Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Exeter
Unit of Assessment: Classics and Ancient History
Title of case study: *Memory, Mobility and Place*

1. Summary of the impact

Dr. Elena Isayev has led three projects, drawing on the implications of historical research, in collaboration with art practitioners, to engage young people, minority and disaffected groups in shared reflection and creative activity. These projects, centred on the paradoxical idea of *Future Memory*, have been used to create alternative spaces in which to re-think attitudes to human mobility, otherness and identity. While promoting new forms of cultural and artistic activity, the projects have also produced social benefit, in enabling large numbers of people, especially young people in deprived communities, to think constructively about their own identity, memories and sense of belonging.

2. Underpinning research

There is a widespread misconception that high mobility is a relatively recent phenomenon and that ancient society was largely sedentary, though in fact it too involved extensive movements of people. If we recognise this fact we can draw powerful analogies with the ancient world and use these to question current notions of belonging, 'the migrant' and the significance of place.

Isayev's research, focusing on ancient Italy, challenges the prevailing view that in the ancient world there was a natural tie to a specific homeland and a demographically settled world. She argues that the combined evidence of archaeology and literature suggests that much human mobility in the last millennium BC was ongoing and cyclical. As a result, xenophobia is difficult to identify, and outside the military context 'the foreigner in our midst' was not seen as a problem. Boundaries of status rather than geopolitics were the ones that were difficult to cross. In view of the high level of population movement in pre-Imperial Italy, Isayev disputes the general assumption that ties to physical territorial sites were essential components of individual and collective identities. She also stresses the absence from ancient culture of many features, such as a rigidly bounded territorial citizenship, that are typical of the nation state. These observations allow us to raise broader questions about the nature of community membership and 'belonging', and to explore the implications for contemporary culture and practice. Isayev's recent studies [3, 4 and 5] and monograph [6] examine diverse ancient patterns of mobility, and chart ancient attitudes towards migrant groups and individuals. Isayev joined Exeter in 2002.

In 2008 and 2011, Isayev was awarded AHRC funding under the Beyond Text scheme for two projects, 'De-placing Future Memory' [a] and 'Future Memory in Place' [d], followed by a 3rd project 'Future Memory in Red Road' in 2012-13, for which funding was raised collaboratively [f]. In these projects, Isayev draws out the implications of her work on ancient Italy [1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6] for contemporary thinking about communal identity, place and memory. In particular, De-placing Future Memory looked at the transmission of memory across time and space and the way that material objects and artistic practice can help us to understand how future memory is embodied in places and objects and how this in turn affects one's sense of belonging. In particular, her projects showed how migrant and displaced people create meaningful memory monuments that express their stories and identity. The projects are not explicitly about lessons drawn from the past. Rather, the ancient context, by providing alternative social and cultural models, has been used as a catalyst in collaboration with art and performance practice to stimulate a rethinking of fundamental categories such as place, mobility and memory, in a way that has led to a new understanding of what it means to belong to a community and place.

3. References to the research

Evidence of the quality of the underpinning research may be ascertained by the fact that it has all

been peer reviewed (with some of the publications and presentations being by invitation), and it has led to the winning of a number of grants and fellowships (AHRC and Princeton, Davis Fellowship).

1. Isayev, E. *Inside Ancient Lucania: Dialogues in History and Archaeology*, London University: Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 90, 2007. ISBN: 9781905670031 [Substantial research-based monograph published in respected Classics and Ancient History series.]

2. Isayev, E. 'Unintentionally being Lucanian; Dynamics beyond Hybridity'. In S. Hales, T, Hodos (eds) *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 201-26. ISBN 9780521767743.

3. Isayev, E. 'Corfinium and Rome: Changing *Place* in the Social War.' In M. Gleba & H.W. Horsnaes (eds), *Communicating Identity in Italic Iron Age Communities* (2011). Oxford: Oxbow, 210-22. ISBN 9781842179918

4. Isayev, E. 'Migration in the Ancient Mediterranean the Last Two Millennia BC.' In I. Ness (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*. Wiley-Blackwell (2013), 1-5. ISBN 9781444334890: DOI: 10.1002/9781444351071.wbeghm357

5. Isayev, E. 'Human Mobility in Ancient Italy and aspects of globalisation before Empire.' In M. Pitts & M.J. Versluys (eds), *Globalisation & the Roman world.* CUP: Cambridge (in Press 2014).

6. Isayev, E. *Migration, Mobility and Place, Relational Paradigms from Ancient Italy* (in preparation, pending peer review of full text, for submission to CUP in 2014).

Research Grants and Project Websites

a. Isayev, I., Principal-Investigator for AHRC (2008) for: *De-placing Future Memory.* £16,661. http://bit.ly/1b2T7lJ

   http://bit.ly/1a4SJAN

b. Isayev, I, Davis Fellowship, Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University (2010), for: project (related to monograph above [6]): *Paradoxes of Place: pausing motion in ancient Italy & now*: £28,000*.*

c. Isayev, I. AHRC Fellowship (Jan-Sept 2011) for: *Paradoxes of Place: pausing motion in Ancient Italy.* £60.699.

d. Isayev, I., Principal Investigator for AHRC (2011) for: Future Memory in Place. £24,426. http://bit.ly/IQVVJg

   http://bit.ly/1bCmfoj

e. Isayev, I., Co-Investigator for AHRC, Research Networking Grant (2011) with Guido Bonsaver (PI), University of Oxford, and Guido Tintori, Key Partner, University of Leiden, for: *Italy as a Crossroad. The transformative nature of Human Mobility: The Italian/Mediterranean case as an explanatory model*. £28,324*.*

f. Collaborative Grant Funding (2012-13) raised for *Future Memory in Red Road,* by: E. Isayev (U of Exeter), C. Webster (Swansea Metropolitan U), R. Kay, A. Phipps (U of Glasgow), Iseult Timmermans (Street Level Photoworks Gallery), from the following sources: Awards for All Scotland, Glasgow City Council North East Area Committee, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow (incl. portion of AHRC grant from CRSEES) and Swansea Metropolitan University. Cumulative TOTAL: £ 20 550. http://on.fb.me/1a4SZjp

http://bit.ly/19u93Aa

4. Details of the impact

Three projects produced substantial social benefit by enabling an expanding network of key participants, organisations and artists to promote shared reflection on identity and place among increasingly large numbers of members of the public. Two projects were based in Swansea and Glasgow, in areas that were among the most deprived in the UK.

De-Placing Future Memory (2009) [a], brought together an interdisciplinary group of academics, along with international artists, musicians and curators, some from conflict areas (Palestine and Iraq). It engaged over 600 participants, including a workshop with 200 school children, and combined artworks, a month-long exhibition, and public presentations at the Exeter Café Scientifique and Phoenix Arts Centre (refs. 1-4).

The methods explored in this first project were taken forward by Isayev with artist Webster and musician Wood in *Future Memory in Place* (2011) [d]. This involved thousands of people in Swansea, including 2700 pupils from 9 schools (with week-long workshops at each), members of the Brunswick Refugee and Asylum 'drop-in' centre, Gower College (ESL), and the over-55 Art Group at the Glynn Vivian Gallery (refs. 5, 7-8). It included the creation of three public art-works in Swansea: (i) a sculpture relating to *tesserae hospitales*, distant friendship tokens, housed at the National Waterfront Museum (http://bit.ly/1gjmVOW) (ref. 9); (ii) a multi-media event, combining a visual installation, new choral composition and film, *1000 Colours Blue,* performed live with a choir in Swansea City Centre, (http://bit.ly/19u9avB); (iii) an exhibition of 800 sent postcards painted by school-children; the postcards, and the *1000 Colours Blue* have been on exhibition in Swansea galleries and in Glasgow Centre of Contemporary Art.

The third project stemmed from a presentation in Glasgow of the Swansea project. This created an opportunity to explore ideas of memory and place in conjunction with the Red Road Flats community and Glasgow-based artists and academics (Kay, Phipps, Given and Timmermans) [f]. It engaged about 1000 participants in spring 2013. It included: (i) archaeological and sound workshops at St. Martha's Primary School (ref. 10); (ii) story, photographic and music workshops with local community groups (ref. 11); (iii) a final event including a live choral performance and a soundscape created through a 25-storey building (refs. 10-11); (iv) a documentary film by Khan, still in the production phase; (v) a forthcoming exhibition at the People's Palace, Glasgow of objects and stories created about them by school pupils.

These projects have strengthened links between artists, community groups and organisations, with significant impact going beyond the public events and workshops just described. For example, University of Glasgow archaeologists (e.g. Given) are designing an ongoing programme of outreach events, modelled on our workshops. Art students from Swansea Metropolitan University who volunteered on our project have set up a community studio and art space, and are continuing to work with schools we engaged with (e.g. St. Helen's Primary School). We did not aim to explicitly convey existing knowledge to a broader public but to enable the many participants to use verbal and artistic means to rethink their ideas about space, memory and belonging. In particular, we used **distance** and **abstraction** to promote reflection on highly contested notions in a way that is not exclusionary, and avoided conflict about ownership of locations and memories.

Distance from contemporary problems was achieved by highlighting analogous ancient themes concerning foreignness, mobility and memory. Archaeological objects such as identity markers (used to create the *tesserae hospitales* sculpture), ancient mapping practices based on journeys rather than territory, and ancient comedies with numerous characters on the move, served as catalysts for wider discussion and activity. E.g. after creating a map based on journey stories rather than territory, which took up the whole playground, pupils were keen to know, or be associated with, people coming from somewhere else. They learnt to accept that migration is the norm through history and in our own time and that borders are fluid and constructed.

Regarding **abstraction**, we developed artistic ways of focusing on abstract entities that everyone shares such as the colour blue, while also highlighting the multiplicity of what blue is (this became the *1000 Colours Blue*). The combination of the use of archaeological objects with creative artistic activity was taken further in Glasgow during the archaeological site survey at Red Road Flats. Pupils collected objects dispersed when the high-rise flats were recently blown down, and,

having worked before with ancient archaeological objects, acted like archaeologists themselves by creating histories with objects. These histories were then translated into colour, by associating specific colours with specific emotions. Finally these colours were sung by a choir, leading to a public performance that projected these voices and sounds, along with stories by ex-residents of all ages and backgrounds, from one of the remaining towers. The 25-storey tower, already stripped for demolition, was equipped with 10 massive speakers on multiple floors, creating one of the largest musical instruments ever played, to a community gathering of 500 people on a very rainy day. Seeing and hearing the multiplicity of stories that made Red Road Flats the place that it was allowed the exposition of multiple narratives and the questioning and replacement of the dominantly negative and bleak narrative that had entered public consciousness regarding Red Road (as recently as this year, the blow down of these 'dysfunctional' buildings was widely publicised and depicted in the leading media networks). This constituted a unique and remarkable cultural event with profound social significance for those involved. The documentary film of these events by Khan will take this to a wider audience and further an alternative multiple narrative.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Sources to corroborate the impact;

1. Exeter Phoenix, Café Scientifique event (http://bit.ly/1afu9P2).
2. Discussion of the project in: AHRC - Beyond Text Mid-Term Report 2010 : (http://bit.ly/198Gi86).
3. Project formed part of the discussions in the *Immigration History Research Centre: University of Minnesota ,* noted in the Newsletter 2010, Vol. XXIV,No.2 (http://bit.ly/17N8yPe).
4. Isayev with others, 2 radio programmes hosted by Audaye, Phonic FM 106.8, Devon, UK: 1) *Politics, Migration and Place, Boundaries and Finance* [date of and time of broadcast: Wednesday 14th July 10: 5pm-6pm GMT]; 2) *Spaces and Places from Antiquity to Present Day: A Head of the Curve* [Friday 24th December 10: 10am-12pm GMT] (http://bit.ly/1b2UAIE)   (http://bit.ly/1hwqpeQ) (http://bit.ly/1b2UPUc).
5. BBC Radio Wales: Arts Show about our Project, with Nicola Heywood-Thomas interviewing the project artists Catrin Webster & Michael Ormiston: Wed 19:00 & Fri 17:30 (http://bbc.in/GIeOxk). Also on BBC News Scotland (http://bbc.in/1aeJ9vz).
6. An article about the project in South Wales Evening Post: Wednesday, September 14, 2011, p.19 (http://bit.ly/198GKTR).
7. Head Teacher, St. Helens Primary School, Swansea. Tel. 01792 655763. Email: st.helens.primary@swansea-edunet.gov.uk.
8. Director of National Waterfront Museum Wales, Swansea. Tel. 01792 638 964. Email: information@museumwales.ac.uk.
9. Head Teacher, St. Martha's Primary School, Glasgow. Tel. 0141 558 6193: Email: headteacher@st-marthas-pri.glasgow.sch.uk.
10. Photographer, Film maker: Bash Art Creative Ltd. Glasgow. Tel. 07886 323 755. Email: bashartcreative @gmail.com, (http://www.bashartcreative.com/).