BU Research Theme: [**Cultural and Social Change**](http://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/2011/05/25/technology-and-design-mark-hadfield/)

**Brief theme summary:**

In a fast changing world, with increasing uncertainty, it is important to understand how change comes about and how both individuals and societies adapt to change. There are many inter-related dimensions of the profound and rapid changes which are taking place, from the technological and economic to the political and socio-cultural. The UN forecasts that by 2050 there will be 9 billion people on the planet. We therefore face critical questions about how we will sustain this population, not just in terms of our resources, but how we can manage conflicts and tensions and also continue to make our lives rich and meaningful.

With all of the challenges facing society today, how can we use our understanding of both the past and present to support us in the future?

Major research areas are (not in order of priority):

* the inequalities and conflicts arising in the globalised world, and governmental responses to them, e.g. the tensions created both by marketisation trends and by increasing global economic interdependencies and mobilities, the rise of various forms of extremism.
* changing practices and emergent cultural formations, e.g. the pressures and opportunities of consumer culture.
* the formation and establishment of identity and how this develops in relation to shared interests in a competitive world.

**Scope of theme: what is included?**

This theme is about identifying the determinants of culture and social change and their effect at the level of individuals and communities in different temporal and spatial contexts. Awareness of regional context (seen from a global perspective) and critical methodological reflection are also common concerns across the theme, though all philosophical and methodological orientations are accommodated within it.

**What is excluded?**

Research with a focus on digital technologies, rather than on their socio-cultural causes and consequences, falls conceptually outside of this theme.

Research with a pedagogic focus, or that concerned with topics in the fields of sport, leisure and tourism, or health, well-being and ageing, would be excluded. Conceptually it could belong here, but such work is best housed under those other BU themes which focus on these areas.

**Which big societal questions are addressed by this theme?**

* What are the main drivers of change?
* How effective are specific policy-led interventions?
* How do societies interact and flourish in a changing environment?
* What are the key parameters of cultural adaptation and identity?
* What is the impact of migration on societal organisation and coherence?
* What are the costs of socio-economic and/or political change, in relation to social inequality, nutrition, health, longevity, acculturation, and the loss and formation of identity?

In an age when the boundaries of the state are being redrawn, the theme will increase the impact potential of BU researchers in areas such as welfare policy, democratic participation, changing patterns of consumption and cultural policy.

**How do these link to the priorities of the major funding bodies?**

This theme links to the priorities of several of the main funding bodies including:

AHRC (Culture and Heritage, Connected Communities, Digital Economy, Living with Environmental Change, Global Uncertainties, Lifelong Health and Wellbeing). Emerging themes: Care for the future: thinking forward through the past; Translating Cultures; Science in Culture; Digital Transformations in the Arts and Humanities.

ESRC’s *strategic priorities* of behaviour change and a ‘vibrant and fair society’, and its *strategic challenges* of:

* Understanding Individual Behaviour
* Security, Conflict and Justice
* Social Diversity and Population Dynamics

ESRC programmes such as *Rising Powers and Independent Futures*.

NERC (Living With Environmental Change)

Other Research Councils and Funding Bodies share a generic interest in this theme: EPSRC, Leverhulme Trust, British Academy, Royal Society, Wellcome Trust.

**How does this theme interlink with the other BU themes currently under consideration?**

There are a number of areas of potential overlap with other themes (health, wellbeing and ageing, leisure and tourism, learning and public engagement) and complementarities with other themes (creative and digital economies, environmental change, green economy and sustainability, entrepreneurship and economic growth).

There will be a close link, for example, between some of the clusters in this theme and the proposed enterprise hub dealing with ‘Conflict, crisis and cohesion’.