Faith in the city
Are Britain’s urban areas improving?

Big Society: The community makes a comeback

Wellbeing: Linking happiness and health

Paul Boyle: The ESRC’s man with a mission
Welcome to the Autumn issue of Society Now, the ESRC’s regular magazine that showcases our funded research and the impact of social science.

In a climate of deepening public sector funding cuts how will Britain’s urban areas be affected? Our main feature on page 10 looks at the economic, political and social factors influencing the development of our cities and towns, and how they will change in the future.

This issue also includes a feature on the Big Society initiative and examines whether organisations and volunteers are ready and willing to rise to the challenge.

This is the second issue of Society Now that is published fully online, using a dynamic PDF presentation as well as a print-friendly version. We are also developing our website to include regular Society Now news, case studies and features to reach an even wider readership.

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

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Despite changes over the past 20 years in the profile of the legal profession in England and Wales, the appellate judiciary remains overwhelmingly white, male and middle/upper class. Although women now constitute 45 per cent of solicitors and 31 per cent of barristers in England and Wales, and around 11 per cent of solicitors and barristers are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, only six (white, middle/upper class) women in total, and no-one from a BME background, have ever sat in the Court of Appeal, the House of Lords or now the UK supreme court.

Not only is this imbalance failing to improve but, according to a new study, taking a feminist perspective would in some legal cases have resulted in entirely different judicial outcomes.

“Recently, there has been considerable debate about the issue of judicial diversity,” explains Professor Rosemary Hunter. “Questions have been asked about the possible impact of more women judges and, in particular, how the introduction of women’s lived experience and feminist theoretical perspectives might affect the development of the common law and the interpretation of key statutes.”

In the Feminist Judgments Project, a group of feminist socio-legal scholars engaged in a practical, ‘real world’ exercise of judgment-making, in which they provided alternative feminist judgments to more than 20 significant legal cases. Feminist judgments, like all others, must be based on the application of legal reasoning to the facts of the case, but the way the facts are understood and the choices made about legal relevance, categorisation and interpretation may be different.

“We found that applying feminist judgments to the cases we analysed would in some instances have changed the legal outcome,” Professor Hunter points out. For example, in one case, the decision to remove an elderly woman with Alzheimer’s disease from a care home would have been reversed.

“In some other cases the feminist judgment agreed with the original outcome, but it reached that result by a different route. Ultimately, if the imagined feminist judgments had really been made, they would have had wide-ranging material and policy implications. The judgments show the contingency and lack of inevitability of the decisions actually made in these cases, the kinds of biases embedded within common law, and the extent to which women’s experiences and concerns are poorly reflected in law.”

In the course of developing the judgments, it also became clear that there was no single feminist perspective on a number of the issues, but that different judges might reach different conclusions.

Professor Hunter believes that these findings highlight the pressing need for a more diverse judiciary in the UK. Feminist justice is, she argues, “both theoretically legitimate and practically possible. But at present, it seems there is little effort being made to do anything other than tweak the existing system.”

The book Feminist Judgments: From Theory to Practice was published in September 2010.

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DISAPPEARING ACCENTS
The UK media reports that English accents are becoming alike. Linguistic researchers have also observed this ‘levelling’. Researchers will study levelling (and its opposite, divergence) in three north-western localities – Liverpool, Skelmersdale and St Helens – in order to investigate the relationship between linguistic and geographical, social and perceptual factors in language change.

LEISURE BUS SERVICES
Researchers will work with organisations that provide bus services for leisure trips to identify the best ways of measuring performance. The project will devise survey templates and a software package to help input the data and produce reports on performance indicators. Findings will help funding bodies compare performance over different time periods and evaluate the value of these bus services.

JURORS’ VIEWS ON DNA
DNA evidence that places a suspect at a crime scene is frequently perceived to be irrefutable by jurors. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that jurors are increasingly expecting DNA evidence, even in cases where it would be of little or no value. Researchers will evaluate how best to present DNA evidence to facilitate juror reasoning and decision-making.

Balance is key to mobility in older people

While maintaining mobility plays a significant part in healthy ageing, a new study highlights a high degree of inactivity even among an ‘elite’ sample of fit and healthy older people aged between 72 and 92 years.

“Mobility is hugely important in terms of older people being able to remain independent,” explains Dr Lynn McInnes. “Reduced mobility can restrict a person’s social life as well as limiting their access to shops, leisure and other activities. People fear not being able to look after themselves and being a burden on others. Often a cause of this dependence is a decline in mobility.”

Researchers set out to examine the actual mobility patterns of older people using innovative methods such as location-aware technologies and an accelerometer taped to their thigh for a seven-day period. The sample of participants came from the North East Age Research longitudinal study, which began in 1983. A total of 86 participants completed all the tests involved in this research.

Findings reveal a fairly high degree of inactivity, with participants spending 70 per cent of the day sitting or lying, 22 per cent standing and only seven per cent walking. The study further reveals that even its sample of fairly fit older people did not travel far from their home: the mean furthest distance travelled away from home was just over four miles per week.

“These findings highlight the importance of providing effective transport networks and a good range of local services to meet older people’s needs,” Dr McInnes explains. “Being able to stay mobile is crucial to older people’s wellbeing, as loss of mobility means the loss of so many other things from their lives such as the ability to go shopping, meet friends and pursue hobbies and interests.”

In the course of the study, researchers discovered that balance – specifically the ability to stand on one leg – is an excellent predictor of a person’s overall mobility. “This is an exciting finding because balance is something that can be worked on with the help of physiotherapy,” she points out. “We believe that physiotherapy interventions that are aimed at improving older people’s balance could have a highly beneficial effect on maintaining their mobility.”

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Part of the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme
Training makes the face fit

PHOTO-ID IS COMMONLY used to prove identity, yet a new study finds that people are surprisingly poor at matching faces to photo-ID. In this study the most common type of error was accepting an invalid photo-ID as being genuine, which is the response posing the largest threat to security. However, researchers found that manipulating photos — for example, cropping or averaging different photos of the same person — improved recognition to some extent. Interestingly, marked improvement could also be gained by the simple intervention of training people to improve their matching performance.

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Baby signing fails to reduce parental stress

BABY SIGNING IS BECOMING increasingly popular. Based on hand gestures, it enables parents to interact with their baby before he or she is able to talk. For parents, the promised benefits of baby signing include reduced frustration and stress, greater understanding of the infant’s needs and a better relationship with the child.

New research, however, finds that mothers who attended baby signing classes were, contrary to expectation, more stressed than those who attended other mother and baby classes.

Researchers suggest that mothers who attended gesturing classes were, contrary to expectation, more stressed than those who attended other mother and baby classes.

Researchers suggest that mothers who attended gesturing classes were likely to have higher pre-existing stress levels, which may have motivated them to attend. They further suggest that gesturing classes may raise maternal expectations of improved infant functioning more than other types of classes. If these expectations are not met during classes, mothers’ perceptions of their infant could be negatively affected.

Nevertheless, findings indicate that introducing some simple gestures into interactions at home with an infant may be beneficial, by increasing a mother’s responsiveness to her infant.

“Encouraging mothers to use gestures can have linguistic and wider, non-linguistic benefits, albeit mainly for those infants who are at risk of language delay because of social deprivation, low parental education or other factors,” concludes Professor Karen Pine.

At present, the majority of mothers who take their babies to baby signing classes are well educated and from higher income families. These babies enjoy a healthy home learning environment so are unlikely to need baby signing.

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IN BRIEF

FORENSIC NURSES
In North America, Forensic Nurses (FNs) have examined rape and sexual assault victims for 20 years. FNs are considered experts in the US and Canada and can provide testimony in court, but not in the UK. Based on interviews with FNs, researchers will explore the similarities and differences between FNs in the UK and Canada.
ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4084

POLICY CHANGE ANALYSIS
Economists lack realistic theoretical models to analyse the effect of macroeconomic policy changes even though changes to fiscal and monetary policy occur frequently. Policy changes including recent changes to UK capital and labour taxes will be explored using an approach that assumes incomplete knowledge of the economy, both before and after a policy change, on the part of households, firms and policymakers.
ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-2617

AUTISM AND MEMORY
Prospective memory concerns the ability to remember to do something at a specific point in the future and is associated with the ability to plan effectively – for example, remembering an appointment. This study will compare the performance of children with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) on two measures of prospective memory ability. Findings will increase understanding of ASD and inform intervention efforts.
ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4125
IN BRIEF

DEER MANAGEMENT
Government agencies are starting to consider deer in the context of ecosystem services. Research has developed a framework that has informed disputes among neighbours and between policymakers over deer management. Stakeholders, policymakers and researchers will co-produce a ‘best practice’ guide for developing sustainable deer management plans.

ESRC Grant Number RES-811-25-0002

OFFSHORING DECISIONS
European multinationals increasingly hold intellectual property offshore. Researchers will develop a model of firms’ choices over intellectual property location in the form of patents and examine how such decisions are affected by corporate tax. The methodology will be useful for evaluating recent tax reforms, such as the exemption system for the taxation of foreign income, as well as future reforms.

ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4268

RENEWABLE ENERGY
If the UK is to meet increasingly ambitious targets for renewable energy, much depends on what happens in the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A two-year study will assess the impacts of devolution on the provision of renewable energy based on interviews with government, business and pressure groups, as well as qualitative and quantitative data.

ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-2526

Old ways prevail in new healthcare

NEW INDEPENDENT SECTOR Treatment Centres (ISTCs) may not be reshaping healthcare working practices as successfully as had been hoped, says new research. Healthcare providers are increasingly encouraged to become ‘learning organisations’. This involves sharing information across organisational and occupational boundaries to foster new ways of working and to enhance service quality and safety.

But a study of two National Health Authority (NHA) and two ISTC Day Surgery Units reveals that knowledge sharing between clinical groups in ISTCs is not markedly changed as traditional ways of working are ‘carried over’ from the NHS. “Our early findings suggest management was unable to act with greater autonomy and radically reshape working practices within ISTCs. Instead, existing cultural and institutional forces were replicated and amplified in the emerging order of the new organisation,” says Dr Justin Waring. “Efforts by managers to transform working practices tended to be limited to enhancing productivity and speed as opposed to integration and learning.”

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Public shuns blame game after fatal accidents

IN CASES OF work-related fatality, where the activities of an organisation cause the deaths of members of the public or workers, there is little public appetite for retributive justice, suggests a new study.

In recent years, a series of high-profile work-related fatality cases (such as the 2000 Hatfield rail crash) prompted a concern as to whether the law would hold those responsible to account through criminal conviction. Indeed, a new offence of ‘corporate manslaughter’ was introduced in 2007 to allow homicide liability to be imposed. “Ostensibly this was a response to what the Home Office identified as a lack of ‘public confidence’ in the law’s ability to deal with fatal incidents,” says researcher Dr Paul Almond.

To discover what the public really think, researchers from the University of Reading undertook a pilot study of 60 people discussing real-life work-related fatality cases. “Our findings show that the public certainly regards these cases as serious and significant,” Dr Almond says. “But in this study people tended not to express anything like the degree of ‘punitiveness’ that might be expected. Indeed, the appetite for blame was tempered by sophisticated reasoning and rational approaches to culpability, with people viewing the law as a way of achieving better outcomes in the future.”

Researchers conclude that people have a desire for accountability, not simply for punishment, in work-related fatality cases. Criminalisation as an element of stronger and more meaningful regulation, rather than for its own sake, seems to be what the public prefers.

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Units for disruptive pupils raise concerns

MANY SCHOOLS IN the UK now rely on internally run Behaviour Support Units (BSUs). These work to keep disruptive behaviour outside of the classroom without resorting to formal exclusion procedures. But, says new research, this strategy raises a range of policy concerns and issues.

“Behaviour Support Units appear to be becoming widespread, yet they are a comparatively new and under-researched behaviour management strategy,” explains Dr Val Gillies. “Our findings highlight not only the lack of basic UK-wide information about BSUs but also raise concerns around the lack of monitoring of these units, the education they provide and their impact in terms of social exclusion and equal opportunities issues.”

Pupils who attend these units do not appear in a school’s exclusion statistics, even though they may be removed from mainstream classes for extended periods.

“We were not able to ascertain basic information such as how many of these BSUs exist, the ethnic backgrounds of their pupils or, indeed, how long children spend there – although we found cases of children moving directly from primary school to a BSU without entering a mainstream classroom, and others who completed the majority of their secondary education within a BSU environment,” says Dr Gillies.

The study suggests that although many BSU teachers are highly talented and dedicated, units are often insufficiently staffed and under-resourced. In some cases the education received by BSU pupils was of a very poor standard.

“Yet interestingly and perhaps surprisingly, we found that pupils in BSUs viewed education as important and expressed a strong sense of attachment to school. Many dreaded the prospect of permanent school exclusion,” she insists.

This study suggests class teachers frequently have too little time to get to grips with the complexity of issues that can lay behind BSU referrals. Hence, the research team are about to begin working with specialist practitioners to produce a ‘Reflexive Toolkit’ that aims to help teachers and other professionals working with pupils at risk of school exclusion, by promoting awareness and informing practice.

Researchers will also be working with young people from the charity Kids Company to produce a ‘Manifesto for Learning’. This manifesto will provide a clear account of the policy changes that are needed to enable marginalised pupils to properly participate in, and benefit from, mainstream education.
Religion in decline

BASED ON ANALYSIS of population censuses and surveys, a study of religious change in five advanced industrial nations – the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US – provides new evidence on religious decline. Professor David Voas explains: “Our findings are consistent with the view that defection from religious affiliation, practice and belief is part of a more general phenomenon of value change in post-industrial societies. That is to say, religion declines because values change, and values change as a result of a predictable process of human development linked to increased levels of prosperity and security.”

The research provides evidence that society changes religiously as old people are replaced by younger people. “There is more life in the idea of secularisation than recently supposed,” Professor Voas argues. “For example, the same pattern of religious decline is now observed across the western world, even in the US. And, at least among people living in Europe and developed countries elsewhere, each generation is less religious than its predecessor. The theory of modernisation and value change provides a possible explanation for this process.”

Deaf children benefit from specialist schools

DESPITE THE RECENT trend towards educating deaf children in mainstream secondary schools, the value of specialist schools for the deaf should not be underestimated, conclude researchers from Oxford Brookes University.

The project aimed to assess the reading and spelling ability of teenagers with severe hearing loss. To this end, 86 deaf children between the ages of 12 and 16 were recruited from a variety of educational settings. Approximately one third used hearing aids, one third had received a cochlear implant (an electronic device implanted surgically into the inner ear to provide a sense of sound) early in life, and one third had received such an implant at a later age.

“These three sub-groups were selected to be of a similar age, and non-verbal intelligence and degree of hearing loss,” explains Professor Margaret Harris. “Based on a previous study we expected to find that children with a cochlear implant were reading at a level appropriate to their age. Instead, assessments revealed that the mean reading ages were several years below chronological age for all three groups.”

Contrary to expectations, participants with hearing aids actually performed better than those who had received a cochlear implant.

“Our overarching aim was to examine the claim that cochlear implants (especially when carried out early) lead to higher levels of attainment in literacy than have been traditionally found in deaf children, but we actually found this not to be the case,” Professor Harris explains.

Exploring this unexpected finding, researchers identified educational setting as one important difference between the three groups of teenagers. The great majority of children in the hearing aid group were being educated in a school for the deaf. Relatively more of the children with cochlear implants were being educated in a mainstream education.

“The key message appears to be that relatively low levels of literacy, especially among children with cochlear implants, point to the need for continuing support for literacy throughout secondary school years,” she explains. “It is simply not the case that the cochlear implant solves all problems. The majority of deaf children will need continuing support for literacy and, for many of them, that support may best be provided in a specialist school.”
Early maturing girls are at increased risk of developing depressive symptoms, according to new research based on the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC).

Researchers set out to examine whether gender, puberty and environmental adversities contributed to depressive symptoms. Findings reveal similar rates of depression in boys’ and girls’ pre-adolescence. The onset of depressive symptoms in late childhood were more strongly associated with early exposure to socioeconomic disadvantage than when onset of symptoms occurred in adolescence.

The study reveals a marked increase in rates of depression in girls during early adolescence. By mid-adolescence the prevalence of symptoms in girls was over twice that in boys. Moreover, puberty had an impact on the emergence of depressive symptoms in girls, but not boys. Researchers conclude that early maturing girls could be targeted for preventive intervention.

Caring is dead end for migrants

WELL QUALIFIED MIGRANTS are wrong to believe that working in the care sector will provide them with a stepping stone into more appropriate work, or even offer them a decent livelihood for themselves and their families, says a new study.

Dr Sandra Cuban’s research looked at migrants, mostly women, with a high degree of professional expertise and tertiary education working in the social care industry in Cumbria. She discovered considerable de-skilling and workplace exploitation to the point where few migrants, especially those who were not from the EU, progressed their careers.

“Our findings reveal significant brain waste amongst a hidden and talented workforce where their higher education neither safeguarded them from mistreatment nor assisted them in career advancement,” Dr Cuban points out.

Contrary to popular myth, they rarely lacked information or language proficiencies. Rather, the obstacles ranged from non-marketable vocational qualification treadmill to long and unsociable hours in a sector that paid them poorly and bound them to contracts. Most importantly, the restrictive immigration policies, especially for those on student routes, limited their freedom and capacities to move upwards – the reason many came to England in the first place.

Dr Carol Joinson’s research looked at adolescent-to-parent violence remains largely unarticulated within the fields of youth justice, policing and criminology. Researchers aim to increase the visibility and understanding of such violence and to develop clear recommendations for effective policies and appropriate interventions for these families and the criminal justice agencies they encounter.

In many cities in the Southern Hemisphere, informal employment now provides up to 80 per cent of urban jobs. Street trade is one of the informal economy’s largest, most visible and contested domains. This study will explore the fragmented and plural regulatory environment facing urban street traders.

The geographical concentration of high-income groups and the segregation of poverty and low-income groups is a common feature of urbanisation in Brazil and India. This study asks whether living in a spatially mixed area is better for population health and health equity than living in a spatially segregated area.
Affordability and the role of planning

Professor Paul Cheshire, Spatial Economics Research Centre and LSE

A lot of media attention focuses on Britain’s position in world leagues of cancer mortality or educational standards. While not arguing that it is more important, it is astonishing how little attention is given to our world standing in terms of housing and housing affordability.

Housing is by far the largest expenditure in most household budgets and is one of the most important sources of welfare. Not only does it provide shelter but, as has been increasingly realised, housing allocates access to a wide range of public goods and amenities such as a quiet environment or clean air.

The way that housing rations access to better schools is the most widely researched of these; for example, moving a standard house from the catchment area of the worst to the best primary school in the Reading area in 2000 was associated with a 33 per cent price premium, but recent work has shown significant house price premiums for access to open space, less noise, better transport, jobs, clean air and less crime. All these apparently ‘free’ goods, provided by public policy out of taxes, are priced just like restaurant meals, but through the housing market.

Yet despite its importance for welfare, housing in Britain is arguably worse and more expensive than in any comparable country in the world. Not only is it more expensive but we have more price volatility. British new-build houses are 40 per cent smaller than in the more densely populated Netherlands; and at the same time they are 38 per cent more expensive per square metre.

People concerned with design complain about their design; those concerned with the environment complain about poor insulation. In the last complete house price cycle (1982 to 1995) the up and down swing of real house prices, averaged over the whole of England and Wales, was 21 per cent greater than in the most volatile urban area in the whole of the US.

Since 1970 British real house prices have increased by a factor of three; in both Switzerland and Germany over the same period they hardly increased at all. Housing affordability – expressed as the lower quartile house price relative to lower quartile incomes – has deteriorated sharply, even since 2000 when the ratio was about four for England compared to 7.63 in 2009. In 2009 new housing construction was at its lowest level since the mid 1920s and according to The National Housing Federation is expected to fall further next year.

The British do not just suffer from bad and expensive housing – problems extend much further. Housing is very unaffordable but this varies regionally; relative to lower quartile incomes housing is almost twice as expensive in the South East as it is in the North West. This makes it very difficult for firms in economically dynamic areas to recruit. More obviously, it makes it hard for people to move from areas of high unemployment to where there are jobs, a problem which is even worse if you are a social housing tenant.

The internationally high price of housing in southern England means that salaries for highly skilled internationally mobile workers have to be...
higher to compensate. Ever rising house prices (see graph below) have a serious effect on the distribution of real incomes and wealth. The old are favoured compared to the young; owner-occupiers over renters; and the children of house owners are the lucky winners in the next generation. We do not just have an increasing problem of housing haves and have-nots but also intergenerational transmission of wealth inequality.

How has our housing got into such a state? The root cause is our planning policy, although our local tax system plays its negative part. This effectively fines local communities that allow anything to be built, since Council Tax gains from more houses are offset by lower payments in grant from central government, but services still need to be provided.

The coalition’s New Homes Bonus is supposed to address this imbalance of fiscal incentives but since it does not come in till after existing housing targets have been abolished and – even if it is ‘new money’ – will be quite modest, it is doubtful, given other pressures for ‘nimbyism’, that it will have much impact.

Policies to restrict land supply for housing remain unabated. Urban containment came with the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and has been successively reinforced since then – most recently by the requirement that 60 per cent of new housing should be on brownfield land. We deliberately constrain the supply of something – space – which would-be house buyers most value.

Over the two generations we have been constraining the supply of land for urban development the real price of houses has increased by a factor of 4.5 but that of housing land has increased by a factor of 12 (see graph below). More unresponsive supply means that not only do prices trend inexorably upwards relative to incomes but that short-run changes in demand require ever larger changes in prices to accommodate them. That is why we have such price volatility.

But if you constrain land supply its price gets bid up and in the process houses become smaller, and less funds are available for good design and materials. Recent Spatial Economics Research Centre research has demonstrated that the restrictiveness of local authorities in terms of allowing development is the most important direct cause of rising real house prices.

### Graph: REAL LAND & HOUSE PRICE INDICES (1975 = 100)

- **Land Price Index**
- **House Price Index**

*Note: House and land data for war years are interpolated*

The University of Edinburgh

**Richard Rodger**, Professor of Economic and Social History, The University of Edinburgh

**THE EFFECTS OF HOUSING POLICY ON URBAN SOCIETY**

SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURAL AND sociological shifts have been brought about by housing policy changes over the last 100 years. The spatial extent of the city leap-frogged its pre-World War I boundaries with the introduction from 1919 of council housing. This fundamentally altered demand, restructured the building industry, and introduced extensive, homogeneous housing estates on the urban fringe. Council housing also ushered in the era of mass-produced, system-built, shuttered concrete- and steel-framed construction of houses from the 1920s. This new type of housing undermined small building firms and traditional craft skills in favour of more industrial forms of construction. Social housing largely replaced housing for the working classes in the inter-war years.

Almost simultaneously, the introduction of Rent Control – the Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (War Restrictions) Act, 1915 – radically altered the balance in the rental market by limiting the rents charged by landlords. Rents were virtually frozen and this led to the decay of the landlordism which prior to the World War I had made up 85-90 per cent of all housing. It took another 40 years before rent control was largely abandoned, though in removing the restrictions the 1957 Rent Act exposed sitting tenants to harassment as many landlords sought to let to new tenants at greatly inflated rents.

Combined with the introduction of council housing and Rent Control, historically low interest rates in the 1930s and, later, mortgage interest tax relief gave a stimulus to middle class semi-detached (and in Scotland, bungalow) building for private ownership. Together with council housing, the result was that residential segregation reinforced the social segregation of British cities.

Tower blocks were a feature of mass house building which redefined the cityscape in the 1950s and 1960s. In these decades, Treasury subsidies were targeted towards high-rise blocks. In London, Glasgow, and Birmingham, where the councils held land for housing, the subsidy incentives encouraged high-rise construction, often on the periphery of the city.

As with council housing in the inter-war years this propelled the poorer families to the outskirts of the city and further disadvantaged them in terms of additional transport costs, disruption to social networks, and loss of informal credit sources. It also denied them neighbourhood facilities, including local shopping, and contributed to a sense of dislocation and exclusion that resulted in boredom, as often exhibited in anti-social behaviour. High-rise building was already in retreat for these reasons before the collapse of the Ronan Point tower block in 1968 in Newham, London as a result of a gas explosion.
In the 1980s race riots in Liverpool, Bristol and other cities contributed to a re-thinking of the Conservative government’s urban policies and resulted in Michael Heseltine’s initiatives for inner city renewal. A series of regeneration schemes were encouraged by the Thatcher government, and councils looked favourably on these because of the cash injection they offered at a time when rate-capping, public expenditure cuts and ultimately the Poll Tax constrained local authority investment. Inner city redevelopment and the renovation of mills, warehouses, and other historic buildings followed.

Projects such as Castlefield in Manchester and Glasgow’s Merchant City and the GEAR (Glasgow East End Renewal) project were encouraged by the inclusion of Development Corporations in partnership with private builders and local authorities. This, combined with the listing process for historic buildings and the obligation to develop local neighbourhood and city-wide structure plans in the 1980s, stimulated interest in heritage and encouraged the re-use of existing buildings and brownfield sites. Re-use replaced demolition; rising incomes for those in work fuelled consumerism and inflationary house prices as footloose capital investment sought inner city opportunities.

The Tenants’ Right to Buy in 1979 (and 1980 in Scotland) produced significant sales of council houses. With local government expenditure restricted, the cash flowed to the Treasury, leaving councils with the costs of upkeep for roads, policing, and social expenditure while suffering reduced rental income from council properties. The ancient system of property-based local taxation—the Rates—was replaced by the Poll Tax in an effort, widely despised, to contain the basis of local government finance.

As house-building cycles dominated the property market for a century before it was disturbed by council-house building in the 1920s, looking to the future there is no reason to suppose that the inherent characteristics of boom and bust will not continue, or that demand will not eventually pick up and exhaust the current oversupply of accommodation and office space.

Historically, house building has experienced 20-year cycles, but with less council house building, it looks as though there might be a return to the market conditions of the 19th century with substantial intervals between each peak in house building.

There are no signs that council house building will resume on any scale, and unless the councils maintain their ageing stock, it may well decline. The effect of inner city regeneration has been to privilege facilities for Dinkies (Dual Incomes No Kids) and a younger cohort in the housing market.

Family properties—three-bedroom flats—have been scarce, and where builders are obliged to produce low-rental properties these have often been too few for the number of low-income families who do not have access to the private housing market. As a result, social infrastructural investment has been accorded a lower priority. Inner city schooling is a central issue to address when considering housing policy because the middle classes reject such schools, either by putting their children into private education or by moving to areas of white settlement in the small towns and villages nearby.

In this way, de-urbanisation has been a direct result of a failure to consider city centre amenities sufficiently for the local population as a whole. There is a long-run (post-1970) trend to de-urbanisation in Europe and North America, partly induced by greater mobility, better roads, and the possibilities of home-working.

But it is also a product of white flight—in Europe as much as in America—though few would admit to this, least of all politicians. In English cities, more so than elsewhere in the UK, the issue of race and housing remains unstated, and the concept of multiculturalism so widely extolled for Leicester and some other English cities remains a myth; segregation by race and faith is strong and almost universal. ‘Pillarisation’ exists, as in the Protestant/Catholic divisions of the 17th-century Low Countries, and in contemporary Northern Ireland.

De-urbanisation, therefore, has also been fuelled by the desire for ‘better’ schooling on the part of those able to quit the city. The result has been a pronounced movement of population to smaller towns where a single comprehensive school provides a decent public education for a white majority.

The long-run effects of structural changes in the housing market are profound. Social segregation has been reinforced and the declining unit of resource available to local government has meant that, compared to Victorian cities, the civic agenda has been weakened. Housing finance has produced centrifugal forces that have propelled families, especially poorer families, to the margins of the city, leaving migrant communities and the very poor to inhabit the city centre.

Recent emphasis on downtown regeneration projects has provided ample housing units for young couples, yet they are necessarily highly mobile in response to short-termism in the labour market. The implosion of a manufacturing base in many British cities has compounded the impermanence of communities.

Cumulatively, the effects on civil society have been adverse, resulting in reduced commitment to civil society clubs and associations and so, as sociologists confirm, social and community ties have been weakened.
IN THE 30 YEARS since the 1980 Housing Act the public’s desire to own a home and the requirement to have more for less have undoubtedly influenced the way architects work. Some architects, sponsored by developers such as Manchester-based Urban Splash, can justly claim to have revolutionised the market in high-density urban living mainly for the ‘pre-child rearing’ generation. However, their influence on the providers of family accommodation in suburban settings has been minimal.

In terms of numbers of homes built it is fair to say that most new housing for private sale since the 1980 Act has been developed at suburban densities by a small number of large house-building companies. The influence of architects has been minimal, very largely because their actual involvement has also been minimal. How often, when passing the advertising hoarding at the entrance to a new housing development does the name of the designer appear? Almost never.

One of the main reasons for this is that housebuilders develop their own standard ‘house types’ – more often than not standalone detached houses – which have been designed by little-known, diligent architects working away from the architectural mainstream, under the thumb of the house builder and its marketing department.

The products of this building programme since 1980 are a reminder of the British motorcycle industry before the Japanese tide swamped it, although, as yet, there is little sign of any ‘Japanesetype’ tide of efficiency and better design moving in. As a result, very few talented architects have been able to make a dent in what the housebuilders claim is an overwhelming public preference for the unsustainable, land-hungry products on offer. There are however some notable exceptions – among them the Accordia development in Cambridge, New Hall in Harlow and, this year, houses at Street in Somerset – but success stories like these are, in the current economic climate, few and far between.

The recession and reduced public funds are also putting us in danger of abandoning today’s high standards of sustainability and space for affordable and social housing. Funding for new affordable housing to the standards now set out by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Mayor of London is in crisis. Precisely at the moment when these standards are being introduced, in an attempt to raise the standard of UK housing up to anywhere near its equivalent elsewhere in northern Europe, the public subsidy made available by the outgoing Labour government has been exhausted. Moreover, the cross-subsidy, previously available from the surpluses created in the private sale component of almost all mixed tenure developments, has disappeared as well.

However, the lessons of, and the procurement routes for, the high rise blocks of the 1960s and 1970s are not forgotten. That era of thoughtless scramble by local authorities – encouraged by government subsidies – to build high, using cheap concrete systems is unlikely to return. But there are signs that central government, through agencies such as the HCA, is unwittingly encouraging housing associations in the cities to ignore the lessons learned, such as too many flats sharing entrances, lifts, corridors and car parks that cannot be affordably managed. There is also an increasing tendency for housing associations to be obliged to ‘buy in’ unsuitable schemes that have already disappeared as well.

In terms of how the architecture profession is faring, the news is mixed. Hard times always act as a stimulus for innovation in architecture, but hardship is hitting architects hard. According to the latest university surveys architectural graduates are the most poorly paid of all the professions. The most talented architectural ‘foot soldiers’, the ones who actually do the design work, choose to work in housing because they believe in the long-term importance of well-designed, sustainable homes, rather than for financial reasons. But, like the building industry, ‘stop go’ government policies usually mean that when the brakes come off again many of the best skills have been forced to move.

If all that talent has a fault, it is the unwillingness, or the lack of opportunity, to test out their radical ideas in the ordinary market place, among low-income, first-time buyers. Too often in the past it has been the affordable housing tenant, who has little choice in the home he/she is allocated, rather than the buying public, who has been on the receiving end of radical architectural designs, against which they have sometimes reacted negatively.
Volunteering is big business in the UK. Surveys show that in 2008-2009 no less than 26 per cent of people in England participated in some kind of formal volunteering programme at least once a month, while the figure for Scotland was slightly higher, at 28 per cent.

Include ‘informal’, unofficial volunteering as well, and the numbers increase substantially: an additional 35 per cent of people in England were informal volunteers, according to the 2008-2009 Citizenship survey.

“Research evidence on volunteering in Britain shows that these numbers have remained relatively stable for more than ten years,” says Professor Peter Alcock, Director of the Third Sector Research Centre, which is part-funded by the ESRC.

But while these high levels of participation readily demonstrate that many Britons are willing to engage in voluntary and community-building activities, they might also mean that the potential for recruiting additional volunteers is limited.

“The already high level of activity raises some questions as to whether it is actually realistic to expect even more people to come forward in a new drive for engagement,” argues Professor Alcock. Yet the extra people are out there, insists Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, Executive Director of volunteering charity Community Service Volunteers (CSV).

“Survey data show that 11 million more people would be prepared to do voluntary work if they were asked. These findings have remained relatively constant over several surveys,” she points out. “The growth in the percentage of older people also offers huge potential – we now have the wealthiest generation of retired people our society has ever known.”

CSV and other volunteering charities have recently experienced a dramatic increase in the number of enquiries they have been receiving about volunteering opportunities.

The reasons for this surge are thought to be at least three-fold: the rise in unemployment, the perceived need to acquire new skills, or simply the desire to fill spare time productively. In a survey of former CSV volunteers nine out of ten of respondents stated that they believed that “volunteering increases job prospects”, with 84 per cent saying the experience “increased employability”.

But the main motivation for volunteering is far from selfish. According to the 2008-09 Citizenship Survey, the most popular reason people gave was simply “wanting to improve things or help people” – mentioned by 62 per cent of regular formal volunteers. And the most commonly cited benefit (by 65 per cent) was “getting satisfaction from seeing the results”. It seems like there could be potential for a citizen drive in society after all.

The main problem for a ‘Big Society’ initiative, however, could be that it comes to be seen as a
top-down government policy. People might like to volunteer for their community, but they might be rather less likely to do so for the government.

“Small community organisations play a major role in community activities, but many of them are formed out of opposition to central government policies,” says Professor Alcock. “The government might want to encourage community organisations, but it can’t necessarily expect a positive response.” Indeed, opposition and protest are common drivers for community action – the Countryside Alliance and anti-fox hunt ban groups being obvious examples.

There might be also an inherent tension between a central drive for local action and the independence of local groups. A recent TSRC Working Paper, Understanding the distinctiveness of small scale, third sector activity, examined the scale and impact of small, idealistic community groups. A survey showed how flexibility and independence was seen as a major strength by these groups. “You are free to say what you want, independent and not tied to any funding, funder or project delivery targets,” as one of the respondents put it.

As they only are accountable to their own members, small and informal organisations can choose to be radical in their philosophy and actions. “For some, being below the regulatory radar was an advantage to small groups enabling them to operate differently from the mainstream. Not constrained by bureaucracy or regulation they could do what they wanted, change their approach when necessary, and be radical,” the Working Paper points out. If these small local groups were to become part of concerted community action, this independence would be challenged.

The Big Society vision might offer new opportunities for individuals, but it will also pose new challenges for organisations. The trend for third-sector organisations to provide public services has been growing over the last decade. Big Society plans foresee that this growth will continue, with both traditional public sector actors and charities bidding for contracts for public services.

But increasing third sector forays into the public sector could come at a cost. In order to ensure that services meet legal standards and are properly managed – for instance in providing health care or schooling – all actors delivering public services will need to be following the same set of procedures.

“The distinction will become less clear between public sector institutions and third sector organisations, and a consequence of this is that the third sector providers risk losing their original identity,” warns Professor Alcock.

“As service providers they could become dependent on public funding, losing some of their independent status. The organisational costs that come with the delivery of public services can change the nature of the organisation, making it bigger and more businesslike.”

Frances Tomlinson predicts that the next few years might see an increasing polarisation in the third sector, between large public service providers and small organisations preferring to focus their activities outside this area.

“Mergers, collaborations and sub-contracting will probably become a trend, with fewer and bigger organisations emerging as a result,” adds Professor Alcock.

He points to last year’s merger between Help the Aged and Age Concern to Age UK as being an indicator of what may be to come. It seems that times are changing for the third sector in the age of Big Society.
The importance of logistics to healthcare provision has long been recognised within the NHS. It’s an area of massive cost and directly affects the experiences of patients visiting hospitals.

A recent Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), between Bradford and Airedale Teaching Primary Care Trust (tPCT) and Manchester Business School, sought to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare provision by analysing the Trust’s logistics operation and making recommendations on how it could improve its service and reduce operating costs.

As well as the ESRC, the project was sponsored by the Technology Strategy Board and the Northern Way – a unique initiative that brings together the cities and regions of the North of England to work together to improve the sustainable economic development of the North and bring it to the level of more prosperous regions.

NHS Bradford and Airedale provides healthcare services to the 500,000 people in the local area and employs around 2,500 people, the majority in clinical posts. In recent years, the Trust made several attempts to improve access for patients to its health services by looking at transport issues, which often caused problems, but their success was limited.

Through the KTP, the Trust got the benefit of the business school’s expertise and a fresh approach to analysing the logistics problems. The collaboration between the Trust and the business school demonstrated how effective it can be to apply formal business improvement tools and techniques to a public sector service setting to identify areas of weakness, make recommendations for improvement and analyse performance.

Through the initiatives introduced, Bradford and Airedale tPCT has become more effective and efficient in the way it runs logistics. Since carrying out the business school’s recommendations, all patient, staff, and non-patient movements are more efficient and require less trips, meaning less vehicles on the road.

As well as providing a better service, the Trust has seen significant financial savings from more effective contracting, the use of community transport in place of more expensive transport methods, and a reduction in the number of missed appointments. Estimates put the amount saved to date at over £358,000, freeing resources to provide additional services.

The project also created new relationships with other local healthcare organisations, maximising benefits across the region, and won an award at the 2010 Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Awards.

Jim Bamford, service improvement manager at NHS Bradford and Airedale, said: “We are delighted to have won the award. The project was not just about reviewing the transport needs of the local population, it was also about getting better health outcomes for patients.

“In addition, by reducing the amount of vehicles on the road, we will in turn have a positive impact on reducing our carbon footprint.”

Dr David Bamford, senior lecturer at Manchester Business School said: “The project results prove the impact that is achievable through focused knowledge transfer. The project has made a direct impact on patients’ lives by improving access to healthcare and the highly successful partnership approach with NHS Bradford and Airedale continues through the commissioning of two further knowledge transfer projects.”

Implementing efficient logistical arrangements not only serves the public better, it also saves the taxpayer money.
Changing perceptions

Altering public beliefs and attitudes is critical to our efforts to prevent dangerous climate change, argues Professor Nick Pidgeon

Avoiding dangerous climate change is one of the most urgent environmental policy issues, and it appears increasingly likely that societies must undergo major transformations to avoid the worst of its potential impacts. In the UK the legally binding Climate Change Act sets an ambitious target of an 80 per cent reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 compared to a 1990 baseline.

Achieving such tough emissions reduction goals will mean significant changes to the ways we both produce and use energy: in particular a transition to lower carbon energy sources, the reconfiguration of supply networks, and extensive changes to our daily behaviour and practices to decrease individual and community energy consumption.

Public perceptions and attitudes are critically important to these challenges. On the supply side, acceptance of new, innovative energy facilities such as power stations and grid infrastructure will play a key role. We know from past case studies that community opposition can lead to delays or even cancellation of plans and construction. Uncertainty associated with the processes to decide where facilities are sited can also bring negative psychosocial and health impacts in affected communities.

On the demand side, perceptions of the need to take mitigating action against climate change, and of the ability to act on this, will be key precursors to changes in personal behaviour and practices, and for the acceptability of wider government policies aimed at motivating such changes. Because of this, gaining an in-depth profile of public attitudes to climate change is critical to understanding whether, and in what ways, public attitudes might be changing or not.

Research on public perceptions indicates that awareness of and concern about climate change is high. Over three quarters of the sample in a major British survey conducted for Cardiff University by Ipsos-MORI in early 2010 stated they believed that the world’s climate is changing. However, perhaps paradoxically given the strengthening scientific evidence, many people in both Europe and the US have become slightly more sceptical about the issue over the past five years.

One possible reason for this is that other global/societal or personal issues can have a higher importance for people, and polling has shown that environmental problems including climate change have indeed assumed a lesser importance since the onset of the global financial crisis. The media controversy generated during the winter of 2009-2010 concerning emails from climate scientists at the University of East Anglia, and over errors in glacial melting forecasts made by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, might also have served to reinforce uncertainty and scepticism among sections of the public. Here the evidence shows that the impact of these high-profile media controversies on public attitudes may have been relatively limited, and certainly less marked than had initially been feared.

A further interesting finding from our 2010 ESRC survey is that people tend to ascribe primary responsibility for dealing with climate change to external actors such as the international community and national governments. Only 10 per cent said that individuals and their families had the primary responsibility. Some people clearly wish to displace responsibility for major action onto others, avoiding what are perceived to be costly or difficult changes to behaviour and lifestyles.

The evidence shows that the impact of high-profile media controversies on public attitudes may have been relatively limited.

For many, however, climate change is seen as too big a problem for individuals to tackle themselves, with inter-governmental agreement also necessary to avoid other countries free-riding. Asked whether they are personally prepared to do something about climate change most people also respond that they are willing, but that it is difficult to take appropriate action without the right guidance, help or incentives from government. All of this implies that there is probably a stronger political mandate for strong government intervention on climate change than is sometimes assumed by politicians and policymakers.

Climate change remains one of the most pressing and complex environmental and political issues of our day. The question of shifting public attitudes, and how these might facilitate or hinder the acceptability of future climate policies, financial instruments, or new low-carbon technologies, is only just beginning to be addressed. It is an issue that is set to become even more important as the debate about climate and energy policy in Britain begins to hot up.

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For details of the 2010 Climate Change Survey see: www.understanding-risk.org
As an expert researcher working in the field of digital inclusion for the last 23 years, you’d think it would be easy for me to write about the benefits of digital technologies. And yet it is not. To explain my difficulty I will draw on two recent experiences: the first, reading the Manifesto for a Networked Nation; the second, attending a technology-related conference. Both experiences illustrate two opposite but influential positions regarding digital exclusion and how to ‘solve’ it.

“I would be dead without the internet,” says Martha Lane Fox, the UK Digital Champion, in her foreword to her Manifesto for a Networked Nation, to begin an anecdote about a young man she met in Leeds who rebuilt his life from drug addiction through his engagement with a community IT centre that enabled him to learn how to use a computer. He went on to make and sell music online.

But what do we learn from this anecdote in terms of digital inclusion? I am concerned about the conclusion that readers of the Manifesto will draw: that all we need to solve digital exclusion is to provide access to technology and teach people how to use it, so that they can become economically productive. This is a simplification that overemphasises the remediation of individuals in terms of skills and motivation, and ignores the need to change society in terms of its attitudes towards disadvantage and acceptance of inequalities.

“The digital inclusion debate is the enemy of progress and the digital divide is not as big as many claim.” This rather cynical statement was made by a keynote speaker at a recent technology-related conference I attended. The speaker had been CEO of a large corporate technology-related company and a school governor. They illustrated their statement with an example from their school governor days, when, they claimed angrily, progress towards using the internet in the classroom was hindered through concerns over exclusion; that not all the children would have internet access at home, so why couldn’t arrangements be made for these few, like giving them homework that did not require the internet?

To ask such a question is to misunderstand or deny the digital divide. It is not necessarily about how many people are digitally excluded or offline, but how few opportunities are afforded to such people. Furthermore, such a question begs the response: why did it not occur to the school to find a way to provide internet access at home?

If Martha Lane Fox has oversimplified the solutions to digital exclusion, the keynote speaker and the school they referred to have ignored the moral case for digital inclusion. To accept the moral case is to accept that everyone has a right to access and use technologies, and to believe that it is unjust and inequitable if anyone is unable to do so. To accept that there is a lack of justice and equity requires, in my opinion, passionate outrage. Such outrage is, unfortunately, rare in the digitally privileged echelons of our society.

To move beyond oversimplified views of digital inclusion and to expand the moral case for action we need a collective examination of the prejudices and attitudes that exist towards the disadvantaged. These permeate the structures and systems that could enact digital inclusion-related policies and strategies.

If we do not focus on the broader structural social change required to ensure digital inclusion for all, then in another 23 years we will still be talking about the potential benefit of technologies, rather than the actual benefit.

This, in a nutshell, is my difficulty with answering a question about the benefits of technologies. I don’t just want to tell you how valuable technologies are; I want to tell you how valuable the people, the communities and the social structures are that enable the benefits of technologies to be enjoyed by everyone.

An inspection of the Digital Inclusion Research Briefing produced by the ESRC-funded Technology Enhanced Learning Research Programme provides some rich examples of this and sets a series of challenges for future research and practice, one of which is to contribute to the challenging of discriminatory practices.

Jane Seale is Professor of Education at the University of Plymouth, Convenor of the TLRP-TEL Programme Digital Inclusion Forum and former Co-Director of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods (2007-2010)

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Keeping children safer

One third of 9-19 year old technology users have received unwanted sexual or unpleasant comments online or by text message. ESRC research is making a significant contribution to increasing online security for young people by contributing to policy and guidance for global companies such as Microsoft and Vodafone, as well as policymakers, police, government departments, children’s charities and parenting groups.

The Economic and Social Research Council 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.

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The ESRC is an independent organisation and receives most of its funding through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
Our at-a-glance overview of volunteering in Britain today. All statistics are from the Department for Communities and Local Government 2008-2009 Citizenship Survey unless otherwise stated.

**Women/Men**

- **Participation in formal volunteering**: At least once a month
  - Men: 40%
  - Women: 30%
  - "Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer" Anon

- **Participation in informal volunteering**: At least once a month
  - Men: 40%
  - Women: 30%

Women are more likely than men to participate in both formal and informal volunteering. The difference between the proportions of men and women taking part in informal volunteering is even more marked.

**Age**

- **Participation in formal volunteering**: At least once a month
  - 16-25: 20%
  - 26-34: 30%
  - 35-49: 30%
  - 50-64: 20%

- **Participation in informal volunteering**: At least once a month
  - 16-25: 40%
  - 26-34: 40%
  - 35-49: 20%
  - 50-64: 10%

Younger people are less likely than older people to participate regularly (ie, at least once a month) in formal volunteering, but they participate more in informal volunteering.

**Regions**

There are small differences in rates of regular formal volunteering according to the regions in which people live. People living in the South East (31%) are more likely to participate in formal volunteering at least once a month than people living in London (20%).

- **South East**
  - 26% East of England
  - 26% East Midlands
  - 26% West Midlands
  - 29% South West
  - 31% South East

- **North West**: 25%
- **West Midlands**: 26%
- **East Midlands**: 26%
- **East of England**: 26%
- **London**: 20%
People who regularly took part in formal volunteering (ie, at least once a month) spent an average of 12.6 hours on these activities in those four weeks.

Participation in regular formal volunteering is higher among those in higher socio-economic groups. People who are employed in ‘higher/lower managerial or professional’ occupations are more likely to take part in regular formal volunteering than other groups (with the exception of full-time students).

“What is the essence of life? To serve others and to do good” Aristotle

Types of activities

Participation in different types of formal volunteering activities was measured by asking people if they had given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations in the last 12 months in any of the ways listed on a showcard. England, 2008-09

Raising or handling money/taking part in sponsored events
Leading the group/member of a committee
Organising or helping to run an activity or event
Visiting people
Befriending or mentoring people
Giving advice/information/counselling
Secretarial, admin or clerical work
Providing transport/driving
Representing
Campaigning
Other practical help (eg, helping out at school, shopping)
Any other help

74% of people living in England had given money to charity

70,000
The number of volunteers needed for the 2012 Olympics is 70,000, plus 30,000 for the Paralympics.

15.3% of undergraduates reported that they volunteered with a charity in their first year of studies. Volunteering rates were highest among students studying medicine/dentistry and social sciences.
www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/sv_old/Student+Volunteering+Week+2010/Research+and+Statistics
In recent years, UK forces have been deployed abroad in diverse places, for various reasons, and with sharply diverging degrees of success. Given growing competition over depleted resources, pressures for humanitarian intervention, and the number of small states and non-state actors with potentially devastating weapons, the number of possible military engagements seems likely to increase.

Few decisions that governments make have more far-reaching ramifications for both public and policymakers than the use of force abroad. Public opinion played a prominent role in discussions over the legitimacy of the Iraq war in particular, yet we have little systematic evidence about British public attitudes towards military action. Are we a nation of hawks or doves? and under what circumstances is the public more ready to support the use of force abroad. Public opinion played a prominent role in discussions over the legitimacy of the Iraq war in particular, yet we have little systematic evidence about British public attitudes towards military action. Are we a nation of hawks or doves? and under what circumstances is the public more ready to support the use of force abroad.

Committee hawks are in the minority, while committed doves seem to be a gravely endangered species.

Evidence of public equivocation would at one time have been attributed to ignorance: assumed to be preoccupied with domestic issues, citizens were held to know little about foreign affairs and to lack coherent and stable attitudes in that domain. Yet, more recent studies have shown that the apparent volatility of foreign policy attitudes – and support for war in particular – reflects the importance of context.

One obvious contextual factor is the purpose of military action. On the same scale, respondents were asked to rate the justifiability and likely effectiveness of force used for a range of reasons. Figure 2 shows the average ratings. Predictably, action to defend Britain from invasion is very widely seen as justified. Aside from that, there is less consensus. The public is more sceptical about the effectiveness than about the ethical justification of military force, especially where adversaries are suspected of abusing human rights, developing weapons of mass destruction or harbouring terrorists. The reverse is true of regime change, with removing a dictator from power seen as being more readily achieved than being justified.

It is easy to discern the effects of recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in these responses. Both conflicts have shown that removing dictatorial regimes is rather easier than promoting democracy or earthing terrorists. The reverse is true of regime change, with removing a dictator from power seen as being more readily achieved than being justified.

It was certainly limited public enthusiasm for the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. A
majority (56 per cent) wanted Britain to ‘withdraw all troops immediately’, with 24 per cent opting to ‘continue the war as now’ and only 20 per cent favouring ‘send in more troops’.

Figure 3 shows how the proportion favouring immediate troop withdrawal varies according to respondents’ general view on the justifiability and effectiveness of military action. Both graphs show the expected downward trend. Yet, strikingly, even those who regard the use of force as wholly justifiable and very effective (ie, those scoring 6 on the scales) are far from unanimous in support for this particular war – around one in three favour immediate withdrawal. Opinions on Afghanistan also seem to be driven more by practical than ethical considerations, with the effectiveness graph sloping a little more steeply than the justifiability graph.

It is not difficult to think of reasons why even those with a generally favourable outlook on military action might want troops out of Afghanistan. We suggested six such reasons to respondents and asked them to choose and rank their top three in order of importance.

The results in Table 1 show that the military death toll is overwhelmingly the public’s major concern about the war in Afghanistan. (Civilian casualties, though far outnumbering British military casualties, seem to cause the public much less disquiet). There is also anxiety about possible terrorist retaliation, and some of the public resent the lack of clarity over the reasons for fighting.

This last point underlines our main finding about public ambivalence towards military action. Very few citizens are flatly opposed to using force, but they need persuading of its merits, both practical and moral. Where they feel that this case has not been clearly made, and worry that the costs in terms of soldiers’ lives are beginning to outweigh the supposed benefits, their attitudes are likely to take a pronounced dovish turn.

Put simply, the public can be talked out of military action, just as they can be talked into it. What really matters, then, is who – politicians, journalists, religious leaders – does the talking.

Robert Johns (University of Strathclyde) and Graeme Davies (University of Leeds) are co-investigators on the ESRC award ‘Foreign policy attitudes and support for war among the British public’.

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**TABLE 1: RANKING OF CONCERNS ABOUT THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Ranked first (%)</th>
<th>Ranked second (%)</th>
<th>Ranked third (%)</th>
<th>Not top three (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British military casualties</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk of terrorist retaliation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty about purpose</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan civilian casualties</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of war to taxpayers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to reputation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life expectancy has soared in richer countries in the past three decades, to the extent that many babies born in Britain today will live past the age of 100. With increased life expectancy has come a greater emphasis on quality of life. Can we compress that proportion of the life we currently lead with a chronic disease, disability or dementia? And if, as is widely acknowledged, happiness improves health, how can we make people happier in order to prevent them from becoming ill in the first place?

To answer some of these questions, academics have been looking at precisely what it is about happiness that leads to good health. Professor Andrew Steptoe of University College London’s Department of Epidemiology and Public Health says: “It could be that happier people lead healthier lifestyles. But the evidence for that is inconsistent – for example, drinking more alcohol often goes with being happy and more outgoing.

Or it may be that bits of the brain responsible for feelings are closely linked with the control of blood pressure, and we have seen an association between happiness and lower levels of cortisol (a stress hormone related to type II diabetes and coronary heart disease), and inflammation.”

Happier people, he says, seem to be able to protect themselves against some serious health problems, and his team has been examining how that ‘health protection process’ works, as well as unravelling the ‘plausible biological pathways’ that link happiness with health.

Professor Steptoe’s ESRC-funded study looked at 600 women in similar occupations in three countries where happiness levels vary: the Netherlands, whose citizens are judged to have a higher-than-average sense of wellbeing; Hungary, where happiness levels are low; and the UK, which comes somewhere in the middle.

During a working day and a day off, the heart rate variability of the women was measured with chest monitors and their cortisol levels were assessed by taking samples of saliva. The women were also asked to complete detailed questionnaires that aim to rate their feelings.

As expected, the women in Hungary reported that they were less happy than the average, although there was not much difference between the women in the UK and the Netherlands.

Positive thinking

As life expectancy increases and more and more people are living into old age, one question has become the Holy Grail for governments, health services and individuals alike: how do we live healthier and happier lives as well as living longer ones?
More significantly, the Hungarians also had worse health problems, higher levels of cortisol and lower levels of ‘heart rate variability’, an indication of chronic strain on the cardiovascular system.

Professor Steptoe said that more work needed to be done and admitted the protective health effects associated with being happy in his study did not appear to be huge. “It would be far better to stop smoking; do more exercise,” he said.

But while the biological effects measured by the study were small, the ramifications were far bigger. “The effects, although small, are long-lasting – over many months or years. Cortisol differences between the women, for example, may only be five to ten per cent over a day, but then the difference goes on every week, every year and every decade, over 30 years perhaps, and this is much more likely to lead to premature disease. So small effects are important because they lead to differences in our everyday lives.”

He added: “We can say for certain that negative things like stress and depression do have bad effects on biology, and positive states may have protective effects and be health promoting.”

Studies of happiness and health have often been hijacked by pop psychologists who imply that individuals with serious illnesses such as cancer can improve their chances of recovery simply by willing themselves well, and being upbeat.

Professor Steptoe said: “It is a ridiculous thing to say to people with cancer ‘be happy’, and it can be maladaptive – if you have an illusion that things will all work out well by being happy, you may not do what is medically good for you.” But harnessed in an effective and scientifically proven way, the link between happiness and health could pay huge dividends.

So what makes people happy and how could happiness be increased to improve their health? Professor Steptoe says there is strong evidence that one activity that improved people’s level of happiness is helping others.

He cited an experiment in which people were given a sum of money and instructed either to spend it on others or on themselves. The participants who gave the money away were happier for longer than those who used the money to treat themselves. “We now plan to look at what people are doing and how happy they are when they are doing it,” he said.

The importance of the pursuit of happiness – for nations as well as individuals – is an imperative that politicians have embraced in recent years.

As an adviser to the Labour Government, Richard Layard became known as the ‘happiness tsar’.

Lord Layard and two colleagues are launching a Movement for Happiness, calling for “a more co-operative society where people expect more satisfaction from what they give than from what they get”.

Lord Layard writes on the Movement for Happiness website: “Happiness is good for you. Everyone wants to be happy, yet many are not. This has been the human condition for as long as anyone can remember – Samuel Beckett said that the tears of the world are a constant quantity. But what if the tears of the world are not so constant? What if it really is possible for individuals and whole societies to shape and boost their happiness?”

Professor Steptoe’s team is going some way towards helping to find the answer.

Sarah Womack is former social affairs correspondent of the Daily Telegraph

International Study of Biology and Positive Well-Being

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Volunteering to help others may improve one’s levels of happiness
The ESRC’s new Chief Executive Officer, Paul Boyle, talks to Society Now about his academic career, his priorities for the ESRC and the value of social science

A life in social science

What inspired you to pursue an academic career?
I went to Lancaster University because I had a genuine desire to study but I certainly didn’t imagine I would end up as an academic. As part of my undergraduate degree I spent a year on an exchange in Boulder, Colorado and that experience, combined with my final year dissertation, gave me the stimulus to get involved in an academic career. So I applied for an ESRC-funded PhD and was awarded a CASE studentship working with Hereford and Worcester County Council looking quantitatively at migration patterns in the county. Though it wasn’t the most glamorous location that work gave me a set of specialisms and quantitative skills that at the time weren’t that common.

After my PhD I went straight into a lectureship at Swansea for four years then another lectureship at Leeds which was one of the leading quantitative geography departments. After another five years I was approached by St Andrew’s to apply for a chair there. St Andrew’s was a weaker department – grade 3 in the RAE – but had great potential. That’s what persuaded me to go and I really enjoyed working with colleagues to help shape that department and improve its position over successive RAEs.

What’s been your involvement with the ESRC throughout your career?
I did the ESRC-funded PhD and was lucky enough to get an ESRC small grant quite soon after I started my lectureship in Swansea, providing my first research assistant. Since then I’ve had a number of ESRC grants – a mixture of PhD studentships and grants as well as more significant funding to support the Longitudinal Studies Centre – Scotland, which has been responsible for establishing and supporting the Scottish Longitudinal Study.

The ESRC Centre for Population Change is the most recent big initiative. I was a co-director in charge of the Scottish consortium of five Scottish universities, all of whom collaborate in the centre. It’s really getting off the ground in Scotland – it’s been behind the Southampton investment because it’s taken a little while to get people in post, but also because we’re going to base all these people in the General Registry Office in Scotland, which is the Scottish equivalent of the Office for National Statistics, and we want the group of research assistants and PhD students to be working there together to give it a critical mass. This is an exciting approach because the demographers are right there at the heart of the main statistical agency for population issues in Scotland.

It has given the project a real policy focus and the interaction with the Scottish Government has been excellent; they have appointed a person to work at the interface between the Government and the centre to feed ideas back and forth. This helps the centre demographers understand the Government priorities and the government departments are also kept up to speed about the centre activities.

What do you believe is the value of social science?
Part of the answer to that is working out what social science is in the first place. As a social scientist I have a clear grasp but I’m not convinced that the public understands social sciences in the same way as the natural sciences. For example, there’s a lot of hard science on television but if social science does make it to TV, it often isn’t labelled social science. So one of the things we social scientists need to do is look at how our science projects itself and how we can get across what its value is.

We also need to think about how we can do a better job of engaging with the impact agenda. There will certainly be academics who get quite worried about that – academic work is not just about having a direct economic impact – but I do think that there’s a lot of academic work which could have an impact but which doesn’t; perhaps it isn’t promoted well enough or perhaps some academics have not had enough experience of engaging other groups with their work.

The other side of the story is about working with government to make them realise social science isn’t just about economic impact. Of course it’s crucial that some of the work we do does have economic impact – you can understand why the public and the government would like to see that. But a lot of ESRC-funded research has a huge impact on public policy – areas where it can change the way society is run and affect people’s daily lives.

Thus, it is essential to recognise that it is not simply about economic impact. There’s cultural, social and intellectual impacts which social science research provides. For example, there are...
numerous major texts written decades ago which at the time might have had absolutely no impact but which led to fundamental changes in society – think of some of the key economic texts that weren’t necessarily valued at the time they were written. For this reason we must never lose that kind of blue-sky thinking in social science.

It is also short-sighted to view social science in isolation. There is a growing recognition across the breadth of academic enquiry that inter-disciplinary approaches are often required and that social science often has a vital role to play. There are various complex questions which require analysis from a range of perspectives – take, for example, climate change. We rely on natural scientists to provide reliable evidence on the extent of global warming, and what the contribution of human activity is to this.

However, we require social scientists to help us understand how to change people’s behaviour so that society becomes more sustainable; to provide advice on how to calculate realistic approaches to carbon trading; and to work with governments to help identify how sustainable policies can be identified that are acceptable to business and the public.

What are the main priorities for the ESRC now and over the coming years?

I’ve come to the organisation mid-way through a spending review which is going to be different to all the other spending reviews of the recent past and is inevitably going to affect the ESRC significantly.

I have to say I’m impressed by how efficient the ESRC is as an organisation and by how much work is done by a relatively small team to further the cause of social science research. However, we do have to think very carefully about what we do within the organisation – how we manage whatever cuts we have to handle, how we’re going to restructure ourselves internally, what sorts of changes we make to the business we do.

It’s also thinking about the investments that we make and prioritising them. We can’t just make cuts across the board at an even rate – we need to be much more strategic and that will probably mean cutting back quite significantly on some of the areas that we fund at the same time as protecting other activities.

However, the spending review does present us with opportunities as well. There will be many organisations – public service areas, other research councils, charities, all sorts of groups – for whom funding is perhaps becoming more difficult now. When individual organisations are struggling financially there may in fact be more to gain by getting involved with collaborative work because it not only creates huge value, it’s also cheaper for each organisation.

And there are other ways that we can make more out of what we’ve got. One of the achievements I’m most proud of is setting up the Scottish Longitudinal Study. This uses resources that already exist so instead of doing a survey of 264,000 people the study uses anonymised information that’s already been collected from the census, from hospital records, vital events registrations, education records and so on. Of course you have to be very strict in the way you handle that data but, linked together, it can provide exciting new insights which may be impossible from surveys which are inevitably smaller scale.

What is going to guide ESRC funding decisions in future?

We’ve already taken a decision that we’re going to introduce three key priorities to direct our decisions. They are: Economic Performance and Sustainable Growth; Changing Behaviour and Informing Interventions; and A Vibrant and Fair Society. These are the areas we have decided to focus our strategic investment around in the next couple of years.

I’m also keen that, unlike the strategic plans of the past that tended to take five years to turn over, we revisit these priorities regularly to see if we’ve done enough work on them and to decide whether they need refreshing. It may be that some priorities need more attention and longer term funding than others and we also need to be flexible enough to identify new priorities as they arise.

It’s important to remember that the ESRC does not make unilateral decisions on its priorities and the way it directs funding. We have a council and well-governed procedures of involving council and our committees in decision making, and we have always, and will continue, to involve the academic community in important decisions affecting the work we do. These may be challenging times, but exciting ones too!
News briefs

MIGRATION AND LABOUR MARKETS
The Centre for Population Change (CPC), in conjunction with The Centre for Applied Social Surveys, organised the second conference on Migration and Labour Markets. Academics from the China Academy of Social Sciences joined the CPC team in providing presentations on migration and labour market integration, measuring and monitoring migration flows as well as the impact of migration on those ‘left behind’. www.cpc.ac.uk/latest_news/?action=story&id=37

IMMUNITY FROM RECESSION
Unemployment has risen, total working hours have declined and earnings have stagnated. At a public seminar on 2 September the Centre for Learning and Life Changes in Knowledge Economies and Societies presented findings on a project aimed at updating and extending studies in the light of the economic downturn. Discussions on how workplace training and learning activities have fared during the recession have been promoted. www.illakes.org

UK SOCIAL COGNITION NETWORK AND TRAINING SCHEME
Postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers from the areas of social cognition and social neuroscience attended the second SCONET consultation seminar on 12-15 September. The project supports the training and networking of early career researchers and doctoral students in social cognition in the UK. Participants presented and discussed their work with seven experts. www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/community/sconet.html

NEW COHORT STUDIES WEBSITE
Cohort studies provide information about life trajectories, helping to understand the links between social and economic change and the impact of policy interventions. Launched in September 2010, Our Changing Lives is a website funded by the ESRC, MRC and Wellcome Trust. The aim is to promote the visibility of cohort studies as a collective resource for research across the biomedical and social sciences and to highlight the outputs and impacts that stem from the data collected. www.ourchanginglives.net

GREEN LIGHT FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship and Research and Knowledge Transfer Fund, sponsored by the ESRC, Barclays and National Council Graduate Entrepreneurship, has announced the funding of four new research projects exploring the challenges posed by contemporary economic conditions. These projects will focus on the importance of entrepreneurship to regenerate and renew economic growth. Results will be presented at regional workshops in 2011. www.isbe.org.uk/RAKEFund

GLOBAL UNCERTAINTIES WEBSITE
The RCUK Global Uncertainties research programme, led by the ESRC, has launched a new website with an extensive outline of core research areas and related projects, news and funding opportunities. Additional resources including publications, external links, facts and figures are also available. Global Uncertainties brings together the activities of the UK’s Research Councils in response to global security challenges. www.globaluncertainties.org.uk

NEW LAND USE PROJECTS
Successful projects in the Rural Economy and Land Use fourth and final round Adapting Rural Living and Land Use to Environmental Change – a joint call with the Living With Environmental Change Programme – were announced in June. Nine projects were launched to assist the building of networks for creative knowledge exchange to help communities adapt to environmental change. www.relu.ac.uk

SAFE RESEARCHER COURSE
Training by the Administrative Data Liaison Service, Office for National Statistics and the Secure Data Service in Manchester on 14 September helped researchers develop the skills and knowledge needed to use data resources responsibly for analysis and research purposes. Delegates took away a better understanding of the legal and security frameworks of administrative data research and how to create safe settings. www.adls.ac.uk/research-themes

GLOBAL COMMUNITY MEET ON INNOVATION
The UK Innovation Research Centre supported the Danish Research Unit for Industrial Dynamics (DRUID) international Summer Conference. The event brought together a global community of 300 researchers on innovation and industrial dynamics. Researchers from over 30 countries presented their latest findings on innovation management and strategy, entrepreneurship and the economics of innovation. www.ukirc.ac.uk/newsandevents/news/article/?objid=3329

TOMORROW’S GIANTS
Professor Robin Williams, Co-Director at the ESRC Innogen Centre, ran a Summer session on research careers. Tomorrow’s Giants was a one-day conference on the future of science co-hosted by the Royal Society and Nature. It brought together scientists and policymakers to collect professionals’ visions of the next 50 years. The day focused on three major themes: Data, Careers, and the Measuring and Assessment of research. www.genomicsnetwork.ac.uk/innogen/news/title,23694,en.html

INFORMATION & UPDATES

AUTUMN 2010 SOCIETY NOW 29
**People**

**PROFESSOR ROBERT MILLER**

Professor Robert Miller, Deputy Director of Access, Research, Knowledge, a Social and Political Archive for Northern Ireland, has been appointed to the Advisory Board of the European Commission Framework 7 collaborative research project, ENRI-East. This is a cross-national study of social and ethnic groups whose goal is to develop an understanding of how European identities and regional cultures are formed.

**NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS**

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has appointed two members to the ESRC Council. Martin Coleman is the Head of Antitrust, Competition and Regulatory Practice for Norton Rose LLP. He has been appointed from 1 April 2010 to 31 July 2013. David Martin is a Professor in the School of Geography, University of Southampton, Co-Director of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods and the co-ordinator of the ESRC Census Programme. He has been appointed from 1 August 2010 to 21 July 2013.

**PROFESSOR STEVE YEARLEY**

Professor Steve Yearley, Director of the ESRC Genomics Forum, has been invited to serve as an international adviser to the American Sociological Association’s Task Force on Sociology and Global Climate Change, which starts work later this year. The task force, established in February 2010, will produce a report on how society is organised, how we commute, consume and communicate, and the effect this has on climate change issues.

**PROFESSOR GRAHAM LOOMES**

Professor Graham Loomes, Department of Economics, has been elected as a Fellow to the British Academy, acknowledging his research into the theoretical and empirical analysis of people’s values, judgments and decisions. He will join the other elected fellows to take a lead in representing the humanities and social sciences and contribute to public policy and debate.

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**EVENTS**

**20 OCTOBER**

**World Statistics Day**

This one-day event marks the first worldwide celebration of the role and achievements of official statistics at both national and international level. Applied Quantitative Methods Network is arranging this seminar to bring together leading figures involved in upholding the quality and integrity of statistical outputs. The ways in which official statistics are used by the outside world as well as the importance of consultation with users will be discussed. [aqmen.ac.uk/events/wsd2010](aqmen.ac.uk/events/wsd2010)

**27 OCTOBER**

**Using knowledge for social good**

This partnership event between the Third Sector Research Centre and the Association for University Research and Industry links will allow participants to discuss ethical issues raised by research and explore how knowledge exchange can be used to achieve positive outcomes. Research on the ‘third sector’ or ‘civil society’ explores a number of complex issues which may have ethical implications when translated into practice. [www.tsrc.ac.uk/News/Events/tabid/350/Default.asp](www.tsrc.ac.uk/News/Events/tabid/350/Default.asp)

**ONGOING**

**Looking for an expert on Eastern Europe?**

A collaboration of leading universities established a partnership to lead research on urgent questions for today, train experts and set the research agenda for tomorrow. An online ‘Database of Expertise’ with over 120 registered professionals has been created by the Centre for East European Language-Based Area Studies. This is a vital resource for anyone wishing to locate an expert on Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. [www.ceelbas.ac.uk/databaseofexpert](www.ceelbas.ac.uk/databaseofexpert)

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**UPDATES & INFORMATION**

Information & updates can be found at [aqmen.ac.uk/news/events/tabid/350/Default.asp](aqmen.ac.uk/news/events/tabid/350/Default.asp)
Publications

Who Needs Migrant Workers?

Are migrant workers needed to ‘do the jobs that locals will not do’ or are they simply a more exploitable labour force? Do they have a better ‘work ethic’ or are they less able to complain? Is migrant labour the solution to ‘skills shortages’ or actually part of the problem? This new book from the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the demand for migrant workers in high income countries. It demonstrates how a range of government policies contribute to creating a growing demand for migrant labour.

Who Needs Migrant Workers by Martin Ruhs and Bridget Anderson. Published by Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-98059-0 (Hardback), 352pp, £60. For more information, visit: ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199805900.do?

Spatial and Social Disparities

Inequality is one of the major problems of the modern world. Issues of equity and deprivation must be addressed in view of sustainable development, but before policymakers can remove the obstacles to a fairer world, it is essential to understand the nature of inequality. This second volume in the series of population studies conducted by the Understanding Population Trends and Processes Programme examines the disparities that are evident across geographical space in the UK and also between different individuals or groups.


Nature after the Genome

This book explores modern understandings of nature and is a collection of essays on issues such as synthetic biology, agricultural biotechnology, stem cell research and biodiversity. The authors from ESRC Innogen Centre and ESRC Egenis Centre aim to show just how far-reaching and radical the implications of genomic science are. The ways that we, as humans, think about life and the capacities we have for intervening in life processes, are being transformed.


Rethinking the Public

Using interesting case studies in research, theory and politics, this book presents the public, public communication and public action in an ever-changing world. It creates academic viewpoints for studying the shaping of publics, focusing on four overlapping processes: claiming publics, personalised publics, mediating publics and becoming public. This volume is a valuable resource for students researching political patterns in this topical field.

Rethinking the Public by Nick Mahony, Janet Newman and Clive Barnett. Published by Policy Press. ISBN: 9781847424167 (Hardback), 188pp, £52.00. For more information, visit: www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?ISBN=9781847424167

EVENTS

13 NOVEMBER

Children in contemporary Taiwan

The White Rose East Asia Centre will be holding its second Taiwan Study Day and Documentary Festival focusing on Children in contemporary Taiwan. Taiwan is an important part of the South-East Asia region and this day will provide students who have little or no background in Taiwan studies with an excellent entry point to the subject. For more information, visit: www.wreac.org/events/all-events/details/84-taiwan-study-day-and-documentary-festival

16-17 NOVEMBER

Universities and their impacts

The research initiative Impact of the Higher Education Institutions on Regional Economies is hosting a final two-day conference, the aim of which is to highlight research findings and policy implications across UK regions. Conference sessions will provide an opportunity to discuss some of the important issues about the purpose of higher education, the impact of higher education and the challenges that will face universities in the future. For more information, visit: ewd.s.strath.ac.uk/impact/Events/2010ImpactInitiativeEvents/NovemberConference.aspx

24-25 JANUARY 2011

Exploring the everyday lives of young children

This two-day event is part of an ESRC-funded project, Young Children Learning with Toys and Technology at Home. Researchers on the project have been exploring the everyday lives of pre-school children and have invited academics from a broad range of disciplines to present and discuss findings that focus on real-world issues in the lives of children who are five or younger. For more information, visit: www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/exploringeverydaylives/callforpapers.php
The ESRC magazine Society Now aims to raise awareness of our research and its impact. It is 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, and is published three times a year (spring, summer and early autumn).

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

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

Our research informs public policies and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. Most 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 www.esrc.ac.uk

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