witness to unfolding drama.

My experience as a director informed my decision to give specifics to the topic choice. I have observed in my own practice that having some defined boundaries such as era, location and broad theme actually helps co-creation rather than hinders it and that people usually like to know that there is a vision from the start. I am aware that I could have initiated the project without such a clearly defined topic choice and that this could have been developed during the production process. However, I believe that it was helpful for Step 2: Recruitment, as it allowed potential participants to know exactly what the project was about, its links to York and the potential drama that could be created around the theme of coaching inns. This enabled them to consider if this was an area of social history that interested them before they committed to being part of the project.

Step 2: Recruitment

Aim: To recruit a maximum of 25 community participants and a production team to include a writer and sound designer

Recruiting the Participants

The ambition for this community project was for it to be collaborative and co-creative. As discussed in Chapter 2, the term *community* is primarily taken to be a group of people with similar interests and geographical reach, namely York and its immediate surroundings. This had the added bonus of finding people with an interest in history and performance but also, especially history of the place they lived and the lives of those who had lived there before them.

Engaging with local project partners in York's heritage and arts sector was a way to recruit potential community participants. Due to my limited resources and the time constraints of the research period, I aimed to recruit a maximum of 25 participants, to enable effective project management. I wanted to engage individuals with interests in historical research, performance and audio drama to form a unique group for the project. To widen the avenues of recruitment, I approached the department of Innovation, Creativity and Learning at Explore York Libraries and Archive²⁰ and they agreed to become a key project partner. They were able to give advice on which possible community groups to reach out to disseminate the project recruitment details. Using the archives' mailing list, Explore York's social media channels and several other organisations such as York Creatives Network²¹, Say Owt²² (spoken word collective) and the theatre group Out of Character²³, I distributed the call-out to inform their members. In addition to this, Masters students from the University of York linked to the Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past and who were studying heritage and community were also included. Keen to not limit the prerequisites to an interest in drama, the wording of the call-out varied depending on

²⁰ explore.york.org.uk

²¹ Grassroots collaborative network: yorkcreatives.com

²² Collective of gobby northern poets: sayout.co.uk

²³ Theatre company of people who use or have used mental health services: outofcharactertheatre.squarespace.com

its intended recipients, as potentially we may have been recruiting people who wanted to primarily do the historical research and not necessarily perform (see Appendix 1).

28 people initially expressed interest in participating in the project. As previously explained in Chapter 1, I had anticipated a drop-off in numbers as this was not a problem as a smaller group would be more manageable from the perspective of production management. The intention was to allow participants to attend the first workshop to ascertain the possible production roles involved and the level of commitment needed (see Appendix 2 - participants are anonymised and each is given a code which is used in the Steps as described below).

Recruiting the Production Team

As well as this early stage of recruiting community participants, the structure of the INNovating production team was also created. The reason for recruiting a professional writer is echoed in the work of Ann Jellicoe's manual *Community Plays, How to put them on*. Jellicoe uses the term *amateur*, whereas I prefer *community participant*, but Jellicoe talks of the beneficial reciprocity that can take place in combining people who are paid and not paid as part of the co-creation process:

There is a great deal that amateurs and professionals can learn from each other: the amateurs particularly have much to teach professionals about relating to each other and to communities. However, a professional writer, director and designer are vital since they ensure very high standards which in turn inspire confidence and commitment (1987, p.9).

Jellicoe believes that trust and credibility in the production team are crucial as people within a community are very cautious to commit themselves until they are certain they won't be made to look foolish but once assured will "share unstintingly their time, energy, talents, skills and enthusiasm" (ibid). The assembly of an experienced (professional) production team in INNovating gave the community participants a level of quality assurance. On top of this, whilst the final output of the audio drama being of a high artistic and technical standard was not necessarily an explicit aim or

expectation at the start of the project, it became a huge bonus and source of pride for everyone on completion, as reflected by one participant (A4), “we made this out of an idea!”. This has to be considered as an additional benefit from the point of view of the research into the process of using digital technologies in the co-creative process of creating community performance.

I appointed Paul Birch (PB) as writer for INNovating on the basis of his experience in community theatre, having previously written audio plays for Out of Character and a commission for Explore York, who had suggested the contact. I recruited a sound designer by sharing the opportunity via the Programme Leader of the University of York’s MA/MSc Film and Television Production with Sound. I had the ambition to incorporate the particular digital practice of creating the drama as a binaural experience. This usually involves using two separate microphones (sometimes embedded into a dummy head) to create the impression of depth and to reflect how the listener would naturally hear sound, ie, at the centre of the action. However, the effect can also be produced with software in post-production, which allows for more control in an edit as sounds can be re-situated and layered with more ease. I thought the binaural experience for the listener would enhance the storytelling, soundscape and sense of movement to create a historical drama, particularly one involving a journey by coach and horses. It was also a technique I was keen to explore for my own professional benefit as a director, extending the scope of this research, with a view to understanding the process to create binaural drama and ascertaining its effectiveness. Four postgraduates responded to the email invitation to find out more about the project and state their interest in being involved. Matteo Falco (MF) was selected as he also had an interest in researching the possibilities of using binaural techniques.

Workshop 1 - Project Introduction

Date: 08.02.2022 - on Zoom - Attendees: 22

Aim: To gather participants in a Zoom workshop to introduce the project and collectively decide on the primary areas of focus for archival research.

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV, PB & Archivist York Explore (AYE)

The overall intention of this first meeting was to be informative, open and interested in why people wanted to get involved and what they would like to gain from the experience. This reflects the *Playbuilding* steps advocated by Joe Norris:

The first meeting/rehearsal typically begins with the question, 'why are you here?' Some are interested in the topic, some enjoy this genre of theatre and others are just curious. No particular experience in acting or research is required, and although some possess various degrees of experience and skill in each, the process is open to all who volunteer, because we recognize that we can learn from the various talents and understandings of every participant (2017, p.22).

The research question examining the use of digital practices in community performance was immediately shared with the group as an opportunity to be explored. Though our first workshop always intended to introduce the hybrid methodology by using video conferencing, namely Zoom, this planning was of immediate benefit as by then I had contracted Covid-19, which would have made it impossible to run the workshop in person.

During the Zoom workshop, which people accessed by laptop or smartphone (at a ratio of approximately 3:1), participants were given the opportunity to learn about the project's aims, the potential production roles (researcher, performer or a mix of the two, production assistant, runner) and the intended timeline of activities. I introduced the overall premise of creating a drama focusing on York's coaching inns and their important position as a stopping place along the Great North Road. In four pre-selected break-out rooms, organised to spread the range of interest and experience in community projects, people discussed the possible broad categories they would like to research that would feed into the drama. The areas of focus for initial historical research, having been discussed in the breakout session, were subsequently identified by the whole group as

- a general history timeline of between 1780-1830 (reflective of the height of the coaching industry in the UK and before the advent of trains)
- the history of coaching inns and who might work there or frequent them

- any specific coaching inns in York that might be potentially inspirational for dramatic retelling
- details of life in York during the specified time frame of the 1820s

Overall, the first meeting met the intended aim as stated above. The clear expectations of the commitment needed to become a volunteer, including the information about the hybrid nature of research, as well as an outline of the intended workshops and rehearsal dates were seen to be of great use to participants, which is reflected in the post-production interviews as seen in Chapter 5. Having achieved a focus of four clear strands for archival research was also a positive outcome.

Step 3: Research (gathering)

The next stage of the INNovating production process was research - in this case, the gathering of historical material concerning four categories as decided in the first Zoom workshop and listed in the section above.

Workshop 2 - Archival Skills

Date: 12.02.2022 - Explore York Archives - Attendees: 16

Aim: To gather participants in person for a workshop to introduce research skills to access digital and paper-based archives

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV (remote) & AYE

To enable those without archival research experience to gain the skills needed to use the Explore York Library's printed and digital resources, the project's first in-person workshop was to be delivered by the chief archivist at Explore York. Sadly, I was unable to attend in person due to still testing positive for Covid-19 but was included via Zoom - an obvious example of a benefit of employing hybrid digital practices. While attending remotely, I was able to type notes on the content of the workshop and distribute them later to any other participants who also couldn't make it. One of the volunteers had contacted me that morning saying that she was suffering from anxiety about meeting so many new people but really had wanted to attend. I realised that she too could join remotely in our hybrid system as we had

already set up a Zoom link and she was positive about the alternative attendance mode.

I decided we could use Google Sheets to record the historical research collected by the participants and for this to be accessible via a shared Google Drive. The reason for this decision was a variety of factors. Similar to the use of Zoom for video conferencing, spreadsheets are used by many people in their work or study and seemed a fairly low denominator for access and ease of use. The use of Google for access to cloud storage was also assessed as simpler than Microsoft Teams in terms of project administration and ease of user access. The cells and additional tabbed sheets within one overall spreadsheet allow for possibilities of simplified categorisation and organisation and encourage brevity compared to a Word or Google Doc, all of which are an advantage if many people will be inputting information. A further advantage was that data input could be asynchronous. The intention was that once it was established, the shared spreadsheet created a sense of ownership. If I had relied on people sending me the information via email attachments, I would then have had the sole responsibility of the collation of documents, which would have meant being channelled through a singular subjectivity and not an appropriate sifting method at this early stage of information gathering. My time also was a linking factor in this, as I was also occupied with the pre-production organisation needed to create an audio drama.

Step 4: Synthesis (grouping, organising, eliminating ideas)

Having had a period of three weeks for the initial gathering of historical research following the archives workshop, the next stage on the INNovating journey was for this data to be shared and, in the next Zoom workshop, to concentrate on the synthesis stage of grouping, organising and eliminating ideas on the basis of dramatic potential.

Participants had done research in their own time according to their interests aligning with the previously agreed themes (a historical timeline of 1780-1830, the history of coaching inns, York's coaching inns and details of life in the city in the 1820s). They

then inputted their notes on the shared spreadsheet, including any available web links to further appropriate research material. The spreadsheet was divided into these themes on different tabbed sheets which had the added benefit of being able to see where the holes were in the research and point people in those directions if needed. Immediate, unsolicited feedback from one seasoned local history enthusiast was that this system looked like "A very impressive system for remote collaboration." (Participant R2)

Researcher:	Title of publication	Volume	Notes	Links to documents
R2	Yorkshire Gazette	9 Dec 1820	Menagerie at WHITE SWAN Pavement: 4 lions, ostrick &c &c	
R2	York Herald	15 Jan 1820	Meeting of Yorks.Law Society at WHITE SWAN Pavement. Meetings, auctions &c common at inns	
R3	York Racecourse website		Details of first purpose built stand 1756 and importance in York season.	
R4	Researcher's own work		Highway Robbery trial at York Assizes - in 1827 , one James Metcafe found guilty of highway robbery -sentence could have been hanging, but was commuted to transportation - trial probably discussed extensively in the inns	http://www.northcravenheritage.org.uk/NCHTJ2019/2019/RobberyRetribution/index.html

Figure 11: Example of use of a shared spreadsheet for gathering historical data

Workshop 3 - Synthesis

Date: 03.03.2022 - on Zoom - Attendees: 13

Aim: To share the archive research generated by the participants and to discuss any possible dramatic storylines emerging to take forward to the devising workshop

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV, PB

In preparation for this next stage and workshop, it was useful for me to be across all of the gathered material and for reasons of the available time of the volunteer participants, I thought it appropriate to assume an oversight role. This was in order to be able to organise and filter back the historical material to the creative team of researchers, performers and the writer during a workshop. Robert Cohen (2011, p.26) sees this position of *oversight* meaning a "view from above" or a "super-view" or "super-vision" - that shortens to "supervision".

When the whole team next gathered for the synthesis of the archive research workshop, it was held on Zoom rather than in person, principally to reduce travel and the need for child care. As anticipated, the group size had shrunk by now, reflecting people's availability rather than a lack of overall commitment, evidenced by emails sent to me by those who had to retire from the project. I divided the group into four teams for breakout rooms to ensure a range of experience in each group i.e., a mix of historians and performers. Each team took one of the episodes to focus on. At that point, it seemed likely that the drama would be structured with each episode being based on one of the four still-existing pubs in York that had been coaching inns. The discussions in the groups were to expand on the research that had been gathered and ascertain any further research needed to build character and possible plot lines in the upcoming in-person devising workshop. Each group discussed their ability to undertake further research at this point, depending on their own time constraints. The suggestions for specific archival research included: prices charged in a coaching inn for an overnight stay, the likely social status of passengers arriving in York and finding the historical evidence of women running an inn during the 1820s.

Step 5: Exploration (ideas translated into the dramatic form)

At this point it is useful to emphasise the nature of my role in this process, which had the duality of my creative practice research and that of the leader of the process. In terms of INNovating, as previously explained, the ambition was for it to be a collaborative creative process, and the notion of a leader to guide the process was not at odds with the collective endeavour. Robert Cohen (2011, p.13) recognises this, and most importantly, the practicality of having a leader to keep a project of this nature going. He states that leadership is not contrary to collaboration but believes it to be crucial to it and that it is what organises the collaboration, giving it focus, discipline, boundaries, and orientation.

Workshop 4 - Devising

Date: 15.03.2022 - Explore York - Attendees: 15

Aim: To devise possible characters, plot lines and soundscape from archive research

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV, PB, MF & AYE

As a director, I have learnt the hard way that turning up to a rehearsal and expecting devising to just happen is not a productive strategy. Therefore, over the years, I have used many tools to assist in the process of creating characters and improvising possible dramatic scenarios, such as, supplying visual archive material in the form of prints or photographs depicting people from which to find inspiration for building a character. Joe Norris supports this idea of pre-designing the improvisational process, “Besides creating opportunities for storytelling and translating those stories into dramatic forms, I look for ways to design improvisations that may better help us understand a phenomenon.” (2017, p.31).

One of the main reasons to run this workshop in person was to be able to incorporate a technique that would eventually be pertinent to the digital aspect of the research but that is most effective when conducted face-to-face. I have adapted the exercise *sound tunnel* from a classroom-based activity sometimes known as a *conscience alley*, which provokes students into empathising with a protagonist (Dobson and Stephenson, 2018). As audio drama was the chosen performance vehicle for the stories we were starting to gather, it seemed appropriate for the devising workshop to include an improvised soundscape. In the exercise, the participants were asked to form two rows facing each other and to make sounds, vocally or physically, using the surfaces around them, that evoked an imagined York street in the 1820s based on their research. This progressed to include the interior of a coaching inn. Participants were then led down this tunnel of sound with their eyes closed so that they could experience the audio sensation without any visual distractions. This devised soundscape was also recorded by myself to be used by the writer, director and sound designer as inspiration for the final recording of the drama. An extract of the created sound tunnel can be heard here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/vawhd>. Improvisation can be a powerful form of inquiry (Norris 2017, p.31), and from the instant positive feedback of the participants in the workshop and also from the quality of the devised sounds gathered, this co-created

soundscape was very effective and gave a glimpse of how the binaural techniques planned for the editing process could affect the final episodes.



Figure 12: Participants of the INNovating Devising Workshop sculpting characters (image - Author's own)

Step 6: Scripting

Joe Norris talks of scripting as a “liminal” act which relies on intuition to create new works of art. Intuition plays a major role as one’s artistry emerges from what is known, creating new meanings and works of art (2017, p.30). There were two elements of my personal experience as a director working in new writing that I was able to harness for the next stage of the INNovating production process. The first was related to how the audio drama should be divided into episodes and where the audience would possibly listen to it. Following the devising workshop, the writer (PB) and I had a walk-and-talk session around York trying to experience the locations that could be related to the plot and find a suitable route for the audio drama trail. We found as many problems as we did inspirations, and in fact maybe more. We became concerned about the safety of people listening to it on the street if we were going to make the drama site-specific, due to York’s traffic. However, if we located the audio trail inside of the still-existing coaching inns, there was an obvious need for the audience to access the pubs, which as an audio download designed to be listened to at any time, might be restrictive due to opening hours. In addition to this, the audience may need to purchase refreshments while there and given we were looking at four locations, this could have been expensive and impractical. If you were

to undertake an audio trail on your own, which many people do, you might not feel comfortable sitting in a pub alone.

The second element where I called on my experience emerged after the delivery of the first draft of the script, which was action-packed and had a large cast. While neither of these elements in themselves is necessarily a negative, given the practical aspect of recording hours available to us due to free room hire from Explore York and the various other time commitments of our participants, we needed to find a way to summarise certain action scenes rather than actually record them. Further to this, the sound effects needed for 'action' are challenging and time-consuming to edit. This was likely to be beneficial to the duration as well, as a listener will have a limited concentration or dwell time for each episode. The solution was to make one of the characters also the narrator and that they would be talking directly to the listener, who in turn became a character within the play that other characters regularly spoke to. This also had the advantage that we could record all of the narrator's lines separately the day before the main recording session and get a consistency of voice and microphone technique.

Workshop 5 - Participant Feedback on Script

Date: 05.04.2022 - on Zoom - Attendees: 11

Aim: To share the first draft of the script and discuss further development possibilities

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV

Even though one person was responsible for writing the script, the intention was to keep co-creation at the heart of the production process and thus a script development workshop was held on Zoom with eleven of the participants to explore the first draft. Everyone had read the script which had been emailed to them and sections were selected to be read out by the participants to prompt discussion. Again, using this remote way of being together had the advantage of being at home during the early evening as previously considered, though some people's wifi connection was better than others, another aspect to consider when assessing inclusion for all. It was useful for me, as the director, to hear people's voices on a digital platform with a view to future casting, as it is not that dissimilar to hearing an

audio drama. On the whole, the feedback on the first draft was very positive. I put people randomly into breakout rooms to create smaller groups to aid conversation. Their task was to identify any areas of the script in terms of plot and character development they thought needed more clarity and then to summarise possible solutions. For example, there was some confusion about the plotline in the third episode, so I sent this feedback to writer PB for his consideration and he made the appropriate adjustments to the script in time for the next workshop.

Step 7: Refining

Workshop 6 - Readthrough of Second Draft of Script

Date: 26.04.2022 - Explore York - Attendees: 10

Aim: To hear the second draft of the script and consider possible casting

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV, PB, MF & AYE

The suggestions emerging from Workshop 5 (as above) were followed up by the writer when crafting the second draft and proved to be helpful to the consistency of the plot. This new draft was then read by the group in person at York Explore as it was considered that in-person would be beneficial for flow and audibility compared to being on Zoom. I sent an email to the participants who said they wanted to act to ask what size a role they would be happy to take and did not hold formal auditions. The reason for this is that I find as a director, auditions can cause increased stress and not necessarily bring out the best in people. Consequently, with the knowledge of the size of part people were willing to take, the readthrough helped form my casting ideas which also had to take into account doubling and the ability to perform using different accents. Once again, the writer (PB) was able to listen, make notes and adjust the dialogue where it had been difficult for an actor to say or understand.

Step 8: Rehearsal

Workshop 7 - Rehearsal

Date: 09.05.2022 - on Zoom- Attendees: 10

Aim: To rehearse the final draft with the chosen cast before the recording day

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV

Following the read-through of the second draft, I made casting decisions by balancing voices and acting ability and considering the doubling of actors, particularly for the male characters due to an imbalance of gender within the ensemble. One of the ways to address this was to cast a woman as the narrator though the character was perceived as gender-neutral.

Due to the cost of studio hire and therefore time constraints, in my experience, it is not expected to have a rehearsal when recording professional audio drama, particularly if the actors have previous experience with microphones and script handling techniques. However, as this was not the case with our performance ensemble, who had varying experiences in making audio drama, I decided to add an extra workshop to be able to read the final script aloud and collectively work on characterisation. Once again, for this workshop, we met on Zoom in the early evening. Unfortunately, though we had attempted to find a time, via a Doodle poll, that everyone could make, there were some people who were unable to attend. Perhaps if we had been meeting in person it would have given the occasion a greater sense of importance. I also realised how much, as a director, I normally rely on my body language and gestures to bring the actors to a pause in the script to discuss and repeat. In addition, the sound quality and sometimes time lag on Zoom made it hard to give an accurate rendition of the texture and pace of the script.

Step 9: Performance (Recording and Dissemination)

Workshop 8 - Main Recording Day

Date: 14.05.2022 - Explore York - Attendees: 14

*Aim: To record the script with the community participants and production team
Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV, PB, MF, P1, & YE Community Engagement*

In considering the original steps of Berry and Reinbold, for this project, the main recording day is to be considered as the performance step. I had been offered the University of York's studios for all the recording but I decided to use my own pop-up recording booth and for the venue to be Explore York, as it was the place where the volunteers were used to coming to, which had good access and was easy to find. The reason for not using a high-spec studio was also to explore what issues might occur by recording in a community space. Other community groups considering making audio drama would be likely to face similar challenges, such as possible external noise and time restrictions. In view of the latter, I was very pleased we took the decision to record the Narrator's sections the afternoon before the main recording day as this eased the pressure of time to record the rest of the script, helped save the actor's voice and enabled consistency of tone and recording input.



Figure 13: Recording Narrator's sections prior to the main recording day of INNovating (image - Author's own)

The main recording day was a success in terms of everyone enjoying the experience and the adjoining room where the actors waited for their scenes was an inviting hub of tea and biscuits, card games and laughter. I decided to record the scenes in chronological order to enable the actors to follow their characters' journeys in the right sequence. We had undertaken a pre-recording site visit to test the sound recording but had not anticipated extra noise on a Saturday. Therefore, due to external sound intrusion coming from the library (photocopier) and outside (aeroplanes and public in the park), we lost about a quarter of the possible recording time and by the end of the day, were attempting to record one take of a scene, compared to two or three at the beginning of the day. Participants P1 and P5 who had originally stated that they wanted to be part of the production team took the roles of production assistant and runner and were a great addition, ensuring that the day ran as smoothly as possible. The production assistant marked up the script during the recording session and the runner made sure that the next actors needed were prepped and ready and that the green room was well stocked with refreshments.

The next month was spent working with the sound designer and community composer to edit the audio drama as a binaural experience. This meant editing the recordings as full episodes before we could then use the software to place the characters and soundscape to generate the binaural effect. The reward of this process, though taking double the normal length of time for editing, was that we achieved what we had intended: to use binaural techniques to enhance the storytelling, placing the listener at the centre of the action.

Workshop 9 - Listening session (Dissemination)

Date: 10.06.2022 - Explore York Archives - Attendees: 16

Aim: To listen to the audio drama with the community participants and production team

Production team / Project Partner attendees: KV, PB, MF, P1, & YE Community Engagement

Once the final edits had been made and the audio tracks had been uploaded to SoundCloud (chosen for its reliability and ease of embedding tracks on other platforms), we were ready to get together again for a pre-launch listening session for all participants. Once again, this was held at Explore York and I had hired some Bluetooth headphones for this event and for the York Festival of Ideas Question and Answer audience session we were running on the same weekend. It felt like a live performance to experience the audio drama all together and as the participants had not been part of the editing process due to the skills and experience needed to finish this last part of the process, they were pleased to hear the end result in its entirety.



Figure 14: Backdrop for the Question & Answer session for York Festival of Ideas (image - Author's own)

Chapter 5: Results of Research

The audio drama INNovating was featured as part of York Festival of Ideas in June 2022 and was accompanied by a question-and-answer session featuring the production team and actors taking questions from the audience. The whole project is presented on the website www.innovatingaudio.co.uk where listeners can download the drama from SoundCloud and take a suggested walking route of York to tie in with the themes of the drama.

I invited all of INNovating's core participants (i.e, those involved throughout the process) to do a post-production Zoom interview and nine people took part. The aim of the interviews was to discuss their participation in the co-creation of the project and in particular, evaluate the value of the use of digital practices in the production process of community performance. I took the decision to conduct the interviews via Zoom because it was a familiar digital platform which reduced time commitment and the need to travel. Furthermore, Zoom offered me the ability to record and transcribe the content for the use of evaluation.

These semi-structured interviews lasted around 30 minutes and were scheduled according to availability rather than levels of participation in the project. Some of the questions were more general, e.g, relating to their previous experience of involvement in community drama, though most of the questions were specific to INNovating (see Appendix 3). For the purpose of this research, I concentrated on their overall experience of participating in the project and, in particular, how they found the use of digital practices employed in the production process. A summary of the responses follows and suggestions for future practice following the analysis of their responses are explored in Chapter 6.

5.1 Expectations of the project and possible restrictions to participation

Four participants (P2, R2, A3, and A4) had no or low expectations of the project or what it would be like to get involved, and two of these participants (A3 and A4) felt the experience exceeded their expectations. One person (A4), who said they always start a project with low expectations, said being part of the whole process “blew them out of the water” as they felt it “attracted the right people to be involved and give their time and skills”, by which they meant recruiting people who were interested in the same things, namely history and drama. Another participant (R1), who had not given it much thought before committing, thought the process initially was clearly explained, “I liked to see you had a clearly thought out programme and what it was going to involve.” Five participants (P5, A2, A5, A6, and R1) thought their expectations were matched, given the original details in the call-out. One (A3) reiterated the importance of being clear in a call-out when asked what advice she would give to a future project of this nature: “use clear communication from the outset and give people a general idea of how much time and what they need to commit to – it’s good to have knowledge of what the process might be.”

Many people cited the limited time they could commit to the project as their main restriction (P5, P2, A3, A4, A5 and R1) and one of these, a busy person in their 80s (R1), suggested both time and energy were limiting factors. One of this group (P2) also cited that childcare was their main potential restriction, and for two people (A5 and A6) social anxiety and mental health could dictate whether they were able to participate on a particular day.

5.2 Digital Practices

Although by no means new or innovative, the use of e-newsletters, direct emailing and social media all increased the potential numerical and geographical reach further than previous generations’ reliance on in-person modes of communication. In addition to this, the ability to add a Google Form for the participants’ expression of

interest and gathering of previous experience as well as contact details made the process, from a producer's point of view, relatively straightforward.

The digital practices listed in the table in Chapter 4 can be divided into three main areas: communication, sharing of research and production of the audio drama. These became the basis of the evaluative questions in the post-production interviews.

5.3 Methods of communication

As the participation call-out required individuals to email me in response, I was able to establish with them whether this mode of communication would be acceptable for sharing meeting dates, details of the workshops and scripts. The post-production interviews reflected that for the majority of people, email had been an effective method of group communication, though there was an issue linking through to the research data spreadsheets if they were attached or linked to an email accessed via a smartphone (R1, R2, A3, A5).

One of the participants (P2), who had extensive experience working as a composer and who offered to write the musical score for INNovating, was clear that meeting with me in person had been hugely more beneficial than when we were trying to communicate changes to the score via written notes sent in an email. Concerning the frequency of email communication, which was mainly to the whole group (who I bcc'd rather than sharing email addresses), everyone was happy with the level of an average of one email a week. One response (R2) summed up, "you've got to keep everyone feeling part of the system without micro-managing them." In fact, one person (R1) was particularly satisfied with the level of communication: "it was very good because you told us what it was and you didn't fuss and you kept us well informed without overload."

When considering other possible methods of digital communication, this split into age ranges, with younger people happy stating they would have been happy using a WhatsApp group and one, in particular, suggesting the keyword function would have been useful to trace a message trail (A5). Another person (P5/A1) suggested

WhatsApp could have been used to develop the characters in the drama but tempered this with a recognition that this method might not be accessible to all participants or indeed, widely taken up. In fact, older participants said they would not have wanted to use WhatsApp or Facebook and were happy accessing information via email. Unfortunately, there was one occasion when there was a change of date for a meeting but the email stating this change had not reached an actor and consequently, they missed the session.

Doodle polls were also created to ascertain people's availability, which enabled an overview of which dates would suit the majority of the participants. From a personal perspective, this method worked well on the whole, but some people were slow to add their availability and needed to be nudged by email to do so.

In response to the use of the video conferencing platform Zoom for the hybrid style of workshop participation, generally, people were confident in their use and recognised this was probably due to video conferencing being adopted over the past few years as a result of the in-person meeting restrictions during the pandemic. Participants appreciated the ease of Zoom from the point of view of travel and childcare, and for some, it eased the social anxiety of meeting in person. They felt it lent itself more to discussions about archive research than those focused on the creation of characters or subsequent script rehearsals. However, there was not an overwhelming love for the screen-based meeting approach, but rather an acceptance, as seen in one comment (A4): "Zoom is not ideal, but is second best." From my perspective, overall the workshops held on Zoom went well, though on occasions I struggled to manage the organising of the breakout rooms as well as leading the session.

5.4 Sharing of research

Participants were asked how they found the use of a Google Sheet to share their historical research at the beginning of the project. Project partners Explore York had been keen to use Microsoft's OneDrive for data collection as it is a system preferred by the local council because it is deemed more secure. However, after several participants had difficulty accessing it, including myself, we reverted to a shared

Google folder, hosted on the University of York's secure system, as approved by the Ethics Committee, to be able to gather our research on a Google spreadsheet. We had originally discussed the possibility of setting up Facebook and WhatsApp groups for sharing research but the first was rejected as few of the group used Facebook, especially younger people, and WhatsApp was not included as it meant having to share personal phone numbers.

The majority of people who had been conducting the historical research found using the Google spreadsheet simple, though some needed a bit more time to get used to how to navigate around it and input their material. One person (A6) had assumed that you needed to have a Google account to be able to access a shared drive or spreadsheet and that this could be potentially confusing if you already have another email account. On a positive note, there was a feeling of ownership of the process and a recognition of the advantage of the asynchronous nature of the input process. Feedback included "The shared drive was a brilliant idea because then you can contribute when you've got the time rather than having a designated meeting where you've got to pour your brains out in half an hour" (A4).

5.5 Production of the audio drama

Response from the participants about using a community space and pop-up recording studio at York Explore was enthusiastic. As it was the same venue where we had run the devising and script development workshops, it was familiar to everyone and had good access and facilities. The pop-up booth was my own, used for previous community recordings and the recording equipment was supplied by the University of York, and organised by the sound recordist.



Figures 15 &16: Exterior and interior of the pop-up recording booth at York Explore (images courtesy of PB)

Many of the participants fed back in their interviews how they had learnt new skills and increased their knowledge, breaking down as follows: 7 people stated that they gained acting, production and technical skills and 3 felt they increased their knowledge of the history of York. When asked if they felt their contribution was reflected in the final audio drama, participants' answers included "(I was) chuffed that the body snatching (research) came through" (R1), "absolutely – loud and clear!" (A4) and "Yes – particularly proud of my improvised blaspheming!" (A2).

Chapter 6. Reflections

This chapter reflects on the results of the PaR, includes the opportunities found by incorporating digital practices to produce community performance as an audio drama, and offers suggestions for producers of future projects of a similar nature. The headings relate to the broader topics of the post-production questionnaire undertaken by the participants.

6.1 Expectations of the project and possible restrictions to participation

Reflection Summary and Suggestions for Producers:

- Be as clear as possible about what participation in a project involves
- Remain open to participants' developing interests and involvement in new areas of production, and accommodate this in the co-creation planning
- Offer expenses payment upfront to enable all to engage rather than paying after an event has taken place

When asked what would have made participation easier in the project as a whole, participants' responses ranged from finding solutions to financial concerns to creating more hours in the day. One participant said that, in general, when volunteering for a project, she would like to be offered expenses to help with the rising cost of fuel etc., and thought people are more likely to give up time if they are valued and can get food and travel. She went on to note that pre-paying these costs would help but so would an allowance which considers where people travel from rather than giving a flat fee. Expenses had been offered, though these should have been highlighted more clearly when sending the call-out for participants to ensure greater take-up of the resource. Further to this, one major learning and recommendation is that it is essential for producers to pay for travel in advance for those who need it (e.g, a taxi fare) rather than expecting a participant to be paid afterwards, as one person in particular could not afford to pay upfront and get reimbursed and this, sadly, prevented her attending one of the sessions.

6.2 Digital Practices

Reflection Summary and Suggestions for Producers:

- Ensure everyone has access to a digital device for communication and sharing of information and have devices available to lend if this is not the case
- Be consistent in when group emails are sent, e.g. Friday mornings, so that participants can expect the communication
- Be clear in what response is needed to an email even if it is confirmation of receipt
- Enlist one person within the group who has experience with Zoom to be in charge of organising the breakout sessions to free up the facilitator
- Run a pre-production training session on spreadsheets for the gathering of research material
- Explore using common devices such as mobile phones to record drama if other recording equipment is not available

A key learning taken from this project is to always consider digital inclusion when designing activities. Digital inclusion has shifted from being an aspirational luxury in society to an integral feature that touches on all aspects of daily life (Bluestone, 2022). This potential barrier was reflected by some in the participants' post-production evaluation of the methodology, as seen in Chapter 5. For example, whilst the use of spreadsheets had the advantage of everyone being able to see the growing body of material gathered and where there were gaps in the research, initially some people had difficulty getting to grips with either accessing the spreadsheet in the first place or then navigating through or being able to add to it. Thus, the ability to communicate solely through digital means should not be taken as a given. Online forms and spreadsheets require all participants to have access to the internet on a device that makes access possible. Adding the cost of hiring internet-enabled devices to a project budget to allow this to happen would be a recommendation going forward.

6.2.1 Methods of communication

Email is widely used and with the INNOvating participants, everyone said they were comfortable with it, though people's frequency of checking and responding to correspondence varied. To ensure that information has been shared, requesting a response to an email could be helpful so that the sender knows it has been read and there are no problems arising. Then, if there are problems, further communication about finding a solution can take place.

For meetings and workshops, although the skills needed to manage video conferencing on platforms such as Zoom have been learnt by many, if break-out rooms are used to discuss in small groups, having a person who is solely in charge of organising this during the meeting and not facilitating, is very helpful.

6.2.2 Sharing of Research

Participants filling in the spreadsheet with what they are interested in researching took a little longer than I had anticipated. Several nudges via email helped to populate the spreadsheet and gradually a body of research grew that would be used to progress to Step 5: Synthesis. A training session on how to access and input a shared drive and the type of content and how it is organised would have been really helpful right at the start of a heritage research-based project such as this.

In addition, appreciating that this spreadsheet could be a unique document, pulling together all the archive material on a particular topic, should be recognised and therefore offered to local history archives or societies as a future referencing tool. Certainly, with INNOvating, the ambition is to extend the project to other communities along the Great North Road and therefore much of the material gathered on the topics of coaching and inns may be a further legacy of the project and of benefit to other researchers in the future, such as the cost and length of travel in a coach between the inns and the various jobs related to the industry.

6.3.3 Audio Drama Production

Using audio drama as the output of this project in terms of community performance was embraced by project participants and partners alike. The fact that the performance can be listened to repeatedly gives great pleasure to those involved and acts as a legacy for the research. For the process of recording and editing the script, one of the advantages of having a postgraduate from the university as the sound designer was that we had access to top-quality skills and resources. An alternative, more accessible, method of production is suggested in the Conclusion. The ambition to create the drama using binaural sound, though effective, certainly slowed down the post-production editing process. However, it was effective in putting the listener at the centre of the action and enabled the artifice of the listener being an active character in the drama. Concerning the incorporation of the musical score, considering the extra editing time used to make the production binaural, the participant who composed the music had a recommendation after finishing the project: "If possible, whatever time you need for composition and editing, double it!" (P2).

Chapter 7. Conclusion

I started my research because I wanted to develop a tested methodology for producing community performance incorporating digital practices that could be used by myself and community groups in the future. I adapted the Daisy Chain model (Bucknall) to refine my focus which became an exploration of the opportunities of incorporating digital practices to produce community performance as an audio drama. Following Nelson's Dynamic Model and an amended version of Berry and Reinbold's Production Steps, my PaR subsequently adopted a reflective hybrid model of online and in-person workshops, historical data collection, rehearsals and recording sessions. The main output of the practice as research is INNovating, a three-part audio drama that evokes the sounds and stories of coaching inns and travellers stopping off on their journey along the Great North Road.

To summarise, the main reflections and findings of the research were that there are many advantages to using digital practices to produce community performance as an audio drama, outweighing the possible challenges. These include:

- Methods of communication - e.g. the convenience of video conferencing for certain workshops, such as sharing historical research, script reading and rehearsing
- Sharing - e.g. the practical aspect and sense of ownership of adopting a digital shared space, such as a spreadsheet in a Google Drive, to collaboratively build historical research used in script development
- Audio Drama Production - e.g. the skills acquired in producing the audio drama by participants and production crew alike and the possibility of the legacy the production continuing to be listened to by a wider audience

It is appropriate to say that my ambition was to create a performance *with* a community group, meaning both professionals and community participants were instrumental in co-creating around a theme and that the final production was a

positive reflection of this collective endeavour. Responses to the post-production interview question asking what the participants had gained overall by co-creating INNOvating are well represented by these two statements: “each one of those people is engaged in creative endeavour and that encouraged me to reach out – it showed me that you can do what you want, earn a living and have fun”(P5) and “I gained friendship...so much came out of it.”(A4)

7.1 Possibilities for Future Research

In terms of addressing the research question, I have examined which digital practices were advantageous when producing community performance and how to mitigate for potential issues arising from their adoption. There are many other routes that further research could take to explore different variables, such as working with one pre-defined group rather than instigating a general call-out for participants or completing a similar activity of creating audio drama with all of the production stages being online only. However, two suggestions that link closely to the production steps that we followed, but that could both vary and extend the research, are as follows.

7.1.1 Production Methods

One suggestion for further research is to explore how to incorporate more easily available recording equipment when co-creating community performance. I recognise that not all potential future productions would have access to the high level of resources or skills that we had for INNOvating. It would be of interest to extend this project to work with the INNOvating actors who have expressed an interest in writing and recording monologues about life in a coaching inn from the perspective of their character. It is likely that this would enhance the feeling of ownership of the production from the participants and increase their levels of engagement, both essential parts of successful community performance. These monologues could be recorded by themselves on their phones and uploaded to SoundCloud. This body of work would add to the research, providing a complementary form of media content, created via more accessible equipment.

7.1.2 GPS-linked Dissemination

In terms of dissemination, I decided early on in the production process not to have the audio drama as a GPS-linked route (such as audio trail productions *The Lost Palace* and *Eavesdropping*, as noted in Appendix 4) but for the audience to be able to access it as a download via SoundCloud. This meant that the episodes could be listened to anywhere, which increased the number of downloads made via York Festival of Ideas and directly through the project's website²⁴. However, a suggestion for further research would be to create a community performance that was more site-specific, with locations being chosen by the participants and using GPS technology to lead the listener on their audio journey. This could further explore the sense of place and enable a listener to more closely relate the plot and characters to their surroundings, without the need to follow a map once the audio experience has started.

My own ambition following this fruitful and rewarding research is to link communities along the Great North Road through a series of audio dramas, created in different locations on the route, using hybrid production methods to research, devise and record the dramas. The episodes would populate a digital map of the journey taken and be available to a worldwide audience via the project's website.



Figure 17: The Great North Road and the future of INNovating (image - Author's own)

²⁴ innovatingaudio.co.uk

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - INNovating Call-Out

INNovating **an audio drama trail around York's historic coaching inns**

CALL OUT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Do you like performing?
Are you interested in researching the history of York?
Would you like to be part of an audio performance project in York?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, read on...

Inspired by the history of York's coaching inns, **INNovating** will be an audio trail that evokes the sounds and stories of these places of hospitality for weary travellers, resting on their journey along the Great North Road.

In workshops led by professional director and University of York PhD student, Kate Valentine, a team of volunteer researchers and performers will devise and record the audio soundscape for the trail. Audiences will listen to the audio as part of York Festival of Ideas in June 2022, in the original coaching inns and via an interactive map.

The volunteer commitment: We will be meeting for workshops in person and via Zoom to research, devise, develop and record the script from the archive material about York's coaching inns. Everyone involved in the project will participate in an introductory meeting, research and script development workshops, with a performing role as optional.

You will also be invited to take part in two short interviews with Kate Valentine to assist with the research for her PhD and be required to agree to this via a sign-up sheet.

The project workshops (dates and venues TBC subject to Covid restrictions):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Project introduction meeting: | Tuesday 8th February 7.30-8.15
Venue: Via Zoom |
| 2. Archives workshop: | Saturday 12th February 2.00-4.00pm
Venue: In person, York Explore |
| 3. Follow up archive research meeting: | Tuesday 1st March 7.00-8.30pm
Venue: Via Zoom |
| 4. Script devising: | Tuesday 15th March 6.30-8.00pm
Venue: In person, York Explore |
| 5. Script development: | Tuesday 5th April 7.00-8.30pm
Venue: Via Zoom |
| 6. Rehearsal: | Tuesday 10th May 5.30-7.00pm
Venue: Via Zoom |
| 7. Audio Recording: | Saturday 14th May 10.00am-4.30pm
Venue: In person, York Explore |

If you would like to volunteer to be part of **innovating**, please contact Kate Valentine via email (kv617@york.ac.uk) by 21st January 2022.

Appendix 2 - INNovating Participants

Code: P=Production, A=Acting, R=Research 1=most interested

YE=Explore York, OoC=Out of Character, MA=Masters, YC=York Creatives

Notes= initial information supplied by participant and added to by KV as reminders

NB: 1s used instead of Xs to enable easy counting using SUM function

Code	R	A	Notes	YE	OoC	MA	YC
P1	1		Student			1	
P2		1	Musician				1
P3			Sound Designer				
P4/A9			Writer / Actor				
P5/A1	1	1	Student interested in audio			1	
A2	1		Actor	1			
A3		1	Actor				1
A4		1	Writer / Actor				1
A5		1	Actor / Dancer		1		
A6		1	Actor		1		
A7		1	Actor		1		
A8		1	Actor		1		
R1	1		Local historian	1			
R2	1		Local historian	1			
UNABLE TO CONTINUE PAST FIRST 2 WORKSHOPS							
R3	1	0	Local historian	1			
R4	1	1	Local historian	1			
R5	1		Local historian	1			
R6	1	1	Local historian. Interested in research & perf.	1			
R5	1		Designer	1			
R7	1		Local historian	1			
R8	1		Student			1	
R9	1		Student			1	
R10	1		Student			1	
A11	1	1	Poet, writer and performer.	1			

A12	1	1	Actor		1		
R13	1		Student			1	
R14	1		Student			1	
R15	1		Student	1			
R16	1		Student			1	

Appendix 3 - INNovating post-production interview questions

Purpose: Questions for semi-structured interviews with community participants to find out their thoughts about being part of the INNovating creative process. The results will be used to reflect on my creative practice and inform a proposed structure and methodology for repeating the project with a new community.

Interviewees: 5 x researchers/actors, 2 x researchers, 2 x production team

Total amount of interviews: 8 x half-hours to be recorded on Zoom and transcribed

Possible questions:

- How did you hear about the project?
- Describe your participation in the project
- What was your experience before this of community projects?
- In what ways did experience either meet or not meet your expectations?
- Were there any constraints to your participation (e.g. your time, travel, cost)?
(If anything, what stopped you from attending?- NB watch ethics) What did you miss?
- What one thing would have made it easier for you to participate?
- How did you find the hybrid way of creating (ie, via Zoom and in-person)?
(Useful - watch the formal language and “how did you find”. Describe the use of online resources - inc shared drive ie not only Zoom. Mode and frequency of communication - does it have to be digital - better worked out in person?)
- Compared to other community projects you may have been involved in before, how was the communication between you and the production team (ie, too much/too little?)
- How did you find the length overall of participation in the project?
- How (where could you hear) do you feel your contribution to the creative process was reflected in the final audio drama?
- What advice would you give a production team, (i.e. writer, director, sound designer) who were doing a similar project in a different community, to include in their planning or production period? (Use this format to expand to what advice to participants?)
- Describe any new skills you may have developed
- Describe any new connections you may have made with other participants

Examples of edited responses to post-production interview

Participant A4

Participation – York Creative news – recently moved to York so good to get involved and meet new people. The research helped with characterisation – everyone brought their own energy and got to play a part which was the cherry on the top

Experience – community projects have always been in my DNA

Expectations – blew them out of the water. Always go in with low expectations. Attracted the right people to be involved and give their time and skills

Restrictions – Missed one but Zoom is not ideal but is second best. Feel a bit guilty but can only do what you can

What would make it easier to participate? – expenses to help with the rising cost of fuel etc. People are more likely to give up time if they are valued and can get food and travel. Pre-pay would help but an allowance considering where people are coming from rather than a flat fee

Hybrid – used to email – prefer it – good audit trail to be able to plan. The shared drive was a brilliant idea because then you can contribute when you've got the time rather than having a designated meeting where you've got to pour your brains out in half an hour. Whatsapp is not helpful as not everyone responds

Methods of communication – as above. Good practice to be more informative. Never such thing as too much information

Length – would have liked more time to workshop characters – one or two sessions – to have fun with them and also to be able to physicalise the dialogue for audio. A good period of time in all. Didn't feel rushed or drawn out

Contribution – absolutely – loud and clear! Everyone brought their 'A' game

Advice – Incorporate as many people who are passionate – requires all different skill sets and you will value everyone's contribution. There is a reason why they are called passion projects!

Skills – building on your skills and could feel them being put into practice again after a couple of years. Enhanced what I had

Connections – friendship and possible jobs. So much came out of it

Participant R2

Participation – Research, particularly on coaching and body-snatching. Found out via the archives

Experience – history projects with the Museum’s Trust and other archive projects

Expectations – no clear expectations for the drama but it was what was expected for the research – ‘the wisdom of crowds process’ – it evolves

Restrictions – no

What would make it easier to participate? - more time is always useful

Hybrid – worked well – most people used to Zoom now

Methods of communication – got to keep everyone feeling part of the system without micro-managing them. Some issues navigating the spreadsheets

Length – very short timeframe for the research and finding where the gaps were. Terrifyingly short timeline to create the audio - No idea how long it would take to make the drama and relieved not to be involved. You can never do enough research

Contribution? – chuffed that body-snatching came through in the plot

Advice – Community group with access to archives – if the infrastructure is there. Allow induction time for volunteers – training on how to use archives online. Mentoring and matching up with people. (NB - didn’t go to the archives workshop)

NB could create a database to be used by other communities along the GNR

Skills – made the sound of a creaking door! Not really

Connections – Yes always a plus. Get to know what other people are researching

Appendix 4 - Sample of productions, platforms and companies

Name of production	Platform used / links	Producer
AR Immersive Guided Walk Murder Mystery Study	App - iOS (iPhones 6s onwards) https://testflight.apple.com/join/xyk85XD Z Android (most non-lite handsets) https://tsfr.io/join/xv6x7s	QMUL PhD student
CONFLUX - York audio walk	TlotT app + details www.cgtheatre.co.uk/portfolio/conflux/	Common Ground TC
Rider Spoke	app	Blast Theory
C-O-N-T-A-C-T	app	Aria Entertainment and WEF Productions
Only Expansion	Specific device provided	Duncan Speakman
Frome Walking Memories (and many others)	app	https://satsymph.co.uk/projects-and-events/frome-walking-memories
Supercharging Audio Storytelling		Damian Murphy & Constantin Popp - UoY
The Lost Palace (recreating Palace of Whitehall) HRP	Bespoke hardware and software system that uses NFC, GPS, haptics, accelerometer, gyroscope and compass	https://heritageinmotion.eu/himentry/slug-b8d95e6193daf8032ca31da893c3e59b
Various productions		https://soundandfury.co.uk/

Eulogy	Strange worlds unfold behind the doors of shipping containers and within experiences for audiences at home	https://www.darkfield.org/
Audible York	App developed by homeless people for alternative tour of York	http://www.goodorganisation.co.uk/audibleyork.html
Various productions		http://anuproductions.ie/
Various productions		https://dreamthinkspeak.com/
Artist collective		https://www.shunt.co.uk/
Posthuman Mediation	University of Derby & Cyborphic (Science Fiction and Greek Theatre Company)	https://beinghumanfestival.org/events/posthuman-meditation
Ghostwalk		https://thesecret.city/how-it-works/
Wilding the Smart City	University of Salford	https://sway.office.com/afAW1mSvuZPYWMOk?ref=Link
A Street Named Gillygate	Claire Hind York St Johns Uni	https://open.spotify.com/episode/5ZAZMmvSKRkeuKEhpgdLOJ?si=1ubCa4d5Q2K9DpEGxlgHgg&nd=1
Eavesdropping	Hannah Lavery and Sarah MacGillivray in assoc with Traverse Theatre	https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/eavesdropping-reserve-equipment
Care & Connection in Crisis	Tamasha. Audio pieces responding to themes of care and well-being	https://tamasha.org.uk/projects/tamasha-directors-audio-project/