

Learning activity

Walking on Kiburn High Road

TIME: 90 mins

LEARNING AIMS:

- Understand the concept of the translocalism
- Analyse your local embeddedness and transnational connections in your community.
- Share experiences of translocalism with other participants

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 10-20

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Papers and pens for participants

FRAMING:

Today we are diving into your sense of place. We will use creative thinking and mapping exercises to explore your lived reality and surroundings. This is a great activity to support a group to further understand their different contexts and how they are embedded in where they are based geographically.

FACILITATION:

Step 1. Welcome the group into space

Can be accompanied by a check in or another warm up exercise or energizer, depending on the dynamics of the group and in the space.

Step 2: Warming up Exercise: Your locality

Think about a place you lived (recently) for a longer period. Use a piece of paper to draw the street and surrounding streets and place your place onto the map. If there is a bit more time you can also add some places that come to mind, maybe your local supermarket, library, a friends place or postbox - really anything that comes to mind when you think about that place.

Allow participants to briefly sketch the place for 10 minutes. Afterwards invite them to place their image in front of them.

Step 3. Reading from Doreen Massey, a global sense of place

Allow participants to find a comfortable place, invite them to close their eyes if they wish to. Read the excerpt slowly from Doreen Masey's [global sense of place](#).

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Excerpt from Doreen Masey's [global sense of place](#).

Take, for instance, a walk down Kilburn High Road, my local shopping centre. It is a pretty ordinary place, north west of the centre of London. Under the railway bridge the newspaper stand sells papers from every county of what my neighbours, many of whom come from there, still often call the Irish Free State. The postboxes down the High Road, and many an empty space on a wall, are adorned with the letters IRA. Other available spaces are plastered this week with posters for a special meeting in remembrance: Ten Years after the Hunger Strike. At the local theatre Eamon Morrissey has a oneman show; the National Club has the Wolfe Tones on, and at the Black Lion there's Finnegans Wake. In two shops I notice this week's lottery ticket winners: in one the name is Teresa Gleeson, in the other, Chouman Hassan. Thread your way through the often almost stationary traffic diagonally across the road from the newsstand and there's a shop which as long as I can remember has displayed saris in the window. Four life-sized models of Indian women, and reams of cloth.

On the door a notice announces a forthcoming concert at Wembley Arena: Anand Miland presents Rekha, live, with Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, Jahi Chawla and Raveena Tandon. On another ad, for the end of the month, is written 'All Hindus are cordially invited'. In another newsagents I chat with the man who keeps it, a Muslim unutterably depressed by events in the Gulf, silently chafing at having to sell The Sun. Overhead there is always at least one aeroplane - we seem to be on a flight-path to Heathrow and by the time they're over Kilburn you can see them clearly enough to tell the airline and wonder as you struggle with your shopping where they're coming from. Below, the reason the traffic is snarled up (another odd effect of time-space-compression!) is in part because this is one of the main entrances to and escape-routes from London, the road to Staples Corner and the beginning of the M1 to the North. This is just the beginnings of a sketch from immediate impressions but a proper analysis could be done, of the links between Kilburn and the world. And so it could for almost any place.

Step 4: Sketching the surroundings

Invite participants to add as many details as possible to their drawing. Simple observations of their immediate surroundings.

Step 5: Sharing imagery

Ask participants to sit in groups of three back to back to share the observations they have when they walk down the road. One person will share their story, one person will listen with closed eyes and the third person will note- take any observations that refer to the translocal nature of the place. After the person has shared, the person listening with closed eyes is invited to add any observations of translocalism with the person note taking. Two rounds follow, so every participant has a turn in partaking in all three roles.

Step 6: Debriefing - small group

First in the small groups of three people are invited to sit back together in small circles

1. Share your observations from the methodology, how did you feel in each position.
2. How was it for you to draw, investigate, observe and retell the stories of your street.
3. Which memories came to mind immediately and which only after some thinking.
4. What observations about the translocal did we have?

Step 7: Debriefing in the large group

Invite the group back to the large circle. Share some final debriefing questions with the plenary.

1. What did you observe
2. What were similarities and differences?
3. How easy or difficult was the exercise?
4. How did the exercise change your perception of the translocal?

SOURCE: Doreen Massey, *For Space*. London, Sage Publications, 2005.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Further reading (can be printed and distributed)

Excerpt from Doreen Massey's [global sense of place](#).

Kilburn is a place for which I have a great affection; I have lived there many years. It certainly has 'a character of its own'. But it is possible to feel all this without subscribing to any of the static and defensive - and in that sense reactionary - notions of 'place' which were referred to above. First, while Kilburn may have a character of its own, it is absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares. It could hardly be less so. People's routes through the place, their favourite haunts within it, the connections they make (physically, or by phone or post, or in memory and imagination) between here and the rest of the world vary enormously. If it is now recognised that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places. Moreover, such multiple identities can either be a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both. One of the problems here has been a persistent identification of place with 'community'. Yet this is a misidentification. On the one hand communities can exist without being in the same place - from networks of friends with like interests, to major religious, ethnic or political communities. On the other hand, the instances of places housing single 'communities' in the sense of coherent social groups are probably - and, I would argue, have for long been - quite rare.

Moreover, even where they do exist this in no way implies a single sense of place. For people occupy different positions within any community. We could counterpose to the chaotic mix of Kilburn the relatively stable and homogeneous community (at least in popular imagery) of a small mining village. Homogeneous? 'Communities' too have internal structures. To take the most obvious example, I'm sure a woman's sense of place in a mining village - the spaces through which she normally moves, the meeting places, the

connections outside - are different from a man's. Their 'senses of the place' will be different.