Open Society Fellowship - Elements of the Portfolio “Choreographing Dissonance”

The pursuit of dissonance informs all aspects of the Open Society Fellowship program’s work, from the recruitment of candidates to the awarding of fellowships and the integration of fellows into the Open Society network. Thus, rather than singling out specific “dissonant” fellows as elements of this portfolio, in this document we’ve chosen to highlight the precise means by which dissonance is choreographed at each step in the process. The examples that follow are intended to be representative, not comprehensive.

1. **Outreach**: The choreography of dissonance starts with outreach to and recruitment of individuals who have the potential to infuse OSF with heterodox views.
   1. External recruitment: The fellowship program independently identifies candidates with views known to be dissonant with OSF.
      1. Fellow [James Forman](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/people/james-forman-jr) argued that the campaign against mass incarceration has to engage with issues of class, violent crime and non-marijuana related drug offences, and directly contested the theory of former Soros Justice Fellow Michelle Alexander’s [New Jim Crow](http://www.amazon.com/The-New-Crow-Incarceration-Colorblindness/dp/1595586431).
      2. Gerard Prunier proposed a radical rethink of the international approach to Somalia with recommendations that included military intervention.
   2. Internal canvassing: Fellowship staff canvasses colleagues to suggest individuals who fit the bill of heterodox thinkers. For example, David Holiday of the Latin America Program recommended [Vanda Felbab-Brown](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/people/vanda-felbab-brown), who presented views on illicit economies that were at odds with OSF’s drug policy approach.
2. **Review and selection**: Fellowship staff looks for evidence that the applicant and project would constructively challenge OSF programmatic thinking and instruct all reviewers to do the same.
   1. Role of the advisory board: The advisory board is mandated to hold fellowship staff to its goal of choreographing dissonance. If the staff presents a fellowship candidate with views that seem to align squarely with OSF, advisory board members question and probe how that individual might bring contrarian views.
   2. Internal Proposal Review: Curating diverse internal OSF perspectives
      1. Fellow [Helen Epstein](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/people/helen-epstein)’s proposal on the political roots of epidemics drew mixed reviews from Public Health Program colleagues, some of whom disagreed with her argument.
3. **Fellowship Project :**

Average 2012-2013 fellowship grant amount - $124,269

* 1. [Arun Kundnani](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/open-society-fellowship/grantees/arun-kundnani) examined the shortcomings of the “hearts and minds” approach to counter-radicalization policies in the US and UK.
  2. [Howard French](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/open-society-fellowship/grantees/howard-french) reported on Chinese migration to Africa, and countered frequent tendencies within African civil society and media to portray this migration in negative terms.
  3. [Petina Gappah](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/people/petina-gappah) surveyed the rising influence of Pentecostalism and its “prosperity gospel” in Africa and analyzed how social justice activists can engage with Pentecostalism.

1. **Collisions within the Network** 
   1. Events: Internal, external and cross-disciplinary collaborations designed to highlight disagreements and debates.
      1. [What Hurts: Does Investigative Reporting Really Deter Corruption](https://karl.soros.org/communities/osfellowship-public-community/files/what-hurts-long.docx/)? Fellowship staff orchestrated this closed-door roundtable in Brussels, bringing together fellows, international prosecutors, investigative journalists and NGO activists for a frank discussion of barriers to, and opportunities for, collaboration between their respective professions to combat corruption.
      2. [Guns, Marriage and the Constitution](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/events/guns-marriage-and-constitution) ­– Fellow [David Cole](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/people/david-cole) moderated this discussion between the former president of the National Rifle Association and the president of Freedom to Marry, to explore the common challenges and strategies employed by these ideologically differing institutions to protect the respective rights to which they are committed.
      3. 2013 Soros Justice Fellows Orientation – Fellow [James Forman](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/people/james-forman-jr) led a discussion on the need for a progressive response to violence and the fear of violence in marginalized communities, among an audience of incoming Soros Justice Fellows many of whom have spent their careers advocating against mass incarceration.
   2. Internal diplomacy: Managing friction that may arise as a by-product of choreographing dissonance.
   3. Ideas Initiative: While the primary goal of this program is to explore new frontiers, such as India, China, Cuba and Brazil, fellowship staff works to identify views and perspectives that may conflict with OSF thinking.
2. **Fellowship Afterlife**
   1. Formal participation: Fellows on advisory boards or shared framework review panels bringing differing perspectives
   2. Alumni engagement: Fellowship staff is also considering other creative forms of alumni involvement to continue the infusion of dissonance into the network.