Society NOW

Leaving a mark
Events shaping society since the moon landing

Polly Toynbee: The social vocalist

School league tables: Falling short of expectations

Fair trade tourism: Bringing it back home
Welcome

to the summer issue of Society Now, the Economic and Social Research Council’s (ESRC) regular magazine which highlights our funded research and the impact of social science.

Few events are truly world-changing, but the 40th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing is a reminder of how particular events can change our perception of our world, or indeed ourselves. The cover feature focuses on events or developments over the last decades that have left their mark on our society – for better or worse.

Other features in this issue include research on fair trade tourism and school league tables, the recent Michael Young Prize winners, and an interview with social affairs journalist and writer Polly Toynbee. The In Focus supplement is dedicated to the new ESRC Strategic Plan – an important ‘road map’ for our strategic priorities over the next five years, setting out research challenges ahead.

I hope you will find the magazine enjoyable and informative, and I welcome feedback and ideas for content.

Editor, Arild Foss

In this issue...

REGULARS
3 News
15 Opinion
A decade of devolution
20 The UK by numbers:
Leisure and culture
28 Information and updates
People; publications; news briefs; websites; events

FEATURES
10 Leaving a mark
Forty years after Apollo 11’s ‘giant leap for mankind’ we take a look at events and developments that have changed our world

16 Changing land policy
Land management research by Michael Young Prize winner Mark Reed has led to national and international impact

17 Tackling the blood trade
Unsafe blood supply practices at the NHS were uncovered by Michael Young Prize winner Carol Grayson

18 Turning the tables
School league tables are seen as an indicator of quality – but they don’t tell us how the school will perform in the future

22 Voices: The social vocalist
Journalist and writer Polly Toynbee talks about social affairs, research and the effect of recession

26 Avoiding the guilt trips
Tourism can alleviate injustice and poverty – or exacerbate it. Research highlights the paradox of the tourist trade
GAINING EXPERTISE AS a teacher is a process that continues throughout a teacher’s career, says new research from the Teacher and Leadership Research Centre, University of Nottingham. “Our findings show that the old notion that experience or years in the teaching profession somehow equates to expertise is entirely false,” Professor Christopher Day points out. “Teachers need to develop expertise throughout their career and there’s no point at which those who want to be more effective teachers can stop learning.”

In this two-year study, researchers analysed the classroom practices of 80 teachers identified as effective in terms of their school’s national test and exam results and data on pupil attitude. The research also involved a further 38 school leaders and some 3,000 pupils in 38 schools in England.

“A key aim was to discover what distinguishes more effective teachers from those who are simply effective,” explains Professor Day. “We found that while a number of key factors (such as creating a positive climate for learning, promoting positive teacher-pupil relationships, creating structured and well-paced lessons) contributed to classroom effectiveness, the more effective teachers drew on a greater range of diverse teaching strategies and practices, regardless of school phase or socio-economic status.”

For example, more effective teachers created a positive climate for learning by challenging pupils’ ideas and being more innovative; they gave more time to developing individual relationships with pupils, focusing on building self-esteem, engendering trust and maintaining respect; and they offered individual support to pupils’ specific needs to build motivation and ensure inclusion in the class community.

Teachers themselves said that enthusiasm for teaching, a positive relationship with children and high motivation and commitment were the most important factors in effective teaching. Their least important factors were years of teaching experience, good pedagogical knowledge and having a sense of vocation. Children’s views on effective teaching varied with age. In year 2 the strongest factor was ‘overall pupil enjoyment and security’; in year 6 it was ‘positive teacher support and reassurance’. For year 9 pupils, ‘teacher interest in pupils’ and ‘teacher approachability’ were very important.

“Several implications for both teachers and the policy community arise from this study,” claims Professor Day. “At present, initial teacher training does not stress sufficiently either the need for lifelong learning or the fact that those starting on their careers are not the finished article. Introducing trainee teachers to the difference between effective and more effective teaching would raise the bar for them.”

In terms of current teachers, researchers suggest that their findings should be more systematically included in existing procedures for observing and assessing teachers’ classroom performance. “Many of the dimensions of more effective teaching can be taught using methods such as feedback,” Professor Day concludes. “We need to increase the focus through continuing professional development on raising classroom expertise, not just for those starting in the profession but across all ages and levels of experience.”

Contact Professor Christopher Day, University of Nottingham
Telephone +44 (0) 115 951 4423
Email christopher.day@nottingham.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number RES-000-23-1564
IN BRIEF

CREDIT CONSTRAINTS
In the current financial climate many firms find themselves particularly credit constrained. A new study aims to analyse the impact this has on how firms structure their dealings with partners in the supply chain. Questions include whether credit constrained firms exposed to market risk wish to outsource or insource operations, and whether credit constrained firms with investment opportunities charge too high prices.
ESRC grant number RES-000-22-3468

PANDEMIC RESPONSES
How people behave, interact and travel during a pandemic could limit or exacerbate their risk of infection. Effective planning requires an understanding of how people are likely to change their behaviour when faced with a pandemic. This new research network is bringing together a range of experts to develop methods with which to predict how individuals may respond to infectious disease outbreaks.
ESRC grant number RES-355-25-0019

MANAGING DIABETES
Does the way people view diabetes affect the way in which they manage their illness? A new study aims to explore whether the ability to ‘make sense’ of diabetes is important in helping people manage the emotional impact of living with an ongoing illness. Researchers will also examine the role played by social environment and family relationships in terms of helping those with diabetes to care for themselves.
ESRC grant number PTA-026-27-1928

Britain on the move
WHILE MUCH MEDIA attention is paid to the topic of international immigration into Britain, the matter of who is moving where within Britain has been largely ignored.
Internal migration is important, Professor John Stillwell argues, because this is the key phenomenon responsible for explaining population change and demographic restructuring in many parts of the country. Hence, in a new 12-month study, researchers from the University of Leeds set out to develop a clearer understanding of internal migration flows taking place within the UK and involving different ethnic groups.
Based on an analysis of Special Migration Statistics and commissioned tables from the 2001 Census on seven ethnic groups – white, Indian, Pakistani and other South Asian, Chinese, black, mixed and other – findings show that the propensity to move within Britain varies between ethnic groups. Despite the fact that nine out of every ten migrants are white, several ethnic minorities have higher migration propensities than whites. The Chinese have a particularly high rate – especially within the 20-24 age group – and are most inclined to move longer distances. While migration involves just over ten per cent of the population, more than 15 per cent of people whose ethnicity is described as ‘other’ non-white in the census migrate within Britain. However, despite non-white groups in general having a higher propensity to migrate internally, people described as ‘Indian’ and ‘Pakistani and other South Asian’ have the lowest recorded rates of migration.
The findings contradict suggestions that non-white ethnic communities are becoming increasingly concentrated or that levels of segregation within the biggest cities are rising.
“One the contrary, our results for London suggest that internal migration is an agent of dispersal for non-white groups, rather than greater spatial segregation,” Professor Stillwell states.

“White people do indeed show a tendency to move to areas of greater concentration of white people. And spatial patterns of migration within London show that internal migrants of all ethnic groups have a tendency to move from deprived neighbourhoods to areas of less deprivation.
“But, interestingly, all non-white ethnic groups except the ‘mixed’ group are moving to areas in London with lower shares of population in the same ethnic groups as themselves. This finding supports work documented elsewhere that serves to dispel the myth of ‘non-white ethnic group self-segregation’ despite the range of positive factors such as familiarity, security, family links, and shared cultures, traditions and language that encourage residential clustering. The policy implication of this may involve making affordable and social housing more available to ethnic minorities in predominantly white areas, or being aware that ethnic minority groups may want the opportunity to relocate from areas with which traditionally they have been associated.”
THE ‘TARGETS AND terror’ policy introduced in England in 2000 to cut hospital waiting times has worked, says research conducted at the University of Bristol.

Findings reveal that the aggressive policy of targets coupled with the publication of waiting times data and strong sanctions for poor performing hospital managers introduced for the NHS lowered the proportion of people waiting for planned treatment relative to Scotland, where no such policy was introduced.

Researchers further claim that the target-driven regime succeeded without appearing to damage patient care. Critics claimed the targets would lead to unintended adverse consequences, such as treatment contrary to clinical priority, but the study finds no evidence to support these claims.

Although volunteers aspire to be collaborators, existing codes of professional ethics make it difficult for researchers to respond appropriately. “Researchers could do more to ensure that volunteers feel ‘comfortable’ with the research experience, whether through adjusting their own behaviour, their briefing material, or their preconceptions about volunteer concerns,” Dr Morris points out.

Contact Dr Norma Morris, University College London
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7679 3703
Email norma.morris@ucl.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number RES-000-23-1160

Volunteers dislike ‘lab rat’ status

HOW DOES IT feel to be a volunteer in biomedical research? While many previous studies have explored why people choose to volunteer and how well they understand clinical trials, very little is known about the actual experience of being a volunteer. “We wanted to discover how those who volunteer to take part unpaid in medical research feel about their role, their influence on the research process and the dynamics of the researcher/volunteer relationship,” Dr Norma Morris at University College London explains.

In this study researchers collaborated with medical physicists who were recruiting volunteers to test new laser light technology for generating diagnostic breast images. The 85 volunteers ranged in age from 19 to 75 and included those with and without breast cancer. Importantly, the trial offered no personal medical benefit to the volunteers, so personal healthcare-related concerns and interests were less relevant as factors.

Findings show that taking part in research is a challenging experience even in the low-risk, pain-free, non-therapeutic setting of this particular study: “It’s often overlooked that taking part in clinical research is a socially awkward situation in which volunteers expose themselves (sometimes literally) to strangers, and to new technology, questions and so on,” Dr Morris says. “We found that to counter these feelings volunteers tend to take an active role in establishing their identity as thinking human beings and not ‘guinea pigs’, emphasising their voluntary participation.”

Contact Dr Norma Morris, University College London
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7679 3703
Email norma.morris@ucl.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number RES-000-23-1160

Hospital targets pay off

THE ‘TARGETS AND terror’ policy introduced in England in 2000 to cut hospital waiting times has worked, says research conducted at the University of Bristol.

Findings reveal that the aggressive policy of targets coupled with the publication of waiting times data and strong sanctions for poor performing hospital managers introduced for the NHS lowered the proportion of people waiting for planned treatment relative to Scotland, where no such policy was introduced.

Researchers further claim that the target-driven regime succeeded without appearing to damage patient care. Critics claimed the targets would lead to unintended adverse consequences, such as treatment contrary to clinical priority, but the study finds no evidence to support these claims.

Contact Professor Frank Windmeijer, University of Bristol
Telephone +44 (0) 117 331 0762
Email l.windmeijer@bristol.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number RES-166-25-0022
Part of the Public Services Programme

IN BRIEF

POLICE UNDER SCRUTINY
Police-public encounters will be scrutinised by researchers in a new study that aims to identify features of which the public approves or disapproves. Previous research indicates that while people value the police as an institution, their experience of contact with police officers is less favourable. Findings will help improve police-public relations by enabling police officers to appreciate how others perceive and evaluate their actions.
ESRC grant number RES-000-22-3571

ATTRACTION BY THE RIGHT
The emergence of extreme right parties has generated much interest, yet very little is known about who joins these organisations, how they do so and why. This fellowship grant will enable the researcher to disseminate recent findings on activism in contemporary extreme right-wing parties. Findings are drawn from semi-structured life history interviews with activists and additional archival research.
ESRC grant number PTA-026-27-2117

DIVERSITY IN PRISON
Prison managers in England and Wales are concerned with developing and sustaining an environment which is secure and yet respectful of diversity. This involves showing respect for a diverse prison population that includes race and ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality, age, disabilities and class. This project brings together practical policy and theoretical concerns about how to respond to diversity in prison.
ESRC grant number RES-000-22-3441
Understanding women child molesters

MALE CHILD MOLESTERS, research suggests, hold a series of beliefs that contribute to their sexually offensive behaviour. These include, for example, seeing children as sexually knowledgeable, seeing sex as harmless or seeing one’s own abusive actions as uncontrollable. Knowing that child molesters may hold such beliefs is vital for treatment providers. To date, however, very little has been known about the beliefs held by women who sexually abuse children.

In a new study, researchers from the University of Kent set out to increase understanding of women child molesters’ offence-supportive beliefs. One interesting finding is that women child molesters over-perceive male hostility. Researchers suggest this belief may result in these women failing to react assertively to men who ask them to accompany them in the molestation of children. Further, over-perceiving male hostility could lead some women to turn to younger males for sexual companionship. The study further indicates that domestic abuse experiences appear to increase the risk of a sexual offence occurring.

By providing this empirical documentation of the types of offence-related beliefs held by women child molesters, researchers believe their study will assist professionals when assessing and treating women abusers.

Religious questions

A NEW STUDY of religious practice based on the International Congregational Life Survey of almost one million respondents in Australia, England, New Zealand and the USA raises some intriguing questions about religious activity. For example, analysis suggests that Anglican church attendance in England is negatively affected by the Anglican share of the local churchgoing population. In other words, the more Anglican churchgoers there are, the less likely any randomly selected Anglican attender is to be in church on Sunday. This also holds true for the US, where average attendance frequency of churchgoers is low in more religious environments.

Why then, if an area is more religious, would churchgoers there be on average less religious than elsewhere? Researchers believe the explanation for this seeming paradox is that the impact of ‘more religious’ localities is felt at the margin.
New family forms are not norms

IF MUCH MEDIA commentary is to be believed, the family as a social institution in Britain is close to collapse as people turn to looser, and more individualised, arrangements for living, loving and caring. In a recent study, researchers from the University of Bradford and the National Centre for Social Research set out to discover people’s views about family and personal life and whether family life is indeed in crisis.

Based on the British Social Attitudes Survey 2006 and UK Census 2001 data about geographical distributions, the study points to a growing acceptance of non-traditional family forms in the UK. But, researchers argue, this does not necessarily amount to ‘family breakdown’. Rather, norms about the content and nature of family life seem quite durable. In other words, while the outward form of families may be changing, the inner core – or the value that people attach to their family relationships – remains steady.

So, when it comes to partnership, people in Britain now generally view cohabitation as equivalent to marriage and divorce is preferable to marital conflict, particularly where children are present. Although a conservative minority in this study retained traditional views of the family, for most people the model of a heterosexual married couple living in the same household is no longer particularly central as a social norm. However, where children are involved, it seems that ‘non-individualist’ moral absolutes or imperatives are still pervasive – for example, levels of approval for single women who choose to become mothers, and for same sex couples (both men and women) as parents were relatively low.

Overall, findings show that although there have been changes in family life and attitudes to different family forms, this does not amount to a ‘breakdown’ of the family. Hence, although friends were seen as an important source of emotional support, they were usually seen as an addition to, not a replacement for, family support. Friends are not the ‘new family’ it seems. “In fact, the importance attached to family life does not seem to have altered,” concludes Professor Simon Duncan. “Certainly there is evidence of change and evolution, but most people still place great emphasis on maintaining successful family relationships and functional family lives, whatever form these take.”

■

Contact
Professor Simon Duncan, University of Bradford
Telephone +44 (0) 1274 235233
Email s.s.duncan@bradford.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number: RES-000-23-1329

Contact
Dr Clare Wilkinson, University of the West of England, Bristol
Telephone +44 (0) 117 328 2146
Email Clare.Wilkinson@uwe.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number: RES-000-22-2180

SUMMER 2009 SOCIETY NOW 7
Food fights

FOOD ALLERGY IS widely perceived as a growing problem. Although the actual prevalence of food allergy and food intolerance is difficult to measure and highly contested, the charity Allergy UK has estimated that two per cent of people in the UK population have a food allergy, and 45 per cent experience some form of food intolerance. Although some experts remain sceptical about the extent of ‘true’ allergic conditions, public concern has intensified nonetheless.

A new study has taken a wide-ranging sociological view on how food allergy and food intolerance is understood and communicated in a number of different settings including medicine, science, the food industry, allergy charities, government, private clinics and testing services, the media, and amongst NHS patients, patient groups and the public more generally. Findings reveal that considerable debate surrounds even the basic definition of ‘food allergy’ and ‘food tolerance’, and that attempts by the scientific profession to define and ‘rein in’ the allergy zone sit in tension with attempts to expand or reframe the allergy zone by a range of other actors, including commercial organisations and patient groups.

“Uncertainty as to the causes of food allergies, compounded by a lack of clarity about what constitutes allergy or intolerance, is making this problem very difficult for people to comprehend and manage, which in turn is contributing to heightened uncertainties and corresponding anxieties,” states Dr Sarah Nettleton.

Using the internet to mobilise British Chinese

CHINESE PEOPLE, ACCORDING to survey evidence, feel the least British among all minority groups in Britain. Moreover, the 2006 Citizenship Survey indicates that Chinese people in Britain are less likely to be volunteers than other ethnic groups, while the Electoral Commission finds this group to have very low voter registration, and there are no Chinese MPs.

In a new study, Dr David Parker and Dr Miri Song explored the cultural and political marginality of the British Chinese and considered the potential of British Chinese websites and online social networks to enhance the social inclusion and political participation of British Chinese people.

“These issues are usually overlooked in relation to a group which appears to be well-integrated and successful in higher education,” argues Dr Parker. “In socio-economic terms, the British Chinese are also regarded as a success story. But unlike the South Asian and African Caribbean populations in Britain, whose cultural and political presence is undeniably felt, there are hardly any references to British Chinese people in mainstream cultural and political life.”

Researchers explored the potential of British Chinese websites (such as britishchinesonline.com, dimsum.co.uk and bcproject.org.uk) for social and political mobilisation. The ability of online communication to connect a dispersed population is particularly significant for the British Chinese, as unlike many other minority ethnic populations they are highly scattered throughout Britain, with no local authority area having more than two per cent of its residents as Chinese.

Findings show that many users of British Chinese community websites found them a key means of meeting other British-born Chinese people, and regular participation on these sites enhanced a collective sense of being British Chinese. “The creation of internet forums aimed at a small ethnic group like the British-born Chinese may appear divisive and insular,” says Dr Parker. “But we argue that the development of the social agenda necessary for subsequent political participation is facilitated by the primarily co-ethnic interactions occurring on the websites we explored.”

The study concludes that British Chinese websites and social networks have the potential to mobilise a part of the population yet to be fully represented in mainstream public life. To secure greater involvement from this under-represented population, the researchers suggest public bodies devise online content that sets out the pathways to political participation at local and national levels, and tailor invitations to policy consultations in areas such as immigration, education and health via these new media forums.
Reaching across the digital divide

DOES THE GROWTH of information communication technologies empower vulnerable people, or does lack of access to the internet merely increase their social exclusion? Researchers from the University of Salford, a city with one of the highest rates of coronary heart disease (CHD) in the UK, set out to explore the impact of providing access to the internet on the lives of a sample of heart patients – a group likely to have lower than average internet access.

Researchers gave more than 100 heart patients free home use of a PC and printer and prepaid broadband access for a year. The people in one half of the sample were given help to use a dedicated coronary support portal for the period of six months (heartsofsalford.net), while the other half used their internet connection without the help of this facilitated learning support.

Findings show that facilitated learning did bring increased self-confidence in managing health, greater proficiency in the use of the internet for health information and other purposes, changes in eating habits and more social support. Researchers also found that people with access to the internet were more likely to go back to their GP for advice and that those who used the CHD portal were more receptive to government health messages. However, internet use was not found to change the patients’ behaviour on drinking, smoking or exercise.

“Our results suggest that facilitated learning is necessary to overcome the digital divide for vulnerable people,” concludes researcher Professor Paul Bellaby. “But it is also resource-intensive. Our findings indicate that GPs face more not less demand from participants in such a project, although this demand is better-informed. Further research is needed to discover whether in the long-term this may result in improved health, reduced surgery and better prospects of survival for heart patients.”

IN BRIEF

FINANCING EDUCATION
This study will contribute directly to policy debate concerning the financing of higher education and, in particular, the contributions that taxpayer, parents and students make towards its costs, the extent to which these contributions should be loans or grants, and how such payments might be designed. The methodology for this project will involve theory, estimation and policy option simulation.

ESRC grant number PTA-026-27-2256

PARTNERSHIP IN THE NHS
Modernising the NHS remains high on the policy agenda. To assess how partnership working contributes to the modernising process, this project evaluates the process and outcomes of the groundbreaking labour-management partnership in NHS Scotland. Evaluating partnership working in NHS Scotland may also provide important lessons on engaging staff that can help improve health services in England and Wales.

ESRC grant number RES-000-22-3569

LIVING STANDARDS
Using new methods, this project will provide improved measures of average living standards for 146 countries covering 95 per cent of the world’s population. It will remedy flaws in the present use of purchasing power parities (PPPs) in measuring living standards. The new method takes into account the fact that the share of household budget spent on different products varies with income and not just prices.

ESRC grant number RES-000-22-3438
Leaving a mark

The Apollo 11 moon landing on 20 July 1969 was a landmark event, witnessed by an unprecedented percentage of the global population and changing our perceptions of the world. Which major events and developments since then have changed society – for better or worse? Our panel of commentators looks at the events that have changed today’s world.

The New Europe

The Fall of the Berlin Wall

Professor Richard Berry, Director of the ESRC Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies

The year 1989 will be seen as a watershed in world history in the same vein as 1789 and 1848. However, it was not ‘the end of history’ and the simple triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism over the one-party state and the socialist economy. In effect, 1989 was the culmination of a long process of economic decay and moral bankruptcy.

The geography of Europe changed dramatically. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was united with the far larger and more advanced Federal Republic. Overnight, the economic and political system collapsed, forcing the government of Chancellor Kohl to begin the process of pouring vast sums of money into the former communist country. This reconstruction process goes on to this day and has implications for the current financial crisis. As a result of its experiences in the former GDR, the government of Chancellor Merkel is wary of another large fiscal stimulus.

The Czech and Slovak republics agreed to go their separate ways (1 January 1993) in what was referred to as ‘the Velvet Divorce’. This was a far cry from the bloody wars that engulfed Yugoslavia, resulting in sieges and atrocities not witnessed on the European continent since the Second World War. The collapse of the USSR meant independence for the Baltic, Central Asian and Caucasian states. Ethnic conflicts, such as in Chechnya, came to the fore. Elsewhere, the beast of nationalism took less aggressive forms, but there were still disputes between Hungary and her neighbours, especially with Slovakia and Romania over Hungarian minority rights. Meanwhile, Roma groups across the former communist bloc looked warily at the rise of right-wing nationalist parties.

The changes in the economic base of the region were dramatic; the old state economies were subject to privatisation and foreign investment poured in. The old communist trading bloc collapsed, necessitating an opening to the world economy. The countries of the region signed Association Agreements with the EU, which would eventually result in EU membership in 2004 for the Baltic states, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia, while Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007. The states of the former Yugoslavia will be next to join. Convertible currencies were introduced, and in the case of Slovenia and Slovakia the euro was adopted, a process which will be adopted elsewhere when conditions permit. Membership of NATO spread throughout the region.

However, there are still economic and social problems arising from the collapse of communism. There are considerable west/east divisions as the more prosperous western regions have a far higher standard of living. The old rust belts of the region still have high unemployment rates. The population had to learn a hard lesson: namely that the establishment of political independence does not result in economic independence, only interdependence. The fall of communism also saw more corruption and provided opportunities for criminal elements to flourish: who had heard of the trafficking of women from the region before 1989?

Overall, the death of communism is to be welcomed. Its legacy is complex, but in the establishment of democracy the people at least have a say. If a government fails to perform, it can be ousted – a scenario unthinkable in the repressive communist era.
THE INTERNET COMMUNITY

1991 | INVENTION OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB

John Fisher, Chief Executive of charity Citizens Online

The Internet was already underway at the time of the moon landing, but it was Tim Berners-Lee’s 1989 innovation the ‘World Wide Web’, connecting hypertext pages with a browser, which brought the global network to the people and kick-started the internet revolution. During the 1990s the growth of the internet doubled year-on-year, and since 2000 the amount of users has more than tripled. The current estimate is 1.6 billion users worldwide, with a global penetration of 23.8 per cent. In the UK, almost 16.5 million households had internet access in 2008 – an increase of 1.2 million households on the year before.

It is impossible to overestimate how the internet has affected our society. Worldwide, instant access to the web has meant that people from different parts of the globe can connect and communicate directly with each other. The concept of a ‘global community’ has taken on actual significance, instead of being the preserve of political speeches and wishful thinking. The popularity of social networking communities such as Facebook and Twitter goes against the cliché of the isolated, solitary computer geek; the internet has the potential to bring people together, across borders and social divides.

The internet has also given the people a voice – to blog, post comments, discuss or rant. Web technology has levelled the field and provided a channel where everyone can be heard, not only the mainstream or major actors. It makes it easier to organise grassroots movements, poll voters, submit petitions, call for leaders to go, or demand new policies. The internet cannot create democracy in itself, but it can be used to hold governments and leaders to account.

The impact is also substantial in the private sector. A whole web-based business market has sprung up, providing a raft of products and services that can be browsed, booked and paid for online. Web media are increasingly taking audience and advertisers from the printed newspapers, while TV and radio programmes can be downloaded online. Public services are going digital, ensuring you can order library books or pay your taxes with a few mouse clicks.

With the increasing importance of the internet, it is all the more vital that no-one is left out. Recent Ofcom research shows that almost 30 per cent of adults in the UK still don’t have internet access at home. The irony is that the people who would benefit most from new skills and job opportunities, cheaper goods and services, and access to new networks and contacts are those least likely to be found online. Digital skills are now considered the third basic life skill after literacy and numeracy, and the recent government report Digital Britain stresses the need for greater digital participation to make the UK competitive in global markets.

Recently, we have seen in places like Iran how the use of online tools such as Twitter has helped people to bypass news blackouts and censorship. Many now believe that access to the internet is a basic human right.

THE AGE REVOLUTION

2001/2002 | LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH FOR WOMEN IN THE UK PASSED 80 YEARS

Professor Alan Walker, Director of the New Dynamics of Ageing Research Programme

Everyone knows that Britain is an ageing society but, in fact, the growth of longevity has been proceeding quietly across all developed countries for around 170 years! Despite assertions that life expectancy must be approaching a limit, it is the linearity of the rise that is remarkable. Ageing is now a global phenomenon; in the last century it was the developed countries that aged most rapidly and, in this one, it is the turn of the developing nations.

Ageing has climbed steadily up the national and international policy and research agendas, rather than being rocketed up there by a particular event. In the UK the key influences have been, first of all, a recognition in policy circles of the significance of societal ageing, for example in the ageing of the workforce and the rising demand for health and social care services. From the late 1980s measures began to be taken to combat age discrimination in the labour market and, in 2006, these were given legislative force through the European Employment Directive.

Two symbolic events have captured public attention; on the one hand there is the very recent overtaking of the numbers of children under 16 by those of pensionable age and, on the other, the retirement of some of the first post-war baby boomer generations.
LEAVING A MARK

The UK Research Councils and other research funders have also attempted to draw attention to the rise of longevity. The ESRC’s first research programme on ageing took place in the mid-1980s and, in the 1990s, four Councils each mounted their own ageing initiatives. Five Research Councils have now combined to create the UK’s largest ever research programme on ageing: The New Dynamics of Ageing.

Despite this increasing profile, there is still a great deal to be done to explain the significance of the age revolution. For example, few will be aware that nearly half of the projected growth in UK households to 2026 is likely to be among older people. The ageing of the boomer generation may help to change attitudes to later life (although there is a lot of unscientific speculation on this point) but policies and practices, as well as attitudes, tend to lag some way behind demographic change. Thus we see the current co-existence of age discrimination in various walks of life with increasing numbers of active older people. Paradoxically, therefore, when Britain needs their skills and experience and to sustain their health and activity for as long as possible, many older people still suffer social exclusion.

However, I am optimistic that Britain will come to terms successfully with its own ageing. The demographics are largely positive: increasing longevity is accompanied by increasing disability-free life expectancy – a trend that, at present, is not as clear in the UK as in some other European countries. In policy terms the government has identified ageing as one of the three great challenges facing the country. In society there is huge vitality and hunger for positive change among older people and those representing them. Many older people of various ages are busy redesigning later life in their own diverse images.

LIVING IN A NEW CLIMATE
Joan Ruddock, Energy and Climate Change Minister

I HAVE NO doubt that the most significant change for our society and for future generations is the recognition that our addiction to fossil fuels is leading to potentially dangerous climate change. Climate change will have profound, far-reaching impacts into every corner of our lives – from the way we grow and source our food, our leisure and travel habits, to the design of our homes and the future employment opportunities for our children and grandchildren.

Here in the UK, this has already led to ambitious government action. In April, the first of the government’s carbon budgets outlined reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by a massive 80 per cent on 1990 levels by 2050, as well as an interim target of 34 per cent by 2020. In this new world, every government decision will have to be made on the basis of whether it fits the carbon budget, whether emissions savings can be made elsewhere or whether it simply can’t be done because of its carbon impact. This in itself is a revolution.

Businesses and the public sector in the UK are, or will be, made to reduce their

TERRORISM AND SOCIETY
THE SEPTEMBER 11 TERROR ATTACKS
Professor Michael Clarke, Director of the Royal United Services Institute

TERRORISTS HAVE SOMETIMES succeeded in their political aims, but they have not traditionally been very successful in changing society. The jihadist terrorists of the last 15 years, however, can claim something of a victory in seriously affecting the American and British society that they have so assiduously targeted.

The September 11 atrocity of 2001 was by no means the first jihadi attack on the US or Britain, but it became the iconic event of modern terrorism. It represented a new terrorist phenomenon; new because it employed novel techniques, using Western society’s virtues of openness, mobility and communication as weapons against itself. It is new because it is also wilfully indiscriminate. Even conservatively, more than 40 per cent of the victims of jihadist terror are fellow Muslims. Not least, it is new because jihadi terrorists since Osama bin Laden’s fatwa of 1998 are not demanding anything that lies within the political mainstream of US or British societies to grant. Nothing Britain or America could realistically concede would assuage these terrorists’ demands. Nor is it largely a reaction to western interventions. The attacks of 1993 and 1997, the fatwa of 1998, the attacks of 2000 and then 2001 all predate the ill-conceived response of the US and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It may not be surprising, therefore, that jihadi terrorism has had such a big perceptual impact on American and British society; one apparently targeted mainly from without, one threatened also from within. The US rushed through the so-called Patriot Act in October 2001, providing the government with a wide range of new powers...
SCIENCE IS USUALLY an incremental process, with research building upon previous discoveries. In the case of biotechnology, the pace of these increments has been extraordinary. It began in the 1970s with the discovery of ways to sequence and manipulate DNA, and continued in the 1980s with the development of transgenic mice and fruit flies, and the identification of the mutations that cause Huntington’s disease and cystic fibrosis. But arguably the biggest step was the Human Genome Project, identifying all genes and mapping the sequence of chemical base pairs in the human DNA. The project launched in 1990 and completed in 2003 – a rare case of a single advance completely transforming its field, and much beyond.

These developments have continued to gain pace; a human genome once took three years to sequence, but we can now do it in a single day for a fraction of the cost. This genetic information has raised the profile of biotechnology in the public eye, particularly for its profound implications for healthcare. The human genome sequence has already been used to uncover hundreds of genetic influences on health and disease. Scientists can use powerful ‘genome-wide association studies’ to systematically search for gene variants that change our propensity to common diseases, such as diabetes and Crohn’s disease. Better understanding of how diseases develop, using knowledge from genetic research, is already leading to improved drugs and treatments, which will allow doctors to identify, monitor and help people at high risk.

Other studies, such as UK Biobank, are investigating how environmental and lifestyle factors are contributing to these increases. Carbon emissions, for example through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, or the forthcoming Carbon Reduction Commitment. But further changes are needed. We already have plans in place to reduce household carbon emissions to zero by 2050, to roll out smart energy meters to every home by 2020 and to introduce measures that will financially reward householders for generating their own renewable heat and power. This summer the UK Government will publish an Energy and Climate Change Strategy to outline a low-carbon future that is prosperous and energy-secure.

As a result of these actions, in the years to come we and our descendants will live in a radically different world. Our homes and appliances will be more efficiently designed and electricity grids will be ‘smarter’, managing the demand in supply more effectively. We or our children may work in the low-carbon sector, now worth £3 trillion a year worldwide and growing fast. We will travel in ultra low-carbon cars and make greater use of buses and electric trains. Energy may cost more, but greater efficiencies will mean we will use less power and there will be wider government support for the poorest. The climate will be different, but we will have used our skills and ingenuity to prepare and adapt.
LEAVING A MARK

LOSING TRUST IN CREDIT
THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL COLLAPSE
2008

Andy Haldane, Executive Director for Financial Stability,
Bank of England

THE WORDS ‘CREDIT crunch’ contain the seeds of an explanation for both the longevity and severity of the current crisis, which has affected all sectors of society and every country in the world. In Latin, credit means trust. Credit crunch is, in essence, a breakdown in trust. Between different parties at different times, that loss of trust has been the root cause of the devastating impact felt by so many people since the credit crunch began in 2007.

The initial cause of the crisis was a breakdown of trust between banks and households, specifically sub-prime mortgage-holders in the United States. As losses on these mortgages and other toxic assets accumulated, trust between banks themselves was impaired – leading to the inter-bank money markets seizing up from the second half of 2007 onwards. These funding pressures further constrained banks’ ability to lend to the real economy.

Damaged by losses on legacy assets and constrained in their ability to make profitable new loans, this in turn raised questions about banks’ future viability and led to a loss of trust between banks and non-bank investors in banks. Bank failures further eroded this trust, and as banks’ capital market funding dried up, credit conditions in the real economy tightened further.

With increasingly severe cuts in credit, trust in the viability of some companies came to be questioned, not least among funding-constrained banks. Starved of bank credit, corporate distress began to rise during the course of 2008, increasing distrust between companies, in particular after the failure of Lehman Brothers in September 2008. The stream of trade credit extended between firms to support their businesses dried to a trickle.

Through these successive waves, the world financial system has found itself with almost every link in the credit chain having been weakened or broken. The largest and most synchronous global economic slowdown since the Great Depression has been the result.

So how is trust, and thereby credit, to be restored? The answer to date has been to rely on the one sector whose credit and trust has not been questioned: governments and central banks. There has been large-scale provision of government and central bank credit over the past 18 months in an attempt to ease pressures and repair breaks in the private sector credit chain.

Extending public sector credit on this scale relies on the deep pockets and prudence of our grandchildren. As such, it can be no more than a stop-gap – a temporary bridge – until private sector trust can be restored. ■
ARELY CAN SUCH high expectations have been invested in a political institution as the Scottish Parliament. The words Winnie Ewing MEP chose to open its inaugural session on 12 May 1999 were immensely significant: “The Scottish Parliament, which adjourned on 25 March 1707, is hereby re-convened.” They were significant not just to those who would prefer to see an independent Scotland, but also to the wider section of Scottish opinion that was comfortable with UK membership but had become disillusioned with the way Scotland was governed within the UK.

The experience of almost two decades governed by a Conservative Party with, at best, fewer than one-third of the Westminster seats in Scotland had called the legitimacy of Scottish government into question. Devolution – the establishment of a Scottish Parliament accountable to a Scottish electorate – was the response. Ten years ago, on 1 July 1999, the Scottish Parliament was officially opened.

The Parliament was expected to be the arena of a ‘new politics’, defined both positively and negatively. Negatively it was about having a Parliament that was not like Westminster; too antiquated in practice, too remote and too much marked by a stylised ritual of opposition.

In the first half of the 1990s much effort was put into working out more positively how the future Scottish Parliament would deliver this new politics. Proportional representation was one part of the mix, which would challenge adversary politics with a new brand of consensus. There was also a commitment to see the Parliament work openly with ‘civil society’ and to open up the new Scottish democracy to participation by others than the usual suspects in powerful interest groups. All this was to be hardwired into the design of the Parliament. The procedures were then worked out in detail by a Consultative Steering Group (CSG) which aimed to put in place “a new sort of democracy in Scotland”.

These were high ambitions. The report card after ten years is mixed. The first years of the Parliament were mired in controversy, in particular about the spiralling costs of the Parliament building. One consequence was a sharp dip in public assessments of the impact of the Parliament, exacerbated perhaps because the imagery of a new politics raised such a level of expectation that the performance of the Parliament in practice was always going to disappoint. Much of the story that the Convention and the CSG created about the Parliament was overly idealistic. In particular it underestimated the importance – and the logic – of party competition. Political parties are central to the operation of the Scottish Parliament. Though not as ‘whipped’ as at Westminster, they generally maintain high degrees of party discipline and, as at Westminster, oppose each other often for its own sake. Convention and CSG also underestimated the capacity of the ‘usual suspects’, especially in the public sector and legal professions, to seamlessly establish insider status in the new Scottish democracy. While new voices have been heard – through a more open committee structure, including a very busy public petitions committee – the old voices still speak loudest.

None of this is meant to suggest that the Parliament has somehow failed in what it was intended to achieve, but rather that the benchmark of a new politics was always a flawed one. But there is a different benchmark, as expressed by Winnie Ewing ten years ago. That benchmark was about restoring legitimacy and accountability to the government of Scotland. There is now a Scottish democratic process (however ‘new’ or ‘old’ its features might be) based on Scottish elections, and carried out through a Parliament able to give due attention to, and assure the legitimacy of, legislation and government action in Scotland. Scottish voters, as recent ESRC research shows, make sophisticated judgements about that government action, not least the new and substantial Scottish statute book that has built up since 1999. The ESRC-supported public attitudes surveys show that the Scots firmly approve of having a Parliament. Indeed, if anything, they would like to see it do more.

Public attitudes surveys show that the Scots firmly approve of having a Parliament. Indeed, if anything, they would like to see it do more.

Professor Charlie Jeffery is Co-Director of the Institute of Governance at the University of Edinburgh, and Director of the ESRC Devolution and Constitutional Change Research Programme 2000-2005. Telephone +44 (0) 131 650 4266 Email Charlie.Jeffery@ed.ac.uk Web http://www.institute-of-governance.org Web http://www.devolution.ac.uk
I believe it is possible for environmental research to make a global impact and to make a difference to people’s lives. When you live and work in a forest for two months you gain a deep understanding of the environment,” says Dr Reed, senior lecturer at the Department of Geosciences and Environmental Sustainability, University of Aberdeen. “Those have been some of my richest and most educational experiences – impinging on everything I do and how I relate to the world.”

Mark Reed is one of this year’s two Michael Young Prize winners. The prize is awarded by the ESRC and the Young Foundation to an early career social science researcher whose research has the potential to make a far-reaching impact on society.

Dr Reed’s research looked into the impact of changing environments on the people who live and work in the UK uplands and the Kalahari drylands in Botswana. His work aims to help people monitor and adapt to future challenges in these different environments – not only protecting their livelihoods, but also the ecosystems that they often depend on.

When selecting his research area, Dr Reed was looking for environmental issues which could bring real change to people’s lives. Local knowledge, he says, is a huge factor in the research: “We chose our focus by asking local communities what the most significant problems were and what we could most constructively work with them on.”

Dr Reed’s research on Kalahari drylands is feeding into the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. “They want guidance from the research community on how they can better combine local knowledge of environmental change with knowledge from the academic community to inform policy,” he says.

The UK uplands project has also constructively influenced a number of UK government initiatives. The team’s recent review of the future of the uplands is feeding into policy at the highest levels, and they have also been working closely with the Commission for Rural Communities, which reports directly to the Prime Minister.

Winning the Michael Young Prize of £3,000 has allowed Dr Reed and his team to translate their findings and recommendations to the benefit of farmers in Botswana. It will also allow them to communicate their findings to people in UK uplands by producing information leaflets and an online video podcast to tell people how they can prepare for the challenges of the future.

Dr Reed is passionate about making the research culture relevant to users. He is part of a new project on the ‘rural digital economy’. His work will look at the role of the digital economy in supporting better decision-making and healthy economies in UK uplands.

“We are creating a web-based portal where it will be possible to look at how different benefits coming from a particular piece of land are changing over time” Mark says. Sensors embedded in the landscape will send real-time data to update online maps and graphs on the portal. He plans to create a ‘Hill View’ application where users can click on maps to see 360 degree landscape views, rate views and add their own photos.

By Robert Ormerod, freelance journalist

Preparing for the future: how can we anticipate, monitor and adapt to environmental change?

Contact Dr Mark Reed
Telephone +44 (0) 1224 273719 Email m.reed@abdn.ac.uk
Our societies are becoming more complex. Humankind is expanding, pushing the boundaries both of nature and culture. Knowledge about our world is becoming ever more important; the need to know – about society, about how we behave, interact and develop. Social sciences have become crucial in delivering knowledge about our man-made, ever-changing world.

The breadth of knowledge that social science delivers is overwhelming, from the level of each individual to the global community, from deep studies of particular events to longitudinal studies stretching over decades. UK social science is at the forefront globally in providing new and crucial evidence, supporting policy and practice in all areas of society.

As events over the last year have shown, human behaviour and interaction have a massive impact on our world. Social sciences strive to analyse and explain how society works, why we choose our particular actions and what kind of effect these actions have. Today’s difficult economic conditions make investments in world-class social science research all the more important. As well as uncovering the causes and mechanisms involved in the collapse of financial markets, research can provide the means – knowledge, innovation and economic impact – for moving out of the recession.

In order to address the issues facing our society, we need a clear strategy for our social science research. The new ESRC Strategic Plan outlines the major research challenges ahead. They cover important aspects of our society – such as economy, environment, health, behaviour, security, innovation and social diversity. In each area we aim to stimulate research and create new knowledge with clear benefits to society.

Delivering the benefits of research is a core part of what we do. We are increasingly looking to maximise the impact of social science research in all parts of society, such as the public sector, business, voluntary organisations and the research community itself. This is why the Strategic Plan will measure success by looking at five different impact objectives for ESRC-funded research – impacts through world-class social science research, through skilled people, world-class infrastructure, partnerships and international leadership.

I believe that the ESRC Strategic Plan provides a good road map for research over the next five years. By identifying key research areas and indicators of impact it focuses our strategic research efforts where they are needed in these uncertain times. The world is changing. Our job is to find out why, how and what it means.
The time for strategic investment in social science research is now, argues ESRC’s Chief Executive, Professor Ian Diamond. He talks to David Walker about the potential of new research knowledge and its impact on the UK in times ahead.

One response to recession might be to pull the blankets over our head and wait for the storms to abate. But intellectual passivity isn’t really an option. Present actions shape tomorrow’s opportunities. Retrenchment and withdrawal run the risk of narrowing future room for manoeuvre; intellectual passivity would shrink the knowledge economy. “What we will know and all that we can do on the basis of that knowledge – in economy, culture and society – depends on what today we seek to know,” muses Ian Diamond, the Chief Executive of the ESRC.

We need to invest in knowledge now, precisely at the moment of economic downturn. That’s for two reasons, he says. One is to understand where we are and how we got here. “Boardroom decision-making proved inadequate in the face of the spiralling complexity of financial innovation. Social scientists have to examine its results, looking at joblessness, corporate failure, international co-operation, the moves to protectionism. Then, yes, put their head on the block by suggesting remedies.”

There’s another reason for immediate support of the knowledge base, and it applies not just to the social sciences. Ian Diamond joined with chief executives of the other research councils to write a letter to the Times in early June making the case for investment now. They had been quick – the letter was sent within days of the creation of the new department of business and the arrival of its secretary of state, Lord Mandelson. “A healthy and vibrant research base is crucial for responding to the economic downturn,” the letter said, “and as we emerge from these difficulties it must remain a priority to ensure the future prosperity of the nation.”

Ian Diamond’s perspective is shared by his colleagues across the disciplines. It’s not just the recession. The world
is changing; witness the revolution in communication technologies and the rise of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) in a multipolar world. It’s the moment to cement the extraordinary strength of UK research while seizing new opportunities.

The ESRC has just agreed its latest Strategic Plan, which runs from this year to 2014. It is published at a time of political and economic ferment, and there is more to come. Over the next five years elections will take place, for seats at Westminster, but also in 2010 for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. Fiscal adjustment is likely; that may be putting it mildly. Debate is rife over the balance of spending, taxation and borrowing. At the same time technology will advance, companies and families will be formed as the age structure shifts, people will migrate and the ‘deep’ currents of economy, society and culture flow on.

Society’s understanding of itself will also change, as a result of the findings and analyses of social science. “We,” Ian Diamond explains, “play a part in shaping and defining society’s self-understanding, guiding – by our grants and our identification of priorities and the dissemination of new knowledge – with and through those who make policy and executive decisions in business, government and the third sector.”

**SOCIETY’S UNDERSTANDING OF ITSELF WILL ALSO CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THE FINDINGS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

The Strategic Plan is at once a map, an aspiration and a prospectus. The world is dynamic and perhaps more unstable, but as Ian Diamond notes: “One of the purposes of research is to puncture hyperbole by making cool comparisons across space and time.” The plan tries to encompass this, setting out where social scientists will work and the tools they will need.

The promise is to deepen and expand collective understanding of where the UK is and where it is heading, of course in a global context. Much intellectual effort will go into the ‘core’, mainstream disciplines such as economics, sociology and psychology. “However, value added by social science will increasingly be found in interdisciplinary work,” states Ian Diamond. “The natural and physical sciences are extending the boundaries of what is technically possible, say in nanotechnology or genomics. We need to be alongside, appraising the social and economic implications.

“Hard and soft, they used to say. But we can all now see that unpacking and explaining behaviour is distinctly rugged. Take innovation, which used to refer to technological fixes. Now we know it’s as much about organisations and ways of working and attitudes – social science – as what happens in laboratories and testing sheds. Innovation is about connecting and transferring knowledge – far from ‘soft’, let me tell you.”

The UK needs – it is argued – to bring discovery and application closer, to shorten the ‘innovation chain’. That means more partnerships between researchers, firms and government departments; social scientists talking to their partners in biological, physical and technological fields and both talking to finance directors and company chairs. Research needs to be positioned ‘further down the innovation pathway’.

The ESRC’s plan embraces support and training for researchers. It will push to apply advanced methods. It will create chances for social scientists to work across national boundaries, with colleagues from other countries. Its investment in datasets and the infrastructure of research will deepen.

“I’m going to steal a phrase from David Delpy,” Ian Diamond says (Delpy is Chief Executive of the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council). “He said researchers needed to be as passionate about the impact of their research as they already are about its excellence. And that is the space we are in. Some colleagues have said ‘you are pushing us to be practical, away from the science’. That couldn’t be more wrong. You only get impact with brilliant social science.

“Nor will this emphasis on impact disadvantage basic research, nor stifle research creativity or scientific discovery. Excellence is and remains the primary criterion for funding. We’re not going gung ho. The research community needs to appreciate that we’re not going to disadvantage excellent research that doesn’t have obvious or immediate impact. That said, we need the community to work with us to demonstrate research’s impact on society, which is why it is vital to go on investing in it.”

And also important, Ian Diamond adds, is demonstrating results – showing what the social science endeavour accomplishes. The ESRC has pushed evaluation. It has recently been looking closely, as in previous years, at what it as a funding agency – and the country at large – is getting from the £106 million spent on research in 2007-2008. Such outputs as books, papers and seminars add to knowledge in the conventional sense. But in addition, wider dissemination shapes (and sometimes subverts) common understandings. Assessing the impact of research on policy is subtler. Many factors influence decisions in ministries and parliaments, but it can be done. For example, the ESRC Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics clearly shaped the design of the national minimum wage introduced in 2001, and the ESRC Centre for Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance at the Universities of Oxford and Cardiff had an unmistakable influence on the Scottish government’s skills strategy.

“Evolving empirical understanding of the socio-economic environment, informed by collaboration with scientists seeking to explain the physical and biological world, is the only basis of sound decision-making,” Ian Diamond concludes. “I am convinced, and I hope the analysis and examples laid out in the Strategic Plan will bring others along.”

By David Walker, former editor of *Guardian Public* magazine and Managing Director of Communications and Public Reporting, the Audit Commission
**OUR STRATEGIC CHALLENGES**

In developing the ESRC Strategic Plan 2009-2014, the ESRC has relied upon extensive consultation to identify key strategic areas for economic and social research. Here are our seven strategic challenges for the next five years – building both on current research efforts and new, emerging areas for social science.

**ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND RESILIENCE**

By 2030, global demand for energy and food is predicted to double. Environmental and climate change will pose important threats to food security, to health and to economic prosperity around the world. Social science has provided evidence on the costs of environmental change and the impacts of interventions to reduce emissions. Energy use, security and trade, food and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are all social and economic issues, for which research is needed to meet the challenges ahead.

The ESRC is committed to developing research in a range of key areas, including drivers and implications of environmental change; the impact of the economic downturn and measures to combat it on long-term environmental change goals; environmental behaviours, practices and policy and how they can be changed to promote sustainability; the interdependence between alleviating poverty, sustaining economic and social development, resilience to environmental change and the human impact on natural systems; food security in the UK and globally; development of a common framework for geo-spatial data to improve monitoring, simulation and development of interventions for sustainability; and new research capacity through studentships and fellowships at the interface of environmental and social science.

**GLOBAL ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, POLICY AND MANAGEMENT**

The financial market collapse and the ensuing recession have created an urgent need for research and knowledge – about financial markets, public intervention, unemployment and poverty. Social scientists will be expected to examine the causes of the crisis, the resulting economic and social distress, and possible solutions.

The ESRC is committed to supporting new research in several areas: macro-economic performance and how markets, institutions and policies work together; the impact of public policy interventions on individual and institutional responses to the crisis; improvement of global economic governance; reduction of poverty among the poorest countries; investment in international datasets (such as those available from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund); access to data resources within emerging economies; and strengthened capacity in macro-economics research.

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Inequalities in health and wellbeing are stark both within the UK and worldwide. In our own society life expectancy can differ over 20 years for communities just a few miles apart. Internationally, the gap widens to over 40 years. The relationship between social, economic and environmental drivers of health has been shown to operate not only within national boundaries but also, increasingly, between countries in a worldwide economy.

The ESRC will support research underpinning interventions to promote improved physical and psychological wellbeing, better social care, healthy ageing and the reduction of obesity and infectious disease. It is also committed to a comparative programme on how to reduce physical and psychological health inequalities; investments in birth cohort studies; access and use of e-health records; and new research capacity through training schemes at the interface of biomedical and social sciences.
UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR
The success of new measures or policies tackling social and economic issues ultimately depends on the behaviour and response of people themselves. However, links between social, biological and environmental factors and individual behaviours, choices and outcomes are still far from clear. We need to integrate the insights and methods from contemporary biology and medical sciences with those of social scientists in seeking to understand individual behaviour.

Further cross-disciplinary research is needed on behaviour with inherent risks, for example in areas such as finance and purchasing, as well as criminal and antisocial behaviours; research for new interventions at individual, family, community and society levels to affect individual behaviour; multi-method approaches to data analysis from panel and cohort studies to improve understanding of behaviour complexities; and new research capacity through targeted studentships and postdoctoral fellowships.

NEW TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND SKILLS
Economic resilience depends on the capacity of people, firms and governments to innovate and create new skills, products, processes and policies. Already, 40 per cent of the UK’s value added arises from knowledge-intensive services and high-tech manufacturing. The economic downturn creates an opportunity to rebalance the economy as investment moves into new areas where the UK could gain an advantage. Social scientists need more than ever to play an active role in innovation, demonstrating how social, economic and political drivers shape new technologies.

The ESRC will support research and knowledge transfer on the challenges and opportunities of innovation; development and impact of key technologies including nanotechnologies, renewable energy, healthcare technologies and the next generation of the digital economy; new technologies to develop research methodology, and the application of new methodologies in order to exploit data resources and innovate e-infrastructure.

SECURITY, CONFLICT AND JUSTICE
Conflicts over identity and competition over resources affect the security of individuals, communities and states. Struggles over identity have torn apart countries and radicalised citizens, and conflicts over resources are likely to intensify given the growing scarcity of water, food and materials, exacerbated by the impact of environmental change. Research will seek greater understanding of the nature and causes of insecurity, as well as the origins and dynamics of conflict and the role of social justice.

The ESRC will lead and develop the RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme; support research on multi-level governance of security and sustainment of human dignity, freedom from threat and opportunities to develop potential; and on identifying any gaps in data resources and research capacity to underpin work on security, conflict and justice.

SOCIAL DIVERSITY AND POPULATION DYNAMICS
Local, national and transnational communities are being transformed by changing patterns of migration, economic opportunity, environmental change, fertility, ageing and new family and household dynamics. Rapid social change demands rethinking of how societies define and pursue collective goals. Understanding the extent and implications of these changes will require new research contributions from the social sciences.

The ESRC will support research on the global levels of childbearing; on how neighbourhoods and communities enhance economic, cultural and educational opportunity, and on necessary interventions to achieve greater security, prosperity and a less fractured society; on the challenges of democratic renewal in the UK and beyond; on the interplay of migration, ageing, fertility and place in affecting individual and family resilience; and research access to population records and linkage with other sources of data.

In each challenge area our strategic aim is to stimulate and steer the creation of knowledge that will have a tangible economic and social benefit. We measure success by pursuing five impact objectives in each area. They are:

■ Impact through world-class social science research
■ Impact through skilled people
■ Impact through world-class infrastructure
■ Impact through international leadership
■ Impact through partnerships

Each of these objectives will extend the reach of our people, their work, the tools and methodologies they apply and their collaboration with other stakeholders in science, government, business and the community.
THE IMPACTS OF RESEARCH

These case studies from the new Strategic Plan show how ESRC-funded research has changed policy and practice, and made a difference to various parts of society.

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
A groundbreaking study on domestic violence has shaped policy and directly impacted on the lives of mothers and children. Professor Audrey Mullender’s research from the ESRC’s Children 5-16 Research Programme has informed debates about legal reforms to childcare legislation, resulting in amendments to the Children Act 1989. This research has also influenced policy initiatives and frameworks, such as the Department for Children, Schools and Families’ programme ‘Every Child Matters’.

PUTTING A PRICE ON NATURE
Researchers from the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment have developed a methodology for assessing the economic value of freshwater and marine environmental systems. The results of this research are now being applied by the Environment Agency to the marine environment and the management of catchments, as required by the EU Water Framework Directive.

HELPING SURGEONS PERFORM
Surgeons’ operating skills are being honed using research by Dr Nick Sevdalis at the ESRC Centre for Economic Learning and Social Evolution. He has developed methods to assess decision-making skills by surgeons in a simulated operating theatre using high fidelity surgical mannequins and full operating theatre teams. This work is leading to the development of reliable assessment tools and training interventions for surgeons’ decision-making and communications skills. A method to provide individualised feedback on decision-making has been exploited successfully by the Royal College of Surgeons.

GAME TIME FOR PUPILS
A software tool that enables teenagers to create their own computer games has been developed by Professor David Buckingham as part of the People at the Centre of Communication and Information Technologies Programme. Allowing pupils to use the MissionMaker application in the classroom has helped researchers identify key elements of game literacy and develop teaching materials for the principles of game design. The MissionMaker is now used in over 200 schools and is part of the Institute of Education’s Masters programmes. The software is being developed further by a company for the commercial market.

SURGEONS’ SKILLS ARE BEING HONED USING RESEARCH FROM THE ESRC CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC LEARNING AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION
CONTROLLING WITHOUT CONFRONTING

Studying behaviour at football matches has helped to establish why some situations spark aggression and riots. Dr Clifford Stott has shown that avoiding the use of heavy-handed tactics, such as automatically sending out a riot squad for crowd control, can help maintain control in potentially hostile situations. A less confrontational atmosphere is created if the police are wearing normal uniforms, move in pairs and interact with the crowd. Dr Stott’s research has been included in a European Union handbook on controlling violence at international football matches, and he is now helping to set up a pan-European police training programme on match safety.

IMPROVING OLDER PEOPLE’S LIVES

The charity Help the Aged has used findings from Professor Thomas Scharf’s research into older people and social exclusion in its ‘Stop Pensioner Poverty Now’ campaign. The research informed the development of the campaign, as well as the charity’s work relating to fear of crime. Co-operation with the research team has also supported the charity’s engagement with Pakistani and Somali communities in Manchester and Liverpool in order to improve older people’s living conditions.

REDUCED DRUG RISK

An ESRC-funded collaborative CASE studentship between the University of Plymouth and Plymouth Drug & Alcohol Action Team has influenced local drug-related policy and practice. Research by Stephen Parkin, with supervisor Dr Ross Coomber, revealed how places produced risks, how policing and other service activities displaced rather than resolved risk, and led to new practices such as locating safe injecting outlets in places of need.

DRIVE FOR SAFETY

A partnership between Cranfield University and Arriva Passenger Services, sponsored by the ESRC and the Technology Strategy Board, improved bus driver training and safety awareness. The project led to the development of a simulator for new bus drivers, a psychometric driver assessment and safety guidelines at bus depots. As a result, the company’s insurance claims were reduced by over £1 million, staff turnover was reduced from 24 per cent to 20 per cent and absenteeism went down from 6.1 per cent to 4.5 per cent. A spinout company is exploiting the commercial potential of the Bus Driver Risk Index, the psychometric assessment of bus drivers’ reactions.

HELP THE AGED HAS USED FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH INTO OLDER PEOPLE IN ITS ‘STOP PENSIONER POVERTY NOW’ CAMPAIGN

IMPROVING SECURITY IN WAR-TORN COUNTRIES

As part of the New Security Challenges Programme Professor Paul Collier has studied security risks in post-conflict countries. His research with colleague Anke Hoeffler indicates that a recovering economy is a crucial element for sustained peace, while an external military force (such as the UN peacekeeping operations) can be an effective way of deterring further conflict. Professor Collier’s work has led to significant input in international policy; he was appointed senior advisor to the Prime Minister’s Africa Commission which reported to the G8 summit in 2005, as well as advisor to the World Bank and resource person for the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Security.
AS WELL AS a print publication, the ESRC Strategic Plan is available online as a dynamic website. It offers easy access to different sections of the plan, including the strategic challenges and objectives, past achievements and future priorities, as well as 19 case studies illustrating impact from different types of ESRC-funded research. The website will continually develop and include new content over time, reflecting progress in research activities.

We will be presenting much of the content in multimedia formats such as podcasts, videos and animations. In this way you can follow ESRC’s strategic activities as they develop, and see how we meet our strategic challenges for the years ahead.

For more information, please visit the website at www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/strategicplan.
Tackling the blood trade

Contaminated blood supplies in the 1970s and 80s led to the deaths of nearly 2,000 haemophiliacs in the UK alone. Helen Pickles reports on how research by Michael Young Prize winner Carol Grayson revealed inadequate procedures and a profit-obsessed blood trade.
A COUNTRY, England is obsessed with league tables. We have league tables for hospitals, for schools and for universities. The idea is that they make public services more accountable to the public and give them better information on which to base choices about those services. But what if that information is totally meaningless?

Research from the ESRC Centre for Market and Public Organisation (CMPO) shows that when it comes to choosing a secondary school the information published in league tables is so unreliable that it effectively makes the tables worthless. The reason is that it can only show the current performance of schools, based on pupils who have just taken their GCSE exams, whereas what parents are really concerned about is how schools will perform in the future when their own children take their exams.

The research by Professor Harvey Goldstein and Mr George Leckie is published in the CMPO working paper The Limitations of Using School League Tables to Inform School Choice. It focuses on schools' value-added GCSE results, since these are considered a fairer way of comparing schools than simple school average GCSE performance. The value-added results take into account not only pupils' test scores but other social factors when they arrive at secondary school, such as the average level of achievement of their class.

Using a representative sample of 266 schools, the researchers show just how unreliable schools' current performance is as a guide to their future performance. When that unreliability is accounted for, only a handful of schools can be separated from each other 'with an acceptable degree of precision'.

"It is very surprising that no-one has commented on just how unreliable the figures are as guides to schools' future performance," says George Leckie. "We all know the famous maxims about stocks and shares: 'your investments may go up or down' and 'past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance'. The same applies to schools' performance in league tables."

School league tables became a feature in England in the early 1990s and, although the government itself does not publish rankings of schools, it supplies the raw material that the media use to produce them. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have either never introduced them or have stopped publishing them. Researchers say that now seems a good time for England to follow suit.

In the meantime, while the tables continue to be published, the authors say that the public needs to have a better understanding of how to interpret the figures and to be aware of their limitations. They agree that all forms of information, including Ofsted reports and word of mouth, have their flaws, but the important thing is for parents not to place too much weight on any single source of information – and be aware of the limitations and issues involved.

The research has wider implications for social policy, Leckie adds. "The main message suggests
that the information which is currently published in league tables, whether it be for schools or hospitals, is less reliable than implied by the published statistics. The government needs to do its utmost to make sure that the information it publishes is accurate and reliable and useful for the purpose of making informed choices. Crucially, whatever information is provided must come with all the necessary ‘health warnings’.

Dr Julien Grenet, a research economist from the ESRC Centre for Economic Performance, is also interested in the impact performance tables have on social policy. His ESRC-funded research with Gabrielle Fack from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra looks at the interaction between residential choice and school choice both in France and the UK. Dr Grenet points out that although the education system in France has its own peculiarities, the research has broader implications.

Previous research on the link between house prices and school performance has focused mainly on primary schools. Grenet and Fack’s research looks at middle schools where pupils are aged 11 to 15. Not only do they compare house prices on the borders of catchment areas, but they factor in the impact of private schools in the area – something that has not been looked at before. The research shows that while a 10 per cent increase in a school’s test scores raised housing prices by roughly 1.5 per cent, the existence of private schools had a mitigating effect.

“It gives another option to parents and breaks the link between housing and school choice,” says Dr Grenet. “It also shows that in terms of reducing social segregation in schools, if you do not take into account the existence of private schools you will misinterpret policy. Having that outside option makes it harder to reduce social inequalities.”

He is interested in whether extending the choice of public schools pupils can attend – for instance by redesigning the catchment area policy – might push up schools’ results across the board. The debate over extending school choice figured prominently in the recent French presidential elections. Grenet says initial results from an experiment in the 1990s showed it was middle class parents who lived in areas with low performing schools who benefited – not the bright children from poor families. “When you give people choice, it’s all about who takes advantage of that choice,” he adds.

Like Professor Goldstein and Mr Leckie, Julien Grenet agrees that parents focus mainly on exam results when they look at school data. “They don’t understand things like value-added,” he says. “It is important to recognise that school league tables are not the ultimate solution to improving the school system.”

Mandy Garner, freelance education journalist and former features editor of the Times Higher Education Supplement.

Parents focus mainly on exam results when considering school data.

CMPO working paper: The Limitations of Using School League Tables to Inform School Choice
Contact George Leckie Email g.leckie@bristol.ac.uk

School Enrollment Policies, Housing Markets and Pupil Performance in France and the United Kingdom
Contact Julien Grenet Email j.a.grenet@lse.ac.uk
Web http://cep.lse.ac.uk
Here we present an at-a-glance overview of the key issues in Britain today, focusing on leisure and culture. All statistics are from the Office of National Statistics unless stated.

### Holidays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>45.4m</th>
<th>36%</th>
<th>3.6m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The record number of holiday trips abroad made by UK residents in 2007 — an increase of 56 per cent since 1997.</td>
<td>of all visits abroad by UK residents in 2007 were to either Spain or France. Other countries that attracted an increased number of visits from UK residents included Tunisia (up 31 per cent from 2006), Poland (up 26 per cent), and Latvia (up 25 per cent).</td>
<td>(11 per cent) of visits to the UK in 2007 came from the USA — the most from any one country. This was followed by France, Germany, Irish Republic, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and Poland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Travel makes a wise man better, and a fool worse"

Thomas Fuller (1608-1661) British clergyman and author

### Media and internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>44%</th>
<th>49%</th>
<th>87%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The percentage of people aged 15 and over in Great Britain who read a national daily newspaper in the 12 months to June 2008, compared with 72 per cent in the 12 months to June 1978.</td>
<td>of all those aged eight to 17 in the UK who use the internet had a page or profile on a social networking site in 2007.</td>
<td>or nearly nine in ten homes in the UK had a digital television service at the end of the first quarter of 2008.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**HOUSEHOLDS WITH SELECTED DURABLE GOODS, UK** In per cent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1998/99</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD PLAYER</td>
<td>HOME COMPUTER</td>
<td>INTERNET ACCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOBILE PHONE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**OVERSEAS RESIDENTS’ VISITS TO THE UK AND UK RESIDENTS’ VISITS ABROAD** In millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK VISITS ABROAD</td>
<td>OVERSEAS VISITS TO UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**HOUSEHOLDS WITH SELECTED DURABLE GOODS, UK** In per cent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1998/99</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD PLAYER</td>
<td>HOME COMPUTER</td>
<td>INTERNET ACCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOBILE PHONE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leisure

8 out of 10
Watching TV was the most common leisure activity for over eight in ten men and women in England in 2006/07 (84 per cent and 85 per cent respectively). Spending time with family and friends was the second most popular activity for 82 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men.

164.2m
Total number of cinema admissions in Britain in 2008. The summer marked the highest number of admissions for 40 years, with more than 50 million admissions between June and August. Source: Cinema Advertising Association

45.3%
of adults attended a museum, gallery or archive during the past 12 months. Source: Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport

39.9% of adults used a public library service during the past 12 months. Source: Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport

75% of women were more likely to shop in their free time — compared with just over half of men (53 per cent).

“Increased means and increased leisure are the two civilizers of man” Benjamin Disraeli

Sports

“Olympics: a lifetime of training for just ten seconds.”
Jesse Owens (African-American athlete)
1936 Summer Olympics

30% (or three in ten) adults had not participated in any active sport in last 12 months during 2005/06. Source: NHS Statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet

14% of men had played football in the last four weeks compared to two per cent of women, making it one of the sports with the biggest difference between the sexes.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERTAKING SPORTS FREQUENTLY (10 TIMES OR MORE) IN SCHOOL

© iStockphoto

© iStockphoto
**Polly Toynbee, Guardian columnist and former BBC social affairs editor, talks to Sophie Goodchild about labour relations, the importance of research, the impact of recession and how she has given up being a socialist…**

**SOPHIE GOODCHILD** Polly, I wonder if you would start by outlining your career?

**POLLY TOYNBEE** Well, I had a scholarship to Oxford but left halfway through. It was the 60s and less essential to go to university and get a degree, so I went to work in a factory. I’d written a novel [called *Leftovers*] and had this absurd idea that if you worked with your hands during the day your mind would be ‘pure’ for writing in the evenings. But not many people who work in factories are writing in the evenings. It’s not conducive to writing – it numbs the brain.

After that, I got a temporary job at the *Observer*. Someone was away sick so I filled in on the gossip column. The *Observer* was a terrific paper in those days. If you came up with a good feature idea and they liked it, even if you were the most junior person, they would tell you to go and do it. So I did a lot of feature reporting on big strikes and then they said, “Why don’t you go off and write a book?” And off I went. The jobs I took were in a car parts factory in Birmingham, and in the Lyons cake factory, as an orderly. That got me into writing about labour relations and to where I am now.

**SG** The most important and illuminating stories in social affairs always depend on underpinning by serious research.

**PT** The most important and Illuminating stories in social affairs always depend on underpinning by serious research.

**SG** Were you drawn into focusing on social issues in particular by chance?

**PT** My family was very socially and politically aware, very Labour [her great-great uncle Arnold Toynbee was a philanthropist and economic historian]. My father became a communist and my mother was a kind of social worker. But I think I just became very interested in the world of work itself and the nature of work. The theme of my book *A Working Life* was based on the same old theme that most people who do these jobs are really very bright, and capable of much more. Monkeys could do these jobs. For me, it felt very comfortable writing on these issues. It was very much about exploring human social relations, about people in very fraught situations and confrontations and seeing both points of view. They were very exciting and interesting times. Now there is very little about working lives in television drama or in reporting.

**SG** What does it mean to be a socialist in today’s materialistic society?

**PT** Ah. It’s a not a word I bother using any more. There are no real socialists left. In the early days I was regarded by my colleagues [at the *Guardian* as a ‘moderate’, but now I’m classed as on the Left. Not that I’ve moved. For a long time now I’ve defined myself as a social democrat. We stopped calling ourselves socialists because that implied there was an egalitarian nirvana that you were inevitably heading towards. But the point about being a social democrat is that you follow the Scandinavian model, which is based on a very sound economy and where people live much more equal lives.

**SG** How will the recession affect us? Can we expect a ‘harder’, less caring society – or the opposite?

**PT** Well, it hasn’t yet hit us fully. Unemployment is due to rise again sharply and it will be a while before a lot of people have been out of work for some time – a while before it becomes scary. But if you look at British social attitudes in times of
If you look at British social attitudes in times of high unemployment, people tend to get a lot more sympathetic towards benefits, dole – all that stuff. Not much we can do. Look, Labour tried hard and they failed.” On the other hand, I have a feeling David Cameron will be very embarrassed if the rate of child poverty soars.

SG How important is social research in reflecting the views of people and our society?
PT People are very shocked about issues like Baby P and dysfunctional lives. They really do want to know what they can do. We did a focus group for a Fabian Society report, organised by MORI. They were all middle-Englanders, people who had voted different

ways – real ‘middle middles’. None of them had heard about the Poverty Pledge and they all thought poverty was inevitable. But when they were presented with the figures of how much difference Sure Start had made, they all got quite enthusiastic. When they heard that 600,000 fewer children were living in poverty they got very engaged. It was something they could perceive. Once they were given the statistics, for example, on kids who had not been on holidays, they were quite shocked. It makes it more real and shows the importance of real ‘social’ research. People’s stories, experiences, their descriptions about real life all matter. It’s about presenting true life by telling the stories of real people. It’s what I started out doing and have always tried to do – really talking to people about their views and perceptions.

Sophie Goodchild, an editor on the Evening Standard
The recession in view

Recession Britain is the ESRC’s forthcoming publication providing the latest research evidence on the current economic downturn. Reporting on its impact towards our labour markets, our businesses and our lives, it is an essential read for everyone.

Out September 2009, for more information please e-mail recession@esrc.ac.uk

Published by the Economic and Social Research Council
For many people, travelling is one of life’s great pleasures. As the travel writer Bill Bryson puts it: “The greatest reward and luxury of travel is to be able to experience everyday things as if for the first time, to be in a position in which almost nothing is so familiar it is taken for granted.”

This helps explain why, by 2020, three times as many people will travel as they do today; that’s 1.6 billion people. At the same time, air prices are plummeting. As one respondent commented on the ESRC project Promoting Sustainable Travel: “All of a sudden, flights are so cheap. It’s actually cheaper for me to get that flight, go to Poland and spend a week there than to go to Cornwall or visit friends in Edinburgh.”

But is our love affair with travel and with tourism going to cost us the earth? It is widely recognised that the way we travel has implications for the environment and its sustainability. What we take from our travels might be just that – taking as opposed to giving back, a selfish one-way relationship that benefits only the traveller. Tricia Barnett of the charity Tourism Concern summed up the impact of tourism, conservation and human livelihoods in the Independent. “The slogan for the most environmentally friendly travelling used to be: ‘Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints’. How times have changed. The footprint we now talk about is a human rights footprint. It includes the environment, the economy and the social and cultural impacts of tourism.”

Figures show that tourism generates £400 billion in trade each year, and employs 220 million workers. Eleven out of the world’s 12 poorest countries are dependent on it for a significant part of their foreign exchange and jobs. Yet as little as 10 per cent of the price of a holiday can remain in the local economy. From 2000 to 2005 the money flowing into Africa from tourism more than doubled from £6.3 billion to £13 billion, yet poverty levels remain high.

So how can we prevent our trips turning into guilt trips? A series of ESRC-funded seminars hosted by three universities and other ESRC-funded research projects are looking at the key issues of tourism and sustainability in a bid to inform current thinking. The seminar series Tourism, Inequality and Social Justice is coordinated by Cara Aitchison, Professor of Leisure and Tourism Studies at the University of Bedfordshire. “As the world’s largest industry, tourism is frequently celebrated as a significant process of economic, social and cultural development, but is often hidden as a site of social exclusion, inequality and injustice,” she says.

Highlighting the paradox of tourism, Professor Aitchison explains that it can both contribute to and alleviate inequality, poverty and social injustice, at scales ranging from the local to the global. “Tourism studies has come of age as an area of theoretically informed applied research that can have a real impact in changing lives, communities and economies in a truly global sense,” she adds.
The first seminar, at the University of the West of England in Bristol, focused on ‘fairly traded tourism’ and ‘pro-poor tourism’. Fair trading essentially means companies trying to ensure that the basic labour rights of their suppliers’ employees in developing countries are respected; similarly, pro-poor tourism results in increased net benefits for poor people.

Angela Kalisch at the University of Gloucestershire, former coordinator in fair trade for Tourism Concern, said the charity had adopted strategies to harness tourism as a means of tackling global poverty. These included post-tsunami tourism development projects in Sri Lanka and campaigns to introduce a fair wage for local tour guides in Nepal. But she claimed that unregulated tourism development was continuing to devastate environments and destroy traditional livelihoods.

To the fury of locals, the Kerala government in southern India allocated almost £10 million of government tsunami rehabilitation money to Kerala Tourism. The 20 projects that benefited covered areas that were not even damaged by the tsunami. The projects were labelled ‘coastal protection’ to quell local outrage, but consisted almost entirely of beach beautification measures to attract tourists – walkways, lamp-posts, an amphitheatre and flower pots.

Meanwhile, Dr Xavier Font at Leeds Metropolitan University’s International Centre for Responsible Tourism outlined findings from his recent study on the development of a fair trade label in tourism. There is a growing consensus that such a label, if trusted and properly monitored, could be successfully attached to holidays that benefit local communities, providing tourists with peace of mind that they are not exploiting their hosts.

Elsewhere, the ESRC is funding research into the sustainability of places like Uganda’s Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, home to endangered species including the mountain gorilla. Tourism at Bwindi has developed to the point that several thousand tourists visit each year, and lodges and craft shops have sprung up. However, as Dr Chris Sandbrook, ESRC postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Cambridge’s Department of Geography found out, over 75 per cent of tourism revenue leaked out of the local area. Food for lodges was bought in Kampala, ten hours drive away, and transported to Bwindi by bus.

As part of his engagement in applying research to projects on the ground, Dr Sandbrook has helped to establish the Bwindi Advanced Market Gardeners’ Association – enabling local people to gain cash income from the industry through the supply of food. It is going from strength to strength.

Sarah Womack, former social affairs correspondent of the Daily Telegraph

Tourism, Inequality and Social Justice is a series of six seminars exploring tourism and the interconnections between different forms of inequality and the ways in which these operate.

Contact Professor Cara Aitchison, University of Bedfordshire Telephone +44 (0)1234 793428 Email cara.aitchison@beds.ac.uk

Tourism, Conservation and Livelihoods: understanding the impacts of wildlife tourism in the developing world

Contact Dr Christopher Sandbrook, University of Cambridge Telephone +44 (0)1223 765963 Email cgs21@cam.ac.uk
People

PROFESSOR PETER TOWNSEND

Professor Peter Townsend, British sociologist, social policy analyst and campaigner, has died, aged 81. His career spanned six decades and he was still researching and writing up until his death.

During his academic career he authored definitive studies in each of his major fields: the definition and meaning of poverty, ageing and later life, disability and health inequalities. In each field the landscapes of both the scientific and policy debates were transformed by his work.

He was an early exponent of the idea of ‘relative poverty’, which defines poverty in terms of the society in which an individual lives. His definition of relative poverty is widely cited: “Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.”

Born in Middlesbrough in 1928, he secured a scholarship at the University College School in London, then a place at St John’s College, Cambridge. He undertook graduate studies at Cambridge and the Free University of Berlin. In the 1950s he was engaged in research, with posts at the Institute for Community Studies and the London School of Economics (LSE). In 1963 he became the first Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, where he stayed for 18 years. In the 1980s he moved to Bristol University, where he kept a post in both the public and private sector. He graduated from Cambridge University, where after his first degree he obtained a PhD in Economic Geography, funded by the then Social Sciences Research Council. His first appointment was at Citigroup/Citibank in 1976, where he was eventually promoted to Executive Director. In 1986 he moved to Goldman Sachs & Co where he was made Partner and Managing Director, and from 2001 to 2008 he was Chairman of the Ulster Bank Group. He is currently a non-Executive Director of United Business Media plc.

Within the public sector, Dr Gillespie has been the Chair of The Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board, the University Challenge Venture Capital Fund, the European Development Finance Institution, Co-Chair of Rediscover Northern Ireland and the Chief Executive of the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

He currently chairs the International Finance Facility for Immunisation – a $5 billion development finance initiative linked to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation in Geneva. It is promoted by the UK government and co-funded by France, Spain, Italy, Norway, Sweden and South Africa.

Dr Gillespie’s experience will ensure a strong platform for future challenges of the Council, which will see him work to improve the links between the ESRC, the research community, including learned and professional institutions, and other sectors. He will also work with the Director General for Science and Research and the other Research Council chairs and chief executives on other science policy issues.

NEW CHAIR OF THE ESRC

Dr Alan Gillespie CBE has been announced as the new chair of the ESRC by Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Lord Mandelson, who said: “I am very pleased to appoint Alan Gillespie as Chair of the Economic and Social Research Council. His experience across business, government and academia will contribute greatly to its leadership and strategic direction.”

Dr Gillespie has succeeded Lord Adair Turner as chair and said: “This is a critical time to become involved with the ESRC. The cost of recession, both in financial and human terms, is huge. The UK social science research community must ask and answer the profound questions which can influence future policy in the public, private and voluntary sectors. I look forward to working with the Council and management at the ESRC in setting the agenda for policy-relevant research over the coming years.”

He has an extensive background in both the public and private sector. He

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Professor Anthony Bebbington from the University of Manchester has been elected to the US National Academy of Sciences, an honorific society of distinguished scholars engaged in scientific and engineering research, dedicated to the furtherance of science and technology. Professor Bebbington holds an ESRC professorial fellowship entitled ‘Conflicts over the countryside: civil society and the political ecology of rural development in the Andean region’, and an ESRC grant: ‘Social Movements and Poverty’. For further details, visit http://www.nasonline.org

ACADEMIC BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Professor David Hendry, Professor of Economics and Fellow of Nuffield College and ESRC award holder, University of Oxford, has been awarded a knighthood for services to social science in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List 2009. Professor Katharine Sykes, Professor of Sciences and Society, University of Bristol has been awarded an OBE for services to science and technology.
Publications

The Explanation of Crime

This book seeks to provide a unified and focused approach to the analysis of the roles of behavioural contexts and individual differences in crime causation. Chapter topics range from individual genetics to family environments and from ecological behaviour settings to the macro-level context of communities and social systems. Based on outcomes from the major ESRC-funded Peterborough Adolescent and Young Adult Development Study, it will appeal to graduate students and researchers in criminology and be of great interest to policymakers and practitioners in crime policy and prevention.

The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum

The issue of asylum has become the focus of intense debate over recent years, much of which is organised around questions regarding how far and in what ways increasing numbers of asylum seekers pose a ‘problem’ or a ‘threat’ to ‘host’ states. Dr Vicki Squire from the Open University critiques the securitisation and criminalisation of asylum-seeking and analyses recent policy developments in relation to their wider historical, political and European contexts, arguing that the UK response effectively produces asylum seekers as scapegoats for dislocations that are caused by the shifting boundaries of the nation state.

Nanotechnology, Risk and Communication

Conceived out of the ESRC-funded project Nanotechnology and News Production, this is one of the first major studies of the media coverage, policy debates and public perceptions about nanotechnology. It draws on data from two of the first studies of nanotechnology communication in the UK, contributing important new empirical and conceptual analyses of the relationship between scientists and the media in communicating controversial new technologies.

Improving Working as Learning

Improving Working as Learning from the ESRC’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme sets out to analyse learning at work in different settings by developing and applying a new analytical framework. The Working as Learning Framework connects the particularities of work tasks with the way jobs are organised and the wider pressures organisations face for survival and growth. It will appeal to students, professionals, policymakers and researchers.

Governing Sustainability

Bringing together experts on governance and sustainable development, this book studies these necessary processes and consequences across a range of sectors, regions and other areas of concern. Aising from research from the ESRC Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, it reveals that the governance of sustainable development is politically contested, and will continue to test existing governance systems to their limits. As both a review of current thinking and an assessment of existing policy practices, it will interest those preparing themselves or their organisations for the sustainability transition.

Beef: How Milk, Meat and Muscle Shaped the World

Research from the ESRC’s Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy has led to this timely book on cattle rearing in the UK and US. In the UK, cows have traditionally been fed on grass and roamed freely. In the US, cattle are fed mainly on maize and grain, which increases the yield of both beef and milk, but requires more intensive farming, with a greater effect on climate change. Growing maize demands more water than grass pasture and any shift to this system relies on a good water supply, which is harder to guarantee as the climate changes.
**News briefs**

**ESRC NEW TRAINING FRAMEWORK**
The ESRC is announcing changes to the way it supports postgraduate training in the social sciences for students who will commence study from 2011 onwards. The new Postgraduate Training Framework will move the ESRC away from a system of providing training through recognised outlets and individual courses and will instead create a national network of institutional level Doctoral Training Centres (DTC) and Doctoral Training Units (DTU) providing the very best training provision.

The primary purpose of the new framework is to further enhance provision for postgraduate training in the UK by building upon the considerable strengths that already exist across the social science research base. The DTC/DTU network will be established through a competitive, peer-reviewed application process.

Detailed requirements of the application process will be circulated to UK higher education institutions in late July 2009, with institutions required to submit their application for DTC/DTU status by March 2010. Successful applications will be announced in late 2010, with institutions hosting their first students under the new framework from 2011. For further details, please visit [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk)

**GLOBAL UNCERTAINTIES FELLOWSHIPS ANNOUNCED**
How individuals, communities and nation states form their ideas and beliefs about security and insecurity will form the basis for 14 new fellowships under the UK Research Council’s Global Uncertainties Programme. The ESRC and the Arts and Humanities Research Council has invested £5.5 million to support and integrate multidisciplinary research on conflict, crime, terrorism, environmental stress and global poverty. Successful applications include: Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman at King’s College London who is researching strategic scripts for the 21st century; Professor David Leonard of the Institute of Development Studies, looking at security in an Africa of networked, multi-level governance; Professor Robert Gleave based at the University of Exeter, investigating legitimate and illegitimate violence in Islamic thought; and Dr Kate Cooper from the University of Manchester researching belonging, deviance and violence in early Christianity. For further details, visit [www.globaluncertainties.org.uk](http://www.globaluncertainties.org.uk)

**ESRC ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009**
The ESRC’s latest Annual Report is now available to all. It provides information on the Council’s activities during the previous financial year, including an analysis of the Council’s research and training expenditure, and its research portfolio. It is published and laid before Parliament annually before the summer recess, covering activities of the Council from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.

The Annual Report also includes a review from the ESRC chair and chief executive and details of our outstanding achievements of the year. For further details, visit [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk)

**ON THE WEB**

**GLOBAL UNCERTAINTIES**
The Global Uncertainties Programme brings together the activities of the UK’s Research Councils across a wide range of disciplines and areas to explore the impacts that drivers such as poverty, health, globalisation, beliefs and competition for resources have on security. The website includes a range of features such as current activities, news and events, and it will highlight new knowledge about how threats to security can be better predicted, detected, prevented and mitigated. For further details, visit [http://www.globaluncertainties.org.uk](http://www.globaluncertainties.org.uk)

**E-STRATEGIC PLAN**
Our Strategic Plan 2009-2014 sets out our prospectus for what social science can and must do over the next five years. To coincide with its July release, we are launching an online version which will enhance each of the seven strategic challenges facing social science and the ESRC. Click on each of the challenges to discover how the ESRC will address each area, highlighting what we have already achieved from the 2005-2008 plan. Other features include informative case studies and objectives to maximise impact in society. For further details, please visit [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/strategicplan](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/strategicplan)
**ESRC FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE 2010**

Applications for the Festival of Social Science, organised by the ESRC as part of the National Science and Engineering Week are now being accepted. It will run from 12 March until 20 March 2010. Aimed at everyone from politicians to schoolchildren, participants can join in to find out about social science research at one or another of the festival’s varied events. It is expected to take place in more than 25 UK towns and cities, with events ranging from conferences, workshops, debates and exhibitions to film screenings, plays, policy briefings and more. For further details, visit [http://www.esrcfestival.ac.uk](http://www.esrcfestival.ac.uk)

**THE MICHAEL YOUNG PRIZE 2010**

Can your research change minds? Does it have the potential to impact on society? This is your opportunity to tell the world about your research. The Michael Young Prize promotes excellence in the social sciences by rewarding the very best early career researchers. The prize was set up in honour of the late Lord Michael Young of Darlington by the ESRC and the Young Foundation to encourage early career social science researchers to effectively communicate their socially relevant research to a non-academic audience. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2010 call. For further details, visit [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/young](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/young)

**COMPARATIVE CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH METHODS**

The ESRC welcomes applications aimed at generating expertise and knowledge relevant to methodological development in comparative cross-national research and advancing understanding of the implementation of best practice. This call is not focused on any particular methodological approach and will fund high-quality proposals from qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods researchers. Training and capacity building will be a significant component of each project. Applications may also include funding for a research-linked studentship (+3 awards). The closing date will be 25 August 2009. For further details, visit [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/current_funding_opportunities](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/current_funding_opportunities)

**ESRC AND THE JAPAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENCE**

The ESRC and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science have agreed to collaborate on funding research seminars aimed at bringing together Japanese and British researchers on a topic of mutual interest. A competition will be held this autumn for funding for up to £15,000 and 2.5 million yen for one or two research seminars to be held in the period April 2010 to March 2011. The closing date will be 9 September 2009. The competition is open for seminars on any topic. For further details, visit [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/internationalfunding](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/internationalfunding) and [http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-bilat/main.html](http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-bilat/main.html)

**‘GREEN GOWN AWARD’**

The Sussex Energy Group, based at the Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex has won the prestigious Green Gown Award for research. The Green Gown Awards, now in their fifth year, recognise exceptional initiatives being taken by universities and colleges across the UK to become more sustainable.

The Sussex Energy Group is a core partner within the internationally renowned Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and it also conducts an interdisciplinary programme of research on the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy. One of their key strands of research is informing the United Nations negotiations which are seeking to secure a new global plan of action on climate change. The awards were announced on 23 June 2009. For further details, visit [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sussexenergygroup](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sussexenergygroup)

---

**EVENTS**

**5-10 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**British Science Festival 2009**

The British Science Festival (formerly the BA Festival of Science) is one of Europe’s largest science festivals, taking place each September. The Festival is in a different location in the UK each year and this year it is hosted by the University of Surrey in Guildford from 5 September until 10 September 2009, with events taking place across Surrey. The Festival will bring you the latest in science, technology and engineering. For further details, visit [http://www.britishscienceassociation.org/web/BritishScienceFestival](http://www.britishscienceassociation.org/web/BritishScienceFestival)

**7-9 OCTOBER 2009**

**ESRC Genomics Network third International Conference**

Organised by Cesagen on behalf of the ESRC Genomics Network, this conference, taking place from 7 to 9 October 2009, will provide an opportunity to further develop the debate and dialogue surrounding both current and future developments in the life sciences. The conference will be of particular interest to academics working in a broad range of social science disciplines and associated stakeholders, including natural and biomedical scientists and policymakers. For further details, visit [http://www.genomicsnetwork.ac.uk/cesagen](http://www.genomicsnetwork.ac.uk/cesagen)

**SUMMER 2009 SOCIETY NOW 31**
The ESRC magazine *Society Now* aims to raise awareness of our research and its impact. Aimed at a wide range of readers from the MP to the businessperson, the voluntary worker to the teacher, the public through to the social scientist, it is published three times a year (spring, summer and early autumn).

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

Subscription to *Society Now* is free. To receive your copy, visit: [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/societynow/subscribe](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/societynow/subscribe)

ESRC also issues a bi-monthly e-newsletter aimed at the academic community, containing information on funding opportunities, corporate news, community updates and events. For more information and to sign up, visit: [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/enews](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/enews)

---

**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 importantly, 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 [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.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

*Society Now* (Print) ISSN 1758-2121

**EDITOR IN CHIEF** Jacky Clake jacky.clake@esrc.ac.uk

**EDITOR** Arild Foss arild.foss@esrc.ac.uk

**ASSISTANT EDITOR** Steve Buchanan steven.buchanan@esrc.ac.uk

**DESIGN & PRODUCTION** Anthem Publishing [www.anthem-publishing.com](http://www.anthem-publishing.com)