

SPACES OF BELONGING

through the eyes
of Bristol Migrant Mothers



Project Lead **Dr. Dana Lungu**
Project Co-Lead **Dr. Harry Wilson**
Participants **Elifnaz**
Maria

Project email:
migrantmothersbristol@gmail.com



ACH



University of
BRISTOL



Elifnaz

Key takeaways

The project showed me how belonging is rooted in small, everyday experiences, from family routines to encounters in ordinary public spaces. I realised how these moments build continuity and connection in new environments.

What I learned/discovered

I discovered how multisensory experiences, especially those shared with my son, play a vital role in linking personal memories with new places of settlement.

What I liked/found useful

I especially appreciated how the project created space to reflect on belonging both academically and personally. The workshop format was particularly useful in prompting me to think about how family life and my son's everyday experiences, intersect with broader questions of place, memory and adaptation. Being able to visualise and record these moments also means that the project will remain a very special memory for us, especially for my son.

Scenes

1. Balance bike: Learning to let go

My son's balance bike becomes a bridge between past and present. It speaks of hesitation and courage, of the first push forward into independence. The scene carries echoes of my own childhood in Turkey while grounding me in the everyday streets of Bristol. It is a reminder of how belonging is created through motion and memory.



2. The Tree by Our Door: A way home

The tall yellow tree outside our flat is more than just a tree. For my son, it is the first sign that we are nearly home, a marker of safety, routine and comfort. Through his eyes, the tree has become part of our belonging, connecting the everyday streets of Bristol with memories of the home I left behind in Turkey.



3. Our home garden: Small, but ours

What looks like a simple patch of grass behind the house has become our small world. Here my son waters flowers, plays with his toys and listens to the wind. This tiny green carries the rhythms of the seasons and gives us a sense of safety, attachment and home.



4. Horfield Common: A place to breathe

Just five minutes from our flat, Horfield Common feels like a different world. It is where my son laughs the loudest and where I feel most at ease, no longer a guest but at home. These small rituals of walking, picnicking and playing stitch us into the fabric of the city, showing how belonging is built through ordinary afternoons.



5. Hand-knitted clothes: Wool, woven with memory

My son's hand-knitted vests, cardigans and scarves, made by his grandmother in Turkey, carry more than warmth. Each stitch holds memory, distance and love, folded into our life in Bristol. Dressing him in these garments connects generations across borders and reminds me that belonging is woven as much through care and touch as through place.



My Bristol map



Maria

Key takeaways

Taking part in the Spaces of Belonging research has encouraged me to reflect more deeply on the idea of belonging. I have realised that I have always searched for it since I was a child.

What I learned/discovered

For me, belonging means feeling safe in a space and experiencing acceptance from others. I often find connection through shared language, experiences, or passions with the people I meet.

What I liked/found useful

I truly valued the process of this project, from meeting Dana, Harry, and Elfinaz to the inspiring conversations and exchanges of stories. Each session was meaningful. When we experimented, the scans and sound recordings were particularly memorable. Overall, this journey has been both special and emotionally fulfilling. I'm so grateful to take part and be able to share my scans and stories with everyone.

Scenes

1. Easton Community Center

I first came to Easton Community Centre as a participant, joining sewing workshops and the English Conversation Club. Over time, my role grew now I facilitate arts and crafts workshops and sometimes host craft markets. Being part of Easton Community Centre has helped me grow and given me the chance to give back to the community.



2. Royal West Of England Academy RWA

I believe that places which give us a sense of belonging are very important.

RWA has given me the space to showcase my artwork, take part in community art projects, and facilitate workshops. It has allowed me to keep growing my skills and given me the confidence to exhibit in such a respected space something I will always be proud of. It also brings artists together and opens doors for them, and has been a real supporter of our artists' group, BRAC.



3. Ziyad Love Artwork

This piece is a celebration of the quiet, powerful act of sharing love. At its heart is the handprint of my son, a moment frozen in time, full of innocence and trust. Over it, I've embroidered threads of love, patience, and connection. This artwork is more than a keepsake, it's a symbol of how love is passed on hand to hand, heart to heart, thread by thread.



Made in June 2025

Displayed at the Sharing love art exhibition June 2025 until August 2025 at RWA.

4. Sparks sustainability & art

I truly believe that places like Sparks, which welcome people and give everyone the chance to be creative, makes such a big difference.

Sparks is one of those places where I truly feel at home, it's where arts and culture come together. I've loved being part of it, from running art workshops to joining in on different projects.

Sparks also creates opportunities for creators and small business owners, all while embracing sustainability.



5. Food tray: migration of tradition

Following my homeland tradition gives me the sense of belonging. I love sharing the foods and meals we used to enjoy, so my kids can experience our culture and feel connected to their roots. Blessings in eating together and sharing the foods.

The smell and taste of Sudan brings back so many beautiful memories for me, as every event has its own unique flavour. During Ramadan, for example, the scent of Helo Murr (حلو مر) fills every corner and neighbourhood, with preparations starting well before the holy month begins.





Dana Lungu Project Lead

Dana Lungu is an academic, community and public engagement specialist, focusing on accessibility, inclusion and equity. She is also a migrant mother.

She is honorary Lecturer in the School of Modern Languages at Cardiff University, honorary Research Associate in the School of Modern Languages and Research Associate in the Institute for Sociotechnical Cyber Security at the University of Bristol.

Her research focuses on the experience of migration and motherhood in particular the challenges and the possibilities for resistance and inclusion it generates.

She uses arts-based methods and community engagement to explore what it means to be a migrant

mother today.

She works and is interested in projects which engage with marginalised voices in order to tackle barriers to access to culture, make policies or programs more inclusive and reflective of community needs.

Her accessibility and inclusion work expands into the field of privacy and cyber security with a view to promoting media literacy and supporting diverse users to make informed choices online.

The Spaces of Belonging Project

She developed the Spaces of Belonging project to engage with the cultural in-betweenness experienced by migrants: the feeling of not being fully immersed in the culture of the host country whilst having left behind your homeland.

This becomes more acute when one has children, and they must navigate this in-betweenness as mother or caregiver. Finding spaces/places of belonging in the host country is essential when migrant mothers try to build a life for them and for their children.

Providing such spaces ensures the strength, the cohesion and the well-being of our communities.

Spaces of belonging explores the perception of migrant mothers in terms of spaces/places of belonging within the local community by drawing on memories of homeland as well as everyday experiences.

Migrant mothers define in their own terms what these spaces of belonging are and give us the opportunity to engage with their experience through immersive scenes.

The immersive scenes created by the migrant mothers using arts-based methods and creative technology enhance our understanding of the importance of such places of belonging within the community.

The project team was selected to give evidence on inclusive cultural spaces in the Citizens Assembly for Culture consultative policymaking process for the West of England Combined Authority September 2025.

Scenes

Pantry

The pantry is the place where the connection to childhood and homeland is strong. Inadvertently, I replicated this memory of a larder full of preserves to create a space of belonging. It has become an everyday space where I feel in touch with that part of my culture and my identity.



Entrance to 17 Woodland Road, University of Bristol

The university was the first place I explored when I arrived in the United Kingdom. Whilst the beginning was fraught with anxiety, the university spaces made me feel like I belong.

17 Woodland Road is part of my journey. The building has witnessed various stages of my development as a researcher and as a person. It is a space where I always felt welcome and it holds some of my dearest memories and my biggest achievements.





Harry Wilson – Project Co-Lead

Dr. Harry Robert Wilson is an artist-researcher and Lecturer in Digital Theatre and Performance-Making in the School of Arts at the University of Bristol. Harry's research and practice focus on interdisciplinary explorations of live art, performance, digital art and creative technologies through critical theory and artistic research. He was Digital Thinker in Residence at National Theatre of Scotland (2018-19) and a Research Associate on the AHRC funded Walking Publics/Walking Arts project at the University of Glasgow (2021-22) (walkcreate.org). Harry currently teaches on the MA Immersive Arts co-taught in Theatre and Computer Science at Bristol.

As an artist-researcher Harry has been exploring the possibilities of using 3D scanning technologies, locative AR and creative participatory methods to explore place-making and belonging. You can read more about a locative AR walk Harry made with his daughter Poppy in his article 'Walking with a 6-year-old and a smartphone' in *Research in Drama Education*.

Any thoughts, comments or questions contacts us at:

migrantmothersbristol@gmail.com

