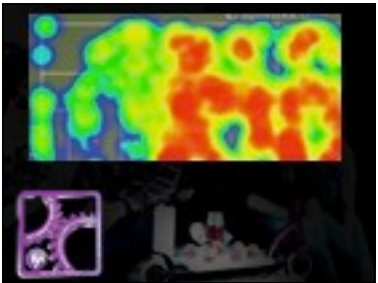




Creating Space is an interplay of people, place and relationship. A place is somewhere you arrive, a space is somewhere to explore and grow. StreetSpace is a Frontier Youth Trust project around new forms of church and ecclesiology with young people on the edge. We are now a national community but I am going to talk about our work in South Somerset.



In StreetSpace We call the walls to dust, beyond the old notions of centre and edge, there is no longer in and out, us and them, christian and non christian, kingdom and church, sacred and secular, we journey together and We call the walls to dust.



Recognising God is already present perhaps a better metaphor is a heat map, where is the energy and chaos of the go between god is condenses as people, place and relationship come together and help us discover God, and for us one such place is our local skatepark



We follow the missio dei but recognise that the God we know cannot be God, she is always more. The challenge is to co-create God, WITH the community we serve. We need the community to help us discover the hidden and seek god and today I bring you greetings from the church of Flow



To call the walls to dust we need to recognise the power issues. Often when we first meet a group we say something like, "we are around every week but you don't have to chat to us if you don't want, you can tell us to get lost if you like" at which point some likely lad usually says 'fuck off then" and so we immediately turn to leave" 9 times out of 10 they will say "I didn't mean it mate, come back"



We need to take our cues from the relationship emerging. Firstly we got involved in developing the space with the young people, and together raised over £80000 to regenerate the surrounding area and skatepark, going through a process where they did most of the work and made the key decisions.



Continuing this We asked a young person what does it feel like when you skate and ride - he replied “you forget all the shit of life and just flow” I responded think thats God but maybe you don’t have the words to describe it. This was the start of the church of Flow, (which grew through pilgrimages, presence and dialogue)



We recontextualise the texts, but remove the barriers of interpretation, we allow the stories to speak for themselves, young people to react, interact and interpret - Together we seek to feel the story and live the story - we call the walls to dust



We are happy with the temporary and to allow the seeds to die. We experimented with Tai Flow as worship. A young person stood on one side of the ramp, me on the other, a group in the middle, he and I centred ourselves and moved like this, the young people copied and for a moment the walls were dust



We challenge the structural issues young people face and undermine their power creatively, we offer young people alternative ASBOS, and borrow from christian peacemakers to turn up at council meetings with this placard to silently witness the discussion about issues that affect our community We call the walls to dust .



We have fun, we play games, we seek balance, and help when young people are homeless or in need. We build tree houses, and make cakes on open fires, we have problems and challenges, drug users, scallies, young leaders and activists, and together we call the walls to dust



We use the seasons, in winter we don't call young people to us at christmas, but burn frankincense and eat marshmallows at the skatepark, we share christmas joys and sorrows we called the walls to dust and the neighbours called the fire brigade



In the autumn we celebrate, and have anything from 300 -500 young people plus adults to our SkateJam and community day. It is a gift and a thin place where heaven and earth are very close, and music is very loud.



In the spring we clean, and most nights all year round the young people drop litter. Their inability to put stuff in the bin gets me down, it is a simple thing that annoys the community, the council and other young people, we are far from perfect.



We seek to be a regular presence, which is key for the more in-depth stuff like our Spaced Out - drugs group, Relationspace a sex and relationships space, and Zine our young community activists programme. Most of the young people in Spaced out stopped using and yet we still have to run it again for the next generation of young people experimenting with drugs and ringing.



It is a contested space. The council like to own the positive change stories. The institutional church like to own the good news stories, but we refuse to pimp out the lived experience of young people to earn a supposed place at these tables. Like any project we could tell these stories but instead we call these walls to dust.



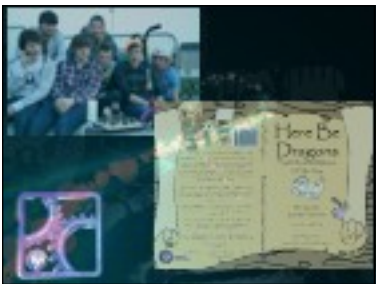
Recently the young people built a new ramp, They were up till 1am in the morning working hard to be ready for the skate jam, but in a contested place but it was a health and safety and practical nightmare, where the young people felt it was their space but the council own the site.



At 9am on the morning of the skatejam, a young person turned up with his widows mite, it a brand new BMX for us to raffle off. We had limited contact with Jason as over the years he had become pretty wrecked through drugs and alcohol, but this year he brought his offering and once again the walls were dust.



We work across the area in many contexts, but slowly things seem to be converging at the skatepark and we don't know why. One of the girls who has been struggling for some time told us how she felt about the space and so several of the team went home that night and wept.



So here I am, learning to follow christ from the living texts around, following flow, and journeying in that place on old maps that simply says "Here be Dragons", but I am no longer a lone explorer, but part of a community of around 200 people locally and StreetSpace is a national community of 57 projects spread, which you can read about if you like, BUT the important thing is that together we are calling the walls to dust.