

Institution: Liverpool Hope University
Unit of Assessment: D35b: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts
Title of case study: Performing Migration
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>'Performing Migration' impact case study includes a number of workshops, performances, artist talks and events undertaken and/or organized by Dr. Lena Simic with contributions from Dr. Gary Anderson, Dr. Niamh Malone and Ms Carmel Cleary. The case study is embedded in the community work within Liverpool, but its outreach is also transnational. This case study's impact lies in enriching cultural life and influencing public discourse around the themes of citizenship, belonging and migration. This work is furthermore activist and political – financial resources have been used from institutions (Arts Council England and Liverpool Hope University) to channel the funds and better the lives of the migrants.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p><u>Foreign Matters practice-based research by Dr Lena Simic exploring citizenship and belonging</u></p> <p>'Foreign Matters' is a practice-based body of work which explores, from a transnational perspective, notions of national and international identity, citizenship and belonging, through performance and subsequent publications. 'Foreign Matters' practice-based research project has been submitted as an individual submission for REF2014. The body of work is concerned to research the individual and often times isolated lived experience of 'foreignness' and transform it into an affirmative, politically collectivist stand through collaborations with others, in workshops, networks, public performances and events. This research focuses on a particular Arts Council England-funded performance, <i>Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...</i> (2011) alongside scholarly publications and artist talks which develop the notions of affirmative collectivist praxis within an international and transnational framework.</p> <p><i>Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...</i> was a performance event and series of community workshops at the West Everton Community Council and Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Group (all in collaboration with Jennifer Verson) which looked to problematise nefarious notions of citizenship and belonging within a local framework. It set out to expose how migrants are treated in contemporary Britain through the 'Life in the UK' test. During the <i>Blood & Soil</i> performance the audiences got to sit an actual 'Life in the UK' test (more than 80% of participants failed), and were at the same time offered two diverse migrant stories of belonging. The performance was later renamed <i>Betting on Being British</i> for Lantern Theatre showcase as well as delivered as a performative presentation at two international and one national academic conference.</p> <p>In addition to the performance's affective quality, this project is a political experiment focused on the sharing of two things: migrant narratives and our own financial means (in this case the Arts Council of England £4800 funding received by Simic, which was used to set up a migrant artists community in Liverpool, and the now firmly established Migrant Artists Mutual Aid, a network of people who come together to produce community cultural events that aim to promote cohesion and intercultural understanding while raising money for migrants in crisis). Subsequent collaborations between Simic and Migrant Artists Mutual Aid include performing for the <i>Vagina Monologues</i> fund-raising event against female genital mutilation (FGM), and Simic's curating of <i>Cartographies of Justice</i> creative event at Liverpool Hope University.</p> <p>It is important to note that this research started as a part of Simic's AHRC funded Ph.D. practice-based research (2003-2007) and therefore represents the culmination of several years of research and practice on this theme.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Practice as research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Council England funded <i>Medea/Mothers' Clothes</i> performance at the Bluecoat in Liverpool 2004 and subsequent tour (part of Simic's practice-based research Ph.D.). http://www.medeamotherclothes.org/ <p>Arts Council England funded performance and its tour were seen by 1000 audience members in England, Croatia and Cuba. Jo Beddoes, one of the curators for On the Edge performance programme, comments: 'Thank you for bringing <i>Medea</i> to us. We all enjoyed it enormously and the students really got a lot from it.' Most common comments on the project were from young women who were pregnant or had small children, and who, after seeing the work, expressed confidence about working as mother artists themselves.'</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

- Arts Council England funded Community Workshops titled *Becoming British* and Performance Event *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...* both in collaboration with Jennifer Verson at West Everton Community Council in April 2011.
- *Cartographies of Justice* creative event exploring citizenship and migration at Liverpool Hope University in December 2012.

Two Publications:

- Simic, Lena and Verson, Jennifer; *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...* performance document; The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home, 2011, ISBN: 978-0-9564165-1-3.
- Simic, Lena; 'On Foreign Discomfort: Magdalena Makeup Live Art Event'; *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience* (edited by Dorothy Rowe and Marsha Meskimmon) Manchester University Press 2013, ISBN: 9780719088759). Simic's paper was selected for publication from a number of presentations at V&A Museum conference 'Diasporic Futures: Women, the Arts and Globalization'.

Performative Presentation at leading international conference on citizenship which included inaugural lecture by Engin Isin and keynotes from Paul Gilroy and Judith Butler:

- 'Mapping Multiple Belongings and Fictionalizing Citizenship in 'Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...'' at Opening the Boundaries of Citizenship international conference at Open University in February 2012

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The work of Dr. Lena Simic and her collaborators Jennifer Verson (artist and Research Associate for the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies), Dr. Gary Anderson, Dr. Niamh Malone, Ms Carmel Cleary as well as a number of participating artists in the *Cartographies of Justice* project (Sai Murai, Natasha Davis, Katherina Radeva, Zodwa Nyoni etc.) have all had an impact on changing perception of migrants in the community as well as bettering the lives of a select number of Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers pre and post Natal Group women in Liverpool. This case study's impact lies in enriching cultural life and influencing public discourse around the themes of citizenship, belonging and migration. This work is furthermore activist and political – financial resources have been used from institutions (Arts Council England and Liverpool Hope University) to channel the funds and better the lives of the migrants. The impact affects: Liverpool toddler group at Unitarian Church on Ullet Road, Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Group in Dingle, West Everton Community Council, ESOL students at Blackburn House, audiences of *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...*, and Migrant Artists Mutual Aid network comprising of Liverpool's migrant artists and refugees.

In terms of historical context and the building of the impact from practice as research, in 2004 Simic developed *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* live art event. The piece was developed through Simic's weekly attendance at two toddler groups in Liverpool (Lark Lane Community Centre and Unitarian Church on Ullet Road), which led to the involvement of a further 19 mothers from those toddler groups and a performance/exhibition at the Bluecoat. The project was ACE funded and went on to tour both in the UK and beyond: greenroom, Manchester (2004), Brunel University (2004), Teatro Guinol, Santa Clara, Cuba (2005), Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia (2005), Performance Art Carlisle Event, Source Café, Carlisle (2006), John Thaw Studio Theatre, Manchester University (2006), Bristol University (2006), *On the Edge*, University of Hull @ Scarborough (2006) and University of Winchester (2007). The piece (including its documentation/marketing material) was seen by approximately 1000 audience members. The performance's message was about motherhood and migration, and audiences were given an opportunity to reflect on how migrants (as mothers) are perceived. In addition to performances, Simic offered workshops and/or artist talks. Simic's research work focused on migration and motherhood throughout her academic career at Liverpool Hope (from 2006).

In 2011 Simic developed ACE funded *Becoming British* workshops and *Blood & Soil* performance at the West Everton Community Council. The workshops were attended by a group of Liverpool's migrant artists as well as ESOL students from Blackburn House (35 participants overall). The performance was seen by 50 people and through its subsequent tour at Lantern Theatre, and three conferences, by 150 more. Thinking critically about citizenship and questioning how citizenship is portrayed by neoliberal governmental policies has been one of the agendas at the creative workshops which tackled the compulsory test for British citizenship 'Life in the UK'. The performance *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...* took the form of the 'Life in the UK'

test intertwined with migration narratives. The accompanying publication (print run of 300) has been distributed to audience members.

Migrant Artists Mutual Aid was set up in 2011 as a result of Simic and Verson's collaboration, at West Everton Community Council as well as with Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Group (MRANG), through 'Home and Belonging' creative workshops attended by 20 women in a busy toddler group in Dingle, Liverpool. Collaboration between MRANG and Simic continues today, with a plan for further workshops. Women at MRANG were incredibly grateful for artistic interpretations of their stories and lives (both in poetry and photographs). Please refer to testimonials for further details. MRANG is also a part of the community outreach programme of the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies.

Simic has been central in the formation of Migrant Artists Mutual Aid and has played a key role in its first fundraising event for a FGM survivor at Lantern Theatre in 2011. At the occasion Simic and Verson performed 'Betting on Being British' (a version of *Blood & Soil*). Migrant Artists Mutual Aid also staged *Vagina Monologues* in 2012 (as a part of V-day campaign to end violence against women and girls and which runs every February) in order to raise awareness about FGM and fight the real battle for a survivor and her young daughter. The same woman's story has been depicted in a BBC Newsnight documentary by Sue Lloyd-Roberts aired on 3rd September 2013, following Migrant Artists Mutual Aid's efforts (post July 2013). Dr. Niamh Malone, Ms Victoria Bates (Department administrator until 2012) as well as Dr. Lena Simic were performers in the piece, whilst a Liverpool Hope University student worked as a technician. *Vagina Monologues* were performed at the Lantern Theatre twice and once at the Unitarian Church on Ullet Road to packed audiences with overall number of 200. There are plans to perform *Vagina Monologues* again in 2014. This activist work is set to continue. Current collaboration between Migrant Artists Mutual Aid and Simic includes raising money for migrants' legal fund through a staging of autobiographical solo performance *1994* which looks at the notions of war and exile at Lantern Theatre in November 2013.

Cartographies of Justice creative event was organized by Dr Lena Simic, Dr Gary Anderson and Carmel Cleary to bring the local Liverpool groups (MRANG and Migrant Artists Mutual Aid) together with international artists (Natasha Davis, Sai Murai, Katherina Radeva). The event took place in December 2012, and it included Student Performance, Artist Talks, Migrant Slam, Long Table Discussion and Migrant Feast. The overall number of audiences and participants were 100. This event was important in terms of furthering public debate around migration and bringing together community groups with artists who tackle migration in their creative practice. The migrant story 'slams' were recorded and interviews were made with organizers, slammers and artists, compiled both on the *Cartographies of Justice* website as well as Gambiankolu Radio in Liverpool.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- *Cartographies of Justice* website <http://migrantstory.wordpress.com/>

A compilation of performances, activities and interviews of the day.

- Migrant Artists Mutual Aid website <http://migrantartistsmutualaid.wordpress.com/>

A compilation of the network's activities, a blog.

- *Vagina Monologues* review http://www.catalystmedia.org.uk/reviews/vagina_monologues.php
- Testimonial (public) from Jennifer Verson, founder of Migrant Artists Mutual Aid

Lena's involvement with Migrant Artists Mutual Aid, in many ways can be viewed as a perfect example of praxis. From the beginning of our work together on *Becoming British* arts project Lena has integrated key theoretical questions about how immersive contemporary performance can comment on migration, citizenship and belonging. With *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...* performance event (and then *Betting on Being British*) we were able to explore the performative and social impact of the work for different audiences that included, academics, artists, refugees and asylum seekers. The publication *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...* served as a theoretical document and a legacy that extends the impact of the work.

One of the results of the collaboration has been the founding of Migrant Artists Mutual Aid which embeds the possibilities of the social impact of contemporary performance into the lives of Migrants living in Liverpool. Key principles of embedding contemporary performance authentically into social justice work were developed through *Blood & Soil*.

Cartographies of Justice creative event was an example of innovative best practice in how performance and performative environments can have positive social impacts. It merged authentic

Impact case study (REF3b)

solidarity with Migrants in crisis through professional development, resource sharing, and friendship with a performative historical exploration of migration. My current work exploring contemporary performance and peace building is a direct result of the creative and theoretical research that I have undertaken with Lena.

- Testimonial from exiled journalist from Gambia

Performance With Lena Simic & Its Impact On Me

I first met Lena Simic in late 2010, immediately after I was released from the Oakington Immigration Detention Centre in UK. This was when I found myself in total confusion about my asylum in the UK and barely lost my conscience. I can say that I was psychologically affected in one way or the other. Soon after my release from the detention, I had to stand with my two feet in collaboration with friends and kind hearted people to raise fund for my legal fee, when I was only an asylum seeker and had no permission to take employment in the UK. This was the time when I was invited by Dr. Lena Simic to join her project on "How To Become British". This invitation not only gave me courage to speak out about my ordeal in an open forum, but it also gave me opportunity to meet other people, may be, in similar situation and, as a result contributed a lot in making me who am I today.

"How to Become British" project also increased my knowledge about UK through Lena's performance in recognising all the importance dates in this country. I will say that this project has also given me opportunity to meet many friends who, in one way or the other, impacted positively in my life and my work as an exiled journalist in the UK. So to sum it all, I will say this event was very inspirational and motivational to give me strength in my quest for a safer place.

"Blood & Soil" (We are always meant to meet...) also contributed a lot in my life and work. This phrase keeps ringing bell in my mind even today as I was meant to meet Lena and Jennifer in this project. I remembered standing on the hill of Everton Brow, while narrating my stories. It also gave me courage to face the reality of the bureaucracy in the West as I kept on waiting for somebody to decide my fate. I have a strong conviction that people meet for a reason and I would always meet people I meant to meet. I never thought of meeting such people when I was escaping from persecution to flee to an unknown place, but this was just consequences of my circumstance and choice of the situation. So I will loudly say it once again, that my involvement in this project has created a positive impact in my life for the courage to stand and narrate my story with the hope that one day all this would be a thing of the past. I was first confused how can I narrate my story through performance, but this project had turned that doubt into a reality.

Through Dr. Lena, I was also able to associate myself with the Migrant Artists Mutual Aids in Liverpool. As it name, this project contributes a lot on my work as an exiled journalist and it is today helping a member who has fallen in similar situation of cultural persecution.

I recently join the first ever migrant slam, dubbed Cartographies of justice by the Liverpool Hope University organised by Dr. Lena and co. This also created a positive impact on my work as a slammer, poet and story teller. Not only contributed to this project as a slammer, but I was able to secure a little funding for my radio project, Gambiankolu Media and African Radio as moral boost. I thank Dr. Lena Simic for her inspiration on my life and my work.

- Testimonial from Counsellor, MRANG

Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers pre and post-natal support services (MRANG) was established in 2004 with the aim of providing support to pregnant and nursing asylum women and their young children, the majority of which are often in a very vulnerable state, as well as being destitute. [...]

In providing workshops in Drama, poetry, photography and creative writing, Dr Lena Simic Lecturer in Drama and Theatre Studies from Liverpool Hope University, provided therapeutic help to access emotions and in some ways to help with their difficulties. This showed in the happy faces displayed in their photographs and the laughter during their work. The work was very much enjoyed.

(Full testimonial available on demand)