Drawing on previous research my current PhD research examines some of the complex challenges that are engendered by the mainstream representation of young people in the U.K. My previous research explored youth interactions at a ground level through qualitative data collection. Combining a top-level frame analysis with localised interviews and focus groups to expand the scale of the investigation by examining documentary evidence at a national level. This research highlighted that a reframing of “youth” needs to take place to enable perception of the non-traditional ways and processes in which young people actively participate within society. Building on this my PhD; Festivals: Spaces of Exception will use mixed methods to expand the arguments and broaden debates on non-traditional forms of participation that take place in festival space.

Festivals provide a cultural space in which many young people feel they have a creative role and sense of investment. The positive attributes of these spaces, if utilised can be transferred beyond these spaces to discover ways young people can feel part of wider society. This research will expand current debates on youth disengagement by drawing on grounded theory and providing a thick analysis of festival spaces. Combining the mapping of festival space with qualitative ethnographic techniques will give multi-layered depth to the work alongside data from frame analysis of the representations of festival space. Data collection will explore how positive practice and models of participation in festival space might be implemented in wider policies and organisational structures to build inclusive engagement practices.