

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Leeds Beckett University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Negotiating conflict through socially engaged art and architecture		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2003-2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Mohamad Hafeda	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Senior Lecturer	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2014 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Hafeda's social art practice generated benefits for diverse communities in London, Portugal, Brazil and Lebanon. 'Shop of Possibilities' (SoP), an art- and play-space commissioned by South London Gallery (SLG), improved the development of 484 children, providing training and employment. An independent report advising the Greater London Authority cites SoP as best-practice, informing its investment of £873,299. Hafeda's work with Roma communities in Braga initiated a mediation group to improve community relations. Hafeda's work '<i>inspired and instigated</i>' curator Amanda Abi Khalil's commissioning of five social artworks in marginalised communities in Rio de Janeiro and for refugee children on the Syrian border.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Mohamad Hafeda uses site-specific participatory art and architecture to negotiate sites of conflict, addressing issues of refuge, displacement, borders and spatial rights. Hafeda and Reem Charif are co-founders of Febrik, a two-person research vehicle for developing participatory art and design projects exploring the dynamics of urban space in relation to marginalised groups.</p> <p>By using play methodologies and architectural strategies to intervene in contested urban spaces, Hafeda's community participation projects instigate propositional thinking, helping people envision changes to their social and physical environment. For example, Febrik's art and design workshops resulted in collaborative outputs – events, temporary art installations, permanent play structures – as well as proposing new urban design policies. This novel methodology evolved from site-specific projects in Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East: Burj el Barajneh, Lebanon (2003-05); Nahr el Bared, Lebanon (2007-10, in partnership with the United Nations); and Talbyeh, Jordan (2008-11, Hafeda here employed as UN consultant). These demonstrated the potential for play and architectural intervention as tools for marginalised groups to contest ownership of space by transforming abandoned objects into play items, and were further developed in his practice-as-research after Hafeda joined LBU (2014). This research on collaboration and production was shared in the journal article 'Bordering Practice: Negotiating Theory and Practice' (2016); the monograph <i>Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon: Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut</i>, (2019); and the co-authored publication 'Creative Refuge' (2014). (3.1; 3.2; 3.3) Hafeda's research is recognised as an essential source for practitioners working with displaced and marginalised groups. Muna Budeiri, ICIP Deputy Director of The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees HQ Amman, described 'Creative Refuge' as "<i>An enormous effort that expands our notions of what is possible in the restricted spatial and social context of a Palestine refugee camp. It is necessary work brimming with creativity of thought and expression.</i>"</p> <p>Hafeda's social art commissions for SLG, SoP (2012-17) and Serpentine Galleries (3.4), applied these methods to projects with young people from Southwark and Westminster, building community cohesion and reclaiming public space. For the SLG commission, Hafeda and Charif remodelled a disused retail unit on Sceaux Gardens Estate into the SoP. Here, Hafeda's principles of freedom and invention encouraged children and families to scavenge materials from the estate for free-play activities led by children, the adults facilitators rather than leaders. Febrik's novel and rigorous exploration of the spatial dynamics of community groups was showcased in the exhibition 'The Social Playground: Space of Protest' at the Lebanese</p>		

## Impact case study (REF3)

American University in Beirut, which assembled various models of play as a mechanism for protest, featuring projects in the Middle East and UK.(3.5)

In 2017 The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, Ashkal Alwan, commissioned Hafeda to produce 'Sewing Borders', (3.6) a film following Beirut residents as they undertake one of Hafeda's projects, using sewing to annotate maps, prompting their consideration of Middle Eastern borders within an ongoing history of displacement. Typical of Hafeda's works derived from participatory projects, the film extends the workshops into a visual language that resists the documentary approach.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

**3.1** Hafeda, M. (2016) "Bordering Practice: Negotiating Theory and Practice". In *Architecture and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 3. London: Taylor & Francis.

**3.2** Hafeda, M (2019) *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon: Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut*. London: I.B. Tauris.

**3.3** Hafeda, M., Charif, R. and Al Jabri, J. (2014) *Creative Refuge*. Washington DC: Tadween Publishing.

**3.4** Hafeda, M. and Charif, R. (2016) *Action of Street/Action of Room: A Directory of Public Actions*. London: Serpentine Galleries.

**3.5** Hafeda, M. and Charif, R. (2017) *The Social Playground: Space of Protest*, Exhibition at Lebanese American University. Beirut, Lebanon, March 2017.

**3.6** Hafeda, M. (2017) *Sewing Borders*. The film was commissioned by Ashkal Alwan for Video Works 2017. Exhibitions include: Beirut Art Center part of Video Works (2017); a screening at the Mosaic Rooms, London (2017) where it was also the subject of a panel discussion between Laila Alodaat (Human Rights Lawyer), Dr. Camillo Boano (Architect), Michaela Crimmin (Curator) and Hafeda; *Living Room UIT (Use It Together)*, ISCP New York (2019).

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Hafeda's projects bestowed long-term benefits to diverse communities in London (2014-present), Portugal (2017-present), Brazil (2019-present) and Lebanon (2019-present), developing social and creative skills amongst 696 children, young people and adults, encouraging them to assert their rights and opinions about public space by building permanent social infrastructures. Hafeda's work influenced decision-making of council authorities in London and Braga, Portugal; UK housing developers; South London Gallery and MK Gallery (UK); and curator Amanda Abi Khalil.

#### Informing estate planning and development in Southwark

The SoP galvanised SLG's presence on Sceaux Gardens Estate. Originally temporary, SoP became permanent, with the Tenants and Residents Association insisting it was incorporated into Sceaux's 2017 redevelopment. John McGrath explained: '*every time we have a meeting we always highlight the Shop of Possibilities because we don't want it to go.*' The result was 'Art Block', a purpose-designed space based on SoP, with improved facilities for higher numbers of children and young people attracted by the provision. Dr Sim's report observed: '*It is no small achievement (and a clear indicator of local endorsement) that the Shop of Possibilities has been incorporated into planned architectural developments on the estate.*'(5.1) Hafeda was invited as guest of honour to launch Art Block in 2017.

#### Influencing surrounding communities

Sim's observation that SoP's '*influence stretches far beyond its immediate location*' echoes Jack James, SLG's Children and Families Coordinator, who says it '*caused an expansion of the direct delivery the gallery was doing*'. Instrumental in expanding off-site projects on 6 neighbouring estates (5.2), since 2016 the Freelands Foundation has supported SoP with £306,146 (5.3), the

Art Block team playing 'a pivotal role in designing and defining the space' at nearby Cezanne House in 2019.(5.1)

SoP was presented as best-practice for estate development in an independent report, shared with housing developers, London's councils and the Greater London Authority, informing the investment of £873,299 for new programmes for the London Cultural Education Challenge (2015-18).(5.4) SoP also influenced MK Gallery's Learning Team's Learning Programme.(5.5)

### **Building confidence and skills in young people and children**

Hafeda's methods have had long-term benefits on participants' confidence, wellbeing and social skills, as three independent reports, based on interviews with sessional workers, parents and children (5.1; 5.6), testify: "*The programme has benefited hundreds of children from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds ... supporting their social development and increasing confidence. It has also created training and paid employment opportunities for local young people between ages 16–25 ... raising their ambitions and career goals whilst acting as positive role models for younger children.*" (5.6). Hafeda's work at Serpentine Galleries with struggling schoolchildren was a catalyst for improving confidence and creative skills. Alex Thorpe, Serpentine's Education Curator, observed that Hafeda's methods '*definitely [build] confidence. Confidence in articulating and sharing opinions and being confident to agree and disagree with people ... giving them [the participants] some tools to think and reflect on their experiences.*'(5.7)

### **New employment/training opportunities**

SoP created employment for 20 sessional workers, 1 manager and 1 coordinator. Art Block employed 17 sessional workers, 1 manager, 1 coordinator and 3 trainees. According to James, estate residents '*gained employment, responsibility and income through this opportunity*' (5.2), many securing their first job since attending SoP as children. Dr Sim noted that SoP positively '*affected the aspirations and resilience*' of employees. (5.1)

### **Improving civic relations in Braga**

When invited by Space Transcribers to mentor professionals on Santa Tecla housing estate in Braga, 2017, Hafeda used his innovative participatory methods to produce art events and a film, facilitating community discussions on social unity. Following Hafeda's work with the Roma community, the community was '*incited... to take action over the future of their own social housing estate*', establishing 'Gabinete de Mediação Roma' in 2018, described by Fernando Ferreira, co-founder of Space Transcribers, as a '*resonance of Mohamad and [the] student's project .. this mediation group continues to act as a bridge of communication and mediation between Santa Tecla's residents and Braga's City Council,*' moreover, '*This mediation process became essential for reducing the conflicts of communication transmitted during the entire regeneration process of the social housing estate.*'(5.8)

### **Informing curatorial commissioning**

Struck by Hafeda's '*rare*' approach to socially engaged practice and his ability to give it a permanence through film, curator Amanda Abi Khalil selected 'Sewing Borders' for the exhibition 'Living Room UIT (Use It Together)' at ISCP, New York, 2019. The film changed how Khalil commissions social art: '*Mohamad's video did influence and impact my practice as a curator, especially when it came to commissioning and the process of commissioning.*'(5.9) Hafeda's parlaying of social projects into further artworks was a key influence on Khalil's commissioning for 'A casa é sua', at the Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro (2020): five social art projects Khalil commissioned, involving hundreds of children and adults from the Favela of Maré; an Arab community living in Rio de Janeiro; and refugees stranded between Lebanon and Syria.

## **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

**5.1** External evaluation reports: Sim, N. (2015; 2019) *Play Local evaluation report 2014-15* and *SLG Open Plan External Evaluation*. Reports supplied by South London Gallery.

**5.2** Interview transcript and staffing numbers: James, J. (2020) Interview with Jack James, Children and Families Coordinator & Resident's Programme Manager at South London Gallery. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 11 March.

**5.3** Annual Reports: The Freelands Foundation Limited (2016, see pg.18-19; 2017, see pg.18; 2018 see pg.18) *Annual Reports*, [Online] Available at: <https://freelandsfoundation.co.uk/about/annual-reports>

**5.4** Summary Report: A New Direction (2018) *London Cultural Education Challenge Summary*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/asset/3527>

**5.5** Research blog: MK Gallery (2015) 'Behind the Scenes: Learning Team Research Visits', *MK Gallery Expansion*, 12 November. Available at: <https://mkgalleryexpansion.org/category/research/>

**5.6** Independent report: Bacon, N. & Bayram, C. (2016, see pgs. 50-51) *The Cultural (Re)Generation: Building Creative Places for Young London*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/asset/3226>

**5.7** Interview transcript: Thorpe, A. (2020) Interview with Alex Thorpe, Education Curator, Serpentine Galleries. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 16 March.

**5.8** Testimonial: Ferreira, F. (2020) Testimonial from Fernando Ferreira, Co-Founder of Space Transcribers, 9 March.

**5.9** Interview transcript: Khalil, A. (2020) Interview with Amanda Abi Khalil, Independent Curator. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 28 February.