

Institution: University of Exeter		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 29 Classics		
Title of case study: Using lessons of ancient mobility to empower communities and transform heritage, artistic and educational practice in contexts of displacement		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-ongoing		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Elena Isayev	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Ancient History and Place	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2002-ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-ongoing		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>In 2015, there were 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, with a high proportion living in camps for extended periods of time, some over several generations. Isayev's research on ancient mobility has shown that while such rates of human mobility are not unique, camps designed to cope with forced migration have few parallels in the past and are a recent political compromise that limits the rights and freedoms of refugees. The long perspective offered by Isayev's research on mobility and constructions of place, hospitality and belonging, and her wide-ranging, collaborative work with refugee communities, artists, NGOs, educationalists, and policymakers across Europe, Africa and the Middle East exposed new and diverse forms of agency, self-representation, archiving and heritage-building, thereby counteracting victimisation of refugees, and achieved the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenged assumptions around mobility as being outside of the norm and reshaped discourses of belonging and heritage engaging with practitioners in refugee camps. • Engaged international artistic practice to promote reflection on, and self-expression of the predicament of people who are displaced. • Transformed perception of migration through educational activities and offered educational and teaching opportunities for refugees. • Contributed to UK and international heritage policy discourse. 		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>For over a decade, human mobility, displacement and constructions of place and belonging have been central to Isayev's work, and collective initiatives, involving NGOs, international artists and scholars in confronting these themes. Her investigative laboratory has been primarily the ancient world, employing diverse forms of evidence and reading it against the grain. In particular, she employs contemporary discourse on constructions of place and relational approaches to spatiality. These are used to gain a better understanding of the past and to position contemporary concerns within a broader discourse, thus emphasising the transience of current socio-cultural conventions.</p> <p>Mobility and construction of place Isayev's monograph, <i>Migration, Mobility and Place in Ancient Italy</i> [3.1], challenges prevailing conceptions of a natural tie to the land and a demographically settled world, arguing that much human mobility was cyclical and ongoing. Starting from ancient Italy, it highlights moments of change in conceptualising mobility and those on the move, and reframes notions of belonging by drawing on theories from geographical discourse, and what it means to experience the world relationally. The research for this book was made possible by fellowships from the Davis Centre at Princeton and the AHRC (2010-12). This theme of mobility was also explored in her articles on diaspora [3.3] and the visibility of those on the move [3.5], which emerge from Isayev's long-standing interest in theories of generational conflict, globalisation and diaspora.</p> <p>Displacement and the institution of asylum and refugeehood Isayev's research also specifically explores the institution of asylum and refugeehood in an interdisciplinary and international context. This research is concerned with the agency and role of those who have been displaced, drawing on insights from the ancient world, and working with</p>		

colleagues and partners in contemporary refugee contexts [3.2]. Building on recent challenges to the conceptualisation of statelessness, human rights, citizenship, and borders, it assesses the extent to which the political practices of people who are displaced defy their condition of rightlessness [3.6]. It also addresses the extent to which the 'right to have rights' (H. Arendt) still remains within the confines of a state-centric international law, despite advances in the institutionalisation of human rights norms [3.4]. Supported by research fellowships (Australia's National University, 2017, and University of Tübingen's Center for Advanced Studies, 2018), Isayev developed a research programme to chart diachronically the transformation of the relationship between hospitality and asylum, and the way it is affected by changes in state structure, the emergence of empire and the nation-state.

Belonging, archives and knowledge

The third strand of Isayev's research brings together the different elements above and allows them to be put into practice, in considering how knowledge creation is affected by contexts of hospitality and hostility, and how these relate to space and place [3.4]. This research seeks to critically analyse the archive as a site of negotiation about visions of the future created through a curated view of the past, and read it against the grain to bring out its multi-vocality. Isayev is co-investigator with Staffan Müller-Wille on the BA/Leverhulme-funded project 'Knowledges in Transit', which looks at Linnaeus's Lapland expedition journal, and uses translation and travel as innovative tools for decolonising the archive. Isayev reads the journal to expose the indigenous and women's knowledge, among others, that Linnaeus relied on. This pilot project allowed Isayev and Müller-Wille to follow parts of his route in Finland and Sweden, and to build a network of potential collaborators in the humanities, arts and heritage sector.

In January 2020, Isayev was awarded, as PI, a GCRF Network Plus grant (£150k development grant, £2 million for the network grant) for the project 'Imagining Futures through Un/Archived Pasts'. This aims to create protocols for egalitarian archival practices that challenge a singular 'we' and, employing dissensus methodologies, allows for co-existence and recognition of multiple experiences and narratives of the past. The grant forges a partnership with American University of Beirut, British Research Institutes Overseas, UCL, Central Saint Martins, University of Arts London, University of Ghana, University of Stellenbosch, and Stella Maris University College in Tanzania, as well as several non-academic partners. Despite the delays caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the network activities have already connected creators and institutions in Africa, the Middle East, North America and Europe – currently, for example, with a joint agreement between the research team and Lindi Regional Commissioners Office for a funding application to create a Future Memory Culture Centre in Tanzania's Lindi province.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 *Migration, Mobility and Place in Ancient Italy*. Cambridge University Press. 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316440612>.
- 3.2 *Displacement and the Humanities*. (Guest editor, co-editing with Evan Jewell.) Special Issue of the international, open access journal *Humanities*. 2020. *Available on request*.
- 3.3 Emerging Diasporas? Oscan-speaking Mamertines, Romans and *Italia*. In Meller H. et al. (eds.), *Migration and Integration from Prehistory to the Middle Ages*. (9th Archaeological Conference of Central Germany, October 20-22, 2016). Tagungen des Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte Halle (Saale), Vol. 17. 2017, 183 -196. *Available on request*.
- 3.4 Hospitality: A timeless measure of who we are? In M. Berg and E. Fiddian Qasmiyeh (eds.) *Hospitality and Hostility Towards Migrants: Global Perspectives*. Special Inaugural Issue of *Migration and Society: Advances in Research*, 1, 2018: 7-21. <https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/migration-and-society/1/1/arms010103.xml>
- 3.5 Elusive migrants of ancient Italy. In J. Clackson, K. McDonald, L. Tagliapietra and N. Zair (eds.), *Migration, Mobility and Language Contact in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Cambridge University Press. 2020, 53-74. <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/9781108763943.003>.

3.6 Between Hospitality and Asylum: a Historical Perspective on Agency. In *International Review of the Red Cross, Migration and Displacement*. Vol. 99, No. 904, 2017: 1-24. 10.1017/S1816383117000510

4. Details of the impact

Isayev's impact activities have been based on both direct interaction with refugees and migrants, and collaboration with organisations and individuals taking the impact beyond her initial direct involvement.

Reshaping discourses of heritage and belonging with and in refugee camps

Isayev's research is changing discourses relating to the refugee experience and **increasing opportunities for self-representation** by asylum seekers and refugees. Since 2015, Isayev has worked with Campus in Camps, an experimental educational platform working with West Bank refugee camps, and Decolonising Architecture (DAAR), which combines architecture, art and activism to deliver new forms of critique, political engagement and collective learning. In November 2015, she delivered two workshops at the Dheisheh refugee camp, where approximately 15,000 refugees live [5.1]. Drawing insights from her work on ancient migration [3.1], the workshops reconsidered contemporary concerns among displaced communities around heritage, belonging, identity, and borders. They looked at projects in public spaces which transgress existing social, cultural and political power structures that limit 'minority' place-making, and thus critique integration. They **delivered new ways of representing camps and refugees** to an audience of 60-80, which included volunteers, residents of camps, architects, community workers, academics and students [5.1]. Participating groups included Riwaq (a heritage rehabilitation and conservation organisation based in Ramallah and working with surrounding communities), Al-Finieq (a community and learning centre in the Dheisheh camp), and Detour (a community group that leads an alternative tourist tour through refugee camps and surrounding Palestinian region). According to DAAR founder Alessandro Petti, the workshops **produced new ideas about constructing histories and alternative storytelling** that were tested in touring through refugee camps. He stated that these ideas "will be used to conduct new tours with different audiences around the Refugee Campus" and anticipated that the new methods **would affect 2,500-12,000 beneficiaries per year**, including visitors, campus communities and guides [5.1].

Further engaging with the forms of alternative knowledge, representation and belonging within camps, in 2018 Isayev visited Beirut and Burje Refugee Camp to explore practices of self-archiving and potential for future archiving by camp residents. The visit led to an invitation to draw on her work on migration, hospitality and displacement [3.4, 3.6], and present at an annual gathering of professionals, academics, and students in the Beirut *City Debates*, an event dedicated to issues of urbanisation in the region [5.2]. This collaboration was extended into the GCRF-funded 'Imagining Futures through Un/Archived Pasts', with the Arab Palestinian Cultural Club based in Badawi camp in Lebanon as one of the partners. The latter commended the 2019 fieldwork at the camp and the project for "its focus on creative and participatory practices including photography, oral histories and creative writing, leading to workshops and exhibitions in the camp [which] will be of great interest and benefit to the members of the camp" [5.3].

Using art to promote reflection on and self-expression of displaced communities

Art is a powerful means of conveying messages and of self-expression, especially in emotional and challenging contexts. Isayev's collaborations with creative practitioners have **influenced their practices and contributed to the representation and public understanding of people who are displaced** in Europe and the Middle East. Building on the success of her work with Campus in Camps, in 2017 Isayev co-founded (with architect Diego Segatto [Italy] and critical pedagogue Isshaq AlBarbary [Palestine]) Almaisha [5.4]. This initiative critically explores hospitality, collective learning and politics beyond the nation state, drawing on her research on ancient and contemporary perspectives on these issues [3.1; 3.2; 3.4; 3.6]. Almaisha delivered collaborative artworks and workshops in Germany (e.g. with Bauhaus Museum Dessau, to develop new forms of pedagogy that promote collective learning [5.5]), the Netherlands and Greece, plus joint

initiatives between the UK and Palestine [5.4]. These activities have **promoted the understanding of the experience of displaced communities** in the 21st century.

Isayev's work with Almaisha has also **enabled unique and profound opportunities for creative self-expression for refugees**, while **preserving understanding of the refugee experience**. In 2018, Almaisha collaborated with the Office of Displaced Designers (ODD), an organisation that brings together designers from displaced and host communities in Lesvos. Here, Almaisha used collective practice also to enact Isayev's findings on hospitality, agency and belonging, including ancient mapping [3.1, 3.4]. This resulted in transformational experiences for participants. An asylum seeker, Aref Hussein (who had previously described himself as an 'uninvited guest' on Lesvos), reported: "Personally it was an amazing experience for me ... **I learned to see the world from a new perspective when it comes to belonging and place**, to understand in depth [and] I decided to study philosophy." [5.6] The ODD collaboration led to an exhibition on the island and the co-authorship of the volume *Inhabiting* (2018). This is part of Almaisha's 'collective dictionary' series, following on from the Campus in Camps publications, which contain definitions of concepts created in the processes of collective practice and learning, and are themselves forms of alternative archiving [5.4].

Almaisha was also invited to join a collaboration with the Franco-Moroccan women's collective Calypso3621° on its programme Out.of.the.blue.map, which brought together artists, curators, researchers and activists to create an alternative map of the Mediterranean in order to address the issues of permanent liminality and the governance systems that affect its borders. Isayev was engaged by Calypso3621° because her "interdisciplinary and inter-practice approaches **lead to collective learning and research beyond the academy**" [5.5]. The resulting output is exhibitions in Morocco and Marseille, as part of the Manifesta13 2020 biennale, unfortunately postponed due to COVID-19.

Transforming perception of migration and refugees through educational activities and offering educational opportunities for refugees

Another important volume in the 'collective dictionary' series, which also features on the Campus in Camps website, was *Xenia* (2019) [5.4], co-written by Isayev, her Almaisha collaborators, and her 3rd year BA and MA students on the Ancient Journeys and Migrants course at the University of Exeter. The course creates forms of practice-based and community-engaged learning and is a platform for collaborative activities that **transform perceptions of migration and refugeehood**. In early 2019, Isayev worked with students to organise a project with a Palermo-based collective Giocherenda [5.7], comprising young migrants from several African countries who create games about storytelling and sharing, and engage communities in migration issues. The project focused on producing educational and creative opportunities to challenge attitudes and misconceptions about immigrants among children and the local Devon communities, building on Isayev's work on refugee agency and displacement [3.2; 3.5].

Mustapha Conteh, a member of Giocherenda, visited Exeter in January-February 2019, where he worked with Isayev's students to deliver day-long workshops with Year 7 pupils of Pilton Community College in Barnstaple, using Giocherenda's method and other original activities to help pupils reimagine migration and movement. The experience **positively contributed to pupils' understanding and attitudes**. Teachers commented that "...as a rural school in North Devon, pupils are not often confronted with ideas of migration, so it was good to **challenge those ideas**" and that "it has **opened up some discussions** in class in regards to migration and current news events". [5.7]. Mustapha, who joined the programme driven by Giocherenda's ambition to raise awareness about migration (he highlights one of the Barnstaple pupils noting that they thought "that only birds migrate") described the visit as "enlightening" [5.7]. Giocherenda and Isayev's students also worked with community organisation Refugee Support Devon (RSD), to organise a music jam session between students, locals and refugees.

Isayev acted as a trustee for RSD between 2015 and 2019. RSD attested to her **contribution to the organisation's strategic direction**, informed by her research on the institutions of asylum

and refugeehood [3.2, 3.4, 3.6], as being of great benefit, and especially her “spearhead[ing] the establishment of Exeter University as a University of Sanctuary”. “This has enabled a number of RSD’s clients to access scholarships at the university. Over the last year, four have been enabled to take up degree courses.” [5.8] Since 2017, the university has offered three scholarships per annum. A scholarship recipient has noted that the scholarship:

“removed the obstacle of accessing education as a refugee [and] allowed me to have a roof over my head in a warm room I can call my own for the first time on this continent. It also paved the way for me to focus on the things that matter the most and on a personal level, such as social integration and building a network. This scholarship allowed me to move on after the atrocities I have faced in my home country and abroad since 2011.” [5.9].

RSD’s chair also cites the benefit of the continuous link that Isayev provides “between RSD staff, volunteers and service users, [and] the university” [5.8], **enabling learning experiences** such as the music session, but also activities such as joint dinners and coastal walks (one of which in 2018 brought together around 35 refugee families, students and locals) [5.8].

The learning activities with RSD and Giocherenda in 2019 also led to an interactive summary *The Storytelling Collective*, created by students, which aimed to “establish refreshed methods of discussing migration, journeys and the stories and networks that are created through them” [5.7]. Exeter students and guests who organised and participated in these activities spoke about their transformational effect, not only by lending “more human, mental and emotional aspects to the themes and academic ideas we discussed in the ‘traditional’ lectures every week”, but also by having a **significant effect on their personal, professional, and even political choices**. In the words of another student: “The project and ideas surrounding it **have permeated almost everything I have done since**, and I am thankful for the awareness it has provided me.” [5.7]

Contributing to UK and international heritage policy

In 2020 Isayev was invited to contribute her expertise to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, to help shape UK policy concerning heritage and UN sustainable development goals [5.10]. On a supranational level, her research on migration and reading archives against the grain led to her invitation [5.10] by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to join a UN Expert Panel in collaboration with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, to develop a *Words to Action Guide* on ‘Using traditional knowledge for disaster risk reduction’. The guide **provides advice to countries and practitioners on policies, programmes and innovative projects for mitigating, preparing and responding to various disaster risks**. The guide will assist in the implementation of critical aspects of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. [5.10]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 DAAR (founder) testimonial. 26/11/2015.
- 5.2 AUB *City Debates* invitation letter. 31/10/2018.
- 5.3 Arab Palestinian Cultural Club letter of support. 17/09/2019.
- 5.4 Almaisha file (website www.viewalmaisha.org and Collective Dictionary publications *Inhabiting* and *Xenia*).
- 5.5 Almaisha pedagogic and artistic collaborations (invitation to collaborate on *Parliament of Schools*. 17/07/2018; Bauhaus 21-24 March 2019 festival programme; Calypso3621° programme *Out.of.the.blue.map*).
- 5.6 Testimonial from asylum seeker
- 5.7 *Ancient Journeys and Migrants* file (Storytelling Collective; course student feedback July 2020; feedback from Giocherenda 27/07/2020).
- 5.8 RSD file (Chair testimonial 23/07/2020; RSD newsletter summer 2018; report from Branscombe walk 17/02/2018).
- 5.9 University of Exeter Sanctuary Scholarship (<https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/what-universities-are-already-doing>).
- 5.10 DCMS policy event, UN invitations and further information on the development of the guide: <https://www.preventionweb.net/experts/oped/view/73073>