



FUN: Free University Nottingham

LESSONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL FROM OUR OWN BACKYARD

IOC CONFERENCE

JULY 12, 2019

Outline

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graph LR; A[Background information to the project] --> B[Project structure]; B --> C[Way forward];
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Background
information to
the project

Project
structure

Way forward

How it all started

- ▶ The origins of the idea
- ▶ Underlying principles
- ▶ Bringing people together
- ▶ Resourcing
- ▶ Organising
- ▶ Staying calm
- ▶ Holding-open the space/Keeping the space open

Overarching project aims

- ▶ The emancipatory potential of education;
- ▶ Inclusivity and hospitality
- ▶ Respons-ability and the 'modern civic university'
- ▶ Co-design as an operational principle
- ▶ To treat this as a pilot project of a bigger project aimed at developing sustainable (long-lasting) opportunities for community-based learning through open dialogue, co-operation and the sharing of different cultural experiences.
- ▶ Resisting the subtle reassurances of colonial geometries

Geometries of Colonialism

- ▶ NRF Employee Quote:
- ▶ *“At the beginning when [NRF colleague] told me about the course, and to advertise the course, I was not excited. **I thought we will be invited by academic people just for research and they will not care about us.**[...]I want to thank everybody in the team. I appreciate everything they do for us, they are patient and they care about us. They are so flexible. They do not come to give the session and go, they appreciated us, and they listened to us. We can talk about things we did not talk about before. They care about our needs. I hope this project carry on. In this project we have people from different backgrounds and cultures, you broke the barriers that we had in the past. I appreciate everything, and I do not find words to express my feelings to you. Thank you very, very much.”*

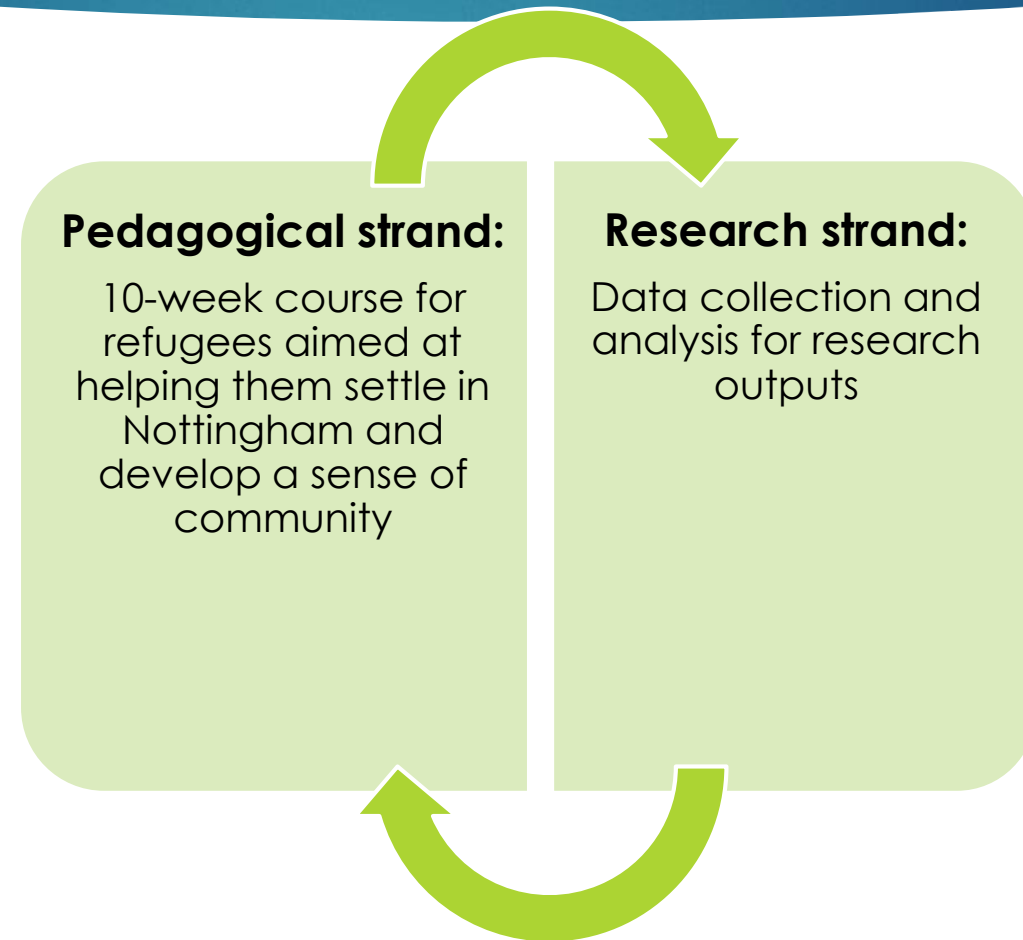
Why is this project important?

- ▶ We see this project as part of the decolonising movement mentioned in the call for papers for this conference:

The decolonising movement intends to “disrupt long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism and continues to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production, well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:128).

- ▶ Internationalism vs Globalism: Lessons from IR
- ▶ Think global. Deconstruct locally:
 - ▶ Integration through e-ducation
 - ▶ Inclusive, non-competitive models of research and teaching

Project structure



Pedagogical strand: program

- ▶ 6th March Welcome and introduction to the team and the project.
- ▶ 13th March Discussion group to help us understand what participants hope to gain from the project, what the benefits might be, and how the team can best work with you to achieve these goals.
- ▶ 20th March Nottingham: a history from below
- ▶ 27th March A history of migration in Britain
- ▶ 10th April Identity, Work and Career – how we understand ourselves through our work.

Easter Break

- ▶ 24nd April Social event
- ▶ 1st May Home and belonging – connecting with people and places.
- ▶ 8th May Journeys – coping with transition.
- ▶ 15th May Settling in – fitting in and forming new ties.
- ▶ 22nd May Wrapping things up. A final discussion group to see what benefits the sessions have had, what could be improved, and what scope there might be for thinking about further short courses.

Pedagogical strand: social events



Research strand: research aims and methods

Aim: to explore how, and to what extent, co-designed, collaborative educational environments impact on a marginalised refugee group in Nottingham.

Objectives:

- i) To assess the deeper educational needs and specific pedagogical requirements of a group of refugees in Nottingham;
- ii) To explore and evaluate the impact collaborative educational experiences have on a marginalised and socially excluded group in terms of wellbeing, cultural capital and a sense of belonging.

Methods:

Data collection:

- 2 focus-group interviews with the refugees (semi-structured)
- Data from the other sessions
- Individual interviews with Forum staff involved in the provision of education services (semi-structured, in progress)

Data processing:

- Translating into English (if in Arabic)
- Transcribing

Data analysis:

Thematic analysis of the transcripts

Research strand: preliminary findings

- ▶ Examples of participant feedback:
 - ▶ *“At the beginning I was depressed as I am lonely here and I miss my family back home. After these sessions I have learned that happiness lies where you find new nice and good people and you then feel belonging. Before that I was sad, but after the identity and belonging session I learned to deal with people differently and became happier. I feel happier deep inside.”*
 - ▶ *“The session reduced my fear and anxiety that claiming asylum is not a crime.”*
 - ▶ *“My 15-year-old son is very much affected by movement, and affected his personality. Now I use what I learned from the sessions to try to encourage my son to engage with the community, how to interact with other people and make friends.”*

Research strand: preliminary findings

- ▶ Examples of Participant Feedback:
 - ▶ *"I learned by engaging in the community here, by interacting with different people, we can also form new ties and relationships."*
 - ▶ **One-word responses:** *"Motivated," "Thank you," "Empowered," "Invaluable sessions," "Optimistic," "Garden full of lovely flowers and roses," "New beginning," "Confidence," "Belonging," "Enthusiasm about every session."*

Research strand: preliminary findings

- ▶ Examples of staff feedback:
 - ▶ *“hugely rewarding[...]has greatly contributed to my teaching practise and commitment to external engagement.”*
 - ▶ *“without doubt this has been the most rewarding experience of my academic career.”*
 - ▶ *“One highlight for me was a participant approaching me at the end of the session and the words he used were “that was very transformative”. Asking those questions of identity and having an opportunity to explore those aspects of transition was, for him, seemed to be a very pedagogically full moment.”*

Where next?

- ▶ Project report dissemination and resource bids
- ▶ Structured volunteering and institutional support:
 - ▶ The modern civic university as an anchor institution.
- ▶ At least two peer-reviewed articles: about the benefits of the course to the participants and education policies of the Forum
- ▶ One peer-reviewed article on staff experience and professional identity
- ▶ Social media presence: Facebook and Twitter, project website
- ▶ Potential short courses with Nottingham Women's Centre, Double Impact, New Rose Associates

The Team

- ▶ This cross-university pilot brought together colleagues from Politics and International Relations, Sociology, Psychology, NIOE, A&H, NCE and CADQ.
- ▶ Mhairi Bowe (Psych), Sarah Burton (CADQ) Imad El-Anis (PIR), Ricky Gee (Soc)
- ▶ Jumana Ghannam (A&H), Blerina Kellezi (Psych), Katerina Krulisova (PIR),
- ▶ Iryna Kushnir (NIOE), Kevin Love (PIR), Maria Fancisca Lozano
- ▶ Niamh McNamara (Psych), Martin Monahan (PIR), Jon Mansell (PIR),
- ▶ Dimitra Pavlina Nikita (NIOE), Ana Nunes (PIR), Mike O'Neill (PIR), Rich Pickford (NCE)
- ▶ Marianna Poberezhskaya (PIR), Clifford Stevenson (Psych), Tom Vickers (Soc)
- ▶ Juliet Wakefield (Psych).