

ODPM Planning Research Network Newsletter No.1 May 2004

New Report

Planning Research Network Members may be interested in a report recently published by the Learning and Skills Research Centre as a fundamental resource for all those concerned with developing the evidence base for public service professionals, and to address the problem about connecting the outputs of research with the inputs that professionals use in making judgements in their day-to-day practice.

Although focused upon the learning and skills sector, it has interesting observations and findings which relate to the whole area of the relationship between practice and research.

Copies of the report may be obtained from Andrew Morris at the LSRC
Email: amorris@LSDA.org.uk

RTPI News

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) “Think Pieces”. The RTPI aims to create a more effective, learned and learning profession in which the practice of planning is built on a current and growing knowledge base. The first step in achieving this was the establishment of the Research and Knowledge Committee, made up of both academics and practitioners. The objective of this Committee is to lead work on developing the framework for the Institute’s engagement with research, including priorities for its own research programme and its ability to influence the research programmes of others, with a specific view to providing a firm evidential and theoretical basis for the Institute’s policies and views and for planning practice.

To this end the Committee agreed to commission a number of small scale scoping papers, or “Think Pieces”, which would look at specific topics, and set out initial views on the topics as precursors to further work.

The context for the work is the RTPI’s New Vision for Planning. This is a key document which sets out the way the Institute believes that planning should evolve to help deliver sustainable communities through a planning system which enables the public to become involved and is integrated with other strategies and initiatives. It sees a radical change, from planners owning the planning system to them becoming stewards of a much more open planning system. Each of the specific papers relate to the themes of the New Vision for Planning (an approach to planning that is sustainable, spatial, inclusive, and integrated).

The production of the Think Pieces is a recognition that the RTPI needs to be more fully aware of the work that is already being carried out that underpins the New Vision for Planning. Equally it acknowledges that the RTPI has a greater role to play in filling the significant gaps in the knowledge. The authors of the Think Pieces are in a unique position of assisting the RTPI in devising a detailed long term work programme which will build on the work carried out to date and allow the Research and Knowledge Committee to begin to put together proposals on filling the gaps.

The four Think Piece papers and their authors commissioned are as follows:

- Sustainability (Richard Cowell, Cardiff University)
- Value (Christine Whitehead, London School of Economics)
- Inclusion (Stephen Hill, Capital Action)
- Integration (Janice Morphet, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

For further details please contact Karen Buchanan at RTPI
Email: karen.buchanan@rtpi.org.uk

Conference Notifications

- 1) **The RGS-IBG Postgraduate Forum Mid-term Conference** on 21st February is now fully booked, but notice is given of the Annual Conference, 15 – 20 August 2004 which will form part of the IGU Congress in Glasgow. Details may be found on <http://www.meetingmakers.co.uk/igc-uk2004/call.html>

- 2) **The 2004 Social Policy Association Conference**, “From Third Way to Which Way?”, will take place at the University of Nottingham, from 13th-15th July.

The conference will provide a timely opportunity to reflect upon the development of New Labour, its impact upon both welfare and social policy, and to look in particular at how things may change in the future.

The call for papers is intended to be fairly open, but papers and poster sessions to the following sub themes are welcomed:

- Health and wellbeing (joint sessions with the ESA Medical Sociology and Health Policy RN)
- Education and Learning
- Communities (to include housing) and social renewal
- Social inequalities (including issues relating to class, gender, 'race', ethnicity and migration)
- Employment and financial security
- Governance
- Social Work and social care (including the new agencies of Third Way)

- International and Comparative Social Policy

Plenary speakers will include Jane Lewis, Paul Spicker, Stuart White, Hilary Wainwright Adrian Sinfield and Bill Jordan. Abstracts of about 150 words (either on paper and supported by a disk in Word compatible format or by email in rich text format) should be sent to:

SPA Conference Committee
School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Nottingham
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

Email: SPA2004@nottingham.ac.uk

3) Please note the postponed deadline (20th February 2004) for abstract submission to the 2004 AESOP Congress.

Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) 2004 Congress
July 1-3, 2004, University of Grenoble, France

"Metropolitan Planning and Environmental Issues"

This year's conference will include parallel sessions focusing on 11 different themes ('tracks'), mobile workshops, paper presentations, and poster sessions as well as opportunities to interact with your peers and enjoy Grenoble and the French Alps.

Visit the conference website for information on the conference format and opportunities for participation.

www.grenoble-univ-rech.org/aesop

TCPA news

Two new forthcoming TCPA events in London:

1) CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES:

Vehicles, Delivery & Infrastructure
Wednesday 18th February 2004
Avonmouth House, London SE1

Speakers include:

Lee Shostak – Shared Intelligence & TCPA Trustee
David Lock – David Lock Associates & TCPA Chair
John Onslow – Cambridgeshire CC
Joanna Averley – CABE
Will McKee – Chair, Thurrock UDC

2) SUSTAINABLE RURAL COMMUNITIES:

A New Deal for the Countryside

Tuesday 16th March 2004

Glaziers' Hall, London, SE1

Speakers include:

Lord Haskins

Richard Wakeford – Countryside Agency

Nick Shuttleworth – Rural Community Council of Essex

Trevor Cherrett – Action in Rural Sussex

Mark Felton – English Nature

Book online on: www.tcpa.org.uk/conferences

European Project

"Sustainable Renovation of Buildings for Sustainable Neighbourhoods" or HQE²R

is a project partly funded by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework R&D Programme. The project started in September 2001 and will continue until March 2004. Co-ordinated by CSTB (Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment), France, it is represented by 7 European countries. It combines research and demonstration aspects with the co-operation of 10 European partners and is connected with 14 municipal case studies.

The objective of the project is described as being: to develop a new approach, together with the necessary tools, to promote sustainable development and the quality of life at the crucial and challenging level of urban neighbourhoods. HQE²R aims at providing decision aid tools for municipalities and their local partners, focussing on the goals of the inhabitants and users of neighbourhoods. The elements taken into account in the development of this approach and of tools are:-

- improving the quality of the built environment (especially comfort and reduction of costs-in-use and of maintenance for buildings)
- improving the quality of life through urban development which respects the environment
- controlling costs and applying management methods
- controlling urban sprawl by managing space, mobility and the use of public transportation. With its integrated approach HQE²R aims at providing a framework, which can be generally applied in European cities. The project uses the case studies as neighbourhoods for and in which the approach and the tools are developed.

More can be found on the website <http://hqe2r.cstb.fr/>

ESRC News

The ESRC are currently seeking nominations to their research grants board. There will be a social policy vacancy from October. See the ESRC website for further details:

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/jobopportunities/board_appointments_2004

The position involves attending 4 meetings a year and reviewing around 10-12 grant applications for each meeting.

Focusing on the Case in Quantitative and Qualitative Research

ESRC Research Methods Training Programme

This is advance notice of an ESRC funded training / research methodology initiative. Attendance at each seminar will be limited to 25 people and all travel and subsistence costs will be born by the programme.

Focusing on the case in quantitative and qualitative research, the project has two interlinked aims:

1) To develop the expertise of UK based researchers in the integrated employment of a range of case centred methods including:

- Numerical Taxonomy methods
- Qualitative Comparative Analysis
- Qualitative Statistical Modelling
- Traditional Case Study approaches

2) To engaged in a dialogical research exercise with researchers about their needs for and understanding of case based approaches in relation to the actual research problems with which they are engaged.

Rationale

One of the major tasks of social science is establishing how things come to be as they are - establishing causal systems in the real world. It is a truism to say that the social world is complex. In other words you cannot explain it in terms of single causes with single effects. However, the traditional quantitative approaches in social science based on variable analysis have tended towards such simple explanations. Sociology has a long tradition of another approach in the form of the comparative method based on detailed comparison across a range of cases. Recently, developments in computer based methods have facilitated an integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a way which focuses upon the cases and allows us to address the complexity of social causes. This project combines training in the use of such approaches with an exploration of the way in which social researchers, at all stages of their careers, have thought about these issues in the past and can develop new strategies in the future based on case centred methods.

Workshops

The combined training and research dialogues will be run through a series of 2 day research workshops to be held during July, September and December 2004, and January 2005. Participants will be fully reimbursed for travel costs and accommodation and training is free. It is intended that participants will attend all the sessions if possible but this is negotiable. Applications are invited from academics, graduate students, and practitioners and it is intended to achieve a mix of people, interests, and academic / practitioners. The package has a value of some £2,500 per person.

Anyone interested in participating should send a note of not more than 250 words (email or Word attachment) outlining why they are interested to David Byrne on: dave.byrne@durham.ac.uk

Feedback

Please send feedback or items for inclusion in the next issue to Steve Littlewood.

Email: s.littlewood@leedsmet.ac.uk