

## Opening slide

Whilst I'm talking, please feel free to draw a picture on the enclosed lighting gel - draw a picture of something about your current living place that gives you pleasure. (explain)

SLIDE of ME

My long term area of research has been into 'place and performance'. What is place today, how is it performed and so on. I am interested in migration *because* of this interest in place. How can place attachment ease the lives of transient or newly arrived migrants and how can performance activities assist this?

I'm going to talk about one research project where I have been working with migrants and place. **SLIDE (picture)**

My Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded research project was called **(SLIDE)** 'Challenging concepts of "liquid" place through performance practices in community contexts' (2011-2014) (Challenging Place). I'm going to - very briefly - discuss what it was and then what's important about it. **SLIDE (the two questions)**

This research reflected my interests in place and it asked to what extent and how contemporary theories of dislocation and transience are evidenced in particular 'real world' contexts, (This was the theoretical extension of what place is), how performance practices can be used to consider relationships to place and whether dislocation - if and where it exists - might be eased through such practices. One clear provocation for this research project was to further scrutinise assumptions about 'traditional' place and 'contemporary' mobility. What was the reality of these claims? How do those who might be perceived as vulnerable or even at risk *actually* perceive their places?

One project took place in Oldham, just on the edge of Manchester UK. The population of Oldham is around 105,000. **SLIDE - picture of map**

From the days of British Commonwealth migrants in the 1950s Oldham has continued to be a site for settling migrants in some number, whether refugees, asylum seekers or otherwise. Our small-scale practical research project aimed to explore the performance of place with relatively new migrants in an area where ideals of 'place' might be challenging for newcomers. They came from a mixture of countries. We were to use extended performance practices of place, experimenting with the aim of easing location for these migrants. The need for this work came from Oldham Council where e.g. Oldham Leisure Services wanted us to work with new communities via 'drop in' sessions at Oldham Theatre Workshop.

Nearly a year of drop in workshops every fortnight then weekly. During this time we undertook a range of activities - many represented on a website. Screenprints are within your folder. Let me show you a clip of just one exercise that took place on the first day although the clip also shows members of the group returning to that window. **[SLIDE - VIDEO]**

There are some points I want to make about this project:

1. That migrants (differently 'found') might be more likely to engage with cultural services in the first instance than, e.g. training and skills development programmes? This may be something about the non-threatening approaches to vulnerable groups...? (Tea and coffee start.) It's fair to say, however, that continuity and sustainability was a major problem.
2. How the model works. About meeting people where they are at, co-development and co-production with a local authority, shared ownership over the practice. (I took in the ideas for practice, theoretical thinking about what place might be today.) Encouraging people to find their own sense of place and unusual forms of place attachment. The emphasis is on place, location and making it theirs. These are not performers but the performance, arts-related activities.
3. The work is effective. (SLIDE - Show second video clip]. Also - this is not about past stories but about the present and future
4. The findings suggest broader issues here. There are broader research questions which need to be addressed and come into play when we talk about integration - mobility, home, environment, conflict resolution, cultural heritage - all pertinent issues across Europe in the current climate and the role that Performing Arts has (inviting participation, cultural integration and easing feelings of dislocation, new places/spaces/cohesive communities or a melting pot/cultural fusion/seeing things differently)
5. The work (hopefully) continues....how can we better work with existing residents in the UK in receiving migrant communities, for this we need to engage with a diverse range of migrant backgrounds and needs which will require EU expertise. We have a small funding grant application in for working further in Oldham with local residents and incoming Roma community.

Plenty of other arts research addressing migration; increasing number of high profile arts events also. Not research - yet - but many events. SEE SLIDES - Globe's *Hamlet*, Kneehigh, the Good Chance tent.