



Bethlehem with settlements (Photo credit: Mark Griffiths)

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Growing up in conflict – project explores experiences of young people in Occupied Palestinian Territories

The experiences of young people growing up amid conflict and crisis will be explored during a new project between Northumbria University, in Newcastle and An-Najah University in the Occupied Palestine Territories.

Over the next two years, academics from both institutions will work with around 120 young people, aged 16 to 25, living in the Occupied Palestine Territories. They will explore the role of shared cultural identities and

heritage expressed through things like music and food, in helping young people deal with the conflict around them.

The research will be used by organisations working with young people in the region, enabling them to create resources which support the young people more effectively.

The project has been awarded more than £260,000 of funding through a British Academy Sustainable Development award, supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund.

It will be led by [Professor Matt Baillie Smith](#) from Northumbria University's [Centre for International Development](#). He said: "We are delighted to have won this grant from the British Academy to be able to work with our partners An-Najah University on a project we believe can play an important role in understanding and supporting young people in conflict and crisis settings.

"By bringing together different disciplines, universities and organisations, we hope that we can develop new understanding of the ways culture, heritage and creativity shape young people's capacities to cope, their citizenship and agency, and through this, their abilities to shape sustainable development for themselves and their communities."

Over the last five years, academics from [Northumbria's Centre for International Development](#) have worked on a variety of projects exploring volunteering, civil society, learning and care in the context of conflict in the global South. This includes a Rutherford Fund Strategic Partnership grant with project partner, An-Najah University, further British Academy funding for research on gender and checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and collaborative research on volunteers in conflicts and emergencies with the Swedish Red Cross.

Professor Baillie Smith added: "Many young people today are living in protracted conflicts and crises. However, humanitarian aid responses and related academic research are often characterised by formal, professionalised and immediate approaches that can neglect community-based responses over time.

"Young people's agency and citizenship and their capacity to shape change

can be overlooked, especially where the focus is on improving the delivery of humanitarian aid. In the occupied Palestinian territories, 16-25 year olds constitute a third of the population. However, little is understood of how cultural agency, creativity and citizenship help them not only cope with the stress and trauma of conflict, but also shape their own and their communities' futures."

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