## PROJECT DETAILS

### Project Title

Imagining New Futures: Engaging Young People Through Participatory Arts in Post-Conflict Kosovo

### Project Summary

This project critically investigates the ways in which the post-conflict generation of young people in Kosovo might be enabled to imagine, construct and share their visions of a more inclusive and socially just future, through selected, participatory arts-based civil society initiatives. With a focus on a minimum of one selected genre, the participatory arts-forms to be investigated might include: music, song, film, poetry, creative writing, theatre, performance art, street art, design, painting, or any other selected art genre through which identity narratives and visions for new futures might be mediated, negotiated, perpetuated or challenged at the grassroots level. The background to this approach is Performative Social Science (PSS), which offers a fusion of the arts and social science grounded within relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002). PSS emphasizes the collective experience of coming together and creating meaning.

This study contributes to a wider Kosovo case study under the umbrella of the comparative AHRC project ‘Changing the Story: Building Inclusive Civil Societies with, and for, Young People in 5 Post-Conflict Countries’ (2017-2021). It sits within a growing interdisciplinary body of theories regarding the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, which demand wider global and societal participation and inclusion in recognition of the potentials of ‘culture’. The SDGs refer to ‘culture’ both in terms of the anthropological concept as ‘way of life’ and in its aesthetic dimension as ‘art’. IR, political and development studies have followed suit in increasingly conjuring up a ‘local’, ‘ethnographic’, or ‘cultural’ turn. The research will take a critical, immersed ethnographic, case study approach in order to contribute new understandings of how such ideas and ideals are operationalised and deliver the anticipated outcomes in practice.

The project will critically explore the extent to which the documented participatory practices either might draw on, or challenge: (1) specific local cultural knowledge of both the selected arts form and historical arts-based collaborations or structures of support that might transcend today's societal divisions; (2) local collective memory underpinning solidarities, divisions and emotions and unexpected potentials, including of usually neglected or silenced groups or time periods; (3) the wider context of internationally-promoted, cross-regional and civil-society initiatives, by or for young people (e.g. 2014 Berlin Process).

The project is composed of three parts: (1) documentation of the selected arts genre’s existing cultural heritage and related local knowledge in Kosovo serving as a resource; (2) an ethnographic, participatory action study of the ways in which young people in Kosovo actively renegotiate their identity and futures through related arts-based, participatory practices and civil society activities; (3) an analysis of the context, sources and inspirations of such practices and the ways in which these challenge, change or integrate cultural heritage and other local, translocal and global inspirations.

Ultimately, the project aims to foster understanding of how participatory arts practices might offer a mechanism through which young people in marginalised, post-conflict settings of a divided society may or may not be empowered to determine their own futures vis-à-vis both internal and external enablers and barriers.

### Academic Impact

The project fits well within UoA 22/23; the new FHSS-research centre ‘Seldom-Heard Voices: marginalised voices and societal integration’ and BU's cross-faculty conflict transformation and Global Security studies initiatives.

It is scholarly innovative in applying (1) the cross-disciplinary, practice-based methodological experience and
societal transformation of PSS as presented at BU to an international, post-conflict case study; and (2) in substantiating the ‘cultural turn’ through immersive ethnography and reliance on, and respect for, local knowledge and specificity. This mutually balanced knowledge and information exchange between Kosovo and the UK (BU) will exemplifying the inclusive and participatory aims, in research practice, of the SDG 2030, and the ‘Seldom Heard Voices’ research centre. The project will further enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration within the FHSS department of Social Work and Social Sciences. It will also closely relate to the VC-studentship (running since 18th September, 2017), exploring the application of arts-based interventions to bridge societal divisions in a comparison of the Bosnian experience (a parallel case study) to Dorset societal divisions following the Brexit vote.

Output expectations include several contributions to workshops and conferences contributions, partly linked to the wider framework of the AHRC-project; regular blogs or op-eds as well as several academic publications in international, peer-reviewed journals.

**Societal Impact**

The findings from this project have a wide applicability across a range of local, national and international agencies working to support young people in post-conflict and divided societies. Dr Schwandner-Sievers’ research and collaborations with both academic and civil society partners in Kosovo has received international recognition and is regularly requested by national or international conflict transformation agencies. Prof. Lee-Ann Fenge’s and Dr Mel Hughes’ work has been recognised for applying PSS to national and regional, inclusive community-building and youth projects. This project will contribute to developing innovative interventions, best practice, and culturally-sensitive, better multi-sector collaborations and policies in this key area. These are applicable to other case studies of societal conflict, divisions and transitions at all levels via the embeddedness in the world-wide comparative AHRC project and collaborative links to local agencies such as the Dorset Race and Equality Council or The Complete Freedom of Truth project.

**Training Opportunities**

This PhD-project will be linked to the Kosovo country case study of the 2017–2021 AHRC project ‘Changing the Story: Building Inclusive Civil Societies with, and for, Young People in 5 Post-Conflict Countries’, particularly this project’s. Beyond integration in the international AHRC project, the successful candidate will be associated with BU’s new FHSS-research centre ‘Seldom-Heard Voices: marginalised voices and societal integration’, which presents recognised PSS expertise. The student will benefit from supervisors’ specific expertise in research methods, ethics and cultural sensitivity; and BU cross-faculty conflict transformation and security studies initiatives.

Transferrable skills: Networking and communication—developed through the process of establishing links with colleagues and agencies in Kosovo, and supported by PhD supervisors to ensure that the student is able to develop in these areas. Communication and presentation: The student will develop these skills through seminars, workshops and conference presentations, and in preparing and submitting peer-reviewed publications.

The student will further benefit from the Doctoral School and its methodological training as well as BU’s expanding PhD-community in the Social Sciences, both within FHSS and across faculties.

**SUPERVISORY TEAM**

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<th>First Supervisor</th>
<th>Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers</th>
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<td><strong>Additional Supervisors</strong></td>
<td>Lee-Ann Fenge</td>
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<td>Fenge, L., Hodges, C., and Cutts, W. 2016. Performance Poetry as a Method to Understand Disability, FQS Forum: Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung,</td>
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INFORMAL ENQUIRIES

To discuss this opportunity further, please contact Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers via email:

BU PhD Studentship Project Description
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Studentship candidates must demonstrate outstanding academic potential with preferably a 1st class honours degree and/or a Master’s degree with distinction or equivalent Grade Point Average. An IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 5.5 in each component) is essential for candidates for whom English is not their first language. In addition to satisfying basic entry criteria, BU will look closely at the qualities, skills and background of each candidate and what they can bring to their chosen research project in order to ensure successful completion.

Additional Eligibility

Candidates should be able to demonstrate relevant language knowledge, an essential requirement for both literature research and the ethnographic core component of this study.

HOW TO APPLY

Please complete the online application form by 5th March, 2018. Further information on the application process can be found at: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/studentships