



#ConnectMe – Resource Pack 3

Celebrate your street – together!



UNIT 14 Co-creating events – Performance after lockdown lift



Having worked through the previous units you will have a wealth of information about your place to share with your friends and neighbours. Once the current restrictions on social interaction due to the Covid-19 pandemic are relaxed, you've got the option of developing a fully interactive "live" celebration for your whole street to experience. Why not create a performance?! You and your neighbours can create characters to tell the story of your place. You can write a script and become actors to bring it all to life.

It doesn't need to be a full-scale theatrical production, but rather, a scene or series of short scenes (probably running no longer than 20 minutes in total) which tell a story of your place. This may form part of a static garden or street party event or as part of a walking performance around your area using stations or stop points for dramatic interludes. The majority of the *Squillometre* performances thus far have adopted the walking approach. By walking the length of a

street or an area, pausing to look at places of interest, the community is drawn together, engaged in conversation and fun togetherness.

What do you want to celebrate? Beginning to find your focus

Having looked at your discoveries, use answers to the following questions to stimulate your imagination and focus in on what you are going to celebrate.

1. What has your research uncovered?
 - BUILDINGS – lost or gained; changes in use; industry or residential
 - LANDSCAPES – topography, changes, secrets – river, forest, pasture, rock
 - HISTORY – events major or domestic, developments and innovations
 - PEOPLE – major figures, ordinary people, jobs, lifestyle,
 - NAMES – street names, house names, the origins of the place

2. What do you want to share?
 - STORY
 - FACTS
 - IMAGES
 - OBJECTS
 - IDEAS

3. Are there obstacles to your audience's understanding of the story you wish to tell?
 - Is it a story of loss or gain?
 - Will you be appealing to your audience's imagination or their sight?
 - Are there gaps to fill or ruins to rebuild?
 - Are there houses to see beyond or walls to see through?

4. What skills do you or your community possess? What is your asset base?
 - WRITING – prose, drama, poetry, music
 - PERFORMING – act, dance, sing, play
 - CREATING – making, building, art, film, photography
 - ORGANISING – drawing people together, making thing happen
 - FUNDRAISING – accessing funding, finding ingenious ways to enable the project

Looking at your answers to the questions above

5. How do you want to share your discoveries?
 - VISUALLY – an exhibition, display board
 - A GUIDED WALK – a group walk around your area guided by a performer in character
 - AN EVENT
 - Performance or concert
 - Garden party
 - Parade

Interwoven strives to present work which is accessible to all, so it is vital to think about who you are reaching out towards. An awareness of your neighbours and their needs will affect the form of your Celebration and will help you to draw all of your neighbours together to share and delight in the discoveries you have made.

6. How can you make participation in your celebration as easy and enjoyable as possible for the following groups?

- Older people
- Families with young children
- Wheelchair users, and people with limited mobility
- Young people and teenagers

With answers to these questions, you have a germ of an idea to bring to life. Now we will look at the ways you can find the characters to bring your stories to life.

Finding characters



A major challenge to overcome is how to communicate the information that is essential for the audience receive in order to see or experience their place afresh.

- How have humans shaped this place?

And / or

- How have humans been shaped by it?

A good performance shows rather than tells its stories. By giving a voice to the people, real or imagined, who worked or settled there, you can find a simple way to reveal wonderful discoveries about your place in a way that is entertaining and playful, but also informative.

- How can you use historical or fictional characters to illuminate place authentically?

Whilst you want to give your neighbours an authentic experience of place, there is a lot of creative scope when you come to present your information dramatically. Remember, this is a performance rather than a lecture so you can find a little poetic license to bring the place to life in the minds of your neighbours. You could always provide an information sheet for those who like to see the facts in black and white.

Regardless of the age of your street or community, put on your *Histori-goggles* and look back 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000 years or further and visualise the people who lived, worked or crossed the land. Allow your imagination to see previous generations walking where you walk, from farmers to merchants, bakers to blacksmiths. Can you follow their footsteps or even walk in their shoes?

Your research will have revealed or suggested trades, types of people, or real characters with stories to tell and experiences of your place which can form a dramatic base for your celebration.

Each of these people has stories to tell, which reveal aspects of your place. To find the most potent theatrical voice from the past some imaginative research may be necessary. These simple questions, created by Constantin Stanislavski over a century ago, to help actors build truthful characters for performance, are useful to consider here.

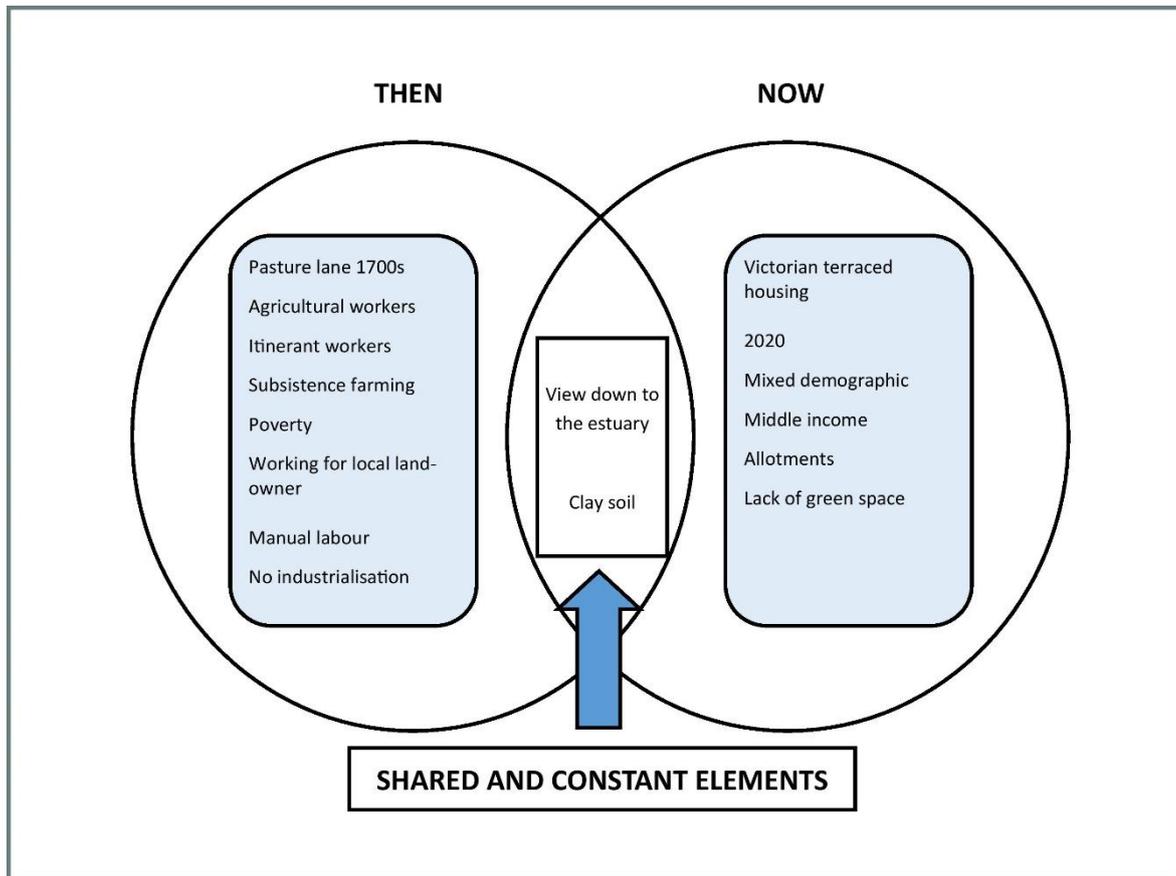
- Who am I? *Name, job, activity. What makes me “me”?*
- Where am I? *How does this place make me feel?*
- What time is it? *Time, day, season, century*
- What do I want? *The thing which drives me forward, no matter how big or small.*
- Why do I want it? *The reasons for the thing I want*
- How will I get what I want? *The things I do to get what I want*
- What must I overcome to get what I want? *The thing which stops me getting what I want*

With a little creative visualisation and imagination around the research you will be able to build some dynamic and truthful characters who can speak to the authentic experience of your place.

Building the story

The following ideas might help you find the areas of difference and conflict which will add drama to your celebration, and will also help to reveal the evolving history of your place through contrast and debate

- How might the spirits of your place, your geographical ancestors, feel about the place now?
- How might they respond to the changes made to their place over time?
- What was your place like for your historical characters?
- What skills would you need to live their life?
- How can you suggest your ancestors experience of place?
- How can you celebrate their tenacity, creativity, ingenuity, environmental integrity?



A simple Venn diagram can help define areas of similarity and contrast which will drive the drama and interaction of the characters you create.

By highlighting contrast, similarities, and shared elements you will be able to create short snatches of dialogue, make stories, paint pictures.

- The reveries of our C18th shepherd could become the lyrics of a song.
- The voice of the Victorian property developer may demand to explain how the houses you live in came to be built.
- A conversation with elders on the street may reveal significant recent changes which throw interesting light on characters from the recent past.

The mutual confusions and shared preoccupations existing between characters, once aired, can go on to open up conversations among your neighbours about their feelings about where you live as you walk, talk and share and re-experience your place anew.

Your celebration performance

Whilst there is no “correct” way to bring your place to life, we have found the following approaches to be useful when planning a celebration of your place which includes performance :

- Clear contrast between characters – historical, cultural, political
- An element of conflict, rivalry or competition which is positive and creative
- Warm, good humour, openness and a sense of delight in meeting the audience
- Respect for the audience, an inclusive non-patronising atmosphere
- A timelessness, perhaps a sense of ghosts or a parallel world
- A question or a journey or a quest which drives things forward and which encourages us all to move and discover together
- An episodic structure with clear transitions between locations
- Surprises - A moment of the unexpected which enriches the performance, re-defines the rules of the place and captures the imagination of the audience.
- Direct address to the audience – asking questions and asking for thoughts and impressions.
- The play’s language is direct and simple and embeds the facts lightly into the text with dialogue which is accessible and appropriate to a mixed audience.



By allowing the research to speak to you creatively as well as factually, you will be able to create a joyful celebration of the uniqueness of your place.