Arab Spring
How political theory underestimated the power of the people

Discovering Copperopolis: An industrial past revisited
Valuing nature: The real worth of the outdoors
Carbon complexity: Can we live sustainably?
Welcome

to the Summer issue of Society Now, the ESRC’s regular magazine which showcases the research we fund and the impact of social science.

This issue takes a look at both global and decidedly local issues. Our main feature examines the Arab Spring – the unprecedented sequence of events in the Middle East that brought people onto the streets in their thousands, toppled regimes and forced dictators to promise reform.

We talk to Simon Burgess, Director of the ESRC Centre for Market and Public Organisation about how the centre’s research contributes to public debate. Features look at the UK National Ecosystem Assessment and a project exploring the heritage of the South Wales copper industry. And experts examine why sustainability clashes with our lifestyles, investigate the barriers to small business growth and show how innovation is thriving in the UK in non-traditional areas and industries.

I hope you find the magazine enjoyable and informative. Please do email us with your feedback or ideas for content.

Nick Stevens, Editor - nick.stevens@esrc.ac.uk

In this issue...

REGULARS

3 News
16 Opinions
Raising school attainment to increase social mobility; exploiting the digital deluge
18 The UK by numbers: Education
29 Information and updates
People, publications, news in brief, websites and events

FEATURES

10 After the Spring
The Arab Spring has shown that a grass roots uprising from the people is much more powerful than any policies from abroad

14 The low-carbon dream
Professor Tim Jackson argues that we need to better understand the link between our lifestyles and the environment

20 Innovation and the credit crunch
How reduced demand and a credit squeeze are affecting SMEs

22 Valuing nature
New research shows the real worth of Britain’s outdoor spaces

24 Voices: Where research meets policy
Simon Burgess talks about the importance of education and how research contributes to public debate

26 Discovering Copperopolis
The ESRC-funded Copper Project examines how the South Wales copper industry lives on in its landscape, buildings and people

Contributors

Tim Jackson Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey and Director of the ESRC Research Group on Lifestyles, Values and Environment (RESOLVE)
David De Roure Professor of Computer Science in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Oxford
Lindsey MacMillan Post-doctoral Research Assistant at the ESRC Centre for Market and Public Organisation
Andy Cosh Programme Director for Enterprise and Innovation and Assistant Director of the ESRC Centre for Business Research at the University of Cambridge
The 2050 goal of reducing UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent is unlikely to be met without radical changes in people's lifestyles and behaviour. Yet while a majority of people in Britain and other nations profess their concern about this issue and the environment in general, far fewer are willing to make substantial changes which would lead them to live in more sustainable ways.

One of the reasons that people may not take action to mitigate climate change is that they lack first-hand experience of its potential consequences, suggests ESRC Climate Change Fellow Professor Nick Pidgeon. A new survey of 1,822 members of the British public aimed to test whether personal experience of flooding had affected perceptions about climate change or, indeed, respondents' intentions regarding energy use.

“Our findings show that direct experience of extreme weather events increases concern about climate change and people's willingness to engage in energy-saving behaviour,” Professor Pidgeon points out. “Moreover, members of the public are more prepared to take personal action and reduce their energy use when they perceive their local area has a greater vulnerability to flooding,” he adds.

Researchers believe that highlighting links between local weather events and climate change could increase public concern and action on climate change. “The apparent lack of public engagement with climate change is now a critical problem,” Professor Pidgeon states.

“Although people do have a good appreciation of many of the more prominent climate change impacts (warming, sea level rise, melting glaciers), they often assume that these will only affect other people, future generations or distant places. In effect climate change is spatially and temporally distant for many people.”

The study suggests that extreme weather events such as major flooding episodes provide perhaps the best visible local sign of increasing climate risks, and therefore hold the potential to change the way people view climate change by making it more real and tangible. “Our results suggest new ways in which climate scientists and the environmental policy community more broadly can engage people with both the mitigation and adaptation agendas,” Professor Pidgeon concludes. “Although the global impacts of climate change are extremely important for policy, to focus solely upon this might simply distance ordinary people further from the issue. Communications might therefore also focus upon the ways that climate risks are, even now, becoming more tangible at a local level, and the concrete implications of this for people, their localities, and everyday lives. In other areas of public policy, as when trying to encourage more healthy behaviours, such efforts have become routine. For climate change the challenge now is to find ways of matching that effort.”
IN BRIEF

CRIME STATISTICS
Since 2009 police forces have published crime statistics using their own web-based crime mapping tools or via the national crime mapping facility. In addition to other objectives, one aim of this initiative was to improve community reassurance. A new study will explore the impact of this initiative as well as reviewing the crime statistics that police forces currently publish and identifying good practice.

ESRC Grant Number RES-193-25-0011

HOMING DECISIONS
Local authorities have a full duty to house those homeless people the authority deems ‘vulnerable’. Whether people fall within this category largely depends on evidence of the person’s physical or mental ill-health. In a new study based on case studies in three varied local authority areas, researchers will examine how local authorities make decisions on vulnerability where medical evidence is involved.

ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4461

HEALTHY AGEING
Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) is a measure that adds a quality dimension to life expectancy and indicates how many remaining years are expected to be healthy ones. Life expectancy and HLE at birth and at age 65 vary considerably across England and Wales. Through three linked work packages, researchers aim to explore the reasons for inequalities in healthy life expectancy (InHALE).

ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-2970

African children bear the load problem

African children as young as six years old are playing a key role in filling Africa’s transport gap with potentially detrimental consequences for their own education, wellbeing and health. A groundbreaking new study involving 70 young African people aged 11-19 highlights a practice which to date has been largely invisible in studies of African economies: load-carrying by children. “Both the scale of load-carrying by children and the ubiquity of this practice – in both urban and rural areas – has received remarkably little recognition,” says researcher Dr Gina Porter.

“In urban and rural areas, wherever transport services are deficient or households lack the economic purchasing power to acquire transport equipment or pay fares, much everyday transport work needed to sustain the family and household must be achieved through pedestrian head-loading,” Dr Porter explains. The largest proportion of domestic load-carrying work is usually delegated to women and their children with boys above 15 years generally only head-loading in emergencies.

A survey of nearly 3,000 9-18 year-olds from Ghana, Malawi and South Africa finds children of ten years carrying 16 kg of maize or a full tray of cassava (perhaps 20 kg). By the age of 15 girls are expected to be able to carry a full adult load of 40-70 kg. Children are required to carry loads before school (particularly water) or on their journey to school (eg, maize for grinding). Children’s load-carrying work negatively affects education as it can result in late arrival at school, exhaustion causing poor concentration, absence from school and school drop-out, the study suggests.

At present there is little firm evidence regarding the health impacts of load-carrying, but 72 per cent of children in Ghana, 41 per cent in Malawi and 21 per cent in South Africa reported that they had experienced physical pain and other problems from load-carrying in the week prior to the research survey. The need for a programme of health-focused head-loading research is clearly evident, researchers argue.

“Overall this study makes sobering reading regarding constraints on the continent’s likely developmental potential if current load-carrying patterns persist,” Dr Porter concludes. “Many of today’s children will reach adulthood substantially disadvantaged in terms of their educational attainment and possibly also with long-term physical impairment associated with load carrying.”

Contact Dr Gina Porter, University of Durham
Email r.e.porter@durham.ac.uk
Telephone 0191 334 3309
ESRC Grant Number RES-167-25-0028
ESRC/DFID Programme Fellowship
Pessimism on peace

ONLY 19 PER CENT of Northern Ireland’s population believe there is lasting peace in the country, according to a recent survey. Moreover, only seven per cent of respondents did not view dissident republicans as a threat.

These findings are based on a representative survey of 1,002 Northern Ireland electors conducted immediately after the 2010 General Election.

The survey examined a range of topics including which issues electors considered the most important and public attitudes to the ‘new politics’ created following the Good Friday and St Andrew’s Agreements in 1998 and 2006.

UK ethnic diversity spreads

Findings from a major research initiative into the UK’s ethnic populations indicate that the UK’s ethnic make-up will change dramatically in coming decades. The UK’s population is set to become more ethnically diverse and geographically integrated, say researchers from the University of Leeds. Moreover, this diversity will have spread to many more parts of the country beyond the big cities where ethnic minorities are concentrated today. In future, at local authority scale ethnic groups will be significantly less segregated from the rest of the population.

Researchers developed new methods of projecting the future ethnic mix of the UK’s local populations based on five population projections from 2001 to 2051 for 352 local authorities in England together with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Findings suggest that ethnic minorities will constitute one fifth of the population by 2051 compared to eight per cent in 2001.

White British, White Irish and Black Caribbean groups will experience slowest growth: while Other White and Other Ethnic groups will experience fast growth driven by immigration. Overall, researchers conclude that by 2051 the UK will have a larger, more diverse and spatially integrated population.

IN BRIEF

SPEECH DEVELOPMENT
How do children learn to adapt their speech to maximise communication effectiveness in difficult listening situations? Researchers will study 120 children aged 8-14 to investigate how the ability to produce ‘clear’ speech develops. Understanding how children control their speech production is important for developing better strategies for communication with children with hearing or language impairments, and in noisy environments.

DRUG AGREEMENTS
The technique of using agreements (that resemble contracts) to govern the conduct of drug users in treatment is a growing phenomenon. Such agreements typically spell out what is expected of the service user and what the service will provide in return. Researchers aim to assess how much these contracts are currently used in drug users’ treatment as well as examining their impact.

OFFENDING HISTORIES
Nearly 100 years of historical prison data will be studied by researchers aiming to explore whether lessons can be learnt for today’s debates about sentencing offenders and managing prison populations. The project will investigate whether short sentences in the past contributed to repeat offending, the outcomes of early release schemes as well as the financial costs of imprisonment to the country.
IN BRIEF

FAST TRACK GROWTH
A new initiative (run in conjunction with the Institute of Directors) aims to link academia with businesses in the South West identified as having growth capability. The goal of the scheme is to encourage greater engagement between the University sector and business. A series of activities will promote, encourage and facilitate greater involvement between business and academics.

MODELS OF CARE
Working with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), researchers aim to provide insight into issues related to the use of micro-simulation to model future health and social care provision for older people in Scotland and the third sector’s role in providing that care. Findings will provide a better understanding of the contribution of the third sector to health and social care provision.

INDIAN VILLAGE LIFE
What roles do villages play in contemporary Indian life? Researchers aim to reveal the new sociological realities of rural India to address questions such as: Who lives in villages? How do villagers relate to one another? How does the present situation compare with the past? What has happened to the ‘caste system’, segregated gender roles and popular religion?

Nurturing relationships fight flab

POOR RELATIONSHIPS with one’s nearest and dearest can increase the risk of weight gain, according to new research. The study explored the relationship of social environment factors with body mass index and waist circumference in midlife and older adults. The findings indicate that stable, nurturing relationships with low levels of conflict and stress may help prevent individuals gaining weight to some extent.

The research findings have implications for health promotion programmes that should take individual’s social relationships into account, researchers conclude.

Self-care steps to drug recovery

Paying greater attention to basic body care issues could help heroin users in their recovery from addiction, say researchers from Oxford Brookes and York Universities. To date, harm reduction interventions have tended to focus on preventing the most dangerous and dramatic consequences of drug-taking, particularly overdosing and injection-related wounds and infections, rather than address problems relating to basic body care. But new research based on in-depth interviews with 40 recovering heroin users suggests this is a missed opportunity that could be rectified without great cost.

“Our data provide good evidence that drug users often neglect their bodies during periods of active drug use but become more conscious of, and concerned about, routine body care in early recovery,” states researcher Professor Joanne Neale.

For example, in active drug use, teeth were often not cleaned and dental treatment only sought at points of crisis. In detoxification and early recovery, dental pain often surfaced alongside embarrassment about missing and stained teeth. At that point, individuals often wanted professional dental care.

Researchers suggest that drug workers might more routinely discuss general health and self-care with their clients; provide greater information and advice on diet, dental care, sleep and constipation; offer free toiletries, toothbrushes and access to a shower; and organise visits by dieticians, dentists, and even hairdressers.

Assistance in these self-care areas could play an important role in sustaining recovery, Professor Neale concludes. “Support for heroin users should include their basic physical needs; caring for one's body and good progress in recovery appear to be mutually reinforcing.”

Contact Professor Joanne Neale, Oxford Brookes University
Email jneale@brookes.ac.uk
Telephone 01865 482696
ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-1016

Contact Dr Anne Kouvonen,
University of Nottingham
Email anne.kouvonen@gmail.com
Telephone +48 798189461
ESRC Grant Number RES-186-27-0019

Self-care steps to drug recovery
The level of remuneration paid by banks is a legitimate cause for concern, argues researcher Dr John Thanassoulis of the University of Oxford. However, placing a cap not on individual bankers’ pay but on the proportion of the balance sheet which a bank can use for bonuses offers a sensible way forward for financial institutions.

A new study of data on the banks and financial institutions traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) over the last decade finds that in about ten per cent of cases the remuneration bill was worth more than 80 per cent of total shareholder equity. “This is quite a disturbing finding because these are large payments which can potentially make the difference between investors having and losing confidence in a financial institution,” Dr Thanassoulis points out.

The EU parliament has agreed explicit caps on individual’s bonuses; in the US regulators are consulting on a new system of regulatory sign-off for individual bonus arrangements. Both of these solutions will result in banks pushing up wages to make up for bonuses.

Dr Thanassoulis argues that banks will find themselves with very large fixed wage bills which they have to pay in bad as well as good times; so increasing risks to the banking sector. A better solution, Dr Thanassoulis argues, is a weak cap on the proportion of the balance sheet which can be used for bonuses which can be structured to both lower the risk of financial institutions and increase the value of those same institutions.

The cap would dampen the competition between financial institutions for bankers and so lower the levels of compensation. It would be set at a level generous enough to allow banks to hire their bankers using variable compensation without having to increase fixed wages, and as the cap is at the balance sheet level and not at a per person level, policymakers do not need to intervene in the business decisions of how much to reward an individual.

“This cap would be a win-win solution for financial institutions,” Dr Thanassoulis concludes. “The only losers would be bankers in that market levels of compensation would be reduced.”
Mediation fails to make impact

POLICEMAKERS NOW FAVOUR mediation as a ‘proportionate’ method for resolving citizen-versus-state disagreements. Yet while mediation may have a role to play in dispute resolution, new research suggests that it has not yet had the significant impact anticipated by policymakers.

In the field of special and additional support needs for children, parents have a right to select either mediation or an appeal, or both processes, to resolve their dispute. In a new study, researchers investigated the use of mediation and tribunals in 49 cases in England and Scotland.

Researcher Professor Sheila Riddell explains: “Mediation is depicted in recent policy documents as less stressful for participants, quicker and more cost-effective than courts or tribunals.”

However, findings indicate that local authorities resented having to fund mediation services and they were not well publicised, and parents were often sceptical about the value of mediation, questioning its independence and the extent to which agreements would be honoured. As a result, particularly in England, parents were more likely to appeal, believing that although the process might be stressful, it offered a better chance of achieving their desired outcome.

“Overall, independent mediation in this field has not been as successful as the Government hoped,” Professor Riddell points out. “But these findings have increased our understanding of the problems which underlie the use of alternative dispute resolution such as mediation.”

Co-researcher Professor Neville Harris adds: “The evidence also reinforced rather than dispelled the belief that even where there is a mediated agreement it will not always be fair to the parent: some local authorities and parent partnership services, albeit a minority, thought that that was the case.”

More feminine outlook for Conservative Party

A clear process of feminisation that has taken place within the Conservative Party since 2005 is identified in a new study from the University of Bristol. But, say researchers, gender challenges still remain for the Conservatives. For example, any significant increase in the number of female Conservative MPs at the next general election will almost certainly require further reforms to the Conservative parliamentary selection process.

“It’s clear that the party has more women MPs in 2010, rising from nine per cent in 2005 to 16 per cent (49 women) in 2010. The party’s women’s organisations appear healthier too, having played a role in policy development and attracting new kinds of women. And the party’s policies ‘for’ women are more competitive relative to the other two main parties and previous manifestos,” suggests researcher Professor Sarah Childs.

“But, clichéd as it is, only time will tell whether the feminisation of the Conservative party between 2005-2010 contributes to a feminisation of government over the 2010 Parliament and whether it gives rise to a further feminisation of the Conservative party – voluntary, professional and parliamentary – before and after the next election.”

Certainly, as it stands, the figures for Conservative women MPs leave the Conservative party falling below the European average for women’s legislative presence, which stands at 22 per cent. It also continues to compare unfavourably to the Labour party which managed to return a parliamentary party that is one third female. The Conservative party also fare badly compared with many of its European ‘sister’ parties: it trails in 19th position.

“The evidence from comparative studies and the British Labour party, especially in 2001, suggests that women’s descriptive representation at higher levels is unlikely to happen naturally,” argues Professor Childs.

“Whether the party will finally accept the logic of equality guarantees remains a critical and as yet unanswered question. Such a move requires political will that party leader David Cameron has not hitherto demonstrated.”

Contact Professor Sheila Riddell, University of Edinburgh
Email sheila.riddell@ed.ac.uk
Telephone 0131 651 6597
ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-0803

Contact Professor Sarah Childs, University of Bristol
Email s.childs@bristol.ac.uk
Telephone 0117 929 3037
ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-0647
Fertility travels on the rise

AROUND 80 MILLION women worldwide are infertile and growing numbers are seeking infertility treatment outside their country of residence.

New research into this phenomenon in the UK finds that a shortage of egg donors, the consequent perceived waiting times for treatment and issues of cost were significant drivers of this trend.

Contrary to media reports of ‘fertility tourists’, many of the participants studied had decided to travel abroad following a long infertility journey in the UK and reported this to be a ‘last chance’ to have a child, although some had delayed motherhood for a variety of reasons. While experiences of overseas treatment were broadly positive, participants reported initial anxieties and practical difficulties pre- and post-treatment.

To reduce the need for fertility travelling, researchers suggest a threefold approach: improving public funding of treatment in the UK, tackling the UK donor shortage and improving patient-centred care.

Peace pays financial dividends

A new theory-based modelling approach developed at the London School of Economics provides a way to assess the economic value of reduced violence in areas of conflict.

Researchers based their study on Northern Ireland – a region with a long history of conflict but more recent experience of peace. Their study aimed to assess the impact of peace by using variation in violence within Northern Ireland to study one important economic aspect of the peace process and the dividend that it brought to residents of Northern Ireland: the impact on house prices.

Findings show, as expected, that violence had a negative impact on house prices. In contrast, the peace process brought a significant, positive effect on houses prices. For Belfast, where violence was greatest, the estimated increase in house prices is between 5.9 per cent and 16.6 per cent.

“The method that we are proposing for looking at conflict has potentially valuable applications in other contexts such as Iraq and Israel/Palestine,” says researcher Professor Tim Besley.

“Sustaining peace is always a challenge in places where there are long-lived political and social tensions. It is necessary to convince those involved in supporting and perpetrating violence that there are manifest benefits to peace.

“This study shows that home owners’ willingness to pay to live in regions where violence decreased in Northern Ireland created a tangible stake in the maintenance of the peace process by capitalising the future value of peace.”

CONTACT

Professor Lorraine Culley, De Montfort University
Email lac@dmu.ac.uk
Telephone 0116 2757753
ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-3390

Professor Timothy Besley, London School of Economics and Political Science
Email pressoffice@lse.ac.uk
Telephone 020 7955 7060
ESRC Grant Number RES-051-27-0166

CROWD MANAGEMENT

Better understanding of crowd behaviours and dissemination of good practice are needed to improve crowd management, safety and event success, given added impetus by the forthcoming London 2012 Olympic Games. This project aims to transfer knowledge gained during previous research on crowd behaviours to the wider crowd event preparation and management community.

ESRC Grant Number RES-189-25-0269

HEALTHY RESOURCE

Young people with Coeliac Disease (CD) must not only follow a life-long gluten-free diet, but juggle this against the need for, among other challenges, peer acceptance. This project aims to develop a DVD resource for young people with CD to help them through the difficult transition from childhood to young adulthood when they must manage the condition themselves.

ESRC Grant Number RES-189-25-0209

VALUE CREATION

Based on a study of a social enterprise in the East of England, researchers will explore the relationship between organisational behaviour and broader institutional forces focusing on how organisational dynamics such as culture are influenced by external social processes. The aim is create insights for social enterprises seeking to manage the apparent conflict between the creation of social and commercial value.

ESRC Grant Number RES-070-27-0050
A Mid-Career Development Fellowship
On 17 December 2010 the Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set fire to himself in protest after the police confiscated his fruit and vegetables. His act of defiance triggered demonstrations and mass protests, not only in Tunisia, but also in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Jordan, Oman, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Over the course of a few weeks the regimes of Tunisia and Egypt had toppled, rebels were fighting in Libya, demonstrators were under fire in Syria, and sweeping reforms were being promised.

The sheer scale and speed of the uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East – fuelled by social media and reports from neighbouring countries – has been unprecedented. “We are in a period of historic change in the region of a type and scale not witnessed since the emergence of the Middle East’s nation states,” says Professor Anoush Ehteshami, Joint Director of the ESRC-funded Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World.

Discontent and anger with food prices, corruption, nepotism and heavy-handed dictators had been simmering for a long time. When a large-scale reaction did come, it was rooted in people’s own frustration, and not pushed by particular groups with their own agendas. “These movements are home-grown,” emphasises Professor Ehteshami. “They have tended to be largely peaceful and progressive, and largely secular.”

Professor Caroline Rooney, Fellow in the RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme, was based in Cairo during 2009-2010 to study how security...
policies affected young people's sense of trust. The project included the hip hop play 'The Rebel Cell', about a clampdown on civil liberties after a terror attack.

"During the performance, the audience were invited to suggest topics for a free style rap. The Cairo audience shouted out: 'Votes!' 'Democracy!' 'Change of government!',' says Professor Rooney. "Afterwards we had a question and answer session with members of the audience, who said that the play resonated greatly with them over the question of being deprived of civil liberties; they also said that the people were beginning to lose their fear."

The secular nature of the uprisings, with a focus on democratic change, rule of law, accountability, and an end to corruption and nepotism, kept radical Islamists from taking over the protests and moving into the ensuing power vacuum. The uprisings took them by surprise, Professor Ehteshami points out. "The Islamists' inability or unwillingness to act as revolutionary vanguards for the protest movements has been very striking. The speed and scale of protests left no time for the Islamists to play a leadership role, and when it came down to it they refused to appear as protest leaders," he says.

"These revolutions have 'de-problematised Islam' – transcending the Islamist-secularist debate and leaving it behind," argues Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi, Fellow in the Global Uncertainties Programme and Co-ordinator of the Democracy and Islam Programme at the University of Westminster. A key factor to the success of the uprisings was the co-operation and solidarity between all participants in the protests – including Islamists – which undermined the 'divide and rule' strategy of the authorities.

In his research Dr El-Affendi has examined how 'narratives of insecurity', such as the threat of an Islamist takeover, kept dictatorships going for decades. The sheer staying power of the dictatorships has puzzled political analysts, who were wondering about the lack of democracy in the Arab world – but therein lies a potential Western bias. "In many cases, it was like asking why mass slavery has endured for so long in the United States, or colonialism in Africa, or anti-Semitism in the West, or misogyny everywhere – then proceeding to answer the question by saying that it must be something to do with black people who could not handle freedom, or perhaps something amiss with Jews or women," Dr El-Affendi says. According to this logic, the lack of Arab democracies would be due to the inability of Arabs to understand – or even deserve – democracy.

Arab societies, went the argument, are too attached to religious dogma, too patriarchal, too tribalistic, too inhospitable to civility and civil society to accommodate democracy. "However, it was not clear why, if despotism was really a reflection of Arab cultural preferences, the victims were so rebellious or the dictators so brutal," argues Dr El-Affendi. "And why did empirical studies persistently indicate that Arabs were, like everyone else, rather keen on democracy?"

The belief in democracy as an external, Western idea that needed to be 'promoted' to Arab countries has not made for effective foreign policy, as Dr Michelle Pace shows in her research. Dr Pace is lead researcher on the ESRC-funded project 'Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East'.

"By focusing primarily on external democracy promotion, the impression is created that democracy is a political concept external to the Mediterranean region...invoking a false image of an unbridgeable cultural rift between the Europeans and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) sides in which democracy is framed as a Western concept," Dr Michelle Pace writes in the 2009 Democratization article 'Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East'.

"The recent uprisings have to lead to a paradigm shift in policy," says Dr Pace. “The assumption in EU policy towards Middle East and North African states has always been that if we support economic development, then a political
After the spring, there is now an appreciation that this policy has failed. EU Commissioner Stephan Fule admitted as much after the ousting of Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, when he said: “The Euro-Mediterranean partnership was mainly focused on economic reforms, and was unable to bring about the necessary political and institutional reforms.”

What the Arab Spring has shown is that a grassroots uprising from the people themselves is much more powerful than any policies from abroad. Political theory, argues Dr El-Affendi, has consistently underestimated the creativity and initiative of suppressed people. “They did not believe the people capable of developing and maintaining the solidarity needed to confront and defeat the formidable repressive machinery of an externally supported modern state,” he says. The Arab Spring proves otherwise.

“While there has been a widespread depiction of the Arab Spring in terms of an ‘awakening’ of the people, it would probably be more accurate to speak of how both Arab and western leaders have been abruptly awoken themselves by those who were awake all along, maintaining a vigilance for the right moment to seize,” says Professor Rooney.

But although the impact of the mass demonstrations was powerful, have they led to genuine reform? Morocco, the first Arab nation to hold an election since the Arab Spring, has approved a new constitution granting new rights to women and minorities.

Algeria is in the process of re-writing the constitution and implementing reform, while King Abdullah II of Jordan has announced large subsidy packages. Other countries have talked of reform but so far with little action; some regimes – in particular Syria, Bahrain and Yemen – have resorted to violent crackdowns; and Libya is still mired in a civil war.

“The vulnerability to mass protests is clear, but much less so is their ability to bring about peaceful and wholesale reform without collapsing under the weight of such an ambitious undertaking,” says Professor Ehteshami. “It is hard to see how ruling establishments can introduce meaningful reforms without exposing their own vulnerabilities.”

All the same, the balance between state and society has shifted dramatically, he argues. “As Syria’s President Assad has found, the cascading pressures for reform cannot be reversed or contained without the regime thoroughly delegitimising itself. The prospect of a peaceful and stable Middle East is upon us, and a true beginning can only be realised once governments in this region are truly open, representative, transparent and abiding by the rule of law.”

Arild Foss is ESRC Senior Copy Editor

Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World
Contact Professor Anoush Ehteshami
Email a.ehteshami@durham.ac.uk
Web www.casaw.ac.uk

Global Uncertainties Programme
Web www.globaluncertainties.org.uk

Radical distrust: a cultural analysis of the emotional, psychological and linguistic formations of religious and political extremism
Contact Professor Caroline Rooney
Email c.r.rooney@kent.ac.uk
Web www.globaluncertainties.org.uk/globaluncertainties/research/Radical_distrust.aspx

Narratives of insecurity, democratisation and the justification of (mass) violence
Contact Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi
Email a.el-affendi@westminster.ac.uk
Web www.globaluncertainties.org.uk/globaluncertainties/research/Narratives.aspx
New research from the University of Exeter finds that innovation in the UK is not restricted to high-tech and pharmaceutical industries. Across the country, innovation can be found in unexpected places and firms, and is not just about new products but also fresh approaches in services, business processes and methods.

This picture emerged from a project funded by an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Fellowship and carried out by Dr Richard Adams working on a one-year placement with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Dr Adams’ project ‘The distribution of innovation activity across the UK industry’, drew on data from three recent UK Innovation Surveys and aimed to uncover innovation ‘hotspots’, and innovative activity in different geographical areas and in a range of industries. It also sought to identify innovation in sectors not usually perceived as innovative, and in firms that engage in little, if any, research and development.

The project found that up to ten per cent of firms in sectors not traditionally thought to be innovative were high performers, including construction, hotels and restaurants. In terms of geographical spread, firms in more than half of UK postcode areas achieved high levels of innovation performance at least once in the three UK Innovation Surveys. Cambridge and North west London were identified as areas of persistent innovation – the hottest of hotspots.

Approximately one quarter of highly innovative firms did not engage in internal research and development. These firms, however, purchased new technologies and revised the design of products and services to achieve greater efficiency. They also conducted market research, changed marketing methods and concentrated on launch advertising of new products and services. About one half of innovative firms invested in employee training programmes to support innovation.

While a number of research and policy analysis projects have helped to build a broad picture of innovation in the UK, contributing to evidence-based policymaking, the University of Exeter project was a more detailed analysis of the patterns of business innovation and contributes to a better understanding of innovation in specific sectors and geographical areas.

Richard Adams’ work is one of a number commissioned by BIS that make use of the full scope of the data obtained from the UK Innovation Surveys. These surveys generate considerable quantities of data but can be distilled down to simple indicators, such as the number of firms that actively innovative. However, evidence for policy use draws on much broader and deeper analysis. The project demonstrates that there are many pockets of advanced innovation in non-high-tech manufacturing, in knowledge-intensive sectors and in the service sector. The fuller analysis shows that this innovation activity is widely distributed across the UK.

The work is important because it sheds light on the evidence underpinning the framework of government innovation policy. Also because in times of fiscal restraint, accountability and of moves to localism, there is a demand for economic evidence of innovation at a local level, such as local enterprise zones and enterprise partnerships. “The results of the research challenge preconceptions about innovation and demonstrate its diversity and dynamism. The findings are good news for the economy as they show firms across the UK are capable of responding to economic uncertainties,” says Dr Adams.
Sustainability doesn’t come naturally to the human species, the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins once remarked. His implication was that somehow it’s our collective patterns of behaviour that are leading us astray, our natural aspirations for the good life that divert us inevitably from success in addressing ecological challenges.

It’s certainly tempting to agree with this idea, as we ponder the failure of decades of environmental policy to make headway on climate change, deforestation, species loss, fish stocks, resource depletion. In the years since 1990 (the Kyoto baseline year), global carbon dioxide emissions actually increased by over 40 per cent, to take just one example. And this happened despite another characteristic of the human species: our undoubted technological ingenuity.

Faith in technology is probably our single most obvious ‘backstop’ belief. If all else fails, we are a clever species, right? We have extraordinary powers of creativity and innovation. So when it comes to saving our vision of social progress in the face of declining environmental qualities, it’s our own technological capability that we reach for.

But the implications of Dawkins’ remark suggest that technology alone just isn’t enough. And this is a conclusion we should already have drawn if we’d paid enough attention to the historical evidence.

To be sure, the average energy intensity of global economic activity decreased by a third across the world in the last three decades – as we might expect in an economy that prizes efficiency. But these predictable efficiency improvements just didn’t deliver reductions in energy use – or carbon emissions. As we’ve seen, the opposite happened.

The truth is, without paying attention to the dynamics of society, to the logic and story of people’s lives, it’s impossible to differentiate realistic hopes for sustainability from a simplistic faith in technology that diverts us from successfully addressing ecological challenges.

The low-carbon dream

Many of us claim to be concerned about the environment but to really be sustainable we need to shift our thinking from a blind faith in technology to a deeper understanding of the links between our lifestyles and the environment argues Professor Tim Jackson.
faith in technology. Businesses have an incentive to create efficiencies in the use of inputs. The case is unequivocal. But they also have an incentive to expand the markets for their outputs. And banking on a market revolution driven by green consumers is too forlorn a hope.

People do indeed hold deeplyfelt motivations to protect the environment. Occasionally they can even save money by doing so. But powerful psychological forces still hold them in thrall. The creeping evolution of social norms and the sheer force of habit conspire to lock us into expanding material aspirations.

Scale wages a continual battle against efficiency. And, historically at least, it’s almost always scale that wins. Putting scale itself under the spotlight may be unpopular for all sorts of reasons.

Not the least of these is the critical contribution that expanding demand plays in achieving conventional economic growth. But shifting the focus away from a blind faith in technology towards a deeper understanding of consumer society, of people’s lives, is critical in addressing sustainability.

Over the past five years, the ESRC Research group on Lifestyles, Values and the Environment (RESOLVE) has been doing just that. A path-breaking, cross-departmental collaboration at the University of Surrey, RESOLVE has achieved international recognition as a centre of interdisciplinary excellence. Its overall aim has been an exploration of the complex links between our lifestyles and the environment.

An explicit goal has been to provide robust, evidence-based advice to businesses, NGOs and policymakers who are seeking to understand and influence energy-related behaviours and practices.

The RESOLVE work programme is organised around five complementary themes. One strand maps the carbon complexity of modern lifestyles, teasing out how much carbon is associated with different areas of our lives (home, travel, leisure and so on) and how this has changed over time. Another strand addresses the psychology of climate change, exploring not just our motivations and values but the relationship between these and our carbon behaviours.

“Social norms and force of habit lock us into expanding material aspirations”

One of the clearest lessons about human behaviour is its inherently social nature. A third strand delves explicitly into the sociological dimensions of modern lifestyles: how demand is constructed, how daily life is negotiated, how ‘environmental resistance’ survives and sometimes even thrives. The final themes cover the question of environmental governance (and in particular the role of community in achieving this) and the exploration of different scenarios for low-carbon living.

Since RESOLVE was launched in 2006, the importance of low-carbon living has gone hand-in-hand with burgeoning media and policy interest in the subject. The Climate Change Act set in motion an ambitious programme of targets and timescales for carbon reduction.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change’s My2050 scenario tool allows ordinary people to engage in designing a low-carbon future. An interesting feature of these scenarios is that the user inevitably ends up making choices not just about technologies but also about lifestyles. Once again, it becomes clear that technology alone won’t achieve our targets.

What My2050 leaves unexplored is what these targets mean for people’s lives. Which areas of our lives will need to change? What will this mean for ordinary people? How are people beginning to negotiate those changes? How effective are policy interventions? Which forms of governance are most successful? None of these questions is easy to answer, particularly in the context of fast-moving politics and a changing economic climate.

This article first appeared in the Guardian

Tim Jackson is Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey and Director of the ESRC Research Group on Lifestyles, Values and Environment (RESOLVE). He also directs the newly-awarded Defra/ESRC Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group (SLRG).

ESRC Grant Number RES-152-25-1004
Email t.jackson@surrey.ac.uk
Telephone 01483 689 072
Web resolve.sustainablelifestyles.ac.uk

RESOLVE maps the carbon complexity of modern lifestyles, showing how much carbon is associated with different areas of our lives such as travel.
Researchers are experiencing a deluge of data. Some of it comes from new experimental techniques in science, like the Large Hadron Collider, DNA sequencing or laboratory automation. Equally, as people and businesses become increasingly online, we are generating data in the digital footprints of everyday life.

Our homes have smart electricity meters, our streets sense society in motion and Facebook has become not so much a Large Hadron Collider as a Large People Collider. Meanwhile old data is being reborn digitally in digitisation projects like the transcriptions of historical documents by ‘citizen scientists’. More data is being liberated as government opens up, and we have greater access to previously secure data. Depending on your point of view, it’s an international phenomenon, or it’s a data deluge, a tsunami or a bonanza.

It was apparent ten years ago that digital data collection was set to produce more data than individual researchers could handle using existing tools and methods. Partial processing would mean that results hidden in the detail would be missed and it would be difficult to spot patterns in the bigger picture. It isn’t just the scale of the data: while some is specifically collected for re-use by researchers, much is collected to be fit for a different purpose, and much sits in silos, raising numerous challenges of methodology, management and ethics. This was a cross-disciplinary problem demanding cross-disciplinary solutions.

The UK e-Science Programme was therefore created by John Taylor, then director of the UK Research Councils, who defined e-Science as ‘global collaboration in key areas of science and the next generation of infrastructure that will enable it’.

Significantly this definition understood that progress is not just about technology but about researchers harnessing technology, and it reminds us to talk about research questions, not just tools. It’s widely accepted now that e-Science should have been called e-Research.

Of course, researchers in many disciplines, from computational sciences to digital humanities, were already sophisticated users of advanced computing techniques. The ESRC had run an ‘analysis of large and complex datasets’ programme where we knew that either ‘large’ or ‘complex’ was enough to be demanding! But the e-Science programme kick-started a broader set of collaborations between computer scientists and domain specialists, and established a wider notion of e-infrastructure to support this. It facilitated co-evolution: researchers and technologists coming together creating and harnessing innovative technology to achieve new research outcomes. For social scientists it became not just a tool but a subject of study.

Observers of the digital research ecosystem might identify three phases of e-Science: the early adopters of new tools, followed by a phase of embedding and re-use and then new research practice and outcomes.

More importantly this is against a backdrop of increasing computational capability and everyday participation in the digital world, widespread innovation outside the e-Science programme, and international collaboration. In social science we’re currently in phase two and heading for phase three.

e-Science was the name of a vision and a programme, and as we celebrate its tenth anniversary, we could now just call it science but the innovation, application and progress all still continue. So we now talk about ‘Digital Social Research’ – harnessing advances in digital technology and practice to achieve world-class social research. We also hear ‘data-intensive research’, ‘fourth paradigm’ and ‘open science’ which all carry forward parts of the agenda.

The ESRC’s commitment to e-Science has created new methods for social researchers and it has benefited a much wider community who now better understand that e-Science is a socio-technical endeavour.
Upwardly mobile?

Policies need to be aimed at raising school attainment of children from poorer backgrounds to increase social mobility, says Lindsey MacMillan

The coalition recently unveiled its blueprint for improving equality of opportunity in the UK. The Social Mobility Strategy Review was a little light on explicit policy interventions and it is probably too soon to say whether the enthusiasm for improving social mobility will translate into better life chances for children. However one thing that is clear is how far there is to go to achieving a more equal society.

Measuring mobility takes a long time, as we need to study individuals from childhood through to their adult life. Hence the latest evidence relates to people now age 41 who were born in 1970. This data found that individuals born to poorer families were more likely to end up the lowest paid as adults than if they had been born to the same circumstances 12 years previously. Social mobility decreased across time in the UK (Blanden, Gregg, Goodman, Machin, 2004).

Following on from this, research found that educational attainment was the main driver of immobility across generations. For the 1970 cohort of sons, family income was more closely related to their educational attainment than in the earlier cohort and this was a key factor in their lower mobility levels (Blanden, Gregg and Macmillan, 2007).

Focusing in on access to the top professions, those who go on to become lawyers and doctors come from substantially richer families than the average individual and this pattern became stronger across time. In contrast, while those who became doctors and lawyers were of higher ability than the average, this trend has weakened across time. This would suggest that there is a widening social gap in entry to the top professions, not driven by ability. While individuals entering top professions in the last decade looked less like the average individual in terms of their family income in childhood, they looked more like the average individual in terms of their ability than the previous cohort (Macmillan, 2009). All of the evidence mentioned above focuses on individuals now in their 40s and 50s. For people born more recently we cannot yet observe their adult earnings but we can instead look at educational opportunity which is such a strong driver on mobility. A couple of new pieces of work have analysed the link between family background and educational attainment to get a picture of what we might expect for the future. The evidence is mixed.

On the one hand, there is some evidence for children born around 1990 that the association between family incomes, Key Stage 2 attainment and GCSE attainment is weakening, reducing the socio-economic gradient. This could be a promising sign. There is also the suggestion that post-16 participation in education has become less associated with where you come from (Gregg and Macmillan, 2009). On the other hand, there is less evidence of this trend continuing into higher education and no change in the relationship between background and early attainment (age 3 to 5) for children born around 2000 (Blanden and Machin, 2009).

So what can be done? Identifying effective policies in this setting is often problematic. However, some research in the US from the Perry pre-school programme indicates that improving behavioural patterns in early childhood had positive effects in terms of greater employability, less contact with the police and higher completed education levels (Heckman et al Various). There is also evidence that lower family income in childhood causes lower educational attainment and lower education reduces life chances (Dahl and Lochner (2008), Oreopoulus et al (2006)).

With this view that education is still a key policy lever in changing patterns of mobility, policies need to be aimed at raising school attainment of children from poorer backgrounds. Increasing the numbers that stay on into post-compulsory education and specifically into university will be important in reversing the decline in mobility. The government has set up a sizeable research fund to work out what causes increased educational attainment of the poorest children as well as the new pupil premium to fund interventions in schools. Unfortunately the most recent policy announcements on the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance and trebling of tuition fees are unlikely to encourage such changes in behaviour.

There is a widening social gap in entry to the top professions, not driven by ability
We present an at-a-glance overview of the key issues in Britain today. In this issue our focus is on Education. All statistics are from the Higher Education statistics agency unless stated otherwise.

Compulsory education

Germany and the Netherlands lead the world in the total number of years spent in compulsory education.

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire”
William Butler Yeats

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it”
Aristotle

The proportion of 16-18 year-olds in education and training at the end of 2009 (Source: DfE - Department for Education, BIS)

Proportion of primary school classes with over 30 pupils in the South West and East Midlands - 2006/7 (Source: ONS)

Girls continued to perform better than boys at each Key Stage, with the widest gap in 2010 at Key Stage 3 (KS3), and the narrowest gap at Key Stage 4 (KS4). Children who were born earlier in the academic year had higher percentages achieving the CSI (Care Standard Inspectorate Wales) than those born later in the academic year at each Key Stage. Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics 2010 Welsh Government

Education leavers

In 2008/9 just over half of leavers from education entered full-time work with 10% in part time work and just over 15% going on to further study.
Study subject areas

Business and administrative studies remains the most popular higher education subject by student numbers.

Absence from school

Percentage of half days missed due to absence in autumn term 2010
(Source: DfE - Department for Education, BIS)

Gender and level

The majority of all students in higher education are female, especially at undergraduate level (2009/10)

Qualifying students

In each academic year approximately a third of the total number of students at HE institutions qualify.

“Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource” — John F. Kennedy
Innovation and the credit crunch

Innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are of great importance to the economy overall. How are they faring in a climate of reduced demand for goods and services and retreat from risk by credit providers. By Andy Cosh

How are innovative small and medium-sized firms coping during the prolonged downturn? Anecdotes abound but good evidence is hard to find, but two studies from the ESRC’s UK Innovation Research Centre provide important insights. The first study at the start of the current recession found that the retreat from risk that accompanied the credit crunch created difficulties for innovative firms, but they may be showing more resilience than in the past. The second study about smaller companies’ open innovation practices suggests that smaller firms may benefit from openness, but cautions SMEs about some drawbacks.

One cause for optimism is that there is some evidence that SMEs may be more resilient than in the past.

The first study, SME finance and innovation in the current economic crisis (www.ukirc.ac.uk/object/rproject/3286/doc/CrCr_EconCrisis.pdf), returned in November 2008 to a panel of firms previously surveyed in 2004 so that direct comparisons could be made with their situation prior to the credit crunch. Although the recession was initiated by a credit crisis, the firms had become much more concerned about demand for their goods and services – 81 per cent of them saw this as a significant or crucial constraint compared with 63 per cent in 2004. Consistent with this, the proportion seeking to grow over the following three years fell from 80 per cent to 59 per cent.

Finance was also a problem for those seeking to raise funds, but the proportion of firms seeking new finance in the previous year fell from 35 per cent in 2004 to only 16 per cent in 2008. Despite this reduction in funds sought, the average percentage obtained fell from 78 per cent to 55 per cent.

The report also compared the recession that started to bite at the end of 1990 with the recent recession that took hold in the second half of 2008. The figure above right compares 1988-94, including the period before and after the recession, with what has happened in the period surrounding the credit crunch recession. It shows some key differences. For example, in the earlier recession inflation was initially at a much higher level but then fell over an extended time; but in the present recession, the initial drop in inflation was rapidly followed by a rise to an uncomfortable level where it has stayed. On the brighter side, the level of unemployment has not, so far at least, risen for as long, or by as much, as it did in the early 1990s.

The picture for growth is also different since the recent recession was more abrupt in its impact. Economic output fell more dramatically in 2009 than occurred in 1991, but has also recovered more sharply. However, there is some evidence that it has stalled recently.

The figure below examines GDP growth and interest rates for the same periods. Interest rates were much higher in the earlier period than were found leading up to the credit crunch. In both periods rates fell during the recession, but to unprecedentedly low levels in 2009. This interest rate that measures the cost of short-term borrowing by the government should not be confused with what SMEs have to pay when margins are added.

Innovation and the credit crunch

The first study, SME finance and innovation in the current economic crisis (www.ukirc.ac.uk/object/rproject/3286/doc/CrCr_EconCrisis.pdf), returned in November 2008 to a panel of firms previously surveyed in 2004 so that direct comparisons could be made with their situation prior to the credit crunch. Although the recession was initiated by a credit crisis, the firms had become much more concerned about demand for their goods and services – 81 per cent of them saw this as a significant or crucial constraint compared with 63 per cent in 2004. Consistent with this, the proportion seeking to grow over the following three years fell from 80 per cent to 59 per cent.

Finance was also a problem for those seeking to raise funds, but the proportion of firms seeking new finance in the previous year fell from 35 per cent in 2004 to only 16 per cent in 2008. Despite this reduction in funds sought, the average percentage obtained fell from 78 per cent to 55 per cent.

The report also compared the recession that started to bite at the end of 1990 with the recent recession that took hold in the second half of 2008. The figure above right compares 1988-94, including the period before and after the recession, with what has happened in the period surrounding the credit crunch recession. It shows some key differences. For example, in the earlier recession inflation was initially at a much higher level but then fell over an extended time; but in the present recession, the initial drop in inflation was rapidly followed by a rise to an uncomfortable level where it has stayed. On the brighter side, the level of unemployment has not, so far at least, risen for as long, or by as much, as it did in the early 1990s.
So how have SMEs faced this recession compared with in the early nineties? We can say that they were more concerned this time about demand constraints than about the cost and availability of finance; and this is consistent with the larger fall in GDP and the lower level of interest rates. In 2008 only 16 per cent were seeking finance compared with 22 per cent at the same stage of the 1991 recession. Growth ambitions were also lower despite the quicker initial recovery this time round. We hope to return to this panel of firms in the coming months to discover how their performance and prospects have changed since 2008.

The reaction of finance providers to the credit crunch was to retreat from risk, or to price risk more highly in their offerings. The UK-IRC report shows that this was potentially damaging to the type of firm of great importance to the economy overall – the innovative SME. The report finds that they not only found it harder to raise overdrafts and commercial loans, but were also more likely to have faced a rise in the cost of finance relative to non-innovative firms. The impact of these changes on their innovative performance has yet to be assessed, but the findings give some cause for concern.

One cause for optimism is that there is some evidence that SMEs may be more resilient than in the past. The Centre for Business Research has been tracking UK SMEs over the past 20 years. They find that the proportion of start-ups that are de novo (and potentially less experienced) has fallen from 68 per cent in 1991 to 51 per cent in 2004. Business planning and the use of other management tools amongst SMEs has also increased. This may also account for some of the observed rise in business survival rates prior to the current recession. Whether improved skills and experience are sufficient to leave a thriving SME sector when the economy recovers is not yet known.

How can innovative SMEs respond to the problems resulting from the credit crunch recession? The second study from the UK-IRC, Open Innovation Choices – what is British Enterprise doing? (www.cbr.cam.ac.uk/pdf/OI_Report.pdf) may provide some clues. The term ‘open innovation’ was coined in 2003 by Henry Chesbrough, an economics professor at the University of California, Berkeley. It encompasses those activities that involve the exchange of knowledge and technology between the firm and the outside world designed to enhance the firm’s innovation. The UK-IRC report divides these activities into hunting, cultivating and exploiting.

Hunting activities involve the search for knowledge outside the firm through engagement with customers and suppliers, the research base, consultants and public information sources. Cultivating activities take place through informal and formal collaborations and partnering with other firms and organisations. Exploitation results not only from bringing innovative products and services to market, but also through external transfers of knowledge and technology through licensing, spin-outs and exchange activities.

The report finds that these practices are not the preserve of large businesses; many SMEs have active Open Innovation (OI) practices. Hunting activities are widespread with similar proportions of larger and smaller firms involved with each source. Cultivating activities are less common and the smaller the firm, the less likely it is to be involved. External transfer activities were carried out by similar proportions of firms in each size group, but smaller firms were more likely to have done this free of charge. The latter were also less likely to use both legal and strategic methods to protect their innovations.

The companies are categorised into three OI types:

- Traditional
  - These firms had made no external transfers and had low searching activities and little formal collaboration;

- Hunting-cultivating
  - These firms had made no external transfers but were active in their searching and collaborative activities.

- Ambidextrous
  - These firms had made external transfers, but were also engaged in hunting-cultivating.

The study finds significant benefits from openness in terms of both innovation and growth.

There are reasons for SMEs to be cautious and to not think that openness provides a quick-fix for their current needs. First, there are many different approaches to being open, so the selection of the right strategy to suite the firm’s particular needs is vital. Second, to be effective openness requires the necessary internal skills and attitudes to leverage the potential benefits. Third, the relationship between SMEs and larger businesses requires careful management. The report provides some evidence that openness is not necessarily providing an equality of benefit.

This suggests that SMEs need to continue to develop their managerial skills, as they have done over the past 20 years, and learn how to leverage the external environment in their innovation process. Success in this area will leave SMEs in a stronger position as the economy recovers.
There’s no doubt that most of us value our parks, mountains, valleys, rivers, forests and coastline, but how much? If pressed, could any of us put a monetary figure on the relaxation benefits, health and happiness our outdoors spaces give us?

For the first time, a wide-ranging, multi-disciplinary report into the UK’s ecosystems does just that. The report – the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) – measures the benefits the natural environment provides to society and continuing economic prosperity. The report estimates that the health benefits of living near a green space are worth up to £300 per person per year and looking at the many other ‘services’ our natural environment provides, the actual value to the UK economy as a whole runs to billions of pounds every year.

The NEA brought together more than 500 experts in ecology, economics and social sciences under the chairmanship of Professor Bob Watson and Professor Steve Albon, and was funded by Defra, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Natural Environment Research Council and the ESRC.

The funding was co-ordinated through the RCUK Living with Environmental Change partnership (LWEC), formed of 22 government departments, devolved administrations, research councils and other bodies.

Where the UK NEA differs from previous studies of the environment is the new approaches it uses to estimate the value of the natural world by taking account of the economic, health and social benefits we get from nature. Traditionally, the common view has been that caring for the environment means extra financial burdens. However the UK NEA shows that there are real economic reasons for looking after nature.

“"The NEA shows that we need a more integrated approach to ecosystem management""

The assessment provides values for a range of ecosystem services to help us fully understand the value of the natural environment and how the benefits to individuals and society as a whole can be better protected and preserved for future generations.

For example, the UK NEA finds that the benefits that inland wetlands bring to water quality are worth up to £1.5 billion per year to the UK. The threat to UK agriculture caused by declining bee populations is well-documented, but through its research the UK NEA can put the value of pollinators to British agriculture at £430 million per year.

Looking at leisure and recreation, according to the UK NEA the amenity benefits of living close to rivers, coasts and other wetlands are worth up to £1.3 billion per year to the UK, making a strong economic rather than emotional case for fighting for their protection and preservation. “"The concept of ecosystem goods and services was introduced
to make clear that we derive a range of benefits from the natural environment, many of which are taken for granted,” Professor Andrew Watkinson, Director of LWEC, explains.

“Whilst we recognise the value of some ecosystems such as food, water and energy as they pass through the market, the value of others such as climate regulation, the delivery of clean water and green spaces for recreation are much more difficult to capture.

“This is where the social and economic scientists have made such an important contribution to the UK National Ecosystem Assessment in allowing us to assign a tangible economic value to ecosystem services that could not otherwise be measured.”

The study examined the state of the full range of services provided across eight different habitats including marine, woodlands, wetlands and moorlands. It shows that while some ecosystems are getting better at delivering services such as crop production from farmland and climate regulation by woodlands, the tendency to focus only on the market value of resources we can use has led to the decline of some ecosystems and habitats through pollution, over-exploitation, and land conversion.

Over 30 per cent of services assessed were found to be in decline, and others degraded, such as marine fisheries, wild species diversity and soil quality.

Continued population growth and climate change are likely to put additional pressure on ecosystems, the study warns, and that actions taken now will have consequences far into the future. It stresses the need for a more collaborative approach to enhancing our environment, with everyone playing their part to capture more of nature’s benefits in a sustainable way.

Professor Bob Watson, Chief Scientist at Defra and co-chair of the UK NEA, explained how an interdisciplinary approach across sectors has been key to measuring the UK’s natural environment: “There is an urgent need to better manage our ecosystems and the natural resources they provide us with. But until now there has been no clear way of valuing the full range of benefits they provide beyond what we can buy and sell. The UK NEA introduces groundbreaking approaches to measure the value of these services and how they will be affected in future if we do not make the right choices now.

“The NEA shows that we need a more integrated approach to ecosystem management, involving Government, the private sector, voluntary groups and the public working together to protect the services nature provides.”

Six future scenarios have been developed showing how ecosystems could be affected over the next 50 years depending on what emphasis is given to environmental sustainability or economic growth and there are stark warnings about what the future of our natural environment could look like.

At the launch of the UK NEA Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman outlined the long-term goal of the UK NEA: “I want our children to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than it was left to them. In 50 years time I want them to be able to look back and see how much the value of nature has grown, not diminished. The findings of this assessment have played a big part in shaping our forthcoming Natural Environment White Paper that will help us revitalise our towns and countryside.”

Nick Stevens is Society Now Editor
Education is important because the growth of the economy depends on the skills of the people

Professor Burgess then studied public services and public service reform including incentives for civil servants, competition in schools markets and competition and choice in health markets. His current work investigates market-based education reforms such as school performance tables, school accountability, choice and competition, admissions and unequal access to high-performing schools. He also works on ethnic segregation in schools, and the educational performance of minority students.

With such a broad field of expertise and interest, why specialise in education? “I think education is important because the growth of the economy depends on the skills of the people in the country. I think it’s important for equality in that the differences in human capital that people acquire seem to be a very important factor in determining how they do over their lives. And the link between people’s outcomes and their backgrounds – which I guess is social mobility – is mediated to a large extent through schools,” he says.

Another pragmatic reason that Professor Burgess gives for his current focus on education is the access to meaningful datasets that are available to researchers, specifically the administrative dataset from the Department for Education – the pupil census which covers every child in state schools in England. “For every year of school life, all of a child’s attainment and various other characteristics are recorded and this is matched with other datasets – the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE), ALSPAC (The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children) and so on. That’s just an incredible treasure trove of information that we can use and was a big reason for my concentration on education,” says Professor Burgess.

Much of his recent research has focused on school league tables and their effectiveness in informing schooling decisions. Although he believes the current league table system is far from perfect Professor Burgess believes it is useful compared to a world of not having any tables. “Clearly when people are choosing schools they are interested in a number of things. But in terms of identifying the ‘best’ school the work I’ve done with Rebecca Allen of the Institute of Education suggests that league tables are actually useful and they do help to predict how your child will do at the local schools your child could go to,” he says.

More than that, Professor Burgess’ research finds that the league table system raises teaching standards throughout the education system. “My work with Deborah Wilson at the CMPO and Jack Worth, ex-CMPO, shows that league tables are useful in terms of accountability. When the Welsh Assembly Government decided to stop publication of school league tables it really had a significant negative effect on the performance of schools and children in Wales. Clearly league tables can be improved and I think in the UK government’s response to the Woof report, their suggestions for changing them are reasonably in line with what Rebecca Allen and I proposed,” he says.

But do school league tables encourage a form of segregation where parents move to be near a desirable school? “I think the core thing in terms of sorting out school segregation is not school league tables at all, it’s admissions codes for those schools.

“Almost all schools use proximity as one of the key factors to determine who can be admitted so if you didn’t have proximity there would be no congregating around the popular schools. Parents care about the academic attainment of schools and league tables provide information on which are the highest achieving but who actually gets into the school? “I think the core thing in terms of sorting out school segregation is not school league tables at all, it’s admissions codes for those schools.

After many reviews, reforms and new policies, how is England’s education system faring? Is it better or worse than ten or 20 years ago? Professor Burgess cites the international benchmark PISA
which suggests that England has declined slightly in education standards. But he qualifies that by pointing out that this apparent decline is because other countries are now included in the international benchmarks. “If you just look at how England has fared relative to Sweden or Finland for example, it hasn’t improved but it hasn’t declined a lot. That’s good but it does invite the question why all the reforms and all that money did not really do very much.”

What about the real-world application of the CMPO’s research – is there a pressure for it to be connected to policy and for it to always have a practical impact? Given that most of the CMPO’s work is centred on public sector reform Professor Burgess thinks it would be bizarre not to have a connection to the policy world.

“I think most people in the centre are very keen to get the message of our research findings out there but there is some theoretical work that we do that doesn’t have an immediate application although it supports work that does,” he says. “There isn’t a three-line whip that everyone in the centre has to do podcasts or research videos but by and large most centre members do, given the topics that we investigate.

“Part of my role as centre director is to pursue innovation and to have events and other communications that generate a lot of impact but which are also an efficient use of our time.” The CMPO has a regular blog that’s been going for eight months and the Centre was one of the first ESRC centres to produce podcasts, building up a library of 30 or more podcasts. “These communications have a lot of impact alongside traditional media such as interviews or articles in the national press or broadcast media,” says Professor Burgess.

With the current government focus on public service reforms and reviews of education and health, CMPO members are often in the media. Carol Propper is interviewed on health issues, Paul Gregg on welfare reform and Sarah Smith on the third/voluntary sector and Simon Burgess on education. “It’s true that the attention has tended to have been centred on a few of us but as government priorities change the research of other CMPO members is being highlighted.” As an example, Professor Burgess cites the work of Ron Johnston (recently awarded an OBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours), which had a significant impact on this year’s Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act.

Public services and the way they are organised have always been under great scrutiny, generating interest from the press, politicians and particularly the public whose taxes pay for them. At a time of reduced public spending the research of Professor Burgess and his team at the CMPO has an even greater role to play in providing the evidence which informs debate, and to suggest how these services can be organised and delivered more efficiently in future.

Simon Burgess is Professor of Economics and Director, Centre for Market and Public Organisation. His research interests are labour economics, inequality and poverty and he is currently working on an economic model of poverty dynamics, empirical models of incentives in organisations, gross job and worker flows, and job tenure.

Email simon.burgess@bristol.ac.uk
Telephone 0117 331 076
Web www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo

Given that most of the CMPO’s work is centred on public sector reform Professor Burgess thinks it would be bizarre not to have a connection to the policy world.
Imagine life without the telephone, coins and cars. Or televisions, computers and the internet. All these depend on copper but without the enterprise and innovation of Welsh copper smelters during the 18th to 19th centuries there might not have been the raw material to create the technologies that we depend on today.

An ESRC-funded project is investigating the importance of copper – arguably the first truly global industry – to the economy and people of South Wales, and the world. Through high-quality research from a range of scholars, the Copper Project explores and communicates the development of Welsh copper and examines its role in technological innovations, international trade and Atlantic slavery, cultural and social consequences, and its aftermath in reclamation and regeneration.

The project embraces academia, the heritage sector and local and global communities and is run by individuals from five major academic and heritage organisations in Wales – Swansea University, National Waterfront Museum, City and County of Swansea, University of Glamorgan, and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. All the partners either hold significant collections of material relating to the Welsh copper industry, particularly that of South Wales, or have conducted historical research on the subject, particularly its international dimensions.

Discovering Copperopolis

Copper was arguably the first truly global industry. Swansea’s ESRC-funded Copper Project embraces academia, the heritage sector and local and global communities, to examine how the heritage of the South Wales copper industry lives on in its landscape, buildings and people. By Nick Stevens
Wales has a long history of copper production. Over 4,000 years ago, miners in Wales began to exploit copper ores from deep open casts at sites in central and northern Wales. Innovations that took place in prehistory defined the Bronze Age as early metalworkers learned to smelt copper with tin to make a much stronger and versatile alloy for a wider range of tools such as axe heads, many of which were discovered through archaeology.

The copper resources Wales was able to provide from the Bronze Age through to the Roman period were exported far and wide. These resources and expertise laid the foundations for Wales' first integrated global industry and by 1851 had propelled Wales into becoming the world's first industrialised nation.

Swansea became the global leader in copper mining and processing, smelting half of the world's copper. Between 1760 and 1890 the Lower Swansea and Neath valleys were the pre-eminent centres for producing the world's smelted copper, and during the late-18th century up to 40 per cent of this output was exported to overseas markets such as Asia and the Atlantic world. In turn, the growing demand for copper encouraged prospecting overseas and by the mid-19th century new ores were being brought to Wales from as far away as Chile, Cuba and South Australia.

This gradual globalising of the Welsh copper industry had a profound impact upon the social, cultural, and urban development of South Wales. Swansea enjoyed a pre-eminent status as a world industrial centre – it is still referred to as Copperopolis today. The Lower Swansea valley area has been described by one historian as hosting the 'most highly concentrated major British industry in the 18th and 19th centuries' and the wealth that was created from copperworking made a huge contribution to the cultural heritage of Wales, particularly in the urban centres.

But as new coal sources were discovered overseas, particularly in Australia and North America, new smelting centres were set up nearer to the sources of copper being produced. The quantities of ore coming into Wales for processing began to decline from the last decades of the 19th century. Much of the expertise and skilled work needed for this caused a wave of migration from Wales to Australia and the USA. Unlike other industries, the decline in smelting activity was gradual. The last copper company in Swansea, Yorkshire Imperial Metals, finally closed its doors at the Hafod Copperworks site in 1981, but the heritage of the metallurgical industries still remains in South Wales, most notably at Port Talbot's steelworks.

Today, the copper industry has been largely forgotten in South Wales. In Swansea, the moonscape left by the smelting processes has slowly greened. Now conifer plantations and lush green grass cover the once-parched hills and river banks. The River Tawe is home to fish and aquatic species again, and is no longer the orange slick it once was. Ironically, amongst all this foliage, a few crumbling remains of the old copperworkings in the city can just be seen. But despite the fading physical signs of the copper industry there is renewed interest in its history and the impact it had on Wales and the rest of the world.

Professor Huw Bowen of Swansea University is leading the Copper Project. “Swansea was a crucible for the world copper industry and of enormous importance. Copper is what made Swansea great,” he said. “We tend to think that the history of Wales is written in coal dust and iron...”
and steel but in fact it’s really copper that lies at the heart of Wales’ development as an industrial nation. I think it’s important therefore that we try to commemorate and explain that.”

The Copper Project tells this rich story of Welsh copper through a national travelling exhibition, websites, social media, 3D animations and a host of events. One of the project’s events, Copper Day, marks the 200th anniversary of the first copper ingot rolling out of the Hafod Copperworks of Vivian and Sons and the 50th birthday of the Lower Swansea Valley Project which began the world’s first post-industrial land reclamation scheme. As well as Copper Day, the Copper Project includes a festival of talks, tours, activities and information to raise awareness of the significance of the copper industry, its heritage, and the place of copper in our lives today.

The project tests the relationships between history, heritage and urban regeneration by combining the fresh approaches of recent academic research with contemporary issues that have arisen as a consequence of the Welsh copper industry. How do we interpret this industry in a public context, for example, in our museums, libraries and galleries? How do we raise awareness of the richness of collections relating to copper to new audiences, both academic and public? Perhaps most important, how can a project like this encourage better communication between different parties, local residents, visitors, local government and businesses to preserve aspects of this heritage and the effect it has had on communities and the environment.

Those involved with the project hope it will be a positive influence on practice and policy developments in the fields of heritage and urban regeneration, as well as providing a context and explanation of the world-significant sites and history of the copper industry, especially those located in the Lower Swansea Valley. The project will not only contribute to the ongoing development of the knowledge economy of Wales, but it also has the potential to improve a sense of place and cultural identity in the localities in which the copper industry was once situated.

Essential ESRC news direct to your inbox

eNews is the ESRC’s monthly email newsletter, highlighting funding opportunities, corporate news and other information of interest to the social science community.

Sign up
If you’d like to subscribe to eNews, please email enews@esrc.ac.uk with ‘Subscribe’ in the subject field. Please include your title, name and full postal address in the email.

For general enquiries please email enews@esrc.ac.uk and to contact the Editor please email: arild.foss@esrc.ac.uk
News briefs

THE LASTING BENEFITS OF LONGITUDINAL STUDIES

Introduced by the Rt Hon David Willetts MP, the ESRC/ONS Longitudinal Studies Seminar on 19 July provided press and policymakers with a better understanding of longitudinal studies and administrative datasets, and their use in a wide range of policy areas, such as wellbeing, social mobility and employment.

Introducing the seminar, David Willetts said: “What we are doing today is celebrating and recognising the importance of evidence-based policy ... recognising that quantitative social science can provide a key input to evidence-based policy, and that we can be very proud of what we’ve already got in Britain by way of quantitative social science. But we need to continue to invest in it and support it.”

In his presentation, Professor Paul Boyle, ESRC Chief Executive, said: “Longitudinal studies are the jewels in the crown for the ESRC – they provide the bedrock of research evidence, making it possible to map how society evolves and identify areas where policy intervention can improve our lives.”

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The ESRC’s Annual Report was published and laid before Parliament on 14 July. The report provides information on the ESRC’s activities during the previous financial year, including an analysis of our research and training expenditure, and our research portfolio.

As well as the ESRC’s full accounts for the year the Annual Report includes a review of the year from the Chair and Chief Executive, outstanding features of the year and facts and figures at a glance. [www.esrc.ac.uk/publications/annual-report/index.aspx](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/publications/annual-report/index.aspx)

MAPPING THE ENERGY RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT MADE EASIER

The UK energy research scene is now easier to navigate thanks to the UK Energy Research Centre’s online Research Atlas launched in May. Energy research covers many areas; from fuel cells, wind energy and bioenergy to carbon capture, smart grids and nuclear.

Linking up all these areas to find out where research is being carried out is complex and with so many agencies involved in research and funding, it is easy to miss something crucial. The Research Atlas is now fully searchable, providing a definitive information resource for researchers and policymakers from industry, NGOs, universities and government, both in the UK and internationally.

QUEEN’S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The following people were recognised in the Queen’s Birthday Honours: Professor Peter Elias, Strategic Advisor for Data Resources, and Professor Christopher Hood, Director of the Public Services Programme, were awarded CBEs for services to social science. ESRC Council member Dr Justin Davis Smith was awarded a CBE for services to the voluntary sector. Professor Ron Johnston at the Centre for Market and Public Organisation and John Loughhead, Executive Director of the UK Energy Research Centre, were awarded OBEs for services to scholarship and technology, respectively.

ESRC COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

The following members have been appointed to the ESRC council: Dr Justin Davis Smith, Chief Executive of Volunteering England and Professor Simon Collinson, Warwick Business School, have been appointed for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014.

Professor Stuart Croft, Warwick University and Professor Glynis Breakwell, Vice Chancellor of the University of Bath, have been appointed for the period 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2014.

UK PSYCHOLOGY: INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING REVIEW

The fifth in a series of ESRC-sponsored assessments covering major social science disciplines in the UK was recently published. A Steering Group comprising prominent UK academics, research users and funders oversaw the review and the report’s recommendations will be considered fully with an action plan to be published later this year. For more information visit [www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-evaluation/international-benchmarking.aspx](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-evaluation/international-benchmarking.aspx)

WORKING MOTHERS AND THE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

A new study funded by the ESRC on maternal employment and child socio-emotional behaviour in the UK shows that there are no significant detrimental effects on a child’s social or emotional development if their mothers work during their early years.

Using data from the UK Millennium Cohort Study, the researchers discovered that the relationship between behavioural difficulties and employment of the mother was stronger for girls than for boys and that this was not explained by household income, level of mother’s education or depression in the mother.

The study was carried out by Dr Anne McMunn and researchers from the International Centre for Lifecourse Studies in Society and Health, UCL. For more information, visit [www.ucl.ac.uk/icls](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/icls)
People

PROFESSOR RAY PAHL
Pioneering sociologist Ray Pahl died on 3 June. Ray Pahl began his academic career as a doctoral student at the London School of Economics, when he tutored mature students for the University of Cambridge Board of Extra-Mural Studies.

In 1965 he joined the faculty at the University of Kent at Canterbury, where he spent the next two decades of his career. During his time at Kent, he was appointed to a chair in sociology and was elected president of Research Committee 21 of the International Sociological Association.

He joined the University of Essex in the mid 1980s and played a key role in establishing ISER. At the time he was simultaneously undertaking work on the household funded by Unilever plc and on urban issues with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Faith in the City project. Professor Pahl was also part of the team that helped establish the British Household Panel Survey.

From 1998 to 2005 much of his work at ISER was on friends and friendship in collaboration with Liz Spencer. Their detailed sociological analysis of personal communities revealed a neglected form of social solidarity. He was recently awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the British Sociological Association.

PROFESSOR MARTIN HUGHES
Martin Hughes, Professor of Education and a developmental psychologist who understood deeply the role of out-of-school learning, died in July. Professor Hughes was an inspired and inspiring developmental psychologist who dedicated his life’s work to understanding the social context of children’s learning and the social embedding of their knowledge and understanding.

As well as his distinguished academic career at the University of Exeter then the University of Bristol he co-ordinated the ESRC Research Initiative on Innovation and Change in Education in the mid 1990s and from 2001 to 2004 directed a large ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme Project on Home School Knowledge Exchange (HSKE).

Professor Hughes ended his academic career with a prestigious ESRC professorial fellowship on out-of-school learning.

PROFESSOR ALAN WALKER
Director of the RCUK New Dynamics of Ageing research programme and Professor of Social Policy and Social Gerontology at the University of Sheffield, Professor Alan Walker has been given one of the first awards by the European Region of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics.

The award was for Advances in Gerontology and Geriatrics in the Social and Behavioural Sciences.

Professor Walker was given the award ‘for excellence and achievements in the science of ageing and in recognition of the outstanding contribution to the development of gerontology in Europe’.

PROFESSOR JOHN DUPRÉ
John Dupré, Director of the ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society, has been elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

The AAAS is the world’s largest general scientific society, and publisher of the journal, Science. Its mission is to ‘advance science and serve society’ through initiatives in science policy, international programmes, science education, and more.

Professor Dupré was elected for distinguished contributions to the history and philosophy of science, especially to the interpretation of Darwinian theories.

PROFESSOR CHRIS HUXHAM
Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM) Senior Fellow Professor Chris Huxham has been awarded the 2011 Routledge Award for outstanding contribution to the field of public management, as voted by the board of the International Research Society for Public Management.

PROFESSOR CHRIS SKINNER
Professor Chris Skinner, National Centre for Research Methods Co-director, has been invited to serve on an advisory panel to evaluate proposed ‘research nodes’ for a new National Science Foundation – Census Bureau Research Network. This network builds on the National Centre for Research Methods model by supporting a set of nodes, each of which will conduct interdisciplinary research and educational activities on methodological questions of interest and significance to the broader US research community and to its Federal Statistical System, particularly the US Census Bureau.

DR WARREN MANSELL
Dr Warren Mansell, a member of the ESRC ‘Emotion Regulation of Others and Self’ research team, has been awarded the May Davidson Lecture Award.

The May Davidson Award is an award given by the British Psychological Society for clinical psychologists who have made an outstanding contribution to the development of clinical psychology within the first ten years of their work as a qualified clinical psychologist.
Publications

Sustainable Communities

Drawing on interdisciplinary research conducted across UK universities and with community-based groups, researchers jointly funded by the ESRC and the Academy for Sustainable Communities offer insights into how local initiatives can enhance sustainable development and suggest imaginative, practical and accessible ways in which communities and built-environment professionals are working and learning together towards a more sustainable future.

- **Sustainable Communities: Skills and learning for place-making** by Robert Rogerson, Sue Sadler, Anne Green and Cecilia Wong. ISBN: 978-1-907396-13-7. 224pp. £18.99. For more information visit store.herts.ac.uk/browse/extra_info.asp?modid=1&prodid=246&deptid=12&catid=62&prodvarid=0

The Labour Market in Winter

This collection of essays by Professor Paul Gregg and Professor Jonathan Wadsworth, senior research fellows in LSE’s ESRC Centre for Economic Performance’s labour markets programme, provides an overview of the key issues concerning the performance of the labour market, and the policy issues surrounding it, with a focus on the recent recession and its aftermath. The result is the first comprehensive analysis of the economic downturn and the Labour government’s record in the fields of employment, education and welfare.


Regimes of Social Cohesion


Understanding Social Research

Social researching brings together a wide variety of research methods—both qualitative and quantitative—to help students and researchers to consider the relative benefits of adopting different approaches for their own research work. The authors from the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods identify the most appropriate methods to answer different research questions and also highlight areas where it might be fruitful to complement different methods with each other or exploit creative tensions between them.

- **Understanding Social Research** by Jennifer Mason and Angela Dale. ISBN: 9781848601444 (Hardback), 264pp, £75. For more information visit, www.uk.sagepub.com/books/Book233410

EVENTS

**13-19 AUGUST**

Writers and thinkers rubbing shoulders

The Genomics Forum is sponsoring a series of events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. The audience is invited to participate in a panel discussion, ‘The kindness of strangers’, on altruism and a further debate will explore our ability to alter human biology in ‘Natural v Unnatural’. A special event for young adult researchers will explore the use of drugs including Ritalin to modify teenage behaviour. For information, visit www.genomicsnetwork.ac.uk/forum/events/edinburghinternationalbookfestival

**23-26 AUGUST**

Britain and China – their pasts, presents and futures

Convened by the British Inter-university China Centre, this conference will assess China’s relationship with Britain and its empire, and its legacy today. It will explore the diplomatic and political relationship between the British and Chinese states, and the differences between their cultures. Many thousands of Chinese and British nationals now live in each others’ countries, fashioning a new set of relationships between the two cultures and societies. This conference will bring together this new and developing scholarship and map out new agendas for understanding the often brittle relationship between the two countries. Visit www.bicc.ac.uk/ConferencesandEvents/tabid/516/Default.aspx

**16 NOVEMBER**

Who should run the countryside

The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU) is planning an X-Factor style final for the RELU Awards at its end-of-programme conference. Delegates will view films of the project teams and their research and then vote to decide the overall winners in both categories.

Finalists include: Best example of Interdisciplinary Methodology and Scientific Innovation – Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies and Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources; Best example of impact – Comparative assessment of environmental, community and nutritional impacts of consuming fruit and vegetables produced locally and overseas and Sustainable Uplands: learning to manage future change.

For more information, visit www.relu.ac.uk
The ESRC magazine *Society Now* aims to raise awareness of our research and its impact. It addresses a wide range of readers, from the MP to the businessperson, the voluntary worker to the teacher, the public through to the social scientist, and is published three times a year (spring, summer and early autumn).

*Society Now* offers a readable, intelligent, concise overview of current issues concerning society.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funds research into the big social and economic questions facing us today. We also develop and train the UK’s future social scientists.

Our research informs public policies and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. Most important, it makes a real difference to all our lives.

The ESRC is an independent organisation, established by Royal Charter in 1965, and funded mainly by the Government.

More at www.esrc.ac.uk

Economic and Social Research Council
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon SN2 1UJ
Tel: +44 (0)1793 413000
Fax: +44 (0)1793 413001

EDITOR IN CHIEF Jacky Clake jacky.clake@esrc.ac.uk
EDITOR Nick Stevens nick.stevens@esrc.ac.uk
ASSISTANT EDITOR Jeanine Woolley jeanine.woolley@esrc.ac.uk
EDITORIAL AND DESIGN ASSISTANCE Debbie Stalker debbie.stalker@esrc.ac.uk