

Thoughts and reflections on
**CALL ME BY MY NAME:
STORIES FROM CALAIS AND BEYOND**
– in images and words

The ethics and politics of the refugee crisis

The ethics and politics of the refugee crisis is an integrated programme of activities about migration, aimed at strengthening collaboration between academic research, civil society, education and the culture sectors via avenues of creative expression.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the programme is a partnership between Citizenship and Governance research at The Open University, The University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), the Migration Museum Project, actREAL and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

About this booklet

This booklet is an output based on reflections from project participants on a key part of the programme: an exhibition staged by the Migration Museum Project in June 2016, entitled *Call me by my name: stories from Calais and beyond*.

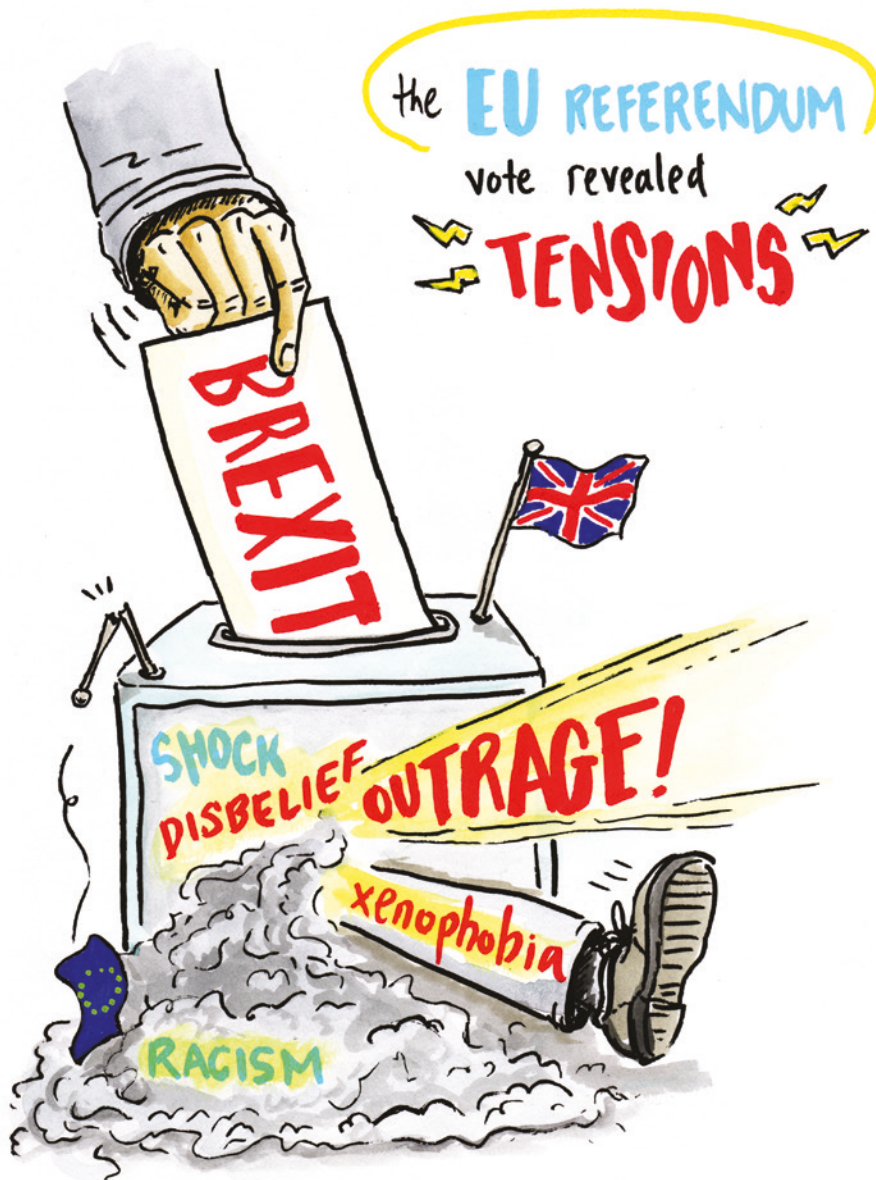
Following the conclusion of the exhibition, programme participants were invited to write and share their reflections on the exhibition, its impact and outcomes – against the backdrop of the EU referendum and the continuing migration situation in Europe.

These documents were given to Laura Sorvala, a Finnish illustrator and visual facilitator based in Cardiff, Wales, who used them as the inspiration for a series of illustrations aimed at facilitating discussion at our first Learning Lab, held at The Open University in London in September 2016.

For more detailed background information on the project and its participants, please see p.22-24.

All illustrations by Laura Sorvala at Auralab (www.auralab.co.uk), based on evaluation documents written by project participants following the conclusion of *Call me by my name: stories from Calais and beyond*, an exhibition staged by the Migration Museum Project in London in June 2016.





The fact that a majority of the people who voted in the referendum on Britain's EU membership appear to choose isolation over connectedness has left me feeling depressed, saddened and worried about the future. Does this point to a future with yet stricter immigration controls, without European free movement, fewer refugees welcomed to the UK and therefore less space for the individuals behind immigration statistics to tell their stories?

The exhibition's importance is arguably enhanced by the referendum result and what it reveals about the divisions within society and current attitudes to migration. The subject matter may be contentious for some, but I genuinely believe that all but the most ideologically opposed visitor would engage with the humanity and artistic expression at the core of this exhibition, and it could potentially go at least some way towards prompting people to think about migration and migrants in a more human – and therefore humane – way.

Little did we know that the British passport taped to the wall of one of the Calais shelters in the final room of the exhibition – a valuable asset and a symbol of a privileged state, state of being and a right – would be so prophetic of recent developments and of political and mainstream stakeholders' lack of responsibility in representing and dealing with this urgent history of the present.

It is such a shame that all of the effort, tactile and emotional creativity that went into working on and curating this exhibition was only destined to last three weeks, especially because more momentum would have been given after the referendum and more reasons for it to be there and have more impact in politically meaningful ways. But I believe that if it moves around the country, it presents a wonderful opportunity to offer a pedagogical platform for challenging stereotypes and engaging people in what it means to make do in conditions of displacement and defacement.

While the referendum result and aftermath have been disheartening, they have reaffirmed, for me at least, the pressing need for a Migration Museum. In the coming years, questions of migration and national identity will dominate our politics and we desperately require a space for nuanced discussions and creative responses – a space where people of all backgrounds feel they belong and have a voice.



Those visitors who left in tears reminded us of our responsibility to those we were representing and to some extent showed immediate evidence that we had succeeded in our objectives. Those visitors who spoke to me directly about their impressions often gave voice to what we had envisioned. Many told me they had learned things they hadn't known before. Many told me of their own experiences of Calais. Those who knew about the 'Jungle' thanked us for presenting it in the way we did.

We felt a great sense of responsibility to the refugees and volunteers that we engaged with, both in the Calais 'Jungle' and in London. My time in Calais will live in my memory for the rest of my life as a unique and shocking experience. That, above everything everything else, gave me the drive and determination to do the best job I could.

As someone who has spent the last few years living outside the UK, the exhibition struck me as very local (in its globality). From elsewhere in Europe, Calais is as distant and 'exotic' as what is evoked by the term 'Jungle'. I would be interested in whether UK visitors to the exhibition were drawing links between Calais and the other border crossings that take place everywhere in the world, and in what ways perceptions of distance and proximity affected a sense of responsibility.



In collecting the stories of refugees, building trust and listening compassionately, we were painfully aware of the sensitivities needed and of the potential of exploiting or even endangering those refugees. The choices we had to make in telling which part of their story was not easy and the extent to which we felt we had 'manipulated' their stories with a curatorial sound-bite edit caused us some anxiety.

The exhibition not only opened the door; it brought visitors into the camp itself. This was a difficult trick to pull off – how can you focus an exhibition on the current migration crisis (as played out in the Calais camps) without being voyeuristic, sensationalising the experience or using it to make fairly easy political points?

Some of the people who ran art projects with residents of the Calais camp presented robust views before the exhibition opened that it was inappropriate or exploitative to exhibit their art. However, having seen the exhibition, they seem to have changed their minds completely.

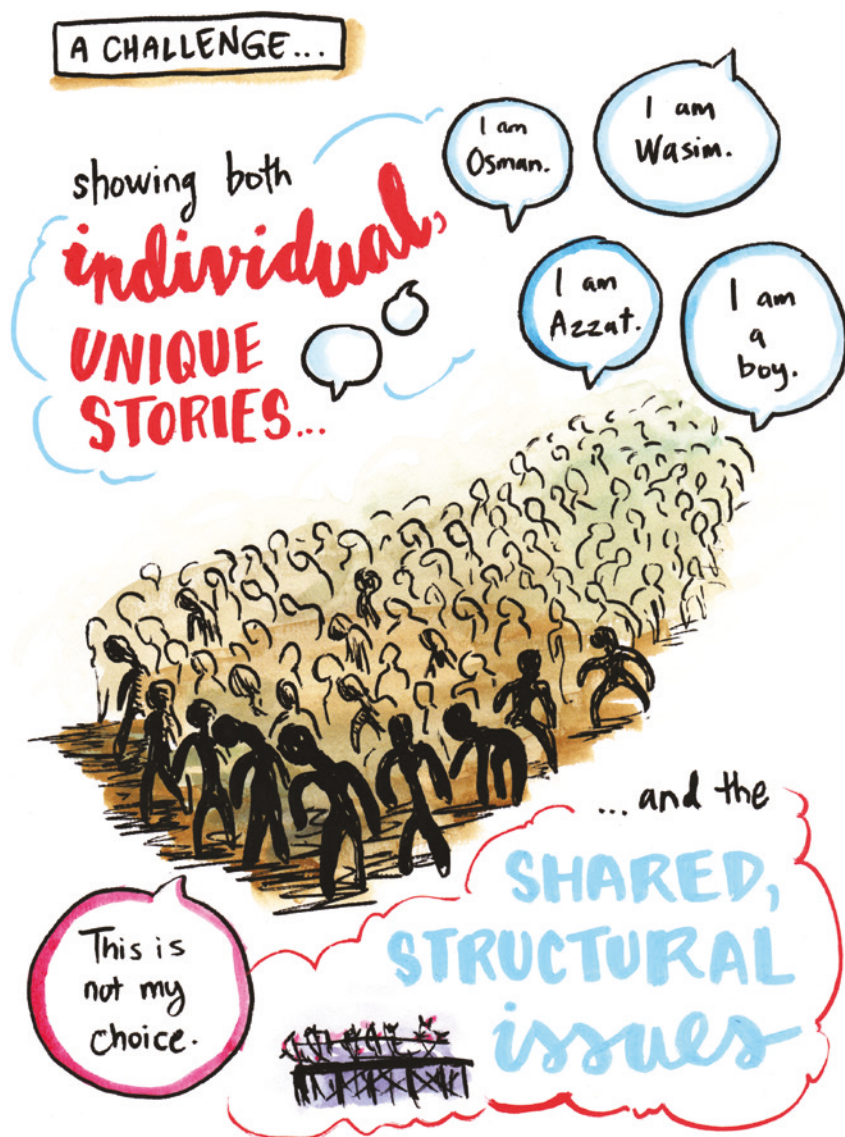
GIVING A VOICE TO CAMP MIGRANTS



It seemed clearly right to give those people who are so often peered at, represented and judged a voice of their own, to mitigate any sense of voyeurism.

The biggest challenge of the exhibition was creating a space where people could tell their own stories and in the way they wanted. I am proud that we were able to include a lot of art from the camp. In some cases, the stories were mediated through volunteers, which made me slightly uneasy. I also wish we could have included more people in the curatorial process, including those living in the camp, but we unfortunately did not have time to develop the relationships to do this. Nonetheless, I think we were self-reflective about our curatorial process and the ethics of representation.

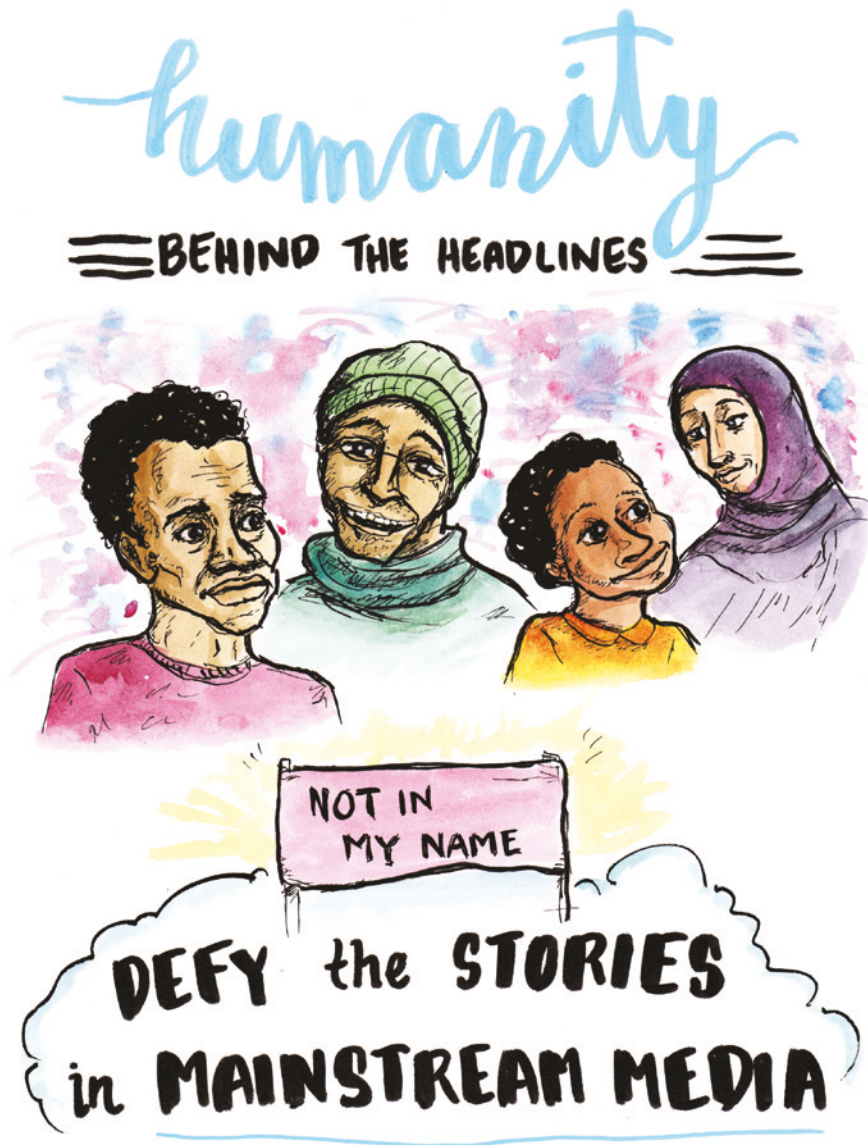
This was an exhibition that brought the humanity of the migrants centre stage, giving them a voice, a history and a complexity that it would seem they have not been allowed elsewhere.



Call me by my name worked so well because it reflects the complexity of the human experience behind the refugee crisis. Those people now considered refugees are in need of help but are not powerless actors; they make demands on European societies even without necessarily bearing legal rights.

I found the idea that the 'nameless and faceless' would look different to the visitor on the way out of the exhibition, after being exposed to the different stories from Calais, both really clever and interesting. It also raised questions to me about the quality of that 'difference' or the direction of that transformation. I was made to reflect on the challenge of showing the uniqueness of each individual story while simultaneously presenting the structural nature of refugee issues.

One of the most powerful moments of the exhibition for me was when a refugee came to speak about his experiences while travelling from Aleppo to London. In response to his detailed description of his journey, another refugee in the audience interrupted and asked him not to give away too much information, as this might endanger those who are still trying to make their way across into the UK. This moment of tension represented so much of the complexity of the refugee crisis, its different actors and their often conflicting agendas – and at the same time was a very human moment, bringing to life the experiences of the individuals involved in the refugee crisis.



The exhibition emphasised the complexity and illuminated the human stories behind the dehumanised discourse, and provided a platform for migrants and refugees to tell their own stories – all without dumbing down, offering easy answers or resorting to emotional manipulation.

Stressing humanity through individual stories was a very strong strand. Visitors were observably engrossed with the 'story wall', and you could hardly leave the exhibition without a visceral appreciation that these stories emanated from real people who mattered.

Call me by my name is indeed a pledge ('Please call me by my name') and an act of defiance ('I demand that I am named'). It defies the persistent mainstream media discourses and racist imaginings of 'swarms of migrants'.



How we manage to square exhibitions of this type with our careful position of being a cultural/heritage organisation and not a political campaigning group is a challenge. I think the exhibition trod this line carefully. But it's something that we will need to continue to have a consistent position on in the future.

Our objectives for this exhibition were expansive and ambitious: to humanise refugees and migrants, to provide a platform for people to tell their stories, to present a range of voices, to inform and question our national responsibilities, and to do this in a visually engaging and interactive way. At times it was challenging to negotiate between these aims and remain apolitical – although arguably art is never apolitical – but I hope we were able to tread the fine line carefully by focusing on individual stories and raising questions rather than prescribing solutions.

The exhibits in the final room provoked interesting discussions around the nature of stakeholderism in volunteerism. A lot has been written – often critically – about the nature of actions by different NGOs and their ability or capacity to represent and manage these fragile states of moving, being and becoming. There's an element of competition for attention, and a promotion of scale and (self) importance and impact by both visible and invisible stakeholders in the crisis.



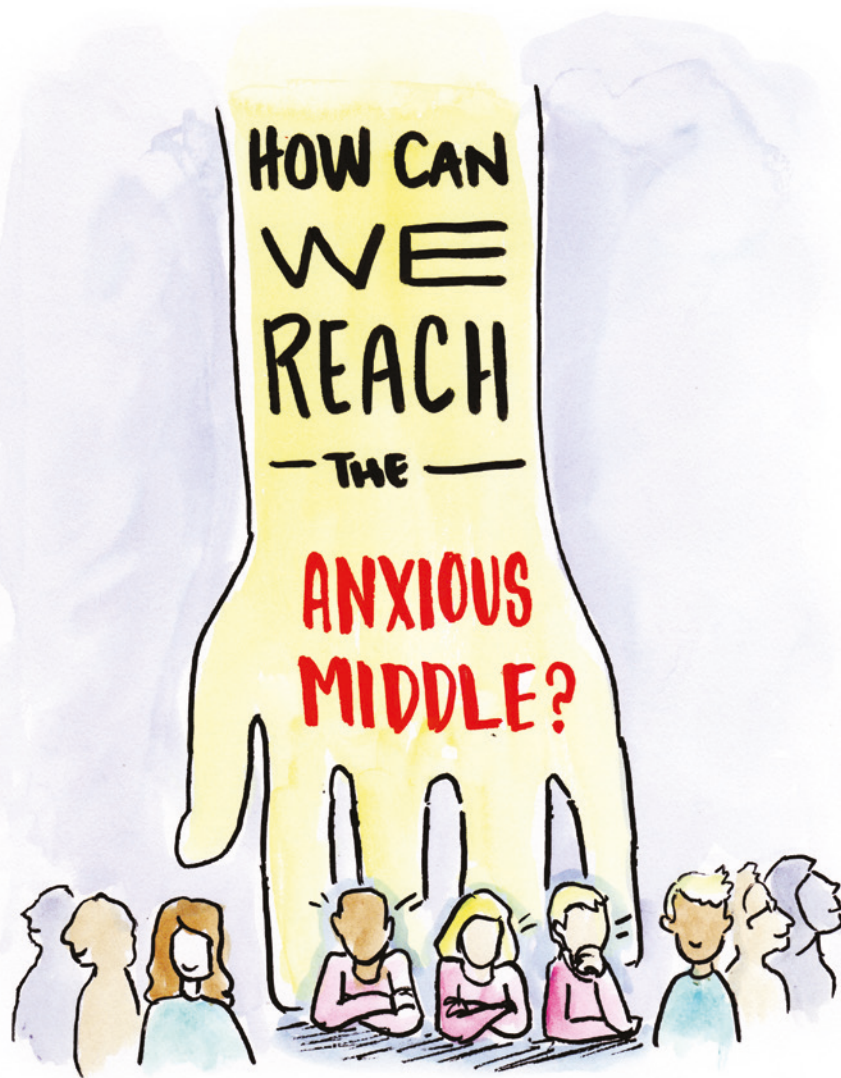
visitors stopping
and **SHARING** THEIR
VIEWS



The response from visitors was overwhelmingly positive. I had conversations with hundreds of visitors, and was encouraged by their willingness to thoughtfully engage with the exhibition, to ask questions and offer their opinions. I have never seen an exhibition where so many people stopped to share their thoughts. There was also an outpouring of response and engagement on social media, which we have not seen with past exhibitions.

I don't think I've ever been to an exhibition where visitors have been as engaged. So many people voluntarily came up to us at the end, wanting to talk about their response to the exhibition. A large proportion of visitors were simply passing by and stumbled across it by chance. The fact that so many people walked in off the street and ended up spending so much time and engaging so deeply with it attests to its power and effectiveness.

A significant proportion of people who came voluntarily wrote comments and filled in evaluation forms. Many spent over an hour in the exhibition. We got people talking, and many extraordinary conversations and discussions took place in that gallery in Shoreditch.



However great it was that so many people came to *Call me by my name*, and however positive the effect that it had on them, there barely seemed to be anyone who wasn't already either an actual supporter of agencies working with Calais groups or convinced of the need to do more for the camp's residents. There was a slight sense of preaching to the converted, which, in the light of the fall-out from the referendum result, is something we need to be even more mindful of than we were before.

The exhibition certainly encouraged its visitors to re-evaluate their understandings of the values they may or may not hold about migration. However, because of the location of the exhibition in an area that attracted people mostly favourable towards migration, the impact of this re-evaluation may not be as great as in other places. I really do think this exhibition must go on tour around the UK, especially now that geographical divisions have become so apparent.

It would be fantastic to take this exhibition (or at least components of this exhibition) around the country. My strong feeling is that once you get people through the doors, it would resonate strongly with visitors – regardless of their political views, social background or where they live. It's ultimately about humanity and the tone, strong narrative and broad range of artistic responses and mediums make it extremely accessible. The key is attracting visitors from across the country and political spectrum.



It would have been so easy for this exhibition to have adopted a campaigning, ‘solidarity for refugees’, ‘no borders’ tone. But it genuinely didn’t – and this is to the curators’ immense credit. Most visitors may have already been ‘converted’ on some level. But at no point did it preach, and I think this was a major reason for the exhibition’s power – and why it elicited such a strong, engaged reaction from so many visitors.

The exhibition was appreciated for the breadth of views it represented. This was definitely one of its strengths, and brought onside visitors who might otherwise have been unimpressed. Demonstrably weighing both sides of the argument provides greater authority, and is more stimulating for audiences.

Although the exhibition attracted a diverse audience in terms of age and ethnicity, visitors did not appear to hold particularly diverse views about migration. This was largely due to the location of the exhibition. There may be much greater scope for engaging in debate, and influencing attitudes in other areas of the country.

Certainly people seemed to think about the question of national responsibility, but the responses were overwhelmingly emotional and not necessarily pragmatic or challenging. It is possible that asking or framing questions in a different way may have elicited a different kind of response.

Background to the programme

The migrant camp in Calais became a potent symbol of Europe's refugee 'crisis'. Its proximity – just 20 miles from Britain's shores – also raised a series of ethical dilemmas about our relationships to, and responsibilities towards, not-so-distant-others. Although the camp has recently been demolished, it remains a key focus of debate and discussion.

The current refugee situation has brought together a host of different actors, with multiple, contrasting projects, intentions and motivations. This obviously includes refugees and migrants, but also those who police and regulate migration, those campaigning for more of it, those who support migration for personal benefit, and those who aid migrants out of solidarity and compassion.

Not only have we been forced to question the politics and ethics of engagement, including researching and reporting of the 'crisis', but we have also been compelled to re-evaluate our understandings of hospitality, compassion, justice, citizenship, borders and migration.

These are questions and challenges that all partners and participants in this project have been grappling with in their own fields.

The consortium consisted of five main partners: Citizenship and Governance research at The Open University (OU); The University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS); Migration Museum Project (MMP), actREAL; and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

All key stakeholders came together to make a joint application to the University of Oxford's Social Sciences ESRC Impact

Acceleration Account (IAA) in February 2016. The proposal sought funding for an integrated programme of knowledge-exchange activities, aimed at furthering long-term and critical-reflective collaboration between academic research, civil society, education and the culture sectors via avenues of creative expression. The programme was also designed to demonstrate and assess the ways in which art, and the ideas inspired through art, can serve as genuine catalysts for positive exchange.

Aims and objectives of the programme

- a) Collaboratively devise avenues to contribute to public knowledge about migrants and refugees by sharing the expertise independently gained by COMPAS, Citizenship and Governance research at the OU, MMP, actREAL and IOM.
- b) Establish a long-term agenda for furthering the collaboration between academic research, civil society, education and the cultural sectors via avenues of creative expression.
- c) Engage with young people, families and local community groups from backgrounds traditionally under-represented in the arts and cultural heritage sector
- d) Engage with national and international civil society organisations active on issues of (forced) migration to demonstrate how arts projects can inform their work and contribute to their agendas.
- e) Devise ways of challenging negative representations in media and government discourse by bringing in direct voices and sensitising the public through personal stories.

Description of activities

The partners jointly organised four main streams of activities:

1. *Call me by my name: stories from Calais and beyond*, a multimedia exhibition staged by the MMP at Londonewcastle Project Space, London, in June 2016, exploring the complexity and human stories behind the current migration situation – with a particular focus on the Calais camp. The exhibition featured work by refugees, camp residents and volunteers, displayed alongside works by other established and emerging artists. It served as a forum for a lively programme of discussions, events, film screenings and performances. The two project leaders – Professors Bridget Anderson of COMPAS and Engin Isin of The Open University – staged two 'Pop Up Prof' sessions, talking to exhibition visitors about their responses to the exhibition and the refugee 'crisis'.
2. An education programme, including four workshops with two schools in London (Skinners' Academy and City & Islington College) delivered by actREAL, using theatre and performance techniques to explore issues around the ethics and politics of the refugee crisis, based on research from the University of Oxford and visits to the MMP's *Call me by my name* exhibition. The students selected ranged in age, behaviour patterns and confidence. Feedback from both students and teachers was extremely positive.
3. Three Learning Labs, held following the conclusion of the exhibition. Graphic artist Laura Sorvala provided visual facilitation of the first Learning

Lab, held at the Open University's London campus on September 15, 2016. The second Learning Lab, held on November 7, 2016 at the Underdog Gallery in Bermondsey, used performative methods to explore the ethics and politics of migration. It was led by Ida Persson, Creative Director of actREAL; Paula M Hildenbrandt, who works on the politics of representation, citizenship and the city at HafenCity University, Hamburg; and Dr Umut Erel, Senior Lecturer in sociology at The Open University. The third Learning Lab, held on November 21, 2016 at The Open University in London, was a public conversation with leading academics on the ethics and politics of migration and the refugee 'crisis'. The panel featured Tendayi Bloom, Lecturer in Politics and International Studies at The Open University; Phillip Cole, Professor in Politics and International Relations, University of West of England; and Matthew Gibney, Professor of Politics and Forced Migration and Fellow of Linacre College, University of Oxford.

4. *The evolving dynamics of the refugee and migrant response*, a showcase and civil society forum held at Rich Mix, London on December 2, 2016. The forum showcased best practices of cross-sectoral knowledge-exchange developed during this project in order to raise public awareness of issues surrounding the migration situation in Europe. Components included a panel discussion, highlights from the Migration Museum Project's *Call me by my name* exhibition, a performance by students from City and Islington College, and live illustration from graphic artist Laura Sorvala.

About key programme participants

Citizenship and Governance research at The Open University

Citizenship and Governance research at The Open University is rethinking the changing relationships between states, markets and citizens in the 21st century and the challenges of governance and leadership, such as migration and security. The research encompasses the macro level down to the micro level – from global issues like migration to the private sphere, via the organizations, structures and practices which create public and social value. www.open.ac.uk/research/main/our-research/citizenship-governance

COMPAS, University of Oxford

The Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS) is a Research Centre within the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at the University of Oxford. Since 2003, COMPAS has established an international reputation for original research and policy relevance. It has undertaken a strategic programme of multi-disciplinary social scientific research, publication and dissemination, events, knowledge transfer and user engagement activities with a broad set of academic and non-academic users in the UK and abroad. www.compas.ox.ac.uk

Migration Museum Project

The Migration Museum Project is creating Britain's first dedicated migration museum, examining the important role that migration to and from the UK has played in our national story. We stage an adventurous set of events, exhibitions and education programmes across the country, as we work towards our goal of creating a permanent museum. Our aim is to tell the stories of migrants who have shaped our culture and identity and to promote a more historically based conversation about the role of migration in Britain. In the current climate, the need for such a space for dialogue could not be greater. www.migrationmuseum.org

actREAL

actREAL uses theatre and other art techniques to engage young people in complex social issues, such as migration, based on cutting-edge academic research. With participatory methods, we look at individual stories and journeys, as a way for students to understand trends, identities, motivations, and contexts to explore their own emotional and critical reactions to the topic. We deliver bespoke programmes to complement existing curriculum demands and to give students a unique, impactful, holistic learning experience. Programmes are delivered in weekly sessions over a full term or in shorter, concentrated periods culminating in a performance by the students. www.actreal.org

International Organization for Migration

Established in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the leading inter-governmental organisation in the field of migration, committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. www.iom.int

I think there
is too much
immigration!

I crossed
over 3 months
ago...

That's ok,
tell me why?

It was a first
for me. Never
before have I
been moved to
tears by an
exhibition.

I cannot
come to
the UK,
but my
painting
CAN.

We are
HUMAN
BEINGS

This is
not my
choice.