Looking to the future

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A Welcome
from the WISERD Director

Since the last edition of WISERD News the world has become a very different place. Faced with great political and cultural change, both at home and abroad, we’ve seen the consequences of widespread division amongst our communities, alongside striking acts of solidarity. In these uncertain times when we have become accustomed to expect the unexpected, one thing that is absolutely clear is the need for WISERD to continue finding new ways to better understand society and the challenges ahead.

I’m delighted to report that WISERD has been highlighted as a ‘major resource’ in the Diamond Review, which also recommended that it ‘receive core funding from the Welsh Government to impact on social policy’. This is a significant endorsement for WISERD and one that fully recognises the breadth, excellence and policy relevance of its research programmes.

We’re also very pleased to have been awarded £215,000 in Research Infrastructure Funding (RIF) from Cardiff University to continue the WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study. This is an important and fascinating longitudinal study tracking a sample of pupils at different points in time. More than 1,200 pupils in over 30 schools in Wales have been involved so far, including ‘Brexit and Wales – the Key Questions’. This well-attended and lively discussion coincided with news about Theresa May’s plans for negotiations with the European Union, the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru’s joint white paper on Brexit, and the Supreme Court’s ruling that Parliament must vote on Article 50, but that devolved legislatures do not have a veto. Clearly the new WISERD centre will have a vital role to play in bringing research and evidence to bear on a rapidly changing political scene.

We cover some of the other recent WISERD events that have provided the opportunity to explore a diverse range of topics, such as the ADRC-W Alcohol Consumption and Population Health Seminar, the 2nd Welsh Retail and Leisure Summit – held in conjunction with the Local Data Company (LDC), the Wales Housing Research Conference, our Testing Times education debate, which coincided with the release of the latest round of PISA results, and our contribution to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)’s week-long celebration of the social sciences and social science research. You’ll also be able to see highlights from last year’s WISERD Annual Conference, which took place at Swansea University’s new Bay Campus.

It was an honour to be asked to take part in the Bangor School of Social Sciences 50th anniversary celebrations towards the end of last year, which showcased the school’s contribution to social sciences research in Wales and beyond. We’re looking forward to joining our colleagues at Bangor University again this year, when we hold our 2017 WISERD Annual Conference in July.

Finally, I was very sad to bid farewell to my friend and colleague, Professor of Economics, Philip Murphy last autumn who has worked in the School of Management at Swansea University since 1991. He has made a brilliant contribution to our research programmes over the years. He will be very much missed by all his colleagues at WISERD but we wish him all the best in his retirement.

I hope you enjoy this edition of WISERD News.

Professor Ian Rees Jones
WISERD Director
WISERD Aberystwyth: New Developments

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WISERD Civil Society project: Higher Education and civic participation

WISERD Civil Society project: Trade union membership, associational life and wellbeing

WISERD Civil Society project: Looking at the associations between gender, age, and volunteering in Europe

Our Changing Land: Revisiting Gender, Class and Identity in Contemporary Wales

Wales Labour Market Summit II: Comparing Policy Interventions to Challenge ‘Business as Usual’

ESRC Festival of Social Science 2016: Celebrating social science research

Using social media in social research: Event highlights

A welcome from WISERD to our distinguished visiting fellows

Measuring spatial variations: The provision of sporting facilities in Wales

Wales Housing Research Conference 2016: Co-hosted by Shelter Cymru, the Welsh Government and WISERD’s Wales Housing Research Network

Welsh high street not dead, but changing fast: 2nd Welsh Retail and Leisure Summit

Poverty and food banks in Wales: Civil Society seminar

Representation in Westminster: New research

The IDEAL study: Finding strategies to live well with dementia

Introducing the GW4 Pay Equality Research Consortium: Enabling ground-breaking integrative equal pay research

Evaluation of the Foundation Phase Flexibility Pilot Scheme: An education report for the Welsh Government

WISERD blog and events
WISERD Aberystwyth
New developments

New WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society

WISERD has expanded its presence at Aberystwyth University with the November 2016 launch of the new WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, which brings existing WISERD staff and projects together with the long-established Institute for Welsh Politics.

Led by WISERD Co-Directors Dr Anwen Elias and Professor Michael Woods, the new interdisciplinary research centre includes over 30 academic and post-doctoral staff and PhD students from across subjects including human geography, politics, economics, law, history, education, psychology and media studies.

The WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society aims to develop understanding of contemporary politics and society in Wales, undertake world-leading critically-informed research, and contribute to public and policy debates.

The research activities of the centre are initially focused on three themes:

- Global Connections – coordinated by Lucy Taylor
- Governance, Participation and Civil Society – coordinated by Taulant Guma
- Language, Culture and Identities – coordinated by Elin Royles

Each theme presents opportunities for engagement and collaboration with WISERD colleagues in other institutions. A number of current funded research grants contribute to work on these themes, including:

- Four projects in the ESRC WISERD Civil Society programme
- GLOBAL-RURAL project funded by the European Research Council
- New Horizon 2020 IMAJINE project on territorial inequalities and spatial justice led by the centre
- AHRC network on Language Revitalisation and Social Transformation

Public engagement forms a key aspect of the centre’s activities. A well-attended public panel on ‘Brexit and Wales – the Key Questions’ kicked-off the programme in January, which has been followed by public lectures and seminars, with external speakers including Baroness Eluned Morgan AM (pictured) and Professor Rick Rawlings, as well as internal seminars, workshops and reading groups. A reception in Cardiff Bay to mark the centre’s launch is also planned for 2017.

Additionally, the centre will contribute to WISERD’s training and capacity building agenda, with activities targeted at both academic and non-academic audiences. A successful symposium on Research Impact in the Social Sciences and Humanities was held in conjunction with Aberystwyth University’s Transformative Social Science Programme in January, with a workshop on innovative methodologies planned for later in the year.

Postgraduate training is supported through linked PhDs, including the human geography and politics and international relations pathways of the ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Partnership, and the MA in Welsh Politics and Society. Courses and workshops for wider continuing professional development are also being explored.

Professor Michael Woods, Co-Director of WISERD at Aberystwyth, explained: “The new centre is a real opportunity to develop exciting new interdisciplinary research collaborations that can make internationally significant interventions to academic debates, whilst at the same time fulfilling our civic mission by stimulating and informing public debate in Wales. By bringing new researchers into the WISERD fold, the new centre will contribute to the sustainability of WISERD and initiate new directions for collaborative research within the WISERD network.”

IMAJINE – Horizon 2020 funding success

WISERD Aberystwyth has been successful in a European Horizon 2020 funding bid for a project about spatial injustice and territorial inequalities: ‘Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe (IMAJINE)’, which started in January 2017.

The project addresses the following themes: ‘Territorial Cohesion, Spatial Justice and Solidarity in Europe’ and ‘Regionalism, a Question of Political and Social Equality?’ It integrates data and analysis from both themes to develop overarching conclusions and recommendations.

The core objective of IMAJINE is to formulate new integrative policy mechanisms to enable European, national and regional government agencies to more effectively address territorial inequalities within the European Union, and to imagine a future for European regions in which the distribution of resources is consistent with principles of social and spatial justice.
Good intentions are not enough

Social innovation in home care for older people

WISERSD Director, Professor Ian Rees Jones, collaborated on a Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) report on innovation in home care that was launched at the Fairer Futures: Reshaping Care for Older People Symposium.

Published to coincide with the symposium, a collaboration between Alliance Manchester Business School’s Health Services Research Centre, WISERD, the Fairness at Work Research Centre and the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research into Ageing, the report argues that having good intentions alone in adult care is not enough.

The findings reveal that the central state and expert community have promoted the worthy aims of personalisation of care and outcomes-based commissioning. However, the report argues that (partly as a result of austerity cuts) adult social care is a sector now facing multiple crises: there is a financial crisis in terms of service cuts, a care quality crisis, a workforce recruitment and retention crisis and a provider crisis resulting from squeezed profit margins.

This is the second of two reports on social care that have been underpinned by WISERD social care research. The earlier report, ‘Where does the money go? The financialised chains and the crisis in social care’, featured in the December 2016 edition of Private Eye, looks at the allocation of funds in care homes. It uses follow-the-money research to show that putting more state money in is no solution, as the care chains owners are adept at taking money out. Both reports have been well received within the Welsh Government and work is ongoing to develop further policy-relevant research in this area.

CRESC Public Interest Report September 2016: Why We Need Social Innovation in Home Care for Older People, report by Diane Burns, Joe Earle, Peter Folkman, Julie Froud, Paula Hyde, Sukhdev Johal, Ian Rees Jones, Anne Killett and Karel Williams.

Adult social care is a sector now facing multiple crises

Continued from page 4

The interdisciplinary team in Aberystwyth are Professor Michael Woods, Professor Rhys Jones, Dr Anwen Elias, Dr Elin Royles, and Dr Maria Plotnikova from the Aberystwyth University Management and Business School. The total grant is just under €5 million with €1.2 million coming to Aberystwyth University.

GLOBAL-RURAL project

Global Countryside: Rural Change and Development in Globalization (GLOBAL-RURAL) is a major research project funded by the European Research Council. The study aims to advance our understanding of the workings and impact of globalization in rural regions through the development and application of new conceptual and methodological approaches.

The project started in February 2014 and comprises five projects:
- (Re-)Assembling the Global Countryside
- Mapping and Narrating the Global Countryside
- A Countertopography of Everyday Globalization
- Differential Global Engagements in Emerging Rural Economies
- Rural Assemblages and Grounding Global Challenges

To find out more about this project, visit the GLOBAL-RURAL project where you can read the latest blog posts from the research team: globalruralproject.wordpress.com
Young people and politics

A new interdisciplinary study

WISERD has recently been awarded ESRC funding to carry out a new interdisciplinary study into how young people in the UK feel about, and are responding to, the most significant policy issue of this Parliament: the UK’s exit from the European Union.

Young people and Brexit

Young People and Brexit will include new and existing WISERD research, employing a variety of methods and drawing on data from a range of sources. This will include nationwide surveys, and interviews and discussions with young people. It will also see the production of two short research films featuring young people and addressing questions such as, how are young people feeling about Brexit, and what impact is it having on their political engagement?

A dedicated team of researchers based at Cardiff University and Aberystwyth University – Dr Stuart Fox, Professor Rhys Jones, Dr Sioned Pearce, Dyfan Powel and Dr Elin Royles are working together on the project with external organisations involved in youth political engagement, such as Youth Cymru, the National Assembly for Wales and Members of the UK Parliament.

Young People and the EU Referendum

The Young People and Brexit project follows on from WISERD’s Young People and the EU Referendum study last year, which explored how young people were engaging with the EU Referendum and the issue of EU membership, as well as their subsequent participation in the referendum.

Using data from a dedicated UK-wide survey of under-30s and a wide range of publicly available data and academic research, the study addressed four key questions:

- What was the likelihood of young people casting a vote in the referendum and what were the traits that may have been decisive in determining which young people did so?
- What was the voting preference among young people – Leave or Remain?
- How much did young people trust the two respective campaigns and the media sources through which they heard about the referendum?
- What effect did media sources have on their engagement with the campaign and their eventual voting decision?

Research findings

The findings showed young people to be overwhelmingly supportive of remaining in the EU, and though they turned out in the highest numbers since the 1990s, those less interested in politics generally were less likely to turnout. Trust in the campaigns was low across the board but higher among young people than their elders, and finally, the EU Referendum boosted interest in politics among young people.

Research impact

The project was funded by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) and throughout its duration the project received around £3,000 in IAA funding to accelerate the impact of findings with partners. The proposed impact was ‘to shape youth political engagement in the fifth National Assembly term by creating research-led recommendations with young people and youth practitioners’.

Dr Sioned Pearce, one of the lead researchers on both young people and politics projects, discusses how the findings were used to spark a debate among young people, practitioners and researchers.

‘Official’ impact of the project

Dr Pearce says, “Firstly, we made short films with young people. During the filmmaking process we read our findings aloud to the young people and filmed their reaction or take on them. We included 11 young people and created two short films, one on social media and the EU referendum campaigns and the other on the future of youth engagement after Brexit. We made contact with young people through existing links with our partners at Youth Cymru (Llais Ifanc), the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) and the National Assembly for Wales’ Youth Engagement Team and spoke to a range of young people across south Wales, some in English and some in Welsh.

“Secondly, we produced 300 infographic postcards, which summarised our findings. We gave these to the young people involved in the short films and to anyone else involved in the project.

“Finally, we organised a one-day event for young people, practitioners and researchers at the National Assembly for Wales’ Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay. The event opened with a speech from the Presiding Officer for the National Assembly, who talked about the Assembly’s commitment to representing young people in devolved politics. We then presented our research findings. The short films were screened, and following this there was a debate opened by the
Children’s Commissioner for Wales, who emphasised the importance of listening to young peoples’ voices. The day finished with a workshop where young people and practitioners formed a Memorandum of Agreement to present to the Welsh Government. Finally, there was a closing speech by the Welsh Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language.

“The project delivered on its promise of co-producing recommendations, 10 of them, to improve youth engagement with politics in the fifth Assembly term. All were underpinned by research and shaped by youth practitioners and young people. The Memorandum of Agreement between the three groups was presented to the Welsh Government’s Department for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language.”

‘Unofficial’ impact of the project
Dr Pearce highlights the limitations involved in reporting on impact, which can mean the exclusion of outcomes that do not fit neatly into the official reporting framework.

“We did not report the impact of the short films on the young people involved. However, this was arguably the most significant part of the project. Those young people, who may not otherwise have attended an event on political engagement, came and had their voices heard in a National Assembly building with an audience of 60, including the Children’s Commissioner for Wales. This gave space to their views and a sense of legitimacy to their issues which they may not otherwise have spoken out about.

“The way the films were recorded, one-to-one with a researcher and cameraman in their own territory and among friends, meant they could talk about the effect that the EU Referendum had on them and their views on the outcome more freely than they would have on the day. Putting this narrative into the ‘official’ context at the National Assembly event allowed their views to be heard in an otherwise inaccessible and potentially intimidating forum. This was excluded from the report largely because it was not possible to evidence ‘empowerment’, which highlights the wider issue of measuring ‘soft’ impact.

Dr Pearce concludes: “Our impact took place in a much wider and more complex context than the reporting revealed. Indeed, this short article does not allow space for the full intricacies of the path to what we presented as impact. However, the argument that the clearer and more open we are about how we present impact the more we can learn as a community, holds true in this case.”

You can read further analysis and commentary of both young people and politics projects through our series of blogs, available via the WISERD website: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs
Administrative Data Research Centre Wales

Informing social, economic and health-related research

The Administrative Data Research Centre Wales (ADRC-W) is a funded centre within WISERD and one of four national centres established in the UK by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). They use cutting-edge technology to link and analyse de-identified administrative data to help inform social, economic and health-related research in the UK.

Big Data or Big Rubbish? The Contribution of Data Linkage to Social Science Symposium

In conjunction with the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University and the Administrative Data Research Centre for Wales (ADRC-W), WISERD secured funding from Cardiff University’s Incoming Visiting Fellows and International Collaboration Seedcorn Fund, for Professor Mike Hout (Department of Sociology, New York University) and Professors David Grusky and Matthew Snipp (Department of Sociology, Stanford University) to visit Cardiff University and Swansea University in 2016.

WISERD’s international visitors attended the conference, Big Data or Big Rubbish? The Contribution of Data Linkage to Social Science, in Cardiff, co-hosted by ADRC-W and WISERD, and in collaboration with the Census & Administrative data Longitudinal Studies Hub (CALLS-Hub). This event brought the US delegates together with leading UK academics to discuss the current state of play regarding data linkage and the future direction of developments in this area. Professors Grusky and Hout presented on the development of the American Opportunity Study – a census-based longitudinal study for the US, for which Professor Hout is the chair of the standing committee.

Among other events, including keynote addresses at the WISERD Annual Conference, the US delegates also visited the ADRC-W facilities at Swansea University. They received a tour of the new Data Science Building and met with ADRC-W Director, Professor David Ford and Associate Director, Professor Ronan Lyons to discuss data linkage work and developments within the UK and US, focusing on data linkage techniques, ethical considerations and data quality.

About the visiting professors

Professor Mike Hout has produced a large body of work addressing social change in inequality, religion, and politics in the USA, and has an international reputation for his work on social mobility and inequality. His current work uses the General Social Survey panel to study Americans’ changing perceptions of class, religion, and their place in society.

David B. Grusky is Barbara Kimball Browning Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences, Director of the Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality, and co-editor of Pathways Magazine. His research addresses the changing structure of late-industrial inequality. He is involved in projects to improve the country’s infrastructure for monitoring poverty, inequality, and mobility by exploiting administrative and other forms of ‘big data’ more aggressively.

Matthew Snipp is the Burnet C. and Mildred Finley Wohlford Professor of Humanities and Sciences in the Department of Sociology at Stanford University. He is also the Director for the Institute for Research in the Social Science’s Secure Data Center. His current research and writing deals with the methodology of racial measurement, changes in the social and economic well-being of American ethnic minorities, and American Indian education.
Alcohol Consumption and Population Health Seminar

The latest ADRC-W seminar on Alcohol Consumption and Population Health took place at Cardiff University’s main building in January 2017. WISERD research utilising the ADRC-W data linkage service can be used to inform policy makers in deciding how to tackle a range of complex social, economic, environmental and health issues.

The event was attended by policy makers, social scientists, statisticians and others interested in social and health research. Delegates came to find out more about how administrative data from Wales and Scotland has been utilised to carry out research on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm.

One focus of the event was around the change in alcohol outlet density and alcohol-related harm to population health (CHALICE), a comprehensive record-linked database study in Wales. The CHALICE study carried out a natural experiment of change in alcohol outlet density between 2006 and 2011 in Wales on alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm, using novel geographic information system (GIS), administrative and survey data linkage and statistical methods.

Speakers (pictured above) explored different topics around the CHALICE study and included Dr Scott Orford (WISERD and Cardiff University), Dr Richard Fry (the Farr Institute and Swansea University’s Medical School), and Professor David Fone (the Farr Institute and Cardiff University’s School of Medicine).

Professor Jamie Pearce, from the Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health (CRESH) and the University of Edinburgh presented findings from Scotland on alcohol outlet density, health inequalities and policy translation.

Dr Scott Orford said: “The work presented here demonstrates clear empirical evidence linking the availability of alcohol with alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm in Wales and Scotland.”

Dr Scott Orford concluded: “Although supporting previous work, this new research also shows some unexpected associations particularly with respect to alcohol outlet density, consumption and income inequality. It also showed that although there are commonalities in the findings between the two nations, there are also some interesting differences which could have an impact on policy.”
WISERD research contributes to curriculum changes

Recommendations made by WISERD and Cardiff University, as part of an independent three-year evaluation commissioned by the Welsh Government, have been used as part of the Welsh Government’s Foundation Phase Action Plan.

The Foundation Phase is an exciting, flagship policy that marks a radical departure from the more assessment-driven, competency-based approaches to early childhood education that have been adopted elsewhere. The policy has been “rolled out” over the last seven years and the evaluation was essential in ensuring that implementation was progressing well and also provided an opportunity to highlight areas for improvement.

In relation to the evaluation, Professor Chris Taylor, Co-Director of WISERD and part of the research team, said: “We find compelling evidence to suggest that the Foundation Phase can benefit young children in Wales in a wide range of ways, including their involvement in learning and their levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy. However, the Foundation Phase is still developing and evolving, and there remains a great deal more that everyone involved in early years education can do.”

The Welsh Government’s Foundation Phase Action Plan, published in November 2016, sets out the national approach designed to improve the way in which the Foundation Phase curriculum for three- to seven-year-olds is implemented and delivered in Welsh schools and nurseries, and includes a number of recommendations made in the evaluation. For example, it sets out pedagogical principles that should be adopted to support the Foundation Phase, which are based on the twelve ‘pedagogical elements’ that the evaluation developed and used.

The Foundation Phase Action Plan also places great emphasis on leadership – an area that the evaluation noted was important to its successful implementation – and inclusivity – the evaluation found that there was little evidence that the Foundation Phase had helped close the attainment ‘gap’ between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. In total, the plan sets out 34 Action Points, across four areas of delivery: curriculum and assessment; professional learning; narrowing gaps in achievement; and regulation and inspection.

Professor Taylor commented, “It is very pleasing to see so many of the recommendations of the independent evaluation being addressed in the Foundation Phase Action Plan, particularly around the additional support to be offered to practitioners. If schools, settings, local authorities and regional consortia successfully adopt these Action Points then we should begin to see even more progress in improving pupils’ educational outcomes in Wales.”

Professor Taylor recently appeared on BBC Breakfast television talking about the implementation and impact of play-based learning, in relation to WISERD research on children’s education.
Leading figures in Welsh education gathered for a debate on the future of education in Wales at Cardiff University’s Hadyn Ellis Building, ahead of the latest round of PISA results released in December 2016.

PISA is a triennial survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. The event marked the official launch of Dr Philip Dixon’s newly published book Testing Times: Success, Failure and Fiasco in Welsh Education Policy Since Devolution. The book provides a critical but constructive analysis of the last seventeen years of Welsh education policy, including the strategies and initiatives that have led to the Welsh Government’s Department of Education famously being labelled ‘dysfunctional’ by its own minister.

The debate was chaired by Professor Chris Taylor, Professor of Education Policy at Cardiff University and WISERD Co-Director. Dr Philip Dixon was joined by Gareth Evans, former Education Editor at the Western Mail, Professor Leighton Andrews, Professor of Practice in Public Service Leadership and Innovation at Cardiff Business School and former Minister for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government, and WISERD Emeritus Professor Gareth Rees.

The forthcoming PISA results featured prominently within the debate. Professor Gareth Rees argued that PISA doesn’t use longitudinal data, which would give a clearer picture, nor can the results tell us about the effects of policy changes on education in Wales. While the results cannot be ignored, we do need to question exactly what they can tell us and what they can’t.

Speaking to the Western Mail newspaper in February 2017, Professor Rees suggested: ‘We should treat the Pisa results cautiously. They are best considered as a starting point for further research, rather than providing a definitive measure of educational performance in Wales. He goes on to say: “It is also important to understand that Pisa is not the only way in which the quality of educational provision in Wales can be measured. Hence, for instance, the National Survey for Wales for 2012-2013 revealed that parents in Wales were overwhelmingly satisfied with the school that their child attended.”

The key messages that arose from the debate were that we do need data showing where we are in a wider education context but we also need to challenge what’s given to us. We then need to steer a steady course with high-quality teaching and leadership, and finally, we must look at all the evidence and collaborate if we are to move forward.

WISERD academics have joined the conversation on other current issues in education recently, such as the grammar schools debate, a ‘state of the nation’ survey on the education research community in Wales, the difference between boys’ and girls’ perceptions of their school experiences and the ever-contentious subject of school place allocations. You can read more on our website: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs
Wales’ largest social science conference took place at the new Bay Campus at Swansea University in July 2016. The seventh annual event brought together practitioners, policy makers and social scientists to discuss and debate themes such as health, social care, wellbeing, education, culture and values, environment, labour markets, devolution, and civil society – with over 70 papers presented.

Headlining the conference were four keynote speakers: Ottón Solís, President and three-times presidential candidate of the Citizens’ Action Party (Partido Acción Ciudadana) in Costa Rica; Professor Andrew Oswald, Professor of Economics, University of Warwick; Mike Hout, Professor of Sociology, New York University; and David Grusky, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University. Opening the event was former First Minister, The Right Honourable Rhodri Morgan.

WISERD Annual Conference 2017 – booking now open

This year’s WISERD Annual Conference will be held at Bangor University on Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 July.

The theme for this year’s event is ‘The Decade of Disruption’ and it promises to provide colleagues from across the academic, policy, public, private, and third sectors with the opportunity to network and discuss cutting edge research from Wales and beyond. We will be sharing and discussing research that explores a decade of unprecedented disruption across political, economic and social life.

We’re looking forward to keynote addresses from Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and Hilary Wainwright, Editor of Red Pepper magazine.

To find out more and book your place, visit: www.wiserd.ac.uk/training-and-events

Register online for this year’s WISERD Annual Conference by 9th June 2017 at www.wiserd.ac.uk/events
Nell Warner, Cardiff University PhD student receives her certificate from the poster competition.

Professor Mike Hout from the Department of Sociology at New York University gives a keynote address on ‘Estimating the Total Effects of Social Origins’.

Delegates pose questions to presenters.

Professor Sally Power, WISERD Co-Director presenting the latest in WISERD’s education research.

Delegates are invited to take part in a variety of sessions.

Sessions draw to a close at WISERD’s Annual Conference.
WISERD Civil Society project

Redefining local civil society in the age of global connectivity

Research team: Professor Michael Woods, Dr Taulant Guma, and Dr Sophie Yarker (Aberystwyth University) and Dr Jon Anderson (Cardiff University)

Introduction

In a world shaken by Brexit, President Trump and longer-running concerns about migration and refugees, climate change, conservation, war and global poverty, consciousness of international events and issues seems to be increasingly informing local civil society actions. This project examines whether this perception is correct and the potential implications.

What is the project about?

We are considering local civil society and global connectivity from two angles. Firstly, we want to explore whether and how the structure and focus of local civil society has shifted with growing global consciousness. Are people drawn more to participation in local branches of environmental NGOs, or to fundraising for international development projects, for example, than to older local charities, causes and community groups? Secondly, we will examine whether and how new technologies have enabled people to participate in local civil society from a distance – for instance through web forums, Facebook pages or online voting for funding – thus stretching local civil society beyond place. By comparing different case studies we will also investigate whether these dynamics are shaped by geography, community size, or demographic or socio-economic profile.

Who is going to be involved?

We will be focusing on three case study locations – one in Aberystwyth and two to be finalised in south Wales – and will be studying and working with civil society groups in these places. We are also linking to research on neighbourly relations in Australia through WISERD Civil Society international fellow, Lynda Cheshire, at the University of Queensland.

Why is there a need for this project?

Social science literature has documented changes to local civil society and global civil society, but has rarely studied connections between the two. There is recognition that individuals’ bounds to place are becoming looser and more selective, with the rise of ‘elective belonging’ and ‘micro-citizenship’, as well as of the role of migration in forging ‘translocal communities’. Yet, the implications of these developments for local civil society remains under-researched. This project aims to address these gaps in our knowledge and understanding.

Any innovations?

The focus of the project offers opportunities to try innovative research methods, which we are exploring. These could include using participatory and visual methods with local community groups, giving participants a direct voice, as well as experimenting with techniques for online research to study technology-mediated participation in local civil society from a distance.

What do you think might be surprising?

As the research touches on current political events and mobilisations there is plenty of scope for surprises. There is much talk at the moment about society polarising between those with an outward looking view and others with a more inward looking perspective. It will be interesting to see whether our research bears out this assumption.

What is going to be the impact of this research?

The intended academic impact of the research is to advance understanding of local civil society and to contribute to the development and critique of key concepts and theories around place, belonging, participation and citizenship. However, we hope the research will also have a wider impact, in particular helping local civil society groups to organise, recruit participants and achieve their aims.

What does the future hold for this research?

With the current backdrop of political events, our thinking about the research will be constantly evolving, so who knows where we will end up. However, we can already see where avenues for future research might spring from the study, for example around historical perspectives on internationalism in local civil society, or more detailed investigation of radical pro-migrant mobilisations.
Introduction

This project will explore the changing relations between government and the voluntary sector in Wales over the post-war period. Almost two decades on since the creation of the National Assembly for Wales, it will provide needed insights into the issues, progress and challenges since 1999.

In short, this project will help us answer the key question: “what difference has devolution made”?

Who is going to be involved?

The research will gather the views of leaders and managers of voluntary sector organisations in Wales – as well as politicians and policy-makers.

What is the project about?

The ‘historical’ part of the research will use interviews and archive sources to chart developments before the National Assembly for Wales was founded in 1999. In relation to the second, ‘contemporary’ component of the research, a core strand of the arguments for devolution in Wales in the 1990s was concerned with making politics and policy-making more ‘inclusive’. One way that this was to be achieved was through more effective engagement of civil society in policy-making, notably with third sector organisations developing a key role in the delivery of welfare. The project will explore the changing role of the third sector in shaping policy and welfare delivery in Wales.

Why is there a need for this project?

We need to understand third sector views about their priorities and experiences in relation to shaping policy and welfare. This matters because it will further our understanding of effective practice and help to identify transferable lessons.

Any innovations?

This research is pioneering in providing the first analysis of its type, looking at the changing relations between government and the voluntary sector in Wales over the post-war period.

What do you think might be surprising?

That remains to be seen. It will be exciting to take stock of the third sector’s experience of engaging in policy-making and welfare provision.

What is going to be the impact of this research?

It will tell us about voluntary organisations’ priorities and experiences, and will further our understanding of what constitutes effective practice by government and non-governmental organisations alike.

What does the future hold for this research?

The project started early this year and the future holds the delivery of a full and ambitious research programme; one that is relevant to anyone interested in the delivery of public services in Wales – as well as issues of democracy, voluntarism and policy-making.
WISERD Civil Society project

Building trust? Institutions and interactions of multi-level governance in France, Germany and the United Kingdom

Research team: Dr Ian Stafford and Professor Alistair Cole (Cardiff University)

Introduction

Trust and transparency lie at the heart of contemporary debates regarding governance and democracy within Europe. This project aims to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of trust and transparency by comparing national, regional and metropolitan/local levels of governance across three European countries (France, Germany and the United Kingdom).

Who is going to be involved?

The project is a collaboration between academics across four universities, led by Dr Ian Stafford (Cardiff) and Professor Alistair Cole (Cardiff and Lyon) and including Professors Romain Pasquier (Rennes) and Arthur Benz (Darmstadt). The research will engage actors across civil society and members of the public.

What is the project about?

The core research question focuses on the extent to which a pan-European convergence in norms of trust has emerged and its relationship to transparency. Alternatively, are different forms of democratic polity or national systems of multi-level governance – understood as the shifting distribution of competences between layers of government and non-state actors – better equipped to retain trust and promote transparency than others? This raises further questions regarding the extent to which the interplay between trust and transparency varies as much within as between states, and the most appropriate territorial scale for retaining trust – both within civil society and the wider public.

The project will adopt a mixed methods research design encompassing three main elements:

- National Trust Profiles – drawing on an analysis of existing measures of trust
- Regional Trust Profiles – identifying and compiling regional level data
- Regional Case Studies – featuring semi-structured interviews with civil society actors and a small number of focus groups with the general public.

Why is there a need for this project?

The loss of trust has been described as a ‘cliché of our times’ (O’Neill, 2002) and the recent rise of populist political parties across Europe has been at least in part attributed to this decline. Transparency is sometimes offered as a remedy to tackle the problems that ostensibly produce such distrust, but understandings of transparency are deeply ambivalent. The project aims to enhance understanding of these processes and explore whether these dynamics vary below the level of the Nation State, which has traditionally been the focus of comparative analysis of political trust.

Any innovations?

The project builds on recent attempts to develop cross-national comparative analysis using the regional-scale as the unit of analysis, notably the Citizenship after the Nation State (CANS) project and Hooghe, Marks and Schakel’s work on the Regional Authority Index. It aims to take this approach one step further in utilising both quantitative and qualitative data in the comparative analysis of our case studies and in the development of our overarching trust-transparency framework.

What is going to be the impact of this research?

The research will add to our understanding of the relationship between trust and transparency and add a sub-national dimension to the analysis of these phenomena. More broadly, the research will provide a weathervane for the potential role of regional or devolved levels of governance in enhancing trust.

What does the future hold for this research?

To date, we have carried out a survey of French regions exploring public attitudes to the new French regions, and questions of trust and transparency. We are hoping to now replicate this survey in Germany and the United Kingdom.
The ‘grey economy’ refers to the contribution of older volunteers (over-65s) to their communities and the organisations they form part of.

Introduction
The concept of old age has changed substantially in recent decades. Those aged 60 and over are more active than ever before, often encouraged by the policies of ‘active ageing’ agendas. Therefore research on volunteering needs to more fully understand the experiences of older volunteers and the contributions they make to their respective communities and organisations.

These volunteers bring with them a lifetime of skills, experience and interests, and this project is interested in thinking about how far the voluntary pursuits of older people are shaped and informed by their previous work and leisure activities. The project will consider these questions in a rural and regional context to understand the geographical demands a place can make on its voluntary sector.

Who is going to be involved?
The central focus of the project is older volunteers, as we aim to gather a qualitative and in-depth understanding of their personal and collective experiences of volunteering. However, in order to gain information about the role of various organisations in this process and with the voluntary sector, interviews will also be conducted with employees. Organisations identified as case studies so far include the National Botanic Garden of Wales and the Royal British Legion.

What is the project about?
This project is about the contribution of older volunteers in rural communities, the contribution this involvement can make to the life of the volunteers, and the contribution of this so-called ‘grey economy’ to communities and organisations.

The project will provide an enlivened account of volunteering of older and retired members of rural communities. Although important, the project seeks to move away from dominant understandings of the health and wellbeing benefits of voluntary pursuits for older people, and instead provide a more nuanced account of the diverse and evolving motivations and benefits of volunteering. In particular, it aims to explore the purchase of serious leisure theory in understanding some of these experiences, and to consider whether people’s voluntary pursuits in retirement have a connection to previous professional trajectories or whether they can be considered as a serious pursuit of hobbies and other leisure activities.

Why is there a need for this project?
With the population growing older and remaining active into old age, there is a need to identify what contribution older and retired people make through their voluntary pursuits. We are particularly interested in this within a rural context, where a diversely ageing population faces long-standing issues of accessibility, service proximity, mobility and social isolation.

What do you think might be surprising?
The breadth and extent of voluntary activities undertaken by individuals, and the central importance this often comes to take in terms of informing a sense of identity and purpose, presents a range of challenges, particularly with regard to drawing some sense of operational boundaries around what might be defined as voluntary pursuits.

The ‘serious leisure’ describes people’s involvement in activities that constitute a central interest in their lives outside of work.

Developed by sociologist Professor Robert Stebbins, this is a conceptual framework that has found little engagement outside of leisure studies research. Therefore, one of the innovations of this project will be to explore the potential of a serious leisure perspective on understanding the contribution of volunteering in later life.

What is going to be the impact of this research?
This project has the potential to redefine what we mean by ‘active ageing’, and ageing more generally, by drawing attention to, and specifying, the contributions voluntary activities of older people make to their communities and their own lives.
Introduction
This project will explore whether the perceived link between ageing and an increase in fear of crime and fear of the young affects the ways in which older people participate in their communities. We will draw on critical writings challenging the ‘myths surrounding ageing’ to situate the debate surrounding the age-fear of crime link.

What is the project about?
This project aims to identify the barriers to older people’s participation in civil society. We are specifically interested in whether perceptions of crime – in particular, fear of crime – perceptions about young people, trust in the justice system, and social trust affect older people’s involvement in their community, while accounting for relevant socio-demographic factors, experiences of victimization as measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales, police recorded crime statistics, and levels of deprivation within the community.

Moreover, we aim to assess whether the impact of these factors change over the life course (or by age). These questions will be explored in-depth with data at a Wales-wide level and comparatively at England and Wales, and European levels. We will conduct secondary analyses on existing datasets using conventional statistical models, such as regression models, latent class analysis, multi-level models, and structural equation models.

Why is there a need for this project?
Despite falls in levels of crime, fear and anxiety levels remain high. Previous research on social participation has mostly examined socio-demographic factors, such as gender, age, marital, parental, and employment statuses, and educational and income levels. This project will examine whether the actual and perceived levels of crime impact social participation among older people. We will also consider other factors such as health, levels of anxiety, etc.

What do you think might be surprising?
We think we could be surprised by a general lack of existing data sources that include good measures for the factors relevant to our research. We expect to find some interesting cross-national differences in the impact of perceptions on social participation.

What is going to be the impact of this research?
We hope our research will help people to become better informed on the associations between the different factors we examine, and that this understanding will improve policy-making.

What does the future hold for this research?
Two elements of this research can be further developed. The potential of using existing datasets in a more comprehensive way can offer new avenues for research and evidence based on relatively simplistic data analyses of large quantitative datasets. Research into intergenerational relations, cohesion, and social participation in older age is a priority in ageing societies and we expect to build on this in the future.
Wiserd Civil Society project
Researching civil participation in Wales, in place and over time
Research team: Professor Howard Davis, Dr Robin Mann, Dr Marta Eichstetter and Dr David J. Dallimore (Bangor University)

Background
This project was one of the first within the Civil Society programme to start and is now well into its third and final year. The research has been investigating continuity and change in participation in civil society in two contrasting localities in North East Wales, one the former mining community of Rhosllanerchrugog (Rhos), the other, Overton a smaller rural community closer to the English border. Through biographical interviews and ethnographic methods we have gathered data reflecting changes in associational forms and how the experiences of local civil society participants are shaped by context.

A distinctive approach to studying civil society
The project has developed a distinctive approach to studying local civil society based on the examination of four interlinked components.

First, the sites in each place where participation takes place are important in examining the levels and range of association. Within the study areas, sites such as the Miners’ Institute in Rhos or the Village Hall and village pub in Overton were found to provide focal points for communal activity, but also highlighted some underlying divisions in both places.

Secondly the findings highlight the importance of actors in each community – those who lead and organise associative activity and without whom much of the association would not take place. The sustainability of much of the associative activity in each place was observed to be highly dependent on the availability of leaders. These were seen to emerge differently in the study areas with leaders in Rhos ‘home-bred’ and coming from within, while in Overton they predominantly come from without as ‘incomers’.

The organisations present in each locality were the third focus of the study. The research observed how their success can be seen to depend on the importance of both tradition and the ability to manage change. In both places, some local organisations – such as the choirs in Rhos or the Women’s Institute in Overton – have long histories with symbolic local significance, but the continued survival of these groups is often dependent on their ability to evolve and respond to external forces.

The fourth component of study are the events where residents in each locality associate collectively. While these differed in each community – reflecting the history of each place and the differing collective identities of the residents – they were found to be important indicators of the health and strength of civil society. In Rhos, there are ‘fun days’ and a Christmas procession each year and cultural events involving music, singing and the Welsh language. In Overton the events reflect a more heterogeneous population with a relatively new but highly popular ‘Real Ale and Blues’ festival alongside the more traditional Summer Fete and the Flower and Produce Show. In both areas, collective action events have taken place as forms of protest.

Local civil societies in Wales have been shaped over time
In summary, our approach could be seen to have wider analytical value for debates concerning the changing local landscapes of civil society, while the emerging findings illustrate how local civil societies in Wales have been shaped over time in relation to the changing social and economic fortunes of the places.

We are now undertaking further analysis of data, preparing a number of publications and conference papers, and organising engagement events in the two study areas to feed back the findings to local residents.

A neoliberal inconvenience
As part of Dr David J. Dallimore’s research on this project, he has travelled around to interview local residents and survey neighbourhoods. In his blog, ‘A neoliberal inconvenience’, he discusses how these experiences of field research led him to consider public toilets as sites of interest within the study, as they are representative of other areas of communal life – illustrating conflicts between ordinary people, the state and the market. To read the blog, visit: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs

Dancers at the Overton Sheep Fair, Clwyd
WISERD Civil Society project

Migrants, minorities and participation in civil society

Research team: Dr Taulant Guma and Dr Rhys Dafydd Jones (Aberystwyth University), Professor Stephen Drinkwater (University of Roehampton) and Dr Andy Thompson (University of South Wales)

Background
This project began in January 2016 and examines how migrants from central Europe – the nationals of the ‘Accession 8’ (A8) states that joined in 2004 – contribute to local civil society in different parts of Wales. It aims to understand:

- How European migrants are involved with civil society
- How European migrants’ participation relates to senses of belonging
- How European migrants’ activities align with ideas of social cohesion
- How European migrants experience Wales as a distinct part of the UK

This project involves a multidisciplinary team combining perspectives from anthropology, economics, human geography, and sociology, with staff from Aberystwyth University, the University of South Wales, and the University of Roehampton.

The research is timely, considering the public discourse surrounding immigration in recent years, and has considerable potential to inform policy on the challenges faced by organisations supporting immigrants, and to inform the public on the ways immigrants contribute to localities through participation.

Quantitative and qualitative research
There are two strands to the research: the quantitative aspect has involved analysis of longitudinal data (from the Understanding Society survey) to examine rates of participation among immigrants from Poland, compared to other immigrants. Analysis reveals that participation among Polish nationals tends to be lower than from many other countries, however, this trend may be as a result of a lack of opportunity due to work pressures, or to other factors such as having arrived more recently or informal forms of participation that are not framed as such. These trends allow for further exploration into some of the factors that may create challenges for participation.

The qualitative strand of the project has included 25 interviews with civil society organisations, groups, and initiatives over the past twelve months. These have included both formal and informal organisations, and small and large initiatives with a local and/or national focus. We have also found a large presence of online migrant communities. Our research field has been multi-sited, covering various localities around Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Bridgend, Llanelli, Merthyr Tydfil, Wrexham, Aberystwyth, and Newtown.

Interviews
To date, we have conducted interviews with migrants from Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary and Portugal. Although not one of the A8 states, Portuguese immigrants’ profiles are similar and worth further exploration. The research sample has included a diverse range of individuals in terms of ethnicity/nationality as well as age, family status, length of stay, etc.

The interviews conducted so far have been mainly with migrants involved in organisations/groups/societies in different roles (volunteers, project workers, founders, secretaries, etc). At the same time, there have also been interviews with non-migrants, such as key stakeholders in the non-governmental organisations sector.

During this period we have carried out qualitative interviews with 32 individuals from a range of organisations. We have also conducted participant observation in a number of relevant events taking place around Wales, for example, the St David’s Day Parade in Cardiff (March 2016) and the Global Village Festival in Merthyr Tydfil (July 2016). In addition, we have also collected a variety of online data from relevant websites and social media. We are now beginning to complete data collection and analysis, and begin dissemination of findings in the next stage of the research.

The Polish Observer newspaper being handed out at a Polish church in London
Spaces of new localism: stakeholder engagement and economic development in Wales and England

Research team: Dr David Beel and Professor Martin Jones (University of Sheffield) and Professor Ian Rees Jones (Cardiff University)

Background
This project began in March 2015 and utilises a series of interviews and document-based analysis to explore the notion of stakeholder involvement in Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs), Enterprise Zones (EZs), City Deals and City Regions. Fieldwork covers four city regions: two in Wales and two in England.

The project seeks to answer the following questions:

- What policy, strategy, and institutional changes have taken place, and are taking place, in the landscape of economic development since 2010 in England and Wales?
- What are the connections between LEPs, EZs, City Deals, and City Regions?
- What are the narratives of devolution and community engagement in the LEPs, EZs, City Deals and City Regions?
- How are these being worked into policies and procedures for stakeholder engagement?
- Who is involved in the new localism?
- What are the compositions of LEP, EZ, City Deal and City Region boards, and their sub-groups and other structures of engagement?
- How successful is the new localism in realising its objectives of economic and social empowerment?

Devolution – no strings attached?
A recent blog by Professor Martin Jones discusses devolution in Sheffield, one of the case study locations in England, and looks at some of the findings from the team’s research report published in September 2016.

“The Sheffield City Region (SCR) faces considerable problems in terms of economic and social inequality. The Sheffield City Region has the highest concentration of those in work and paid below the living wage, in addition to high numbers of people relying on out of work benefits which have been cut over the past few years.

“There are elements of the Autumn Statement that have been welcomed in relation to the region, including more funding for devolution growth initiatives (the North West gets the highest proportion), the introduction of a Productivity Fund and funding for university collaboration with industry. However, these are small scale improvements in relation to the problems.

“The Northern Powerhouse is the government’s devolution strategy for the North, which gives increased responsibilities and powers over transport and economic planning; electing mayors; some powers to manage health; new employment and skills via apprenticeships; and in 2017, the co-commissioning of welfare to work policies.

“As reflected in the initiatives announced by the government in the Autumn Statement, devolution policies focus on economic ‘growth’, but pressing questions remain as to who will benefit from a growth strategy? This is the context for the WISERD research on civil society and economic development and its extension through further Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) money to specifically look at devolution and disadvantage in the Sheffield City Region.

“Within this context, our research report was published in September 2016. It analysed the implications of national and devolved policies for economic and social disadvantage in the Sheffield city region, and ultimately argued for a more inclusive and sustainable growth strategy. We found that:

- Devolution growth objectives face significant challenges: the combined impact of austerity cuts and welfare reforms result in over £1.1 billion in lost income to the Sheffield City Region, far exceeding committed monies from devolution deals. Current budget settlements for local authorities involve further cuts of around £131m for just 2016–2017, with disadvantaged groups and areas particularly affected.
- Skills funding has also been cut back, particularly in the further education sector, affecting those courses that will benefit disadvantaged groups and enable them to access apprenticeships.
- Economic and social disadvantage, combined with difficult labour market conditions including low paid and poor quality sustainable employment, presents major challenges for employment and skills policies.
- There is a lack of perspective in terms of how disadvantaged groups can be included in, and importantly benefit from, Sheffield City Region policies to stimulate growth.

“In short, austerity and devolution are inextricably linked, and to miss this raises false hopes and air-brushes out the negative consequences of the long-game of devolution. Yes, the leaders of the Sheffield City Region might object to austerity, but by playing the devolution game they are bound-up in agreeing to and implementing austerity.”

To read the full blog, visit: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs

Higher Education and civic participation

Research team: Dr Stuart Fox, Emeritus Professor Gareth Rees, Professor Chris Taylor and Dr Ceryn Evans (Cardiff University)

Background
The expansion of higher education (HE) in the UK has led to some of the most dramatic sociological shifts of the last fifty years, and its consequences for patterns of entry to HE, graduate employment and economic development have been researched extensively. To date, there has been little exploration of the contribution that HE makes to civil society.

This project aimed to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between higher education and participation in civil society as the UK’s higher education system has expanded and evolved.

A key element of this analysis has been to compare the civic participation of graduates and non-graduates from the 1960s (when access to HE was limited to less than 15% of the eligible population) and from the early 2000s (when up to 50% of eligible young people attended HE), and to examine how graduating from a different HE system has affected the contribution graduates make to their local civil society.

Research findings
The project has employed a mixed methods design, drawing on quantitative data from large-scale surveys and qualitative data derived from interviews. Analysis of large, national surveys, including the British Household Panel Survey and the National Child Development Study, has shown that traditional forms of civic participation – such as joining unions, attending church or joining a sports club – have declined in Britain, and that both graduates and non-graduates have become less likely to be active.

The data also show that there is a ‘graduate boost’ to civic participation, ie, graduates are typically more active than non-graduates, and this is usually because of the skills and values they developed while at university that facilitate civic activity.

The most surprising finding, however, is that while the overall number of graduates and non-graduates in civic associations has fallen over time, the ‘graduate boost’ has become stronger, ie, the benefit of being a graduate of the UK HE system in the 2000s in terms of civic participation is stronger than that of being a graduate of the 1960 UK HE system.

The qualitative strand has involved analysis of interviews with 64 adults, all aged 50 and living in Wales, half of whom were graduates. Comparing the civic participation of graduates and non-graduates showed that, as in the survey data, graduates are slightly more active, and more frequently active, than non-graduates. They were also more likely to take on roles of responsibility and leadership such as chairperson, treasurer, or secretary.

The qualitative data also allowed us to explore reasons for non-participation, and showed that time constraints (often connected to working irregular hours) and family commitments (such as looking after children) were the greatest barriers to civic activity for graduates and non-graduates alike.

Graduates and non-graduates were also equally likely to avoid civic activity if they perceived a disconnect between civic participation and personal conception; where the idea of civic participation jarred with their conception of the sort of person they saw themselves as or the sort of person they wanted to be, they were less likely to participate.

Where next?
The second stage of qualitative data collection and analysis is underway, involving qualitative interviews with a sample of 30-40 year old graduates who participated in a ‘mass’ HE system. This stage of the research will involve detailed examination of the role of higher education in civic participation through attention to the degree programme studied as well as extra-curricular experiences during higher education. Analysis will be guided by questions about the role of these higher education experiences in shaping civic participation in adults during and after their time at university.

Research presented at Public Uni event
Dr Ceryn Evans presented her research on higher education and civil society at the Public Uni event at Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff. Public Uni is organised by Cardiff University and aims to provide researchers with an opportunity to communicate their research in engaging, bite-sized ‘chunks’ to a ‘lay audience’. Each presenter has just 10 minutes to talk about their research, using only props or pictures to help them.

Dr Evans said: “On the evening of Friday 31st March I found myself stood in a packed-out room in Chapter Arts Centre, in front of an audience of roughly 60 people, sharing some of the findings from the civil society research project I have been involved in for the past two years.

“Audience members raised searching questions about the extent to which all ‘civil society’ participation can be taken as an intrinsically ‘good thing’, and whether some civil society organisations or associations might themselves be exclusive or elitist, which might help explain why graduates are more likely to participate in them...”

To read Dr Evans’ full account of her Public Uni experience, including what she feels can be gained from public engagement events such as this, visit our website: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs
Among younger workers, and that intergenerational understanding of the labour movement, as well as the role of employers in negotiations over the pay and conditions of employees. Whilst the presence of downward trends in union membership is not open to debate, there are many more workers affected by unionisation than one might think based on a casual glance at the official statistics.

Memory, storytelling and the labour movement
Historical events, for example, the 1984-85 miners’ strike, can hold a powerful symbolic presence for trade unionists in the present day. Sources of geographical variations in trade union membership can be illuminated by examining the role of collective memory of such events; storytelling of these ‘defining moments’ of labour history can act as a powerful mode for the transmission of collective understandings of trade unionism. Read Dr Helen Blakely’s blog, Strike, to find out more:

Trade unions on social media
Data collected earlier in 2016 show that the Trade Union Bill mobilised a large number of individuals and organisations on Twitter. Prominent among these, and the driving force behind much of the online debate surrounding the Bill, were a number of trade unions who are active on social media including Unite and UNISON as well as the Trades Union Congress. However, Twitter use is not uniform across trade unions in the UK. Patterns of activity amongst trades unions on Twitter also appear to be distinctive; conversations are generally built around retweeting certain forms of content such as petitions that encourage collective action. Read Wil Chivers’ blog, to find out more:

Comparisons of job satisfaction within Britain reveal that employees are more satisfied with their jobs in Wales than anywhere else.

Despite Wales exhibiting the highest levels of union membership in Britain, union membership in Wales is not associated with lower levels of job satisfaction.

Trade union membership statistics don’t add up
Comparisons across nationally representative surveys raise cause for concern as they diverge from official estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey which underestimates the true extent to which unions are both present in the workplace and recognised by employers in negotiations over the pay and conditions of employees.
Looking at the associations between gender, age, and volunteering in Europe

Dr Martin Hyde (University of Manchester), Professor Ian Rees Jones and Dr Martijn Hogerbrugge (Cardiff University)

Not everyone volunteers, and those who do vary in the amount and intensity of their volunteering. Looking at the literature those who are more highly educated, with a higher income and more religious have been found to volunteer more, whereas non-married people and those with poor health have been found to volunteer less. However, results showing the associations between gender and age on the one hand and volunteering on the other are less clear-cut, and we have been exploring this issue using cross-national data.

Using data from the 2012 wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) – a biennial cross-sectional study of representative samples from 36 European countries – we ran a series of ordered logistic regression models to see how respondents’ answers to the question “In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organizations?” varied by gender and age.

When estimating the model on the complete sample of European countries, men and women were not found to differ in their likelihood of volunteering more or less frequently. However, when the same model was run on each of the samples from the different European countries separately, we found that in some countries men and women do differ in their likelihood to volunteer – even after accounting for other sociodemographic factors that have been previously linked to volunteering (age, marital, parental, and employment statuses, educational and perceived income levels, religiosity, health, and trust towards people in general and government institutions specifically).

In the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, and Poland women were found to volunteer more frequently, whereas in Denmark, Germany, and Italy women were found to volunteer less. In the other countries, no significant difference between men and women was found.

Turning to age and its association with volunteering, no significant differences between countries was found. Instead, in all countries we found the same curvilinear relationship after accounting for other sociodemographic factors (see Figure 1a). Respondents who were still in their teens (age 15-19) volunteered most, with subsequent age groups volunteering less, but with those in their ‘middle years’ (age 40-69) showing levels of volunteering that were higher than those who are in young adulthood (age 20-39) or old age (age 70 and over). Separate models for men and women revealed that this curvilinear association between age and volunteering did not differ by gender.

However, the assumption in the models estimated so far was that the impact of age on the likelihood to report a higher frequency of volunteering was the same over the different levels of intensity. Put differently, age was assumed to affect the decision to volunteer ‘once a year’ versus ‘not at all’ in the same direction and with the same magnitude as the decision to volunteer ‘weekly’ versus just ‘once a month’. But by allowing the model to drop this assumption and estimate different coefficients for the different answer categories, I found the effect of age on volunteering was indeed more complicated (see Figure 1b). Older respondents were more often found to not volunteer at all, but once they volunteered they were found to volunteer more frequently when compared to younger respondents – the exception being the respondents who are over 80 years old.

This observation about the complexity of the relationship between age and volunteering was the starting point for the paper we are currently working on. In this, we explore whether conclusions from previous studies regarding the (lack of) impact of country characteristics, such as the level of economic development, welfare state expenditures, and level of democracy, are valid or whether the association with individual-level volunteering is more intricate.
Our Changing Land

Revisiting Gender, Class and Identity in Contemporary Wales

WISERD civil society research was presented at the launch of a new book by Dr Dawn Mannay.

Professor Paul Chaney’s findings from the Territoriality & Third Sector Engagement in Policy-Making and Welfare Provision project, which is part of the WISERD Civil Society programme, have been published in a chapter (Women and Policy-Making: Devolution, Civil Society and Political Representation) in a new edited collection by Dr Dawn Mannay (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences) entitled: Our Changing Land: Revisiting Gender, Class and Identity in Contemporary Wales (2016, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, ISBN 978-1-78316-884-2). The well-attended launch event for Our Changing Land was co-hosted by WISERD and University of Wales Press.

In his presentation, Professor Chaney outlined how the chapter revisits an earlier piece of work, Inclusive Government for Excluded Groups, which he co-wrote for the book, New Governance: New Democracy? Post-Devolution Wales (Chaney et al, Cardiff, University of Wales Press). Published in 2001, it was written in the first months of the National Assembly and discussed civil society views on the potential implications of devolution for women’s political representation in Wales.

Launch attendees heard how many of the women interviewed in the original research spoke of their high expectations for the new National Assembly. They expressed excitement and looked forward to significant change. For example, one said, “it will be very exciting. I’m sure that because there are so many people, so many women that have been elected, it will reflect a lot of our concerns”.

Similar optimism was echoed by another interviewee who spoke of her “high expectation that it [the Assembly] could drive the agenda in a very positive way”;

and the representative of a prominent voluntary group felt that “it is going to give us a much larger voice... I think it’s very positive”.

Almost two decades on, Professor Chaney explained how the new chapter draws on a raft of interviews with members of civil society organisations in Wales. It reflects on developments since the Assembly opened its doors with reference to the nature and quality of women’s political engagement; as well as the issues and challenges associated with representation and devolved policy work. Weighed against these initial hopes, he argued that progress has been disappointing in three key respects – depth, breadth and permanency. ‘Depth’ refers to the fact that whilst the past fifteen years has seen some progress, it has fallen short of achieving gender parity and eliminating inequality. Allied to this, ‘breadth’ refers to variability across policy areas and issues; some have seen greater progress whereas others have registered little change. ‘Permanency’ refers to the fact that, as interviewees alluded to, the gains made to date are vulnerable to reversal, notably in the face of current austerity and spending cuts.

Notwithstanding this, Professor Chaney also detailed positive post-1999 outcomes. Devolution has seen the development of a range of legal instruments, institutional mechanisms and policy-making procedures with the potential to advance the substantive representation of women and promote gender equality.

These were largely absent during the Welsh Office era. Compared to the early years of devolution the policy tools available to ministers today are stronger and more sophisticated. Will these deliver greater progress over the next decade?

Paul Chaney argued that this will depend on effective monitoring and compliance, and a ‘step-change’ in equalities training in government and the public sector. It is also conditional on extending political engagement with civil society. Moreover, it also requires two further, more elusive commodities: determination and imagination.
Wales Labour Market Summit II

Comparing Policy Interventions to Challenge ‘Business as Usual’

The Welsh Labour Market Summit II took place on 14 September 2016 at the Thoday Building, Bangor University. This knowledge exchange event served as a platform for comparing, debating, and informing policy interventions in response to large-scale job losses across traditional industries – deindustrialisation.

While the primary region of focus was North Wales, the summit aimed to provide opportunity for comparative reference to other regional and national labour market interventions in the UK and beyond, with the intention of catalysing change in future policy and practice.

Speakers and attendees comprised stakeholders, practitioners, and academics. Speakers were: Tuomo Alasoini (Tekes, Finland), Dylan Williams (Head of Economic Development and Community Regeneration, Anglesey), Professor Frank Peck (Research Director, Centre for Regional Economic Development, University of Cumbria), Professor Karel Williams (Manchester Business School), Professor Ian Rees Jones (WISERD Director, Cardiff University), Dr Alexandra Plows (Bangor University), Professor Patricia Findlay (University of Strathclyde) and Professor Alan Felstead (Cardiff University).

Speakers covered a variety of topics ranging from workplace innovation in Finland and why we need innovation in adult care, to supply chain and procurement initiatives in North Wales and self-employment.

Along with Professor Tony Dobbins and Dr Alexandra Plows, Professor Howard Davis (WISERD Co-Director, Bangor University) takes a closer look at the jobs situation in the UK since the 2008 financial crisis in a blog for The Conversation. In the blog, Professor Davies discusses the increase in flexible “non-standard” working patterns, such as part-time work, zero hours contracts, and underemployment.

Professor Davies says: "Too little is known about changing work patterns at the margins of the labour market and research is required to explore peoples’ experiences of self-employment. In the meantime, there’s a risk that a growing chunk of the workforce will experience precarious, insecure working lives in a system currently ill-equipped to provide sufficient numbers of good quality jobs. The UK does not have a coherent labour market policy or industrial strategy to address these problems."

Read the full article on The Conversation: www.theconversation.com
WISERD offered a number of events in Cardiff as part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)’s week-long celebration of the social sciences and social science research. As with previous years’ events, the festival provided a variety of free activities across the UK.

**Using the WISERD Data Portal to map civil society data**
Representatives from the voluntary sector and civil society organisations came together with policy makers and researchers in a workshop exploring WISERD’s Data Portal. This free online tool allows users to search, discover, map and download socio-economic data. The event demonstrated the WISERD Data Portal and showed how researchers can use the programme to map their own data on the Data Portal and overlay it on other map layers, in order to compare their data with research data such as census data, and electoral data.

A Q&A session at the end of the workshop allowed participants to provide feedback and suggestions for further improvement. Those who weren’t able to attend the workshop could watch a live webcast on the WISERD website and take part in a Q&A session on Twitter.

**Disability Talking: stories of disability at work**
WISERD researchers at Cardiff Business School launched Disability Talking. This short film was constructed around first-person accounts of disability challenges and support at work, and the film’s interviewees represented a range of disabilities. Alongside the personal narratives were statistical summaries highlighting the scale of disability-related disadvantage in the contemporary workplace.

The event was led by Professors Melanie Jones and Victoria Wass (Cardiff University), who were joined by a diverse line-up of speakers for a panel discussion afterwards. Each speaker had their own connection to the issue of dyslexia and was able to contribute personal, professional and legal experiences of coping in the workplace. The event also coincided with the launch of a new website designed to enhance engagement with research in this area: [www.disabilityatwork.co.uk](http://www.disabilityatwork.co.uk)

**Evaluating the impact of third sector outputs**
The final event that took place as part of the festival was a workshop for those who work in the third sector. WISERD researchers provided materials aimed at helping participants learn how to formally evaluate their activities, identify the impact of their activities and provide an evaluation framework for those impacts.
Using social media in social research

Event highlights

This event formed part of WISERD’s interdisciplinary training and capacity building programme. It was delivered in collaboration with colleagues from Cardiff University’s Social Data Science Lab. WISERD Research Associate Dr Wil Chivers looks back on the highlights from the day.

“The volume and variety of data produced on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube offers enormous potential for social research. However, collecting these data and beginning to make sense of them raises many challenges for researchers. Using Social Media in Social Research aimed to provide a broad and interactive introduction to these issues and some of the tools researchers can use for exploring social media data.

“The event was jointly delivered with Professor Matt Williams and Dr Luke Sloan from the Social Data Science Lab, which brings together social and computer scientists to study the methodological, ethical, theoretical and technical dimensions of new and emerging forms of data in social and policy contexts.”

Getting to grips with social media

“In the morning session, we drew on examples of WISERD Civil Society and Lab research to introduce key issues regarding the potential of social media data as well as its pitfalls. We were keen to hear about our audience’s interests and engagement with social media and the result was an informative and lively discussion of the topics we raised.

“I looked at how user-generated data consisting of sentiments, shared content and interactions can inform our understanding of contentious political debate on Twitter, such as that surrounding the Investigatory Powers Bill. Dr Luke Sloan went on to outline Lab research that has sought to establish ways of identifying demographic indicators for social media users and how we can understand Twitter behaviour as a result. Professor Matt Williams wrapped up the morning session looking at the vital issue of the ethics of using social media data in research. In particular, the question of when it is appropriate to publish data from Twitter, which is easily attributable to individuals, generated a good deal of discussion from the audience.”

Hands-on experience

“The second half of the day was dedicated to a practical session, during which attendees were able to explore two pieces of software for collecting and analysing social media data: COSMOS Open Data Analytics and NodeXL. These tools differ in what they can offer social researchers looking to use social media data.

“COSMOS, originally an ESRC-funded collaboration between Cardiff University, the University of St Andrews and Warwick University, is now maintained by the Social Data Science Lab and is solely for use with Twitter. The software allows for the real-time collection of tweets and also has built-in functions for analysing frequencies, networks and sentiment. Attendees were given an introduction to the software before spending some time collecting their own live data – which ranged from maritime piracy to Cardiff City FC – and experimenting with what COSMOS could do.

“NodeXL (Network Overview, Discovery and Exploration in Excel) is developed by the California-based Social Media Research Foundation. Embedded in Microsoft Excel, NodeXL allows researchers to import historical [i.e., searchable] social media data from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. For example, reactions, comments and shares of posts on a Facebook Fan Page, or the last 3,200 tweets from any Twitter user account. NodeXL’s strength is in producing visualisations of networks from social media data but it also offers a good range of functions for analysing these networks. Again, attendees were able to carry out their own data collection as well as explore pre-made datasets about the Rio Olympics and the EU Referendum.

“Overall, the event was a great success. The relevance of social media to different sectors and disciplines meant we were able to reach out to a wide and interested audience, including academic staff from Cardiff University and the University of South Wales and researchers from the Welsh Government and third sector organisations. I was particularly pleased to receive such positive feedback about the day. It is encouraging to see an appetite for more events like this in 2017, whether that is revisiting the themes from this event for other researchers looking to get to grips with social media or to provide more in-depth training on COSMOS and NodeXL.”

Dr Wil Chivers has started a blog series on the WISERD website that explores some of the issues associated with doing social research with social media, and reports on findings and case studies that engage with social media data. To read the blogs, visit: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs
A welcome from WISERD
To our distinguished visiting fellows

Civil society and democratization in India
In October 2016, Professor Paul Chaney introduced Visiting International Fellow, Professor Sahoo Sarbeswar of the Indian Institute of Technology, as part of the WISERD Civil Society seminar series at Cardiff University.

Sahoo Sarbeswar is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi. His research interests include issues related to postcolonial state, civil society and democratization, identity politics, Hindu nationalism, poverty, and neo-liberal globalization.

Professor Sarbeswar’s presentation examined how non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as part of civil society, contribute towards democratization in India. In particular, the stimulating discussion explored the factors that facilitate and/or inhibit NGOs’ contribution. The research was theoretically-informed and drew on an extensive body of empirical data. Comparative case studies of three developmental NGOs which work among the tribal communities in south Rajasthan were outlined. In turn, qualitative data analysis identified three different kinds of politics within civil society – liberal pluralist, neo-Marxist and communitarian.

In the seminar, Professor Sarbeswar analysed their contrasting implications in relation to democratization. Importantly, the discussion demonstrated that civil society is not necessarily a democratizing force. It made a powerful case for how it can have contradictory consequences. In particular, the findings showed how the democratizing effect of civil society is not a result of the ‘stock of social capital’ in the community, but is contingent on the kinds of ideologies and interests that are present or ascendant not just within the institutions of civil society but also within the state. The well-received seminar offered a nuanced understanding of civil society’s capacity to influence democratization in the developing world.

Improving the social welfare system in China: urbanization, community development, and social participation

Last year WISERD hosted five visiting international research fellows from China, led by Professor Lin Xiao from the Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Beijing. The visit is part of a two-year joint Chinese Academy of Social Sciences/British Academy Newton Advanced Fellowships programme, entitled: Improving the Social Welfare System in China: Urbanization, Community Development, and Social Participation.

During their time at WISERD, the visiting fellows engaged with a series of presentations from WISERD researchers working on the ESRC-funded Civil Society research programme. The aim of this international engagement is to build links and further collaboration. To this end, the visit allowed participants to explore the potential for ongoing work exploring welfare development in China, Wales and the UK.

In the Chinese case, the backdrop to this research focus is rapid urbanization and marketization, accompanied by unbalanced economic and social development both between and within cities. In turn, this presents a number of challenges including social justice and sustainable development, and the establishment and improvement of social welfare. In this regard there are key links with WISERD’s existing research on civil society.

During the visit, a number of common research challenges were identified that are shared by the Chinese, Welsh and UK contexts. These include the developing role of the community as an important part of the social welfare system, particularly in providing care and support services to older people. Notwithstanding central government’s attempts to develop this aspect of social policy in the wake of the transformation from a planned to market economy, welfare development in China faces a number of challenges.

This resonates with the rise of ‘welfare pluralism’ in the UK. In other words, the situation whereby state services are complemented by input from other sectors. In the case of Wales, this has seen government emphasis on third sector provision of welfare. This is a development that has been underpinned by a series of legislative and policy measures – including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) and the Welsh Government’s voluntary sector partnership scheme.
Measuring spatial variations

The provision of sporting facilities in Wales

Research team: Professor Gary Higgs and Dr Mitchel Langford (Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Research Centre at the University of South Wales) and Dr Jonathan Radcliffe (Sport Wales)

Professor Gary Higgs and Dr Mitchel Langford from the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Research Centre at the University of South Wales have been working with Dr Jonathan Radcliffe at Sport Wales to map accessibility to sports facilities in a new way.

Creating a space where people live, work, learn and play in indoor and outdoor environments that encourage sport and active recreation is clearly important, as recognised in Welsh Government strategies such as Climbing Higher and Climbing Higher – Next Steps.

A lack of resources or opportunities to participate can make sustained physical activity difficult and there is an urgent need for facility planning models to make people more aware of opportunities, and to match supply and demand. One way in which this can be accomplished is through a study of variations in geographic accessibility to facilities.

The existing landscape

Wales has a generally good range of provision in terms of built facilities for sport, however much of the stock is ageing and difficult to maintain at a time when resources are scarce. Many facilities are nearing the end of their lifespan and do not meet users’ expectations. Alternative ways of managing facilities are increasingly being used or considered by local authorities. This often involves collaboration between different local authority departments, for example, between a local authority and other agency, national governing body, area association or key local voluntary groups, between neighbouring local authorities or a combination of the above. These decisions require a better understanding of facility provision in Wales, as highlighted in Facilities for Future Generations: A blueprint for sport and active recreation in Wales (Sport Wales, 2016).

Measuring geographical accessibility

The use of geographical accessibility tools can be used to examine variations in the supply of sporting infrastructure as part of wider studies concerned with, for example, examining the impacts of variations in provision on participation in sports or physical activity levels.

This project is concerned with developing user-friendly tools that enable the calculation of geographical accessibility scores using a database of sports facilities for Wales. These measures are derived from the use of floating catchment area (FCA) models, which use Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to compute a supply-to-demand measure based on distance/travel time catchments around facilities. A GIS enables the input, storage, management, analysis and visualisation of data on a map, which presents a powerful set of tools for researchers.

Accessibility measures are calculated from a modelled or empirically derived estimate of the maximum distance, or maximum time, people will reasonably travel to reach different types of facilities. So, for example, we might choose 5 km, or 15 minutes, as the maximum distance or time we expect people are prepared to travel to reach a badminton court or a swimming pool.

The FCA measure provides a familiar supply-to-demand ratio based on realistic travel catchments rather than those measures derived from, for example, a crude count of facilities in an administrative area of residence. This ratio represents the proportion of the total service provision, for example, the total number of swimming pools in the entire study region that are shared amongst, or consumed by, each particular geographical subset of the population. Thus we can envisage an FCA score as the relative share of the total service supply that a person in each population centre can reasonably access.

Calculating geographical accessibility

As part of a project funded through the Sport Wales’ Illuminate Scheme, which awarded research grants to help develop insight into participation in sport in Wales, we have developed an ArcGIS™ Add-In. This provides a user-friendly interface for colleagues in Sport Wales to run FCA models alongside work-through user guides and documentation (Figure 1).

Figure 1: ArcGIS™ Add-In tool for calculating geographical accessibility to sport facilities

In addition to the database of sports facilities, the package also includes a database containing a road network, various administrative polygon areas and point locations, and census statistics tables, which are all derived from open sources. The interface is designed so the user can configure some of the key FCA analysis parameters such as the maximum time (or distance) for the catchments that are to be constructed around each supply and demand point within the model.
The example illustrated in Figure 2 draws on the database to show spatial variations in access to swimming pools across Wales using the lower super output area (LSOA) level of population distribution. These tools can be applied to other types of provision and can be updated if empirical evidence is available from surveys of the actual use of facilities enabling the thresholds to be varied. Figure 3 shows, for example, spatial patterns in accessibility to tennis courts in Wales and also for a zoomed-in area around Cardiff, based on user-defined thresholds inputted as part of the accessibility calculations. In both maps, the heavier shading refers to those areas with better access to the sporting facility under consideration (i.e., those with higher FCA scores).

The future landscape
Sport Wales is committed to working with the Welsh Government and key stakeholders to prepare proposals that will help to deliver an effective, efficient and sustainable local, regional and national network of facilities for sport and active recreation. These analytical tools demonstrate how bespoke GIS tools can be used to provide a base-line ‘state-of-play’ with which to monitor the impacts of future changes in the provision of sports facilities in Wales.

Sport Wales has already begun to use the ArcGIS™ Add-In to help explore gymnastics facilities available for residents in south Wales. These tools also help organisations such as Sport Wales to pinpoint those communities that could benefit from increased levels of provision and provide policy makers with potentially powerful tools to help improve participation rates amongst those demographic groups with consistently low levels of physical activity.

In summary, geographical accessibility tools such as these enable the sector to better use insight, knowledge and evidence to plan what we want our sporting landscape to look like.

90 delegates attended this year’s Wales Housing Research Conference, which took place at Cardiff University.

Delegates were invited to attend a variety of sessions, with themes including housing policy and devolution, health and wellbeing, the Welsh homelessness service, vulnerable groups, and the private rented sector. The diversity of topics highlighted how significantly the study of housing crosses over into other areas of research. This was emphasised by Mr Ceri Breeze of the Welsh Government, who updated delegates on housing policy developments and highlighted the need for more research which cuts across policy areas to inform more integrated public services.

Shelter Cymru launched their Welsh homelessness legislation report, Reasonable Steps: Experiences of Homelessness Services Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Research Officer at The Wallich, Mr Alex Osmond, shared his own experiences of homelessness services, as well as his findings on those of other service users. Alongside the legislative changes is a Welsh government-led drive to create a more person-centred service culture and a system that's more effective at prevention, by intervening earlier and addressing the root causes of people's homelessness.

Discussions weren’t limited to Wales – how housing policy and the private rented sector is developing in other areas of the UK was a recurring theme of the day. Professor Kenneth Gibb, University of Glasgow, provided an insight into housing policy in a devolved Scotland and raised the question of whether they are experiencing constrained autonomy or opportunity. Mr Steffan Evans, PhD student at Cardiff University, shared his findings on how social housing regulation differs between Wales and England.

Themes explored towards the end of the day took a more ontological approach, with presenters considering how housing contributes towards health and wellbeing. Dr Jennifer Hoolachan, Cardiff University talked about The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 and its implications for private renters. As part of this discussion, she raised the important distinction between ‘home’ and ‘housing’, emphasising that these are not the same thing.

Dr Peter Mackie, Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University’s School of Geography and Planning, said: “The Wales Housing Research Conference 2016 provided a unique opportunity for academics, national and local government officials, and third sector agencies to collectively explore some of the most pressing housing issues in Wales. Events like this are rare. We have developed a wonderful collaborative approach to understanding and acting on housing issues in Wales and we expect to see future action on some of the key issues discussed at the event, including; homelessness, affordable housing supply, and conditions in the private rented sector.”
Welsh high street not dead, but changing fast

2nd Welsh Retail and Leisure Summit

The second annual report from the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) and the Local Data Company (LDC) reveals the contradictory dynamics of the retail landscape in Wales and how this has changed over the past year. It also highlights the wide variance and make-up of Welsh towns along with their individual trajectories.

Following the launch of the report, the detail was dissected at the 2nd Welsh Retail and Leisure Summit, which took place at Cardiff University in January.

Highlights from the report discussed at the event were:

- The number of empty shops in Wales fell in 2016, as it has for the past three years – although the rate of improvement is slowing.
- The rate of shop vacancies in Welsh town centres has improved faster in Wales than in England or Scotland over the same period – yet still remains higher than in either.
- Shopping centres in Wales have fewer empty shops than either English or Scottish centres – part of the reason that more town centre shops are vacant.
- Concerted efforts at urban regeneration can be successful, as demonstrated by projects such as Friars Walk shopping centre in Newport – yet increased vacancy rates in surrounding areas can indicate that improvement in one place causes problems elsewhere.
- The proportion of independent shops in Welsh towns is rising, contrary to popular belief, as this sector continues to demonstrate the value of its vitality to towns – yet the average percentage of independent shops in Welsh towns remains below that of Great Britain as a whole.
- Shops that sell non-food products (finished goods) are being replaced by food, drink, entertainment and service outlets in Wales, as in Scotland and England.
- Charity shops and booze, money and gambling (BMG) outlets are not taking over locations in Wales as seen in the past – contrary to common perception.
- Persistent vacancy among shops in Wales is not improving, with a stubborn rump remaining empty for three years or more – a clear indicator of oversupply. Planners need to consider changes of use more systematically and have a clear understanding of what a town can realistically sustain in the future.
- Stability still reigns in many town centres in Wales which remain a key destination for their communities, especially with the rise of convenience shopping and an ageing population who value the interaction and engagement that local shops offer. However this may not hold forever as millennials prefer to shop online and they are rising in number and economic significance.

Matthew Hopkinson, Director at LDC commented: “Change in some of the towns is being helped by the reduction in the stock of redundant shops. This is no bad thing when shopping centres and retail parks are increasingly the key destinations for much consumer spend.”

He added: “The prospects for towns are clearly determined by the state of the local economy and the proximity of competing centres as people now travel further to destination locations as mundane shopping can be done from the comfort of your sofa via the internet.”

Dr Scott Orford, Reader in Spatial Analysis and GIS and WISERD Data Research Co-ordinator, said: “There continues to be a clear relationship between local levels of deprivation and retail vacancy rates. In some towns nearly two-fifths of vacant premises have been empty for more than three years. New initiatives are needed in these places to bring these premises back into use.”

Dr Scott Orford concluded: “Compared to last year, there has been an increase in independent retailers in some towns with a noticeable rise in the more rural areas of Wales. Such a development is encouraging given the trend of some of the big retailers reducing their shop numbers and this may reflect consumers wanting something different on the high street from what they can get online.”
Poverty and food banks in Wales

Civil Society seminar

Poverty and the rise of food banks in Wales were the focus of research shared at a recent WISERD Civil Society seminar at Cardiff University. PhD student, David Beck and Dr Hefin Gwilym from Bangor University’s School of Social Sciences presented findings from their research exploring the experience of food poverty in Wales.

Representatives from Cardiff Foodbank, The Trussell Trust, Oxfam Cymru and The Wallich came together with academics to find out more about the rise of food banks in Wales and the accounts of both volunteers and users.

Mr Beck and Dr Gwilym discussed the experience of food poverty being tracked using two methods – the growing number of food banks across the UK, and the ‘felt’ experience and understanding of food poverty by service providers and service users. Their work highlights how the growth and experience of food poverty has been marked by the presence, use and proliferation of food banks.

The first Welsh food bank opened in Newport in 1998 followed by the opening of the Prestatyn food bank in 2005. The Trussell Trust operates the UK’s largest collective network of UK-based food banks, and 2008 saw the opening of their first food bank in Wales. By the end of the Labour Government in 2010 food banks had grown to a total of 16. The change of government also brought about changes in the way welfare is administered. As a result, poverty rose and so did the number of food banks. Between June 2010 and December 2015 the number of food banks grew by 141, bringing the total number to 157 throughout Wales alone.

Dr Hefin Gwilym shared recently completed research comparing the voting patterns in the EU referendum and the prevalence of food banks, which showed that provision and usage of food banks does not follow a pattern of Brexit voting in Wales.

The seminar highlighted the implications of voluntary welfare provision becoming increasingly institutionalised and replacing more traditional state approaches, and what the future could hold for a welfare state post-Brexit. Questions covered the importance of a clear definition of foodbanks, what can be done by the Welsh Assembly government to address the issue, and how the increase in food prices and the lack of skills to prepare food relate to the increase in food banks.
Representation in Westminster

New research investigates parliamentary scrutiny and the representation of women and disabled people

As part of the WISERD Cardiff Lunchtime Seminar Series, Professor Paul Chaney, WISERD Co-Director, outlined the findings of his research on parliamentary scrutiny and the representation of women and disabled people at Westminster. The work explores patterns and processes of “substantive representation” over the post-war period. This term refers to the situation whereby politics allows the needs and concerns of disabled people and women to be reflected in public policy-making and law.

In the case of disabled people the study showed there is evidence of “institutional ableism” – or the existence of systemic, pervasive, and habitual policies and practices that disadvantage individuals based on their abilities. In the three decades to 1970, a period when millions were affected by disability as a result of the Second World War, the analysis shows there were just four general UK public Acts of Parliament concerned with disability. The malaise continued through to the 1990s when a small number of landmark statutes – such as the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) – were passed. Yet, the statistics show how disabled people’s representation has been far from a mainstreamed issue in Westminster law-making.

This conclusion is supported by the study’s findings on ‘early day motions’ – or ‘EDMs’. This is a colloquial term for notice of a debating motion given by an MP. They allow Members of Parliament to put on record their opinion on a subject and canvass support from fellow Members; effectively, it is a kind of petition that MPs can use to bring issues to the attention of their peers to promote the representation of marginalised groups. It again shows that disability issues are far from a mainstreamed policy priority amongst parliamentarians (less than a third of parliamentarians tabled a ‘disability’ EDM).

The research produced broadly similar findings in relation to women’s representation at Westminster. When the content of 22 King/Queen’s Speeches 1945-2012 was analysed, just 26 legislative proposals (‘Bills’ – or promises of legislation) specifically concerned with women’s representation were found. This amounts to under one per cent all post-war governments’ legislative programme proposals (in other words, the things new governments promise they will do when taking up office following election). Crucially, the research showed how MPs’ response to this marginalisation.

Specifically, it examined transcripts of ‘First Day Debates’ at Westminster. These are the occasions when MPs give their response to the incoming administrations’ priorities and programme for government. The analysis showed a significant post-war increase in attention MPs paid to women’s representation. When the first and last 25 years of post-war period are compared, the number of debating interventions on women’s representation almost doubles. Overwhelmingly, this is led by parties of Left (with Labour accounting for more than two-thirds of such interventions). Furthermore, when the debating interventions are disaggregated by sex, male MPs account for 72.9%. Yet it should be noted, when weighed against the percentages of women and men in parliament, proportionately, women MPs are much more likely to raise women’s representation issues in their scrutiny in First Day Debates.

To summarise, in the case of both disabled peoples’ representation and the substantive representation of women at Westminster, the research confirms a clear history of marginalisation and representational failings over the post-war period. It also highlights that the role of ‘critical actors’ and Left-party strength are key factors in addressing these shortcomings.

Professor Chaney’s research is published in the Journal of Legislative Studies (Routledge, T & F) and Women’s Studies International Forum (Elsevier).

Research presented at the House of Commons

In January 2017, Professor Paul Chaney presented findings from the WISERD Civil Society research project, Territoriality and Third Sector Engagement in Policy-Making, at the House of Commons. The presentation at the ESRC “Feminizing Politics: Voice, Access and Accountability” seminar highlighted the role of civil society as a political space for accountability with a focus on its role as an arena for claims-making by feminist policy actors. It drew on international work (studies of the UN Beijing +20 and the first and second cycle Universal Periodic Reviews of human rights instruments).

FURTHER READING:

International Women’s Day 2017
Professor Paul Chaney’s research into gender equality and public policy was also featured in an International Women’s Day blog written for the ESRC.

Equality for disabled people
Professor Paul Chaney’s research into equality for disabled people was also covered in The Conversation, in the blog: Without European intervention, equality for disabled people in Britain would be a distant dream.

To read these blogs, visit: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs
Finding strategies to live well with dementia

Research team: WISERD Director, Professor Ian Rees Jones and Research Associate Dr Alexandra Hillman (Cardiff University)

WISERD Director, Professor Ian Rees Jones and Research Associate Dr Alexandra Hillman are currently working on the ESRC-funded IDEAL study, Improving the Experience of Dementia and Enhancing Active Life: Living Well with Dementia. This longitudinal, mixed-method project studies the various factors that enable people to live well with dementia.

In a recent blog, Dr Hillman said: “Finding strategies to live well with dementia is increasingly a focus of UK government policy. But, we know relatively little about what living well with dementia means to the people and families affected by it, or what factors support living well and what factors act as a barrier to living well.”

Dr Hillman explains the challenges of a project like this: “We rely on our participants to tell us stories about themselves and their lives; this can pose difficulties for those for whom recalling events and reflecting on their meaning provides a significant challenge. However, hearing the stories of those directly affected by dementia is integral to understanding the factors that influence a person, and their families’ ability to manage and cope with its effects.”

Dr Hillman said: “The IDEAL study will make a significant impact by providing an evidence base, built from quantitative and qualitative findings, from which to identify what changes could be made at individual and community levels to actually make living well with dementia more possible.”

Dr Hillman concludes: “We believe our study will result in more informed recommendations for social and health care purchasers, providers and planners as well as more informed advice and guidance for people living with dementia and those who support them.”

To read the full blog, visit: www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs
Introducing the GW4 Pay Equality Research Consortium

Enabling ground-breaking integrative equal pay research

From 2018, companies with more than 250 employees will be required to make their gender pay gap publicly available online. Employers that fail to address gender pay disparities will also be highlighted in new league tables intended to drive progress. The launch of a new project has coincided with the government’s publication of these planned reporting rules for the gender pay gap.

Rhys Davies of the Administrative Data Research Centre Wales (ADRC-W) and WISERD, and Alison Parken of Cardiff Business School are members of the recently established GW4 Pay Equality Research Consortium (PERC). The consortium is a multi-disciplinary team headed by Professor Carol Woodhams at Exeter Business School. Other PERC colleagues include Dr Gregory Schwartz of Bristol University and Dr Susan Milner of Bath University.

Persistent pay inequality amongst men and women still poses a challenge for employees, policy-makers, organisations, and economies.

Concerns include the causes of the pay gap, its consequences and possible remedies. The regulation of pay equality highlights tensions between economic concerns and social/individual concerns. These tensions are reflected in the differing assumptions that underpin research approaches.

Discussions about pay gaps are controversial across academic disciplines and at all levels of society. In a context dominated by government discourses of deregulation and a voluntary approach to pay transparency, little resource has been allocated to close gaps. Section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 has not been implemented. The government’s Think, Act, Report initiative, which requires the voluntary release of company pay data, has not been widely adopted. Sector-specific studies demonstrate that pay gaps are still considerable and also interactional.

GW4 universities employ around 40 colleagues working directly on pay and income inequality, gender disadvantage or affiliated areas within research institutes and centres. GW4 funding will enable the research team to formalise links between groups, consolidating and integrating separate research clusters to strengthen collective interdisciplinary expertise.

GW4
GW4 is an alliance which combines the intellectual capacity and physical resources of the four leading research-intensive universities in the South West of England and Wales: Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter.

This project will provide new impetus to the field. A central goal of this GW4 consortium will be to determine the feasibility of establishing a multi-disciplinary team that will enable ground-breaking integrative equal pay research via the systematic collection of data using innovative methods. Ultimately, findings will have economic, managerial, human resource and policy implications.
Evaluation of the Foundation Phase Flexibility Pilot Scheme

An education report for the Welsh Government

Research team: Dr Dan Evans, Professor Chris Taylor and Dr Mirain Rhys (Cardiff University)

WISERD has been working on a WISERD Education report for the Welsh Government, which provides an evaluation of attempts to see how the Foundation Phase curriculum could be delivered in a ‘flexible’ manner.

Pre-school education – what are the options?

Children in Wales are required to begin school at age five. Although parents have no legal obligation to put their children into education before this, it is widely accepted that pre-school education has a positive impact on children’s cognitive and social development. Local authorities in Wales are required to ensure that all 3- to 4-year-old children can access a minimum of 10 free hours a week of early years education.

To date, this free pre-school education in Wales has been provided through a variety of settings. These include nurseries, nursery schools or nursery classes, private day nurseries and playgroups. In many of these settings provision is organised in the traditional form of morning or afternoon sessions, normally lasting 2.5 hours.

Children may not stay all day in nurseries, and nurseries do not typically offer wrap around care (ie, care before and after the sessions).

What’s the problem?

It has been suggested that the way pre-school education is currently organised in Wales is inflexible and ultimately inconvenient for parents. There is a fear that some parents may find the system so inconvenient that they actually withhold their children from pre-school education completely, or children may only be accessing part of their 10 hours entitlement. Ultimately, children may not be able to receive the full educational benefits of pre-school that they are entitled to.

Flexibility pilot schemes

In response to these fears, the Welsh Government was keen to explore ways of increasing the flexibility of pre-school provision with the overarching aim of increasing children’s participation in early years education.

In 2013, the Welsh Government invited local authorities in Wales to participate in pilot schemes to test how pre-school education could be made more flexible. Local authorities were given the freedom to design forms of flexibility which responded to the specific needs and issues within their area. Four local authorities participated: Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport and Denbighshire. Examples of flexibility include providing wrap-around care and unsociable hours provision to employing family link workers.

WISERD’s evaluation

WISERD was commissioned by the Welsh Government to evaluate the implementation and impact of these flexibility pilots. The two-year evaluation used a combination of interviews with local authorities, teaching, managerial staff and parents, surveys with staff and parents, school visits and classroom observations.

Overall, the flexibility pilots were found to have worked well and to have helped solve or alleviate the problems they were designed to address across the different local authorities.

Some of the report findings included:

Effect on parents – The research found that the forms of flexibility offered generally helped parents’ work/life balance and made their daily routines easier to manage.

Effect on staff and settings – The implementation of the Foundation Phase Flexibility Pilots was not found to have obstructed the implementation of the Foundation Phase curriculum, which was generally well delivered. However, educators felt there was the potential for some forms of flexibility to impact on it, eg, by causing mixed timetables and fluctuating pupil numbers.

Effect on children – The flexible forms of provision generally did not seem to have any adverse impact on children’s learning or the implementation of the Foundation Phase. Classroom observations conducted in the pilot settings recorded generally high levels of children’s well-being and attentiveness. Moreover, the majority of parents interviewed as part of the research felt the flexible provision had a positive impact on their child.
The WISERD blog provides regular updates on the latest project developments, research findings and events.

Some of our recent blogs:

**Public Uni – reflections on public engagement**  
By Dr Ceryn Evans

**WISERD Civil Society: Social Media Research Series – How do trade unions use Twitter?**  
By Wil Chivers

**Without European intervention, equality for disabled people in Britain would be a distant dream**  
By Professor Paul Chaney

**Young people and Brexit: will Brexit spark young people’s interest in devolved Welsh politics?**  
By Dr Sioned Pearce

Read all our blogs at: [www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs](http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/news/wiserd-blogs)  
If you would like to contribute to the blog, please email WISERD: [Comms@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Comms@cardiff.ac.uk)

WISERD is committed to capacity building within the social sciences in Wales, the UK and internationally. We offer a series of workshops, seminars and conferences, aimed at those with an interest in the social sciences. Here are just some of our forthcoming events:

**Exploring the Counter-narratives of British African Caribbean men who have attended elite universities in England and Wales**  
13 June 2017, Cardiff University  
British African Caribbean ‘home’ students have been found to have low levels of entry into higher tariff (ie, the elite UK Russell Group) universities compared to other ethnic and white groups of students. Dr Constantino Dumangane Jr. will discuss at this WISERD Lunchtime Seminar.

**Young People and Brexit - One year on**  
22 June 2017, National Council for Voluntary Organisations Society (NCVO), London  
How are young people feeling about and responding to Brexit? A one-day conference to consider this important question. We will also be exploring how Brexit is affecting young people’s broader engagement with politics.

**WISERD Annual Conference 2017**  
5-6 July 2017, Bangor University  
The theme for this year’s event is “The Decade of Disruption” and it promises to provide colleagues from across the academic, policy, public, private, and third sectors with the opportunity to network and discuss cutting edge research from Wales and beyond.

For more information about our events or to book a place, visit: [www.wiserd.ac.uk/events](http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/events)