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This issue shows scholarship shedding light on a range of policy and other topical issues.

THE 2010 SPENDING REVIEW:
Implications for the state and its reach

The Coalition Government has said that the 2010 Spending Review 'will be a complete re-evaluation of the Government's role in providing public services'. 'It is time to rethink how government spends our money,' the Chancellor has said. On 30 July 2010, a British Academy Forum sought to address the 'big questions'. **Professor Andrew Gamble FBA** *summarises the discussion.*

THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT has made tackling the deficit in the public finances its chief priority. Some immediate cuts were announced in the emergency budget, but much more drastic measures were promised for the autumn with the completion of the comprehensive spending review. Most Departments apart from Heath and International Development were asked to plan for cuts of 25 per cent and 40 per cent. The Chancellor, George Osborne, announced that he wanted 80 per cent of the reduction in the deficit to come from spending cuts and only 20 per cent from tax increases.

Cuts on this scale, if delivered, would be unprecedented, greater than the cuts achieved in any period since 1945 including 1976–77, 1980–82, and 1992–94. According to Michael Portillo, Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 1992–94, the Government at that time only managed to achieve a ratio of spending cuts to tax increases of 50/50. The austerity implied by the Coalition Government's plans will last a full Parliament, requiring greater political determination and cohesion in the face of political unpopularity and the lobbying from special interests than most previous Governments have displayed. The Coalition Government in its rhetoric at least is promising a fundamental review of all aspects of state activity, in order to reduce state expenditure substantially, transferring many functions to the private sector or doing without them altogether.

Principles

Periods of large fiscal adjustment are an opportunity to consider the most appropriate size of the state and the principles which justify public rather than private spending. This was the subject of the British Academy Forum held on 30 July 2010. An extreme libertarian might argue that there should be no state spending at all because it involves coercion of the citizens through the extraction of taxes, and therefore is always illegitimate, while an extreme collectivist might claim that all spending should be controlled and directed collectively, because only in this way can the good society be realised. Between these two extremes there are many different possibilities for the balance that can be struck between spending that is public and spending which is private, between the state and the individual. The argument has tended to focus not on whether the state should exist at all, or on whether it

Figure 1. *Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne makes his Budget Speech, June 2010. Photo: Reuters/ David Moir.*

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should include everything, but on whether it should be minimal or maximal in the functions it performs. Proponents of a minimal state wish to limit those functions to the provision of security, the administration of justice and the protection of property rights, while proponents of a maximal state want to add protection against risk and the equalising of opportunities for all citizens.

One influential way of analysing where the boundary should be struck between public and private from the libertarian side, as Samuel Brittan pointed out, has been to assume that all spending should ideally be private, and to justify public spending on technical grounds because the good in question is a public good, or there is an externality, or a separate argument for redistribution can be made. But there are other starting points as well, depending on different conceptions of the fundamental purpose of government. For utilitarians the purpose of government is to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, for libertarians it is to protect human rights, for communitarians it is to promote identity and social cohesion, and for egalitarians it is to diffuse power and resources as widely as possible.

One difficulty in deciding how big the state should be is to know how big it actually is. One of the simplest if crudest methods for measuring the size and activity of the state is to express public expenditure as a proportion of GDP. This remains a useful indicator, but is only a starting point. The state needs to be considered in its different roles as provider, purchaser, redistributor and regulator. State expenditure needs to be disaggregated by programmes (defence, health, education, welfare) and the different ways these are delivered (for example through transfer payments to individuals, purchase of services, direct provision of services) – as Michael Lipton emphasised. A very different way of thinking about the state, as Douglas Wass argued, is the extent of its capacities to regulate and influence all other activities.

Historical patterns

In the last hundred years there has been a very substantial growth in the size of the state in the United Kingdom. Before the 20th century public expenditure as a proportion of GDP was below 10 per cent. It rose dramatically in both world wars, to a peak of 47 per cent in 1918 and 65 per cent in 1944, falling sharply once the war was over, but never to the same level before it.

Between 1920 and 1939 it averaged 23–28 per cent, and between 1947 and 1965 it averaged 34–39 per cent. From 1966 to 1973 public spending increased to an average of 40–43 per cent, before briefly rising as result of the economic crisis of the mid 1970s to 46-48 per cent between 1974 and 1977.

The great fiscal contraction begun by Labour and continued under the Conservatives brought the average spend down to 40–45 per cent between 1978 and 1986, and then from 1987 to 2008 it fell back to an average of 35–40 per cent, although on a rising curve after 1999. The financial crisis of 2007–08 saw public spending rise sharply above 45

Two traditions of thinking

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) is an extremely interesting figure when thinking about the state, partly because he himself was so contradictory. He both favoured the most minimal state possible, but also gave justifications for state activity in terms of ensuring security and equality – in due course that would allow for a much greater expansion of the state. His notion of frugal government, at which all governments should perhaps aim, was to reduce delay, vexation and expense in achieving the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Bentham's concept of the agenda and non agenda of government was picked up by John Maynard Keynes FBA (1883–1946), but used to promote the idea of a more active state. In the famous quotation from *The End of Laissez Faire* (1926), Keynes says, 'The important thing for government is not to do things which individuals are doing already, and to do them a little better or a little worse; but to do those things which at present are not done at all.' Keynes thought that the task of economics was to distinguish the agenda from the non agenda – services that were technically social and services that were technically individual. The task of politics was to devise forms of government within a democracy which could accomplish the agenda. In some ways it is a satisfying division, but one that is difficult to achieve in practice.

Jeremy Bentham

John Maynard Keynes FBA

per cent once more, in response to the recession and the additional expenditure incurred in bank bailouts and fiscal stimulus.

Political pressures

This does not amount to an inexorable rise of the state. There have been two large increases as result of the two world wars, and after each a new higher plateau was established. There has been a tendency for some upward incremental drift, but generally for the last 60 years Britain has had a 40 per cent state, and it has proved very difficult either to increase or to reduce it substantially. There are many reasons why public expenditure has been so hard to reduce. Increased demands and expectations, the pressures of democratic politics, growing complexity and interdependence, and multilevel governance all contribute. But it is still surprising, as Tim Besley and Mark Littlewood pointed out, that there has not been greater readiness to have a more radical look at the size and functions of the state. Many contributors at the Forum suggested this was due to the political pressures faced by Ministers and civil servants, which made large cuts unfeasible, and meant that few discussions of first principles ever take place in Government. Affordability and political feasibility tend to govern the process, and this means that cuts when they are implemented involve salami slicing of existing activities, rather than the cutting out of whole areas of activity.

Another key consideration is the appropriate level for the control of budgets. These can be at the level of central government, local/regional government, the service providers (whether public, private or third sector) or citizens themselves. As Tim Besley pointed out, there is much talk about the virtues of localism, but there is an unwillingness in practice to think beyond the mechanisms of the bureaucratic, centralised state. One of the big uncertainties is how far citizens want to be entrusted with direct control over services, to assume the personal responsibility which has previously been exercised by state agencies on their behalf. Sue Cameron suspected that whatever citizens said they wanted, they would still blame government if things went wrong.

Three models

The Coalition Government inherited a level of spending which is currently more than 45 per cent of GDP as a result of the recession. The fiscal position at the moment is sustained by a large amount of borrowing. For the purposes of the Forum's discussion, it was assumed that three broad choices confronted the Coalition: it could choose to attempt to stabilise public spending at around 44 per cent of GDP; it could seek to reduce it to 38 per cent of GDP; or it could seek to reduce it further to 25 per cent of GDP – although as Peter Riddell pointed out, in practice Governments never think in terms of targets like these; they may want to shrink or expand the state but they have little idea what the result will be.

All three options are in principle compatible with different purposes and different styles of government; but they also embody different political judgements about how the state can best promote the prosperity of a market economy. There is no necessary correlation between the amount the Government spends and the extent to which the state penetrates all corners of civil society. The Government could spend 50 per cent of GDP, but in the form of transfer payments rather than directly providing services itself. At the same time a 25 per cent state could still have regulatory and monitoring capacities which made it very intrusive in shaping all aspects of economic and social life. Spending by itself is not an indicator of how much or how little the state intervenes, or the way in which it intervenes.

44 per cent state

A 44 per cent state has only been approached during wars and in the aftermath of major financial crises, but it also moved towards this level during 1966–73, and again before the financial crisis of 2007–08. It is associated with the Nordic countries, the countries with advanced welfare states, high taxation and high spending, and dynamic private sectors. It supports a large role for the state in promoting national competitiveness (economic or military) through strategic investment in human capital, the research base, and infrastructure, while at the same time providing high levels of social security and social solidarity through universal health, education and welfare programmes. A condition for this model to work is a very broad tax base and therefore high levels of tax compliance, and a political culture which accepts the trade-off between high taxation and social cohesion. Vernon Bogdanor wondered why in the aftermath of the financial crisis and the discrediting of the market-led model of the previous thirty years, this model does not command more support.

38 per cent state

A 38 per cent state has been the default position of British Governments since 1945. It was broadly achieved between 1947 and 1965, and again after 1987 until the financial crash. This level of spend has been typical of other Anglosphere states, including the United States. The public sector is sizeable and the role of government extensive, but greater weight is placed on the private than on the public sector. There is a hybrid welfare state and a hybrid political economy. The lines between the public and the private sector are constantly changing the strategic role of the state is uneven, and there is often conspicuous underinvestment in human and social capital.

25 per cent state

The 25 per cent state was last seen in the UK in the 1920s and 1930s. Contemporary exemplars of such a state include Hong Kong and Switzerland. It allows much lower taxation than in either of the other two models, and therefore very high individual incentives which encourage entrepreneurialism and individual responsibility. The welfare state is residual but can still be very important in certain areas – for example, Hong Kong provides cheap subsidised rented accommodation for the great majority of its workers. Inequality tends to be higher than in either of the other two models. Taxes would become flat and proportional rather than progressive.

Conclusion

The view of most of the participants in the Forum was that the Government would find it hard to live up to its rhetoric of radical cuts, and would settle in most areas for reductions in current activities which are politically least painful, rather than a deeper review of what the state should and should not be doing. That would require determining the agenda and non-agenda of Government as Bentham

and later Keynes advocated. The Coalition is unlikely to do things differently from its predecessor, but it may yet still surprise us.

A lot may depend on how the public reacts. Avner Offer argued that in certain circumstances people were unable to assume responsibility for themselves, while Peter Taylor-Gooby suggested that many people would only become involved if their own interests were directly concerned, for example over their children's education. This scepticism was countered by Tim Besley, who argued that there did seem to be a great appetite among people involved in the voluntary sector to change the way things are done. The fate of the Big Society programme may depend on which of these views is closer to the truth about contemporary Britain.

Andrew Gamble is Professor of Politics at the University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

The British Academy Forum 'The 2010 Spending Review: Implications for the state and its reach' was chaired by Professor Peter Hennessy FBA (Queen Mary, University of London).

The following participants at the Forum are cited above: Professor Tim Besley FBA (London School of Economics); Sir Samuel Brittan (*Financial Times*); Sue Cameron (*Financial Times*); Professor Michael Lipton FBA (University of Sussex); Mark Littlewood (Institute of Economic Affairs); Professor Avner Offer FBA (University of Oxford); Peter Riddell (Institute for Government); Professor Peter Taylor-Gooby FBA (University of Kent); Sir Douglas Wass (former Permanent Secretary, HM Treasury). A full list of Forum participants can be found at www.britac.ac.uk/policy/2010_spending_review. cfm, along with the slides of Professor Gamble's presentation to the Forum.

British Academy Forums offer a neutral setting for argument based on research and evidence, to help frame the terms of public debates and clarify policy options.

British Academy Forums provide opportunities for frank, informed debate. It should not be assumed that any summary record of a Forum discussion reflects the views of every participant.

Universities and research under the axe

In the following extracts from his Presidential Address to the British Academy's Annual General Meeting on 22 July 2010, **Professor Sir Adam Roberts** *discusses the challenges confronting universities and other scholarly institutions as they face the imminent prospect of cuts in their funding.*

NEVER HAS the environment in which we operate needed to be questioned more than it does now. For the past year we have been going through a period which might be likened to the 'phoney war' of 1939-40. Everyone knew that a huge storm was brewing, but it had not yet hit the UK in any major way. It is now beginning to hit – especially with this week's announcement that colleges and universities have suddenly had £82 million slashed from their current budgets.

In my address to AGM last July I warned of the problems ahead. It did not require any exceptional gift of prophecy to state:

> There will be an election within a year, and obviously a change of government is a possibility. Whatever the outcome, we know that there will be pressures to make savings in public spending. This is therefore the time to try to shape the public debate, and to ensure that the humanities and social sciences are properly recognised in the life of this country.

That is still our task.

The challenge to Government – and to the Academy

Within the next twelve months a double-whammy is likely to hit higher education in the UK: cuts in funding for teaching and student grants, at the same time as cuts in funding for research. The big challenges we all face – not just within the British Academy, but in the whole field of Higher Education – revolve around two core questions: (1) what is to be the basis of future funding? And (2) how do we get from where we are now to where we are going without inflicting serious damage on the whole system in the transition?

The pressure for cuts

There is little value in simply opposing all idea of government cuts. The fact is that, rightly or wrongly, both the Labour government and the coalition government have been committed to funding cuts, including in the field of Higher Education. We may all wish it were otherwise – and some may wonder why it is that the recession-beating propositions of our distinguished former Fellow John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) have apparently been summarily rejected. However, cuts there will be, and apparently on a major scale. We cannot usefully approach the debate by saying that there is no room for efficiencies and rationalisation in Higher Education, and no degree courses at all that cannot be improved or even cut. Nor can we ignore the argument that the vast expansion of higher education in the past half-century calls into question the old model, of which all my generation were beneficiaries, of receiving university education free. Vince Cable has gone so far as to argue that 'a model designed for 10% of the population could not be applied to 40%.'[1] And we cannot ignore the fact that the national research budget received a significant boost in funding over the last decade.

In face of the pressure for cuts, what we can do is to assert – as powerfully and persuasively as we are able – that the Higher

Education sector in general, and Humanities and Social Sciences in particular, have achieved extraordinary success both in teaching and in research. They are a huge national asset. Students from all over the world want to study here, and, despite hot competition from elsewhere, do so in ever-increasing numbers. UK research consistently outperforms that of other countries in the various crude measures, such as citation indexes and return on investment, that are used to gauge its impact. Other national institutions, especially in the financial sector, have failed the country and aggravated our exposure to the present recession. By contrast, higher education and research have served the country well.

The case for protection

Does higher education have a case for being protected in some way from the effects of cuts? The answer has to be yes. What has taken generations to build can be destroyed in just a few years. If cuts there are to be, they need to be on a scale appropriate to the situation of Higher Education in this country, and part of an overall strategy for how this sector is to be funded in the future. In other words, if there are to be cuts, they need to be done in a joined-up way. Instead, what we have has been aptly described by one vice-chancellor as an 'increasingly wild debate about who should pay for higher education.'[2]

There has been some insistence, from both the Labour and coalition governments, that STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects should be privileged. While we have made the case robustly for the value of humanities and social sciences, we have never sought to undermine the important claims for resources of our colleagues in the natural sciences. What we do argue, however, is that humanities and social sciences should be valued properly and funded fairly.

Both the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Vince Cable, and the new Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts, have a social science background. Their recent speeches have also indicated a refreshing awareness of the value of humanities and social science – the very points that the Academy has been making. I would not claim that the Academy's efforts are the sole influence – these are clearly deeply held views by thoughtful individuals – but they represent a sea change from the time, not so long ago, when a Secretary of State could publicly question the value of medieval history. Both have made it clear, however, that every area will need to bear its share of the burden. As far as university teaching is concerned, it is important that there be exploration of alternative funding models involving some combination of permitting universities to raise tuition fees, an augmented student loan system, and a tax on graduates. We are probably destined to go down one path or the other, but before we do so some questions need to be addressed.

Figure 1. *At the Annual General Meeting on 22 July 2010, 54 distinguished scholars were elected to be Fellows of the British Academy; and on 27 September 2010, a ceremony was held at the Academy to admit them to the Fellowship.*

Student contributions

Regarding tuition fees and maintenance support, the British Academy organised an excellent Forum in February.[3] My questions on fees, loans and taxes are obvious and familiar, but require clear answers related to the new situation. If fees are to be increased, what mechanisms will be in place, nationally or within each university, to ensure that the admissions processes are needs-blind, and that those who need a financial package to see them through university actually receive it? And what is to be done about the burden on students doing degrees that lead to careers with obvious social utility but low remuneration?

Last week the Secretary of State explored some ideas about a graduate contribution tied to earnings – which the press immediately labelled a 'graduate tax'. If some form of graduate tax is under discussion, many tough questions arise. The first group of questions relate to fairness: why should a graduate earning the same as a non-graduate pay a higher rate of tax? Is income tax a simpler and better basis for raising funds? The second relate to the statist and bureaucratic character of the proposal: would it weaken the vital link between the student and the university? Would universities supplying resource-intensive provision receive a proper share of the proceeds of this tax, and how would that be calculated? And what guarantees would there be that this hypothecated tax is actually passed on in full by the Treasury? The third group relate to practicality: can funds from this source be generated in time to cover the deficits that universities face? And, since the job market is increasingly international, how can there be an effective means of claiming a graduate tax from those working overseas? Might a graduate tax indeed contribute to a brain drain?

In short, there is a risk of rushing into a new funding model before there has been full exploration of how it would actually work. Much rests on Lord Browne's review of higher education funding, publication of which has been postponed to the autumn. I hope that it

will provide a basis for answering at least some of these questions. Meanwhile, there is huge concern at a situation where cuts appear certain, but what replaces them is not known.

My challenges to the government are simple. Don't ask us to implement cuts on such a scale that they damage successful institutions and disciplines; or, to put it differently, don't wield the axe without a clear plan of how such great institutions are to be funded in the future. Don't make cuts that threaten excellent teaching and research. And work out some plans for how to cross what Steve Smith, President of Universities UK, has called the 'valley of death' – that period between when the cuts kick in, and new forms of income come on stream.[4]

Funding of research: our submission to BIS

The position regarding research funding is no less dire, but has involved the Academy in a greater degree of consultation with government. Last week the Academy published its submission to Professor Adrian Smith, Director-General of Science and Research at BIS, in response to his invitation to the Academy and five other national bodies to submit formal advice on the needs and contribution of the research base in the context of the next Government spending review. [5]

The Academy's submission makes a strong case for continued Government investment in research in general, and in humanities and social sciences in particular. We stress that relatively small cuts, which would make little difference in terms of cost savings, could fundamentally endanger the UK's exceptionally successful research base, steadily developed over generations and one of the country's few world-class assets. We urge that the major challenges we face today – such as economic recovery, climate change, a steadily ageing society and obesity – require analysis and research from a wide range of disciplines including the social sciences and the humanities. We argue that the humanities and social sciences play an indispensible role, socially, culturally, and also economically – not least by attracting income from overseas students.

The Academy's submission highlights the importance of a long-term framework for research funding, of maintaining diversity and breadth across the research base, of focussing on excellence as the primary starting point for assessing the value of all research and of investing in the most talented researchers, so that this country remains a beacon which can nurture the best researchers across all disciplines from the UK and elsewhere in the world. We believe that the current proportional spend between quality-driven research funding (QR) and project funding through the research councils is the right one; and that while the cost of HSS research is low in proportion to that of the natural sciences (and therefore harder to cut without doing fundamental damage), the return on that investment is high.

Furthermore, in what I believe is a unique step, Lord Rees and I have sent a joint letter to Professor Smith, expressing the un-equivocal view of both the British Academy and the Royal Society that that the UK must maintain top class universities able to compete with the best in the world, maintaining the breadth that has led to the country's being ranked second across the world in most disciplines.[6] We state that Britain's research leadership provides two clear benefits: first, a wellspring of new ideas, innovation and economic growth; and second, vital 'absorptive capacity' – the ability to search for, adopt, exploit and diffuse knowledge from other countries. Both are essential to our country's health and wealth, its international reputation and its continued ability to innovate, develop and rebuild our economy. We also argue that the dual support system for funding university research must be retained; and that the major challenges of today require multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches.

We need to argue the case anew. A 25% cut in research funding – and an equivalent cut for the Academy itself – would be a huge waste of potential. It is a tough argument, but one we need to sustain: I believe that the government can still be persuaded to see the case for investment in research.

Cuts within universities

There have of course already been many cuts announced within universities, and Fellows have expressed legitimate concerns. The Academy has a settled policy of not seeking to intervene in the internal affairs of universities, out of respect for institutional autonomy, although this does not rule out what I might call quiet diplomacy. Individual Fellows of course often make their views known robustly, and very properly too, so long as it is clear that this is in a personal capacity. Where the Academy has a clear locus is if there are national trends, or risks concerning the national capacity in a particular subject. On this we have been in communication with HEFCE, which is charged by the Secretary of State to develop a policy on strategic and vulnerable subjects. Research Councils too have responsibilities for disciplinary capacity in research. Our view is that circumstances have changed radically and rapidly: at a time of far-reaching cuts, there is a risk that small and isolated units (often disproportionately in HSS) will seem easy pickings for savings. What may be rational for an individual university (however undesirable from our point of view) may be less than optimal nationally or regionally if it leads to the disappearance of expertise or provision in a particular area. Our view is that a radical review of this policy is called for to deal with what could be a period of crisis. It is no longer simply about just languages and area studies and other traditionally vulnerable areas – it is a threat across the board.

Let me conclude by saying that while the immediate future looks distinctly unpromising, the Academy is in good shape to continue the long and difficult fight on behalf of the subjects we represent.

Notes

1 Vince Cable, speech at London South Bank University, 15 July 2010.

2 Professor Sir Peter Scott, Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University, 'A graduate tax is illogical: why not a tax on A-levels?', *Education Guardian*, 20 July 2010.

3 British Academy Forum on 'The economics of undergraduate tuition fees and maintenance support', www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary/economics_of_tuition_fees_outputs.cfm

4 Steve Smith, 'Our universities are standing on the brink of catastrophe', *The Observer,* 13 June 2010. (The headline, as he has made clear, was not his.)

5 British Academy, 'Investing in Excellence: The Needs and Contribution of the UK Research Base', 16 July 2010, www.britac.ac.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/367

6 Lord Rees of Ludlow and Professor Sir Adam Roberts, letter to Professor Adrian Smith, see www.britac.ac.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/367

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Why Should We Care?

The British Academy's Director of External Relations, **Tim Brassell**, *reports how the Academy has been corralling evidence of the public value of the humanities and social sciences*

WELL BEFORE the General Election of 2010 it became clear that financial clouds would darken the higher education and research landscape. The years of steady growth and rising public investment were numbered. Tough debates about national priorities, economic and public value and demonstrable impact lay ahead.

By their nature, there are no simple, stark answers to questions such as 'What do the arts, humanities and social sciences do for the UK?', or conversely 'What is at stake if there are major cuts to public investment in these areas?' However, as its contribution to this inevitable and perfectly legitimate debate, the British Academy started to draw together a set of narrative arguments that could illustrate the economic, social and cultural contribution that research and scholarship in our disciplines makes to the UK's health, wealth and international reputation.

The resulting booklet, *Past, Present and Future: The Public Value of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, also contains ten case studies that illustrate this impact – ranging from the way research on different kinds of social disadvantage influenced the billion pound 'Sure Start' initiative, to how Nicholas Stern's seminal report on climate change has influenced government policies around the world.

Launch

The booklet was launched at the House of Commons on 17 June 2010, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council, Universities UK (UUK), and the Russell and 1994 Groups. Lord Patten, the Chancellor of Oxford and Professor Steve Smith, President of UUK, joined our President, Sir Adam Roberts, in speaking of the importance of sustained public funding for science and research.

The publication and event received considerable media attention and political recognition. In his speech to University Vice-Chancellors on 15 July, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable, acknowledged how 'what my father used to describe as "arty farty" subjects feed into the rapidly growing and successful industries like creative design, publishing and music. Many employers simply want people who can think clearly, which is why study of philosophy or history or classics is a lot more than an interesting diversion. An essentially utilitarian take on universities doesn't necessarily mean philistinism. The British Academy report, *Past, Present and Future*, recently made this case more eloquently than I have.'[1]

At the UUK Conference on 9 September, the Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts, confirmed that 'a strong research base is vital for our future in a global knowledge economy – strong in both fundamental, curiosity-driven research and research applied to the challenges facing businesses and public services.'[2]

Figure 1. *David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science, beside Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy, at the Academy's panel discussion on 20 September 2010. Photo: David Graeme-Baker.*

Debate

On 20 September, David Willetts took part in a British Academy panel discussion on ‘Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Why Should We Care?’, to debate the issues raised by the Academy’s booklet.

Professor Geoffrey Crossick, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, argued that humanities research increased understanding of some of the toughest issues facing modern society, including global security and terrorism, an ageing society and the ethics of stem cell research. ‘The complaint is sometimes made that humanities don’t give clear answers and this is often true,’ he said. ‘People are complex – shaped by language, identities, history, faiths, cultures – but humanities help us understand that complexity.’

Dame Hazel Genn FBA, Dean of the Faculty of Laws at University College London, argued that ‘social science is a critical resource to society and to government’. It provided crucial insights in comprehending the world – the behaviour of individuals, groups and whole societies – and how structures influence, constrain or encourage particular behaviour. And ‘the partnership between social and natural science is the key to facing and effectively managing the challenges that confront our society’ – whether climate change, family structures and stability, demographic change, public health and well-being, or economic stability and regulation (Figure 2).

Value

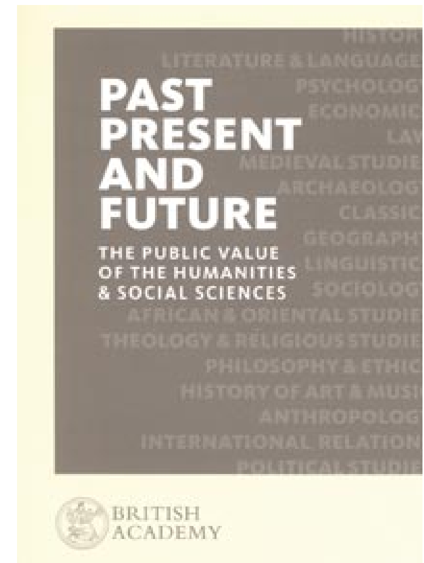
David Willetts began his response by seeking to reassure the audience that ‘I understand – and not just me, the Government understands – the value of the disciplines – the arts, humanities, and social sciences – represented here this evening.’ His own recent book, *The Pinch*, ‘was only possible because of an extraordinary amount of research from social scientists and others, on which I shamelessly drew.’

He commended *Past, Present and Future* for the way it provided ‘exactly the right arguments put in the right way at the right time’, adding that ‘something that comes out very clearly is the sheer strength of the links between the humanities and the social sciences and public policy and public debate.’ And he reiterated the point that these disciplines ‘contribute enormously to our national life and our national economy.’

The Minister went on, ‘One of the most important and attractive features of some of the disciples represented here today is the importance of individual scholarship. And I pay tribute here to the role of the British Academy in supporting individual scholars who make ground-breaking discoveries without necessarily being dependent on quite such large-scale pieces of equipment as are sometimes necessary for advance in the physical sciences.’

David Willetts concluded, ‘So yes, what goes on in the arts, humanities and social sciences is worthwhile in its own right. There *are* challenges because of the fiscal position we are in. There is absolutely no desire on the part of government to pick on arts, humanities and social sciences as somehow of less value than other disciplines: we have not fallen prey to the belief in that kind of reductionism. There will be tough decisions to take, but I know that all of us around the table who are participating appreciate the power of the arguments set out in this excellent British Academy pamphlet.’

Figure 2. *Former Chancellor, Lord Nigel Lawson, and Sir John Vickers FBA, at the British Academy Forum on ‘The future of banking: stability, competition and regulation’, held on 30 September 2010. Sir John is chairman of the Government’s Independent Commission on Banking.*



Notes

1 Vince Cable, Secretary of State, Department for Business Innovation & Skills, ‘Higher Education’, speech at London South Bank University, 15 July 2010.

2 David Willetts, speech at the Universities UK annual conference, 9 September 2010. He went on to say, ‘Public funding for university research will continue to be delivered through independent arms-length bodies – including the national academies which support outstanding individual scholars – and distributed on the basis of excellence determined by expert peer review and assessment.’ A video and transcript can be found via www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Events/Annual-Conference–2010.

Past, Present and Future: The Public Value of the Humanities and Social Sciences can be downloaded via www.britac.ac.uk/policy/

Audio recordings of the panel discussion ‘Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Why Should We Care?’ may be found via www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary

Political decision-making in a crisis

In March 2010, a British Academy Forum looked at how political decisions are taken during a crisis (whether 'foot and mouth' or 7/7). **Dr Catherine Haddon** *considers the lessons that can be learned for the future.*

FROM FUEL PROTESTS, foot and mouth outbreaks and floods, to terrorist attacks and bank collapses, the last Government faced a number of serious crises that often had terrible and lasting consequences. In both the successes and failures of their handling, officials and politicians learnt important lessons at Cabinet, departmental and local agency level. A comprehensive guide for officials and a shorter one for ministers have recently been completed, and officials now undergo training and rehearsal sessions fairly routinely. Nonetheless, such events are hugely challenging even for a relatively seasoned government, as the volcanic ash cloud and the confusion around the UK government's responsibility and response in April 2010 reminded us. Looking at both the last 13 years and further back into the history of crisis decision-making demonstrates just how important it is that crisis-handling machinery is cared for, and lessons of behaviour and response are imparted to new generations and to a new government. This was the subject of a recent British Academy Forum attended by representatives from the civil service, political, media and academic worlds, and from the Institute for Government.

History

The current system for managing emergencies in the UK has its origins in the early 1970s, and has been studied in depth by Rosaleen Hughes, one of the Forum participants. Hughes described how, during the miner's strike of January-February 1972, 'the country was really just days away from the end of coal-fired electricity generation' and the loss of 75% of energy supply. The strike was 'handled very badly politically and logistically... The system was very slow to find out what was happening and even slower to react to it.' The scale of the shock of these events led to 'long post-mortems' which concluded that the system was broken, in particular the emergency committee of ministers, which was large and unwieldy. A smaller committee was established in summer 1972, known as the Civil Contingencies Committee (with a Civil Contingencies Unit to service it) incorporating both ministers and officials. This Committee met in the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) and 'was integrated into the same system as planning for nuclear war'. The new system did not resolve many of the problems surrounding crises, particularly industrial disputes, but it was a vast improvement on its predecessor and forms the basis for the present system. It also played a major role from the 1970s onwards in dealing with counter-terrorist emergencies such as the Iranian Embassy siege. This would continue to be an important element in its character.

These origins of COBR in the 1970s left an important legacy in how government coped with civil emergencies. As one observer of both eras – former Permanent Secretary Sir Richard Mottram – put it, the fact that 'COBR came out of a defence and nuclear release set of arrangements ... had an interesting impact... It drove the way communications were thought of ... [and it] gave it a defence flavour, which may not have been that helpful'. COBR retained its role and importance in counter-terrorism emergencies, and successive Home Secretaries and officials were experienced in this area. However, with the end of the Cold War there was a reduced focus on rehearsing transition to war and planning for civil defence. This, and other factors, seems to have led to a degree of atrophy in crisis handling, specifically over civil emergencies. The scale of the problem became apparent when, between autumn 2000 and summer 2001, three major civil crises occurred to which the country 'seemed almost unable to respond'. These were the three 'F's: the fuel protest in September 2000; major floods in October and November of 2000; and the foot and mouth disease outbreak that lasted from February to October 2001. All generated lessons, the machinery and official training and rehearsal were improved. Yet, while improvements

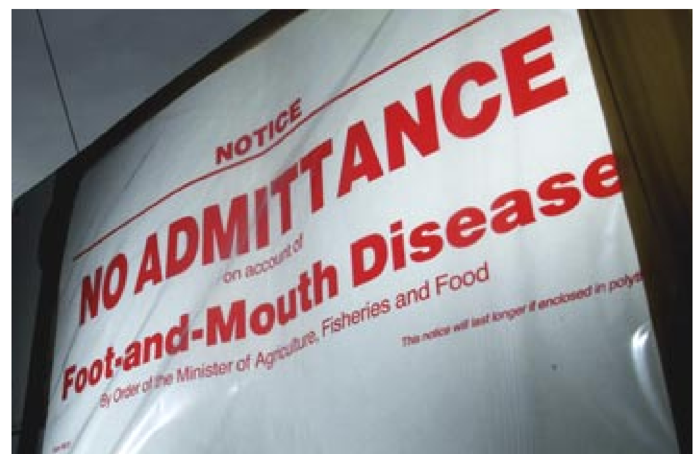


Figure 1. *Political crises caused by nature.*
Top: *The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001. Photo: Reuters/Ian Waldie.*
Bottom: *Flights cancelled because of the ash cloud from the Icelandic volcano in April 2010. Photo: Reuters/Andrew Winning.*

occurred, particularly for agencies and emergency services after the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, as well as the central COBR machinery, such events will always prove a major challenge and their handling will acutely affect people's lives.

Different behaviour

For ministers, particularly new ministers, knowing the role they play and the forces that will be upon them are a real challenge. As the former Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and Security Intelligence Coordinator, Sir David Omand, put it:

> you are going to behave rather differently; the pace of decision-making is going to be much faster than you have been used to; the mechanics of your relationship with your officials are going to be rather different, and very importantly, you are going to have to take more decisions on less information than you have been used to. That last point means you have to stick your neck out ... it is about risk management. You do the best you can, but it may or may not be the best decision at the time and you are not going to know that as you take it... You have to live with that and just get on. That is not how most policy-making process works.

With this in mind, and based on the expertise of two leading officials in crisis management in government – Alun Evans, who was Secretary for the reviews into both the 2001 and 2007 foot and mouth outbreaks, and Simon Webb, who has spent the last year developing both officials' and ministerial guides to crisis handling – the British Academy Forum discussed a number of important lessons for ministers in how the machine works and what their role should be.

1. Anticipation of potential crises

There was some discussion about the nature of different crises – those that stem from policy failures or develop over a period of time, as opposed to those that seem to come out of the blue. The government has become much better at dealing with crises of a similar nature to the last one, but as Professor Peter Hennessy reminded the Forum, there 'is always an unforeseen element [to a crisis] even if it is a repeat' where a particular crisis 'suddenly rises up again in a different form in a different generation'. At the same time, this does not mean resorting to fatalism: crises will occur, but 'the trick is how to prepare and deal with them in the circumstances in which they happen.'

2. Preparation of contingency planning and training

Officials now have extensive training and practice drills, something that many believed helped the reaction to the terrorist attacks in London on 7 July 2005. A question remains as to how much ministers need to be involved in such training. In the US the outgoing Bush Administration arranged for a crisis rehearsal for the Obama team. In the UK, this was not constitutionally possible before the 2010 election, but ministers have much greater continuity of support from officials. As well as potential rehearsal opportunities in their departments, there is still a question about how much ministers should be encouraged to think collectively about how they might react and what lessons they can learn from previous governments' experience.

3. Reaction to an emergency or escalating crisis

Poor 'initial political and public handling' in the early stages of a crisis can have a severe impact on confidence, as well as knock-on effects on response and recovery. One part of this can be recognising that you are in a crisis. As Sir David Omand put it, 'it is when the ship no longer responds to the helm and you are about to be swamped by the waves and reports of damage are coming in faster than normal processes can cope with'. This was a particular factor in the fuel protests. Though the most acute phase only lasted five days, the government was slow to realise how serious an impact the blockades were having.

4. Communication

This is a problem both of the centre communicating with those directly dealing with the crisis, as well as with the media and, most importantly, with the public and especially those affected by the crisis. The ability to gather information and co-ordinate it in the middle of a fast-moving event is a huge challenge. Increasingly, as the former Ministry of Defence and Department for Transport official Simon Webb put it, governments 'are liable to be outpaced in the public information space', especially by new social media in terms of recording information and transmitting what is actually happening. This continues in the aftermath of a crisis when the issues of narratives, accountability and responsi-bility, and the role of an inquiry, are very important. For former Home Secretary Charles Clarke, 'you under-estimate at your peril the desire of everybody to know what happened'.

In certain crises, where government decision-making can form the basis for the solution, such as in the fuel protests, this can prove to be more difficult. One of the issues during that crisis was whether the Government should change its policy towards the fuel escalator tax, the issue that had caused the protest in the first place. At the same time, the crisis was becoming acute because of the specific threat to human life in hospitals that were running out of fuel. This made the role of ministers and their decision-making a crucial component, and only partially separate from the logistics of being able to get fuel deliveries restarted.

5. Delegation

Too often there is a desire to try to gain control by managing a crisis from the centre. In actual fact it is largely the role of local officials and agencies. Where the centre of government is important is in being able to see the overall strategy and picture. Also, many crises will cross departmental boundaries. There is often not only an issue of co-ordinating action and communication, but also the important question of which ministry should be the lead department. A number of crises discussed had seen confusion between Departments and the centre of Government about who held responsibility for certain decisions. It is important that ministers also understand the limits of their role. For Charles Clarke, Home Secretary during the 7/7 bombings, one of the most important things was to avoid 'taking up the energies of the key operational people' by having them reporting to committees when they needed to be 'doing their job'. Instead, he saw his role being 'to try and protect the operational people in those circumstances'.

6. Expert advice

One of the greatest challenges, along with access to information, is the ability to analyse that information in a timely and accurate fashion. This is particularly important in terms of advising non-expert ministers who may then have to make the decisions on the basis of such advice. Conflicting 'experts' may appear, not least in the media, and the fog of excess information and conflicting accounts of what is happening may dominate the narrative. It is important to remember that perception of the narrative of what is occurring can often be as important as, or more so, than what is actually happening (or subsequently becomes clear has happened). Credibility is hugely important, and the role of expert advice is crucial in this respect, as in other parts of government.

7. Public expectations

Individuals expectations about access to information and support have greatly increased, not least because of the greater role of social media. This was seen subsequently in April 2010 when, after a volcanic ash cloud forced a no-flight zone for several days across Europe, the UK government was seen as slow to react and then confused in its response to the thousands of Britons stranded. Simon Webb reminded the Forum that, after the Asian Tsunami of 2005, much of the Swedish government decided not to come back from its Christmas vacation on the grounds that people should have insurance and the airlines should get them back. After two parliamentary inquiries, Swedish Ministers were forced to resign over the issue. In the same vein, the Forum also wondered whether, having vastly improved its domestic crisis handling, the UK machinery was geared up to handling similar issues abroad and of synthesising its domestic and foreign machinery.

8. Ministerial role

Political decision-making in a crisis is sometimes misunderstood. For Simon Webb, who has created a checklist for ministers for the early stages of a crisis, 'finding a ministerial role is about two things in the early hours'. One is the 'strategic outcome'. Decisions made in the early hours of a crisis can often be crucial for reducing the harm caused. On 7 July 2005, for example, ministers were clear that London had to 'stay open' for business. Giving overall direction and the focus of an outcome helps the machine so that it does not just cope, but seeks to steer. The second immediate role for ministers is in helping to communicate this strategy. Actually delivering it may not be the right role for a minister publically, depending on the nature of the crisis (note the roles played by Chief Medical or Veterinary officers during medical or animal health scares), but there is still a ministerial role in considering how the key messages should be formulated.

9. COBR

One of the issues discussed was the personality to chair COBR.

> COBR meets with the news going on around it; it needs tight chairing in order to deal with the situation, depending on who is there and what is going on, and this is not easy to achieve. I have always thought the role of chairperson in meetings is extremely important and it has been given insufficient attention as a means of ensuring you do things in the right way. You need a strong chair who can deal with strong personalities sat around the table.

There is also a question about how COBR should be used and whether the chair understands this. One of the big problems identified in crises was 'groupthink', where consensus pushes out critical analysis or alternative views that might prove crucial. The role of COBR was seen as vital to this, it was 'not necessary and a waste of time for COBR to be just getting up to date, you can have people commissioned to do that and they can circulate it in advance. The ideas to get on the table at COBR are the forward options, and to have a proper discussion which includes having a sceptic there to try and break into groupthink'.

Figure 2. *The day after the 7 July 2005 bombings in London, Home Secretary Charles Clarke meets faith leaders at the Home Office. Photo: Gareth Fuller/AFP/Getty Images*

Learning lessons

Of course, in all this there is a human dimension that must be remembered and means that no 'system' is itself adequate. Instead it is also about 'the personalities of individual people ... [and] their qualities. People are very aware that they will be judged by history and how they behaved at this key moment. People behave in different ways'. The importance of learning lessons about crisis handling and in thinking about how to impart them to new generations of government should itself be part of contingency planning. The Conservatives, as part of their preparation for government work while in Opposition, were keen to undertake some training on this subject, but this was blocked. It is also why the Institute for Government has incorporated crisis management as part of its induction programmes for new ministers and for special advisers. Indeed, as Peter Riddell pointed out, there have been a number of crises in recent years where 'the system coped rather well'. Nonetheless, these crises have had huge and lasting effects on people's lives. Reflection about the government's capacity to respond, *including* the effectiveness of its ministers, should be treated with appropriate seriousness.

Note

Under British Academy Forum rules, quotes attributed here are by permission of the relevant individuals.

Dr Catherine Haddon is Research Fellow at the Institute for Government. She co-authored the Institute's important publications on *Making Minority Government Work* and *Transitions – Preparing for Changes of Government*.

The British Academy Forum on 'Political/ministerial decision-making during a crisis' was held on 30 March 2010. It was chaired by Professor Peter Hennessy FBA.

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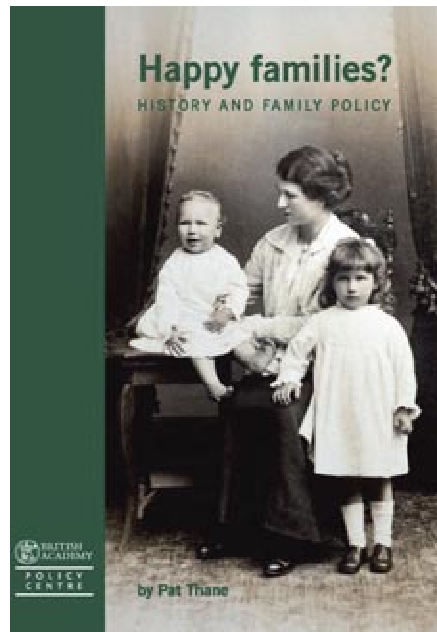
Happy Families?

Dr Simon Griffiths *and* **Emma McKay** *of the British Academy's Policy Centre discuss Professor Pat Thane FBA's new overview of changing family patterns.*

IN A RECENT speech Mr Justice Coleridge argued that 'The general collapse of ordinary family life, because of the breakdown of families, in this country is on a scale, depth and breadth which few of us could have imagined even a decade ago.'[1] Similarly, journalists and researchers in think tanks are often heard to bemoan the 'tide of family breakdown' blighting our society.[2] At their worst, these claims lead to policy responses based on false assumptions about the ways in which families and family structures have changed in recent years. A new report from the British Academy's Policy Centre – *Happy Families? History and Family Policy*, written by historian and Fellow of the British Academy, Professor Pat Thane – sheds light on the main trends in this area. Her overview provides a much more complicated picture than that rendered in many contemporary accounts.



Marriage and divorce

Many commentators cite the rising levels of divorce as a sign of the collapse of family life. It's certainly true that divorce rates have increased with changes in the law.[3] Until the Divorce Reform Act in 1969, which established irretrievable breakdown as valid grounds for divorce, it was hard to escape from a non-functioning and sometimes violent marriage. For most people, lawyers were prohibitively expensive. The Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes reported in 1912 that divorce was 'beyond the reach of the poor', but recommendations to rectify this were largely ignored.

The matter was even more complicated for women with children. From 1839 to 1925 legal custody was by right the husband's once the children were over the age of seven. After that date, women were allowed to apply for custody of their children over all ages, provided they were married, and in 1959 this was extended to parents of 'illegitimate' children. Finally, in 1973, women were given equal, unconditional guardianship rights. Domestic violence was also a common occurrence, especially against women and children. It wasn't until 1978 that men were legally fully restrained from beating their wives.

Once the Divorce Reform Act was passed, numbers of divorces increased steeply, peaking at 165,000 in 1993. After this they began to decline, until in 2007 there were 128,500.

Perhaps the greatest threat to family life between the 18th and early 20th centuries was caused not by divorce, but death. In the late 1730s, 24 per cent of marriages were ended by the death of a partner within 10 years and 56 per cent within 25 years. Gradually, as health and life expectancy improved, so did a marriage's chances; and in contrast, by the late 1930s, just 5 per cent of marriages were ended by mortality. It was only after this that divorce began to take over as the primary reason for the ending of marriages.

Cohabitation

Many contemporary accounts of family disintegration focus on the rise in cohabitation. While it is the case that the number of families registering as 'cohabiting without marriage' was at an all-time high in 2007 (14 per cent), cohabitation is not solely a contemporary practice. A survey of working class Londoners in the 1890s found that couples who met when they were older tended to live in non-legalised unions; there is also evidence that throughout the 19th century many young couples lived together before marrying. This state of affairs was often accepted by the clergy, and the law was increasingly pragmatic, making provision for 'illegitimate' family units in the Workman's Compensation Act 1906 and in regard to payments for servicemen's partners during the World Wars. Recognising the impact of tough divorce laws in forcing couples into 'illegal' couplings was, in fact, an instrumental part of the moral argument for divorce reform.

Births outside marriage

One of the most cited modern changes to families is the increase of births outside marriage – 43.3 per cent in 2008. However, again, this is not entirely new. In the early 19th century an estimated 20 per cent of first births were illegitimate and over half of all first births were probably conceived outside marriage. The main development appears to be one of social acceptability: couples no longer need to marry to uphold reputations. The figures suggest that premarital sex has been part of relationships for some time, but in contemporary Britain it is easier to be open about such matters.

Diverse patterns, and policy

Families may have changed, but it is inaccurate to portray this as a shift from one extreme, of secure and happy marriages, to another of divorce, cohabitation and unmarried parenthood. Families have always been diverse, and while many stable family units and long-lasting marriages may have existed – especially in the 1950s and 60s – Pat Thane's review suggests that the high volume of divorces, and the shift towards cohabitation which followed 1969, are an indication that these marriages were often not as harmonious as was believed.

What also emerges from the review is that poorer families have greater difficulty sustaining stability and harmony, which may suggest that socio-economic inequality is a more important challenge than change in the family itself. It has also emerged that there is no systematic historical evidence of a

relationship between families and wider social problems – such as violence and poor educational performance. Although it does note that in recent decades, increased cohabitation, divorce and unmarried parenthood have occurred at a time of stable or falling levels of crime and greatly improved educational performance overall, especially among girls (although least among the poorest boys and girls).

Overall *Happy Families?* shows how history can shed light on current claims about changing family life.

Happy Families? History and Family Policy will be published by the British Academy in October 2010. Copies will be available via www.britac.ac.uk/policy

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Notes

1 www.resolution.org.uk/editorial.asp?page_id=228&n_id=14

2 www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/default.asp?pageRef=312

3 All quotations and figures can be found in Pat Thane *Happy Families? History and Family Policy*. Statistics largely relate to England and Wales.

Simon Griffiths and Emma McKay report on other work coming out of the British Academy Policy Centre

New Paradigms in Public Policy

There are new economic, social and political demands in British society today, which will have impacts on the way that public policy is made, what issues are tackled and how.

The *New Paradigms in Public Policy* project, chaired by Professor Peter Taylor-Gooby FBA, will cover a spectrum of the areas in which change is expected, including new approaches to the economy, environmental issues, multiculturalism, social policy and democratic change.

To mark the launch of the research, the British Academy Policy Centre invited Professor James Fishkin of Stanford University to give a lecture on 30 June 2010 on one of the themes of the project: the roles and responsibilities of citizens in policymaking. Professor Fishkin has pioneered the concept of deliberative polling, which allows groups of citizens to be informed about all aspects of an issue before giving an opinion.

Deliberative polling, Professor Fishkin argued, offers an opportunity to bring the public into decisions about how we use public resources. One of the key parts of the process is selecting a sample that is representative of the population in question, in terms of both demographics and attitudes to the issue being examined. This sample is then fully informed of the issue, often by an advisory group and/or a briefing document that covers all arguments for and against it. The participants have small group discussions with a trained moderator and are given the opportunity to question experts as a group.

In his lecture, Professor Fishkin discussed the success of this process, as well as its potential downfalls. He gave numerous examples of deliberative polling, from making energy choices in Texas to deciding infrastructure projects in China. Professor Fishkin's lecture offered a refreshingly positive account of how the people really can be trusted to make sensible decisions for themselves when given correct and balanced information. It also publicised an excellent, democratic alternative to public opinion polling and focus groups, which may prove to play a vital role in the future of public policymaking.

A transcript of his lecture 'How to Make Deliberative Democracy Practical: Consulting the Public Thoughtfully' is available via www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary/

Drawing a New Constituency Map for the United Kingdom

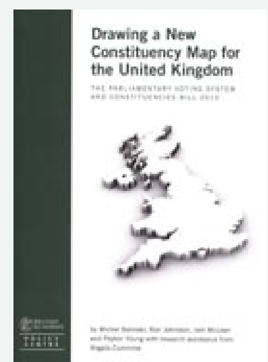
While the Liberal Democrats have traditionally been in favour of electoral reform, the Conservative Party is also making a surprising push for change, proposing the equalisation of constituency boundaries.

The *Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Bill 2010*, as well as discussing a Referendum to change the UK electoral system to the Alternative Vote system, proposes massive changes to the constituency system. These include setting the number of MPs at 600; roughly equalising the number of registered voters in each constituency; and changing the method of public consultation by the Boundary Commissions.

With the current electoral rules, there is no minimum or maximum number for the total of MPs and while the UK should not have 'substantially' more or less than 613 MPs, there are presently 650. Also, population growth has not occurred equally across all four territories of the UK, which means that the average size of a constituency electorate in 2010 ranges from 71,882 in England to 56,545 in Wales.

The complexity of redistributing and equalising constituencies lies in the number of factors to be taken into account – for instance attachments to traditional area boundaries and local authorities, as well as the potential for future population change.

Following on from *Choosing an Electoral System*, a guide to the pros and cons of the various electoral systems (reported on in the last issue of the *British Academy Review*), Professor Ron Johnston FBA and Professor Iain McLean FBA were joined by Professors Michel Balinski and Peyton Young to provide an invaluable guide for parliamentarians, policy-makers and other interested parties to the problems presented by this Bill and the best routes around them.



Drawing a New Constituency Map for the United Kingdom is available to download at www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Constituencies-bill.cfm

PSYCHOLOGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: *Collective Solutions to a Global Problem*

On 23 September 2010, in his Joint British Academy/British Psychological Society Lecture, **Professor David Uzzell** *argued that behaviour-change approaches to climate change need to take account of the societal context that gives rise to the values and attitudes that drive our behaviours. As consumers, our preferences and actions – and as a consequence our greenhouse gas emissions and the impact we have on the environment – are shaped by the products and opportunities we are offered, which create new desires and preferences. In the following extract, Professor Uzzell looks at the societal forces influencing our practices and identities as workers.*

WHETHER WE are looking to 'greener' technologies, or seeking to take a more radical stance and achieve 'prosperity without growth' as my colleague Tim Jackson puts it, production and thus jobs will be affected. Even policies that centre predominantly on consumption – changing consumption through changing behaviour – will create less or changed demands, and will influence production processes indirectly. Therefore, we ought to investigate how workers and management relate to climate change and to the policies that are developed to combat it.

The first step we have taken to research this is a project being undertaken with my Swedish colleague, Professor Nora Räthzel (University of Umeå) and financed by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research. In this, we are examining the climate change policies of trade unions in the Global North and the Global South – since climate change is an issue that has to be tackled globally. In another project, which will start next year, funded by the European Union, we will examine the relationships between management, trade unions, and workers in two plants in Sweden and the UK, as we also need to ask what kind of policies are developed by producers, workers and management alike.

Official trade union policies

Trade unions are typically not seen as standing at the frontline of combating climate change. They are often perceived to be reluctant to change, and hostile to any kind of legislation that might threaten jobs. And workers in the major carbon-emission industries – steel, cement manufacturing, transport – are doubly condemned as these industries are perceived to have a major responsibility for climate change – no matter that the power workers are producing power to heat the buildings we are in at the moment or the metalworkers manufacture the cars we want to drive.

This is an inaccurate perception. The TUC in this country has been running a highly effective Green Workplaces programme. The Blue Green Alliance in the USA started as a collaboration between the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club to expand the number and quality of jobs in the green economy and now includes a wide range of labour organisations and environmental NGOs.

In our research study, we have interviewed senior trade union policy-makers and officers, from both North and South – Europe, Brazil, South Africa, India and Malaysia. We spoke to people in global and international trade union confederations (International Trade Union Confederation [ITUC]; European Trade Union Confederation), as well as in sectoral national, international and global unions (e.g. International Metalworkers' Federation, International Transport Workers' Federation).

One of the major planks of trade union policies is the concept of 'Just Transition'. As the ITUC policy states, there is a need 'to create green and decent jobs, transform and improve traditional ones and include democracy and social justice in environmental decision-making processes'.

But while the ITUC has recognised that 'the main victims of climate change will be the workers, in particular in developing countries, whose sole responsibility will be to have been born poor in the most fragile parts of the planet', and that 'trade unions engage in current climate negotiations with a message of commitment, solidarity and action', it is acknowledged that jobs may have to go and jobs may have to change. 'Just transition' is far from easy to implement. One of the goals of our project is to understand better some of these challenges as exemplified by two of our interviewees from the metalworkers union.

Challenge

One Canadian union official argued '"Green jobs" is a term from the environmental movement, not the labour movement.' This was expressed even more strongly by another senior trade unionist, who saw the traditions of his industry and the identity of its workforce being challenged by the notion of greenness:

> Green jobs are insulting. Steel are brown jobs. You can't build windmills and aircraft without steel. The steel job is a green job. A rigger is a rigger when he is working in a brown or green job. What is a green boss? A green boss is still a boss. A green capitalist is still a capitalist? Vestas – they might be green, but they are … still bosses. (Jim)

So the kind of questions we are asking are:

1. How are the causes and consequences of climate change framed at a policy level in the context of jobs versus environment and the offshoring of jobs from the Global North to the Global South where there are lower wages, less regulated working conditions and weaker environmental regulations?
2. What are the drivers/constraints on international co-operation and solidarity? To what extent do national interests trump internationalism and global solidarity?
3. What are the psychological barriers at the collective and individual level to a 'just transition'?

Photo: Walter Hodges/ Getty Images

Lorry driving

The two quotes above raise forcefully the issue of identity and the social impact of transformed production. A senior policy-maker in one of the international trade union bodies – whom we call Julio – provides an example of how political and technological changes are related to broader societal problems. He demonstrates that one cannot tackle environmental issues without addressing the social and the psychological:

> Because, for example, the social problem of (...) road transport. ... it's not easy, because the position of the driver is a real position in society. When you are a driver, it's the same thing as when you are a miner: you do not have a high qualification but you have a real job — and you have real recognition. (...) You have a real identification. Because when you are a (...) young boy, you play with – a car, and you hope to become a driver. (...) It's not a technical problem. We know the technical problem perfectly well now. (...) It's to change the social image and to change the population.

What Julio is referring to is that people still see work as a central part of their life. Steel workers, chemical workers, or, as in Julio's example, lorry drivers, are proud of their work and their skills. Their aim is to do 'a job well for its own sake', as Richard Sennett puts it.[1] But Julio is also referring to another aspect of people's work: jobs are articulated in terms of a certain way of being in the world, they give people a sense of purpose, and imply a specific 'way of life' that is associated with specific kinds of work. In the case of a long-distance driver, this is adventure, independence and freedom. Julio speaks about identification with a 'position in society'. In other words, work identities are not mere individual identities. They develop within a process in which people occupy positions that have existed long before they occupied them and will continue to exist after they have left them.

The lorry driver connotes a certain type of masculinity, associated with technology, the conquest of foreign lands, individuality, and independence. The lorry driver might be seen as something like the 'Marlboro Man' of the road. We get a sense of the way in which driving a lorry is a male thing to do, when we see the difficulties of recognition that female lorry drivers suffer.

This kind of representation of lorry drivers makes sense in opposition to jobs which are not only alienating but appear to subordinate masculinity – such as those jobs men undertake in offices, who don't have control over powerful technologies and which, from the point of view of manual workers, appear as 'pushing paper' and doing 'feminised work'.

Threatening industries threatens jobs, which in turn threatens identities. And this is a potential major barrier to change. How can we formulate 'just transition' policies and practices that recognise this? Can we provide new jobs, green jobs, decent and non-precarious jobs that not only enable the construction of new identities but also positive identities in the context of carbon-reduced production?

Conclusion

I was struck by another comment from Julio who said

> Sustainable development is a possibility to build a new project for humanity. Because nobody knows what a sustainable society should look like. So each trade union in the world, each person in the world, each population in the world, has the possibility to express their views and their opinion in order to build this project. ... it's very important to have a real co-operation with other countries ... [and (my addition) communities and individuals].

What Julio is suggesting is a vision of a sustainable society could be seen not as a threat or a sacrifice but as an opportunity – an opportunity for which all of us have a responsibility to create a world in which our relations with others and nature are more equitable and just.

I am sure some of you are familiar with the African saying 'a person is a person through other persons'. This speaks about our interconnectedness. We are our social relations. Community, well-being, rootedness to the environment, quality of life, beliefs and identity are always lived out among others. An individual's well-being is caught up in the well-being of others and it is from others and with others that we learn, teach and act. It will be through working with and through others that we may have a chance to solve the serious social, economic and environmental problem we call climate change.

Note

1 R. Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

David Uzzell is Professor of Environmental Psychology, at the University of Surrey.

An audio recording of the whole lecture may be found via www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary

Africa's Neglected Chronic Disease Burden: setting priorities for research, practice and policy

One of the British Academy's UK-Africa Academic Partnerships has been offering a fresh approach to tackling chronic disease in Africa. **Dr Ama de-Graft Aikins** *reveals the key insights of a report published in November 2010.*

HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (TB) dominate the global agenda on African public health, and command significant proportions of donor funding and government health budgets. This is to be expected, as infectious diseases cause an estimated 69 per cent of deaths on the continent. What is less publicised, but equally important, is the significant burden of chronic non-communicable diseases in many African countries. In both men and women, age-specific mortality rates from chronic diseases as a whole are higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in virtually all other regions of the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that over the next decade, Africa will experience the largest increase in death rates from cardio-vascular disease (CVD), cancer, respiratory disease, and diabetes. The rise in chronic-disease deaths is likely to be compounded by co-morbid relationships between infectious diseases of poverty such as HIV/AIDS and TB, and major chronic diseases like CVD, diabetes and cancers.

In February 2009, the British Academy, the Royal Society and the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences organised a conference in Accra, Ghana, entitled 'Africa's Neglected Epidemic: Multidisciplinary Research, Intervention and Policy for Chronic Disease'. The conference had three aims:

1. to discuss Africa's chronic disease burden from multidisciplinary and multi-institutional perspectives;
2. to highlight challenges and good practices in research, practice and policy; and
3. to formulate a new set of policy recommendations.

Twelve key experts from academia, international health and development agencies presented research and ideas on these core areas. This article presents key insights from the report that was subsequently commissioned by the British Academy.[1]

Chronic disease prevalence, morbidity and mortality

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD), cancers, diabetes, genetic diseases (including sickle cell anaemia) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (including asthma) have been identified as major causes of disability and death in the region. The report focused on CVD (stroke and hypertension), diabetes and cancers.

Prevalence

While prevalence rates vary widely across countries and sub-regions there are some interesting within-country trends relating to gender, class and rural-urban location. In terms of gender, stroke and cancer rates, for example, are higher in women compared to men in many African countries. Obesity, a major risk factor for a range of chronic diseases, is also higher in women compared to men. Data on hypertension provides important insights on class and rural-urban differences Hypertension, or high blood pressure, has been identified as 'the most powerful, highly prevalent, independent, modifiable risk factor at the population level' for stroke. In many countries, hypertension prevalence rates are extremely high and exceed the rates of other prevalent chronic diseases. Rural prevalence rates range between 20 and 25 per cent, while urban and semi-urban rates exceed 30 per cent. Within urban populations, hypertension prevalence is higher among salaried and mainly sedentary workers (e.g. civil servants) compared to low-income informal sector and mainly mobile workers (e.g. street hawkers). In many countries hypertension detection, treatment and management are poor. Therefore experts predict that the burden of stroke morbidity and mortality is set to rise to epidemic proportions in the future.

Morbidity and mortality

Chronic disease morbidity and mortality rates are higher in Africa and among African populations in Europe than rates recorded in Europe and other parts of the world. For example, Africans are particularly susceptible to the cardiovascular and renal complications of diabetes. Clinical studies since the late 1980s show that in some countries like Cameroon and South Africa, up to 50 per cent of people with diabetes develop chronic complications. In the UK in the 1990s, mortality from end-stage renal failure was between three and six times higher within African and African-Caribbean groups compared to Asian and the general UK population.

Generally, age-specific mortality rates due to chronic diseases as a whole, in both men and women exceed rates in other parts of the world. For example, adult stroke deaths in Nigeria and Tanzania are significantly higher than rates in Canada, the UK, Brazil, Pakistan, India and China.

The socio-cultural and economic context of chronic diseases

Urbanisation, globalisation, rapidly ageing populations, poverty, poor lifestyle practices, weak health systems, and weak leadership and governance are key factors implicated in the rising prevalence rates of chronic diseases and in the high rates of complications, disability and death. Three factors are worth highlighting here: lifestyle, poverty and health governance.

Lifestyle and diet

Chronic diseases have non-modifiable and modifiable risks. The non-modifiable risks or 'inherent factors' are age and genetics. The modifiable risks include poor diets, physical inactivity, obesity, high blood pressure and lifestyle practices such as cigarette smoking and high alcohol consumption. In many African countries the prevalence rates of

these modifiable risk factors are high, particularly in urban areas. A series of WHO surveys show that physical activity is low in urbanised populations and high in rural populations in West, Central and South Africa. Poor diets, low in fruits and vegetables and high in saturated fats, are more prevalent in urban settings. Salt intake – a risk factor for hypertension – is high in both rural and urban populations in many countries. Obesity rates are high, and as noted previously, women are more likely to be obese compared to men. In Ghana, demographic data shows that female obesity rates have trebled over the last 15 years: from 10 per cent in 1993, to 30.5 per cent in 2008. While an increase is recorded across the country, educated wealthy urban women are more likely to be obese compared to uneducated poor rural women.

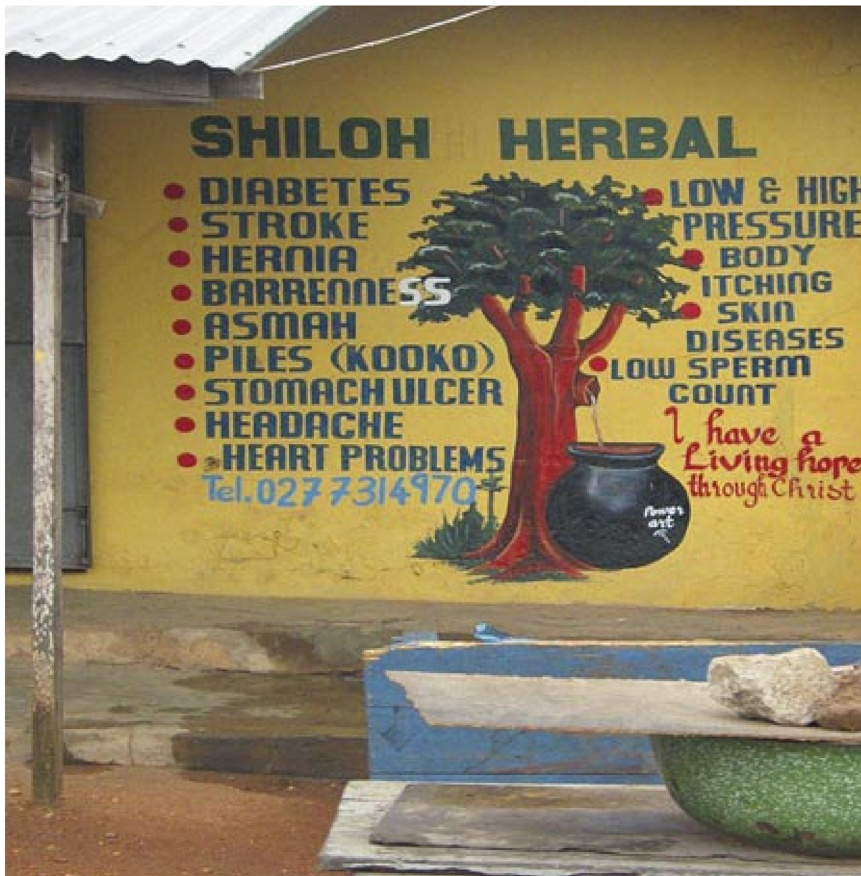


Figure 1. *A herbalist advertises chronic disease treatment.*

The socio-cultural context is an important mediating factor for chronic disease risks in many settings. Diet and food practices are major risk factors for the broad range of chronic diseases. Some traditional African diets, and traditional cooking and food preservation methods (e.g. curing fish and meat with salt) contribute to the risk burden. Cultural attitudes to body size and image have also received attention. High obesity rates among African women have been attributed to the associations many African societies draw between fat, beauty, wealth and health. These associations have been reinforced by HIV/AIDS. Thinness is often associated with poverty and illness – and increasingly rapid and sustained weight loss is linked with HIV and AIDS in many countries. However, research shows that the increased consumption of poor diets high in fat and processed nutrients is more strongly associated with globalisation, urbanisation and westernisation. In West Africa, food consumption patterns have changed from traditional diets based on locally produced coarse grains such as millet and sorghum, to modern diets based on imported wheat and rice. This change has been attributed to the aggressive marketing of processed foods by multi-national food companies in the region, as well as to changes in food production and supply policies enforced by development partners such as the World Bank and the IMF over the last 20 years. This suggests that, while lifestyle and culture are important factors in chronic disease risk, the role of geopolitical processes are equally important and must be acknowledged and addressed.

Poverty

Almost half of the continent lives in absolute poverty, on less than US$1.25 a day. Between 1995 and 2000 Africa experienced an urban growth rate of 4.3 per cent compared to 0.5 per cent in Europe. It is estimated that by 2025 over 70 per cent of Africa's population will be living in urban areas, many in crowded slums and settlements. It is becoming clear that poverty and poverty-related stresses are risk factors for chronic diseases. Africa is experiencing a 'protracted polarised' health transition (Frenk *et al.*, 1989) with two key elements. First, populations have lived with a protracted co-existence of infectious and chronic diseases over the last few decades. Second, the double burden of disease is polarised across socio-economic status. While wealthy communities experience higher risk of chronic diseases, poor communities experience higher risk of infectious diseases and a 'double jeopardy' of infectious and chronic diseases. The double jeopardy is largely attributable to the rising burden of infectious diseases of poverty, such as TB and HIV/AIDS and the co-morbid relationships between these infectious diseases and chronic diseases (in particular diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancers). Poverty-related stressors, such as overcrowded and unsanitary environments, malnutrition and psychosocial stress, are also risk factors for chronic diseases. For example, under-nutrition and malnutrition are associated with the prevalence of atypical diabetes, some cancers, and some cardiovascular diseases. Under-nutrition among children has been linked with an increased risk of adult obesity.

Health governance

African health policy-makers and their development partners prioritise infectious diseases and health issues noted explicitly in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore chronic diseases are neglected. Health facilities in most countries lack the appropriate basic and sophisticated equipment, medicines are either expensive or unavailable, health professionals are poorly trained in chronic disease

diagnosis and management, and lack appropriate knowledge and skills. The medical and psychosocial vacuum created by inefficient biomedical services is filled by competitive traditional medicine and faith healing systems that offer unregulated chronic disease care to both urban and rural communities.

The neglect of chronic diseases by governments and health ministries is partly due to the fact that the economic and developmental impact of chronic diseases has been underestimated. Two trends have become evident. Firstly, chronic diseases affect the most economically productive age in many countries. For example, diabetes affects individuals in their early forties in countries like Ghana and Tanzania and reduces life expectancy by 2 and 7 years, respectively. Because rates of chronic complications, disability and death are high, the chronic disease burden has significant implications on quality of life for sufferers and their families, and on the productivity of sufferers and their primary care-givers. Secondly, chronic disease care is costly for governments. A study in Tanzania showed that between 1989 and 1990 the government spent approximately US$138 per diabetic patient per year. This translated to 8.1 per cent of the total budgeted health expenditure for the year, and exceeded the allocated US$2 per capita health expenditure for that year. Similarly in Cameroon, the direct medical cost of treating a diabetic patient between 2001 and 2002 was US$489, which represented 3.5 per cent of the national budget for that year. Since both countries had an additional burden of CVD, cancers and other chronic diseases, the cumulative economic impact of chronic diseases on government budgets was likely to be much higher then, and is likely to have increased in subsequent years.

Developing chronic disease interventions and policy: five priority areas

Five priority areas were identified by conference speakers for addressing chronic disease research, practice and policy in Africa:

1. strengthening research on epidemiological surveillance, primary and secondary prevention;
2. developing multidisciplinary collaborations to conduct research and inform practice;
3. engaging in multi-country research;
4. developing multi-institutional collaborations between researchers, healthcare providers, policy-makers, NGOs, and lay communities to bridge the gap between research, practice and policy; and
5. investing in postgraduate training in chronic disease research to produce the next generation of multidisciplinary chronic disease researchers.

There was a consensus that Africa's chronic disease burden constituted an urgent developmental problem, and that political and policy inaction was likely to have devastating costs in terms of life and welfare. There was recognition that part of the challenge of developing and implementing chronic disease policies was to understand the processes and political economies of policy-making in Africa. Firstly, some speakers observed that that the economic impact of chronic diseases on some government budgets was immense and unsustainable. For this reason, robust research was needed to measure the current economic impact of chronic disease regionally, and to forecast the implications for public health, development and governance. Secondly, the relationships between national policy-making and international economic and political pressures needed to be better understood. Research was required to examine the extent to which the health MDGs could support a chronic disease agenda for Africa and the role of policy-makers in pushing such an agenda.

Figure 2. *Marching for heart health in Ghana.*

Note

1 *Africa's Neglected Epidemic: Research, Intervention and Policy for Chronic Diseases*, by Ama de-Graft Aikins, published by the British Academy in November 2010, see www.britac.ac.uk/intl/Africa_Chronic_Disease.cfm

Dr Ama de-Graft Aikins is a Visiting Fellow of LSE Health, at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a Senior Lecturer at the Regional Institute for Population Studies, at the University of Ghana.

In 2006, the British Academy awarded funding for a UK–Africa Academic Partnership, with Dr de-Graft Aikins (then at the University of Cambridge) as the lead UK partner, and Dr Daniel Kojo Arhinful as the lead partner at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana. The number of partners has expanded from 17 in 2006 to 40 in 2010, and includes multidisciplinary researchers based in West, East and South Africa, as well as from Europe and the United States.

The partnership has published a flagship special issue on Africa's chronic disease burden in the online journal *Globalization and Health* (available at www.globalizationandhealth.com/series). In 2010, the partnership co-convened an international symposium in Malaysia, entitled 'Prioritising Chronicity: an agenda for public health research on chronic health conditions for sub-Saharan Africa and Asia'. Proceedings from the symposium can be accessed at http://www.med.monash.edu.my/News-and-Events/Prioritising-Chronicity.html

A position paper based on the conference titled 'Rethinking Health Systems: a focus on chronicity' will be published by the *Lancet* in November 2010.

Islam and Muslims in the UK

In March 2010, the British Academy hosted a conference on 'Islamic Studies in Europe'. One of the speakers, **Dr Tahir Abbas**, *analyses the place of Islam and Muslims in British society.*

THE SUBJECT of Islam in Britain has become one of genuine interest to academics and policy-makers in the light of recent events in the UK, and more generally in the light of wider developments to the nature of the lived experience of Muslims in Western Europe in the post-war period. While much recent attention has focused on terrorism, extremism and identity politics, broader discussions have concentrated on issues of integration, multi-culturalism, equality, and the role of Islam in the public sphere. Though these debates are important and necessary in the current climate, they are also conflated and instrumentalised by different interest groups in society. This essay is an attempt to provide a profile of Islam and Muslims in the UK, presenting a broad overview of the essential historical, cultural, sociological and politico-philosophical developments in recent periods. The focus is less on Islam as theology, spirituality or political ideology; rather it is more a social-science analysis of Muslims in Britain, and of the nature of differences, commonalities, challenges and opportunities that face everyone in society.

Immigration

Historically, Muslims have arrived and settled in Britain for over a thousand years, entering the economy and society as traders, bankers, spice merchants, medical students, sailors and servants.[1] During the British Raj, Indians from upper-class backgrounds came to the UK for the specific purposes of education and enterprise. It could be argued that the current South Asian Muslim population possesses similar educational and entrepreneurial ambitions, but it is drawn from the more impoverished areas in the region of Azad Kashmir in north-west Pakistan, the Sylhet region of north-west Bangladesh, and the Punjab region of India. The principal aims of South Asian Muslims at the beginning of the 1960s were to create as much wealth as possible before returning to their countries of origin, supported by a 'myth of return'.[2] It did not happen – whether by chance (opportunity) or by design (legislation).

Muslim East African Asians arrived in the 1960s and the early 1970s, essentially because of the 'Africanisation' of former colonised lands by the British. Their economic characteristics were middle class and professional in the societies they left, and they sought to achieve those same aspirations in Britain. In 1973, Ugandan Asians were forced out of their country, and those accepted by Britain were encouraged to settle away from already densely populated South Asian pockets known as 'red areas'.[3]

Bangladeshis arrived when severe economic hardship and the desire for family reunification forced many to seek refuge in Britain during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Photo: Peter Macdiarmid/ Getty Images.

 © The British Academy

More recently, in the 1990s, there has been an intake of Muslim Eastern European and Middle Eastern refugees, emanating from such places as Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq.[4] Indeed, for many Muslims, the most recent phase of immigration is largely because of political dislocation, with 'marriage migration' continuing to affect Pakistanis and Kashmiris in significant numbers to this day.

'Islamisation'

Presently, there is a certain desire among second- and third-generation British Muslims for a certain degree of 'Islamisation'. Today's British-born South Asian Muslims, which include all Bangladeshis and Pakistanis and approximately 15 per cent of all Indians, have been increasingly distinguishing their ethnic from their religious identities. The nature of Islam and 'Muslimness' among these groups is questioned and re-examined in the light of inter-generational change. A re-evaluation of individual, political, cultural, ethnic and religious identities has involved a return to a more literal Islam for some. This has led to tensions within communities, and broader social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are also affected by this internal malaise. While some of these issues are concentrated among a limited number of groups and communities, the dominant rhetoric in relation to Islam and Muslims conflates local area sociological issues into an attack on the religion of Islam itself.

Diverse profiles

Although it is true that South Asian Muslims reflect the greatest profile in relation to Islam in Britain, there is a risk of homogenising the religion by suggesting that South Asian traits are wholly typical of British Islam itself. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are nearly always Muslim, but there are B.h Muslims of Arab, Albanian, Bosnian, Iranian, Nigerian, Somali, Turkish and many other origins, whose cultural, social, economic and theological profiles directly contrast with the South Asian Muslim experience.

There are also within-group variations to consider. For example, there are huge differences between Sunni Barelwi Pakistanis and East African Ismailis, but they are both South Asian Muslims by definition.[5]

The experiences of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are not at all reflective of individuals and communities from other ethnic Muslim back-grounds in Britain, but as a combined group they continue to retain the dominant demographic profile.

Assimilation, multiculturalism, anti-racism

With the arrival of African-Caribbean and South Asian economic migrants from the late 1940s through to the 1970s, the assumption of various governments was that through the provision of English-language support in schools, ethnic minorities would learn 'to become like us'. That is, they would be 'assimilated'.[6] The assimilationist model, however, was based upon an inadequate understanding of the social psychology of group identity and, in particular, the resilience of ethnic identities where the minority community is marginalised and faces hostility.

Responding in part to the failure of assimilation, multiculturalism emerged as an approach that gave space to the recognition of ethnic diversity in Britain. Multiculturalism provided the framework within which ethnic diversity could be recognised by policy-makers, and respect for different cultures could be encouraged between individuals and groups. Thus, through multiculturalism, the identities and needs of ethnic minority communities were shaped, *but* in a political process where difference is the perceived problem.

However, throughout the late 1970s and into the mid-1980s, multiculturalism was critiqued by certain ethnic minority communities who deeply resented its implied paternalism. At the beginning of the 1980s, anti-racist strategies emerged as an alternative to multiculturalism. This model recognised the conflicts of interest within multi-ethnic Britain and the importance of addressing systematic processes of inequality within British institutions. It developed its insights from the concept of institutional racism which informed the Race Relation Act 1976, and exposed the idea that perfectly ordinary (nice!) people can be involved in generating discriminatory outcomes through their everyday professional practices. In responding to inequalities and discrimination within a multi-ethnic society, anti-racism was a direct challenge to dominant white Britons who felt comfortable with Britain's 'tolerant credentials'. It provoked considerable debate in political and governmental circles. It also, however, attracted a range of critiques from many on the left and from ethnic minority communities who found it strong on rhetoric but weak on delivery.[7]

Education

Numbering 2.2 million in the current period, Muslims form a significant group whose educational needs are of particular interest to government. Muslims in Britain are young, with one in three under the age of 15.[8] This adds considerable importance to debates surrounding the educational achievements of Muslim groups who will potentially constitute a large segment of the workforce population. The Open Society Institute (OSI) asserts that 'with Muslims ... [comprising] ... almost a quarter of the growth in the working age population in Britain between 1999 and 2009, integrating British Muslims into the mainstream labour market must now be a priority for the government'.[9] Statistics for educational performance show young Bangladeshi and Pakistani men have some of the lowest average levels of attainment at GCSE level, marginally ahead of Caribbean groups. Official statistics showed that in 2003-04, 31 per cent of Muslims of working age in Britain had no qualifications, exceeding all other religious groups. Similarly, Muslims are the least likely of all groups to have higher education degrees.[10]

Compared with other South Asian groups, Muslims consistently under-perform in education (particularly outside of London). The most rudimentary reasons seem to be social class and the educational levels of parents (as is the case with all groups in society); how majority society views and acts in relation to Muslim minorities; and the negative general outcomes that emanate from various social and institutional encounters and modes of cultural and political exchange. Ultimately, the study of Muslims in relation to their potential to engage and participate successfully in everyday life has the effect of focusing on individual and group differences rather than structures and opportunities – as suggested by Ash Amin in responding to the

'community cohesion' reports, and by Tariq Modood in his analysis of the various 'capitals' (cultural, social and economic) that impact upon the experiences of ethnic minorities entering higher-education institutions in Britain.[11]

Employment

Analysis of first-generation economic migrants and their labour market experiences found that, generally, all ethnic minorities experienced an 'ethnic penalty', including East African Asians, who were better qualified compared with other ethnic minorities. It is African-Caribbeans, Pakistanis and the Irish, however, who suffered greatest. Indians, Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans all underwent substantial 'ethnic penalties', even after controlling for their age and education.[12] A 'racial division of labour' ensured African-Caribbean and South Asian workers, including Muslims, were kept apart and therefore prevented from organising together as part of a wider collective struggle. This process de-skilled workers, kept wages down, and segregated ethnic minorities in the low paid jobs that majority-society workers did not want.[13] Analysis of 1991 UK Census data revealed that the 'ethnic penalty' or 'ethnic disadvantage' experienced by first generations was largely transmitted onto second generations. Some elimination of the 'ethnic penalty', as second generations are British-born and have received their education in Britain, was expected. But both direct discrimination and cultural differences, therefore, must play a part as the range and magnitude suggest complex explanations, as Anthony Heath *et al*. have argued.[14]

As part of the 'Islamic Studies in Europe' conference, Dr Dalia Mogahed (Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, Washington DC) gave a lecture on 'Who Speaks for Islam?'. (An audio recording of this can be found via www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary/) Photo: Matt Crossick.

Without doubt, Muslims in Britain (along with some Sikhs) have lower economic activity rates, and are more likely to be unemployed and less well paid than average. There is an observable distinction between Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims. It is possible to conclude that Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are under-represented in the top income bands and certain employment sectors as opposed to Indian Muslims. Interestingly, there is also data pointing to religious discrimination, as those who classify themselves as white Muslim graduates have a lower than average employment rate after graduation; 'it's even the case that a white Muslim faces a higher employment penalty than a Pakistani of no religion'.[15] Clearly, there are certain patterns in the education and employment experiences of various Muslim minorities that demonstrate acute fragmentation. Educational achievement is conspicuously low for Muslims, but there are strong ethnic variations within particular patterns of underachievement found among the sons and daughters of rural–urban first-generation Muslim economic migrants. The experience of marginalisation in education is often translated into problems of limited higher-educational outcomes, followed by higher than average graduate unemployment, but it is noticeable that the role of community cultural values are important to consider when exploring the education of young Muslim women.[16] Statistical analyses confirm that Muslims suffer a 'Muslim penalty' in the labour market over and above that of an 'ethnic penalty'.

Islamophobia

The cultural and social identification of the 'Muslim other' emerges from the experience of imperialism and colonialism, and this 'fear or dread of Islam or Muslims' is described as Islamophobia. In the post-9/11 and post-7/7 period, there has been a sharp focus on the identities of Muslim minorities, but with little or no appreciation of the structural constraints often facing many communities. A negative politicisation of the debate can impact on the perceptions of both the individual or group of interest and those who form the majority society. 'Islamophobia' is an observable cultural phenomenon, and it invariably compounds an existing and highly problematic situation for many Muslim minorities. Over the centuries, there have been periods of learning and understanding on the part of the British and the Europeans, but there has also been ignorance, conflict and the demonisation of Islam.[17] Periodically, Muslims have been portrayed as 'barbaric', 'ignorant', 'narrow-minded' or 'intolerant religious zealots'. This characterisation is still present today in the sometimes damaging representation and treatment of the 'Muslim other', which exists as part of an effort to aggrandise established powers and, in the process, to legitimise existing modes of domination and sub-ordination.

Although it is important not to treat Muslims as an undifferentiated mass, as there are very many ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political differences between individuals and groups, this characterisation of Islamophobia nevertheless remains relevant. While racism on the basis of 'race' continues, the anti-Muslim shift suggests markers of difference of a social and religio-culture nature. The social and religious foundations of Islam, as well as of Muslims in general, have attained such a degree of notoriety that their 'visibility' is immediately associated with entirely negative and detrimental frames of reference. Since 9/11 and 7/7, the situation has both deteriorated and intensified. Islamophobia has gained a greater discursive prevalence, to the extent that much of Western European society has become uncritically receptive to an array of negative images, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in relation to Islam and Muslims.[18]

The charge of media bias needs to be taken seriously as the coverage of 'extremist Muslims' and 'Islamic terrorism' has dramatically increased in recent periods, and especially since the events of 9/11 and 7/7. The language used to describe Muslims is often violent, thereby implying that Islam is also hostile. Arabic words have been appropriated into universal journalistic vocabulary and invested with new meaning, which is generally exaggerated and aggressive. 'Jihad', for example, has been used to signify a military war waged by 'Islamists' against the West. The deeper Arabic meaning of the term is, in fact, far broader and refers more to the idea of a 'struggle' (where the struggle against the

'false ego' – *nafs* – is the highest of all jihads). Words such as 'fundamentalist', 'extremist', 'radical' and 'Islamist' are regularly used in apocalyptic headlines across all sectors of the British press. In the post-9/11 era, politicians have used the fears people have of Islam for their own ends. By focusing on the 'War on Terror', the existing anti-Muslim frame of reference is replaced with the idea of 'terror'. The reporting is compounded by a concentration on the 'enemy within' or the loyalty of Muslims to Britain.[19]

Policy development

It is in the inner cities where most British Muslims are physically concentrated. Invariably, neglect will remain on the part of the state and the political establishment – until, of course, something tragic happens. It is precisely where the multiculturalism model in Britain works least well. While difference and cultural sensitivity to minority interests are celebrated, the notion of a universal national identity has not been sufficiently determined to permit the range of different ethno-cultural characteristics of British ethnic minorities and majorities to coalesce around it. Meanwhile, in the inner cities, where British Muslim minorities are largely to be found, different poor minority and majority groups effectively compete directly with each other for what are often the crumbs of society. At a policy level, in the current era, notions of cultural identity politics supersede those relating to the need to eliminate deep-seated socio-economic inequalities. Perhaps the recent return to integration and the development of the notion of the 'Big Society' on the part of the Con-Dem coalition may well help a return to genuine structural concerns.

As I write in late 2010, the study of Islam and Muslims is clearly on the increase in the UK, and with a genuine shift away from the more immediate concerns around terrorism and extremism. There are a whole host of debates that draw on a wide variety of social science and humanities fields, as well as those that have a specific policy application to them, and there needs to be greater investment in these academic studies. There is now a genuine opportunity to take a lead and to provide the intellectual stimulus to affect social change and public policy developments, in this highly significant area of research and scholarship.

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The symposium on 'Islamic Studies in Europe', held at the British Academy on 23–24 March 2010, was jointly organised with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). It was convened in response to a request to HEFCE from Prime Minister Gordon Brown to investigate the idea of setting up in Britain a 'European Centre for Excellence for Islamic Studies'. Further information on the symposium, including a short report by the convenors (Professor Clive Holes FBA and Professor Carole Hillenbrand FBA) can be found via www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010/islamic_studies.cfm

'MULTICULTURAL' LONDON

Professor Pat Thane FBA *reports on a British Academy Forum held on 15 June 2010.*

London is an exceptionally diverse city in terms of the cultural and linguistic origins of its residents. About 300 languages are said to be spoken within its boundaries. It has long been home to migrants from many countries, though their numbers and the diversity of their origins has grown in recent decades. Tensions associated with migration in other British towns and cities and other countries regularly make headlines, yet London seems exceptional both in the extent of cultural diversity and the relatively peaceable way in which such rapid change has come about. The purpose of the British Academy Forum held in June 2010 was to discuss the past and present of London's cultural mix, and to ask how best to interpret it and whether any generaliseable messages for policy-makers can be proposed which could contribute to improving social harmony and cohesion nationwide. The Forum was chaired by Wesley Kerr, whose mother came from Jamaica in 1958 in response to appeals for nurses to work in the NHS. He became a TV presenter and now chairs London Heritage.

Multiculturalism

Lord Bhikhu Parekh FBA opened the Forum by discussing whether the term 'multiculturalism' defines a desirable goal for a culturally diverse society, such as London. It has been much criticised by those who believe that it assumes cultural relativism, giving equal value to all aspects of all cultures, endangering aspirations to a national common culture and encouraging excessive awareness of cultural difference and social division rather than social cohesion.

Lord Parekh described multiculturalism as a post Second World War concept. Earlier waves of migrants came in smaller numbers, often fleeing from persecution, were expected largely to assimilate to the dominant culture and readily did so, from gratitude at finding refuge. Post-war migrants from former colonies came voluntarily, largely for economic reasons, encouraged by Britain which needed their labour. They came in larger numbers than their predecessors and often had greater confidence and desire to retain their accustomed cultural practices.

In Lord Parekh's view, multiculturalism means that British society can accommodate and respect cultural differences, though not uncritically, if it provides opportunities for people to interact, formally and informally – hopefully evolving a shared culture which respects differences while building common bonds, enabling each cultural group to learn from others, enhancing awareness of the strengths and limitations of each other, and in the process redefining the national identity. In the Forum discussion, some criticised this as utopian, underestimating the discrimination, inequalities and tensions that are the reality of relations both between and within different cultural groups in London. It was also pointed out that economic crisis, limited resources, unemployment and housing problems created tensions which could undermine ideal solutions.

Professor David Feldman (Birkbeck) agreed that London, indeed the whole of the UK, has coped with cultural diversity for at least 300 years. His interpretation of the process was different however from Lord Parekh's: that Britain absorbed immigrant cultures in the same way that Wales, Scotland and Ireland were integrated into the multinational United Kingdom, and the colonies into the British Empire: preserving cultural distinctiveness insofar as it did not challenge English dominance. The British government achieved this through supporting dominant leaders and hierarchies and orthodox religions – e.g., by supporting faith schools from the 19th century – in minority cultures, in effect supporting their more conservative characteristics. It was suggested in the discussion that this continues to be so – e.g., only male voices from certain communities were influential, reinforcing patriarchal tendencies which marginalised women. Who speaks for each 'community' is important.

Immigration history

Professor Jerry White (Birkbeck) also pointed out that London has a long but not wholly benign history of immigration. Traditionally it did not welcome cultural difference and was suspicious of strangers. This makes the change since 1945 all the more striking. The numbers and diversity of overseas immigrants have grown at unprecedented speed. In 1951, only 1 in 20 Londoners was born outside the UK, the largest single group being Poles; by 1971, 15 per cent were foreign-born; by 1991, London consisted of 12 per cent of the British population but 45 per cent of its Black and Minority Ethnic population. Incomers came from an increasing range of countries for a growing diversity of reasons: economic migrants from former colonies and recently from the EU, refugees from persecution such as the Ugandan Asians in the 1960s, and many others more recently, refugees from war-zones. These changes occurred with no sustained hostility or violence, and without the ghettoisation characteristic of some other towns and cities in the UK and other countries.

Brick Lane

Dr Claire Alexander (LSE) provided a case-study of this process, discussing Brick Lane as epitomising 'multicultural London in its many, and not always positive, faces'. The area has been home to successive waves of immigrants, many of whom later moved on to other parts of London and elsewhere: Huguenots, Jews from Eastern Europe, both escaping persecution, Irish dock-workers, sailors from everywhere, more recently Bangladeshis who are mainly economic migrants. It has also seen conflict, notably anti-semitic riots of the 1930s, struggles against racists in the 1970s, and the resistance to both. It has always been poor, and two-thirds of Bangladeshi families in Britain live below the poverty line. But they do not live in an inward-looking cultural ghetto. The existing community has a strong sense of

Figure 1. *Brick Lane. Photo: Cate Gillon/ Getty Images.*

the history of the area and their connection with it, and also of their connection with Bangladesh. They preserve distinctive characteristics of their culture, but this cultural identity is not uncontested and there are divisions around gender, age, class and politics. They engage with wider cultures, most notably through the restaurant trade whose growth and existence has itself changed British culture – chicken tikka masala now being a favourite national dish, invented in Britain from Indian origins and now exported to South Asia. 'Indian' restaurants also make a substantial contribution to the UK economy.

Absence of ghettos

In the discussion following, Professor Tony Travers (London School of Economics, Greater London Group) reinforced White's point about the absence of ghettoisation as a key to the relatively peaceful coexistence of multiple cultural groups in London. London's size and mobile, fragmented character, combined with the random way that different groups of different sizes had migrated, meant that there were no big concentrations of migrants or obviously ethnically based politics or voting. This was supported later by the talk by Professor Ron Johnston FBA (University of Bristol) which clearly mapped the geographical dispersion of ethnic groups in London (Figure 2). Though there are some strong concentrations, they are nowhere a majority. Even in East London, 63 per cent of Bangladeshis live in areas where whites are a majority. Johnston suggested that perhaps the only ghettos in London are the overwhelmingly white outer suburbs, which have changed much less than inner London. Travers, however, observed that suburbs such as Harrow and Redbridge are changing too as people move out from the inner city, as previous generations of migrants did. Rob Berkeley of the Runnymede Trust pointed out that the Greater London Authority predicts that by 2015 five of the seven boroughs which will be 'majority minority' are Harrow, Redbridge, Croydon, Ealing and Hounslow in outer London, as well as Brent and Newham which already are. Tower Hamlets and Lambeth are not predicted to be 'majority minority', reinforcing the perception of the fluidity and lack of ghettoisation of the London population. It also suggested a degree of upward mobility among at least some minority groups

The Barking and Dagenham experience

David Woods, Acting CEO of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, gave a case-study of how one, less privileged, outer London borough has coped with change. In 1980, the area was overwhelmingly white and working class, two-thirds of housing was council owned, and most workers were employed at the Ford car factory. During the 1980s, the sale of council houses and the running down of Fords changed the area. Unemployed residents moved away in search of work. Former council houses were bought by immigrants, of varied ethnic origin, from inner London because they were among the cheapest in London; and by buy-to-let landlords, including inner London boroughs, who dumped their problematic tenants on Barking and Dagenham. In 1991, only 7 per cent of residents were non-UK born; in 2001, 15 per cent. The non-UK born population is now estimated at 40 per cent. The area has changed radically, with greater turnover and less commitment of residents to the community and to care of the environment. Tensions built up around housing and unemployment in particular, fanned by the British National Party which gained seats on the local council.

In the past few years the council, together with the local police, has worked hard to map the characteristics of the population, then to communicate individually with residents to establish their concerns and discern how to respond. In particular, the clearing and improving of the front gardens of transient residents and the environment generally, and investing in skills training and apprenticeships (especially for local white working class boys, who are the worst performers in school), have, Woods argued, helped to reduce tensions and build a more cohesive community. Not least it probably ensured the total defeat of the BNP in the local elections in May 2010. This suggested that initiatives of this kind by local government – of which too little is known – may deserve much of the credit for the relatively calm history of cultural change in London, but that this is too little recognised or supported by central government. Woods commented that central government spent ‘huge sums in response to how things are, but not very much on changing the way things are’ – e.g., a very large amount is spent in Barking and Dagenham as a consequence of domestic violence, but very little on preventing it. This was one of the strongest messages of the Forum for government policy.

Identity

Rob Berkeley (Director, Runnymede Trust) then took up the issue of how identity is constructed in a city as diverse as London. He described a recent discussion at a sixth-form college in an ethnically diverse part of North London about the impact of race and racism on students' lives. He asked whether they felt they were British. One or two did so. None thought they were English. All agreed that they were Londoners. To him this suggested the identification of these students and others with the great variety of communities in London: Vietnamese, Bolivians, Brazilians, Francophone Africans and many more, as well as migrants from the Commonwealth and the EU. But there is enormous diversity within and between cultural groups: there are Poles who came during and after World War II and stayed, and very recent, sometimes transient, migrants. Among Black Africans, Nigerians are more likely to have degrees than the white population of UK, Somalis are less likely to have finished secondary school. There are divisions also around age, gender, sexuality, religion and levels of income and wealth, which may be more important for individuals than ethnicity in building cultural identity. And there are real inequalities and discrimination, e.g., ‘the police will stop and search black people eight times more in proportion than white people’. There is also the important issue of the number of people who live in London who do not have full citizenship rights. It is important to be aware of the great diversity of people in London rather than trying ‘to suggest that everyone should assimilate into a very narrow space ... people don't just identify with small spaces’ – as his opening example suggested, they might, rather, identify with the large space of ‘London’.

A world city

In conclusion, Berkeley pinpointed the main issue emerging from the Forum: ‘We won the Olympics on the back of the notion that we were the world in one city. I think it is becoming more and more true. We are creating the world in one city and all the inequalities of the world in one city. I want to start in a hopeful place about those interactions and things that we could create differently in London, to challenge the rest of the world about some of the ethnic conflict that still occurs. We are not yet capitalising on that. I worry that London could be a complete real beacon for the rest of the world in terms of thinking about what it really does mean to be a world city, but it is missing an opportunity.’

The Forum opened up important aspects of the issue of how a ‘world city’ might be made to work, how this opportunity can be taken forward; what helps and what hinders co-existence across cultures. It produced no clear answers but it began to frame the questions as central to our understanding of modern cities and to our aspirations to build a future together, despite our diverse pasts.

Pat Thane is Leverhulme Professor of Contemporary British History, at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

The British Academy Forum ‘Multicultural London: History and policy’ was organised in association with History & Policy.

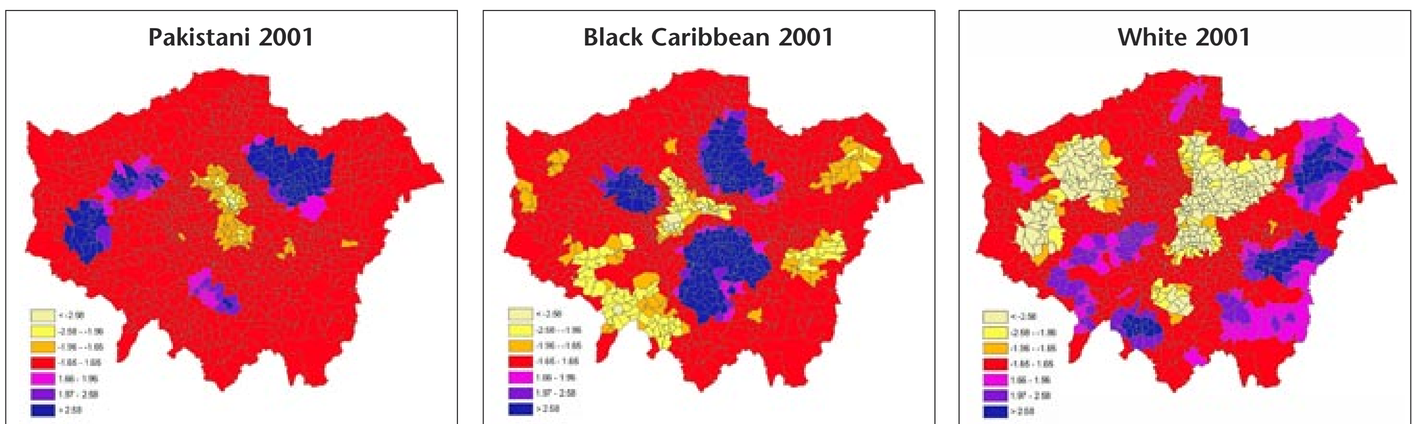


Figure 2. *Ethnic groups in Greater London, as defined by the 2001 census. Blue represents areas where each group is found in much greater percentages than across the city as a whole; yellow represents areas where they are absent in relative terms. Maps: Michael Poulsen and Ron Johnston.*

THE 'OTHER' IN ITALY

In June 2010, the British School at Rome held a conference on 'Language, space and otherness in Italy since 1861'. The conference organiser, **Professor David Forgacs***, explains how defining 'the other' has helped shape the Italian identity.*

Narratives of Italy

In 2011 Italy commemorates the 150th anniversary of Unification. In the run-up, historians and others have been reflecting on the story so far of its development as a modern nation-state. As historians well know, this story, like that of any nation, can be told in different and conflicting ways. Some accounts draw attention to the relative weakness and failures of Italian state-formation since 1861. They emphasise the persistence of strong local and regional identities, the failures of successive national governments to tackle inequalities between regions or to incorporate the interests of particular social groups. The rise of Fascism in the 1920s, supported by some of Italy's most powerful landowners and industrialists after a wave of strikes and occupations, or the rise in the 1980s of the Lega Nord (Northern League), which subsequently called for the secession of the more prosperous north from the rest of Italy, have been seen as two important pieces of evidence of this. Persistent organised crime and political corruption up to the present have been seen as symptoms of the failures of the state to engage its citizens fully or to acquire real democratic legitimacy.

Other accounts argue, by contrast, that, despite these limitations, the dominant trend in Italy, particularly since 1945, has been towards a fairly well consolidated popular national identity and increased democracy. Massimo d'Azeglio allegedly declared after Unification 'We have made Italy; now we must make Italians.' Since then, it has been maintained, the nation's internal divisions and differences – religious, cultural, political, linguistic – have indeed been largely overcome, and traditional rituals of local belonging, such as celebrations of local patron saints, have been flanked by rituals of belonging to a wider national community, such as voting in general elections or tuning in to the same radio or television programmes at the same time. As this suggests, the development of mass political parties and the rise of the mass media, as well as the emergence of national sports teams and nationally recognisable public figures, have been important causes of national aggregation. Nation-building has been, according to this view, a story of coming together and overcoming of difference, one of modernisation and improvement, increased internal movement and networking, consolidation of frontiers and shared identifications.

There is, however, a third way that the story of the Italian nation, like that of other nations, can be told: neither as a narrative of impediments to its full development, nor as one of successful integration but as a history of exclusions. The latter is a story of the nation defined by what and who it cuts out, relegates to the edges and tries to forget, in order to form itself as a modern community. It is a narrative of the creation of 'others' to the collective self-image of the nation. According to this narrative, whole groups of citizens are omitted from the legitimate nation or at any rate not fully admitted to it. One is not talking here about the regional minorities, like the Sardinians, or about localities and their traditions, all of which have often been quite vocal over the last century and a half in expressing their own interests. One is talking, rather, about less obviously recognisable 'others', those who have not always had the collective power or the access to means of public communication necessary to advocate for themselves.

Figure 1. *Man asleep on a bench, Ponte Sant'Angelo, Rome, c. 1890. Late 19th-century photographs of lower-class people were often governed by a picturesque representation of poverty. Beggars and homeless people were either captured unawares, often in 'characteristic' settings (beggars outside church doors, homeless men asleep on benches), or were posed full-face to the camera. They were generally included in photographic collections depicting the variety of social life. Nonetheless these photographs retain a unique documentary value as sources of information about how the poor looked and dressed and about streets and houses in Rome at this time. Photo: Giuseppe Primoli, reproduced with permission of Fondazione Primoli, Rome.*

'Others'

One early example of such a collective 'other' was the urban poor. The growth after Unification of poor districts and slum areas in the larger cities, such as Milan, Turin and Rome, was the result of the rapid expansion of an urban labour market, a low-wage economy and uncontrolled private housing. By the 1880s the existence of poor urban areas had come to be treated as a serious social problem. The urban poor were seen either as an occasion for charitable intervention or as a threat to the rest of society. Slums were seen as breeding grounds of disease and crime. The plight of the poor

Figure 2. *The daughter of a Bosnian Roma family carries wood to take to her mother for cooking in the Roma camp at Casilino 900, Rome, 2009. Since the 1990s the poorest areas of informal housing on the peripheries of Rome have been inhabited mainly by migrants from eastern and central Europe. Casilino 900 was, until its demolition by order of the mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, in January-February 2010, the largest informal settlement of Romani people in Europe. Located on Via Casilina near the junction with Viale Palmiro Togliatti, on part of the site of the disused former airport of Centocelle, the area was originally inhabited by migrants from Sicily engaged in selling fruit. When the latter moved into regular housing in the early 1960s, Roma and Sinti families took their place. The number of inhabitants expanded considerably in the 1990s with the arrival in Italy of thousands of Roma from former Yugoslavia. The main groups in Casilino 900 were from Montenegro, Kosova, Bosnia and Macedonia, with a smaller number from Serbia. Photo: Maria Stefanek.*

and the working classes was taken up in Italy, as elsewhere, by the labour movement and by the churches. As Leo XIII wrote in his encyclical of 1891, 'Rerum novarum' ('Concerning new things'), in effect also an anti-socialist manifesto, 'some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class'.

Five other historical examples of less visible and less vocal 'others' have been: the indigeneous inhabitants of Italy's overseas colonies, acquired at successive moments from the 1880s to the 1930s, who were generally denied the rights enjoyed by their colonisers and turned into a social underclass in their own countries; poor peasants in the more 'remote' rural areas, notably in the South, whose beliefs and traditions came to be seen, as Italy began to modernise, as rooted in the past and as an embarrassment to the self-image of a modern nation; sexual minorities, that is to say lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals, who only began to acquire a strong collective voice in the 1970s; persons with a disability; and the mentally ill. The last of these groups, up till Italy's mental health reforms in the 1960s and 1970s, were generally confined, particularly when they were also poor, in long-stay institutions or asylums (*manicomi*), and were among the least vocal, marginalised and forgotten groups in society.

Among contemporary 'others' the most prominent are the migrants from poorer parts of the world, including those from Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as the many Roma who have come into Italy from former Yugoslavia since the early 1990s. If xenophobia has been on the rise in Italy in the last two decades, both in popular attitudes and in the policies of the Lega Nord and the other parties of the right, this seems to give support both to the view that Italian national identity has indeed finally become consolidated and that it has been strengthened by a process of definition and exclusion of 'others' who are considered marginal or peripheral – those who work in the low-wage or informal economy, who live in substandard housing, who do not have residence permits, or whose permits have expired.

Space

'Marginal' and 'peripheral' are spatial representations, as is that of the 'group', and are strongly loaded with symbolic connotations. They belong to a way of talking and thinking about places, and indeed about whole societies, as having centres and edges, inner and outer regions, and about people as being bound into collectivities identified with particular places and seen as sharing recognisable physical or behavioural characteristics. However, these spatial representations are not 'merely' metaphorical or symbolic. For one thing, they often correspond to a real physical and social geography. Poor housing areas, including both shanty towns and low-rent apartment blocks, were and are often situated on the edges of cities. Depressed rural areas were for many years disconnected from the main transport networks and hubs and sometimes also cut off from other infrastructure such as a clean water supply or electricity. Colonies were part of a global periphery in the sense that they were physically distant from the metropolitan centres from which they were politically controlled, and they too lacked most of the productive and service infrastructure that was available in the centres. In the second place, insofar as margins and peripheries are metaphorical and symbolic representations, ways of imagining social relations in spatial terms, they are ones backed up by social prestige, real political power, armed force and the law. They carry implicit associations of vertical hierarchy, up/down, more important/less important, overlaid onto their overt horizontal topography of in/out.

Questions

The aim of the conference, 'Language, space and otherness in Italy since 1861', held at the British School at Rome on 24–25 June 2010, was to identify and investigate the main rhetorical strategies and devices used in Italy since Unification to define 'others' and those used to resist such definitions. How, the delegates at the conference asked, had different types of discourse and media

produced certain 'marked' categories of people – for example the poor, the sexually different, colonised subjects, gypsies, illegal immigrants, persons with disability or with mental illness?

In an extraordinarily rich and varied series of papers and presentations, speakers at the conference examined these questions and considered how some people marked as others had reacted with their own discourses, counter-definitions and actions. One example was the theatre group, Insania Teatro, formed by patients of the former mental hospital of Santa Maria Maddalena in Aversa, north of Naples. Another recent example has been the film-making project developed in Rome by the group Asinitas Lab, in which recent migrants who attend Italian language classes are given video cameras and training in filming and editing and encouraged to make films about their own experiences, rather than being, as is more often the case, objects of representations by other filmmakers, or by the mass media.

The conference was accompanied by a large exhibition, called 'Italy's Margins', in the gallery spaces of the British School at Rome, consisting of 100 photographs and 20 film extracts on the same themes. Two of the images illustrate this article.

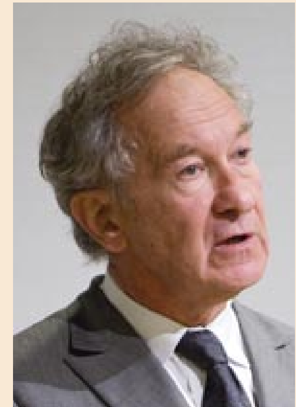
David Forgacs has held the established Chair of Italian at University College London since 1999. In 2006–09 he was Research Professor in Modern Studies at the British School at Rome. In 2010 he organised there the conference 'Language, space and otherness in Italy since 1861' (24–25 June) and curated the exhibition 'Italy's Margins' (26 June–9 July).

The British Academy is the sponsor and principal funder of the British School at Rome.

Quests for identity

In May 2010, two British Academy events explored further the complex issue of national and cultural identity.

On 13 May, in his Elie Kedourie Memorial Lecture, **Professor Simon Schama** discussed interpretations of ancient Israel and narratives of 20th-century Jewish history, and the role that each has played in shaping the modern identity of Israel.



Professor Simon Schama

On 24 May **Professor Julia Kristeva FBA** (Institut Universitaire de France) asked 'Is there a European culture?' – in a public conversation with Professor Jacqueline Rose FBA and Professor Marian Hobson FBA. Professor Kristeva described Europe as 'the cradle of the identity quest'. The European Union has established itself as 'the first real terrestrial space of universal peace', and a European 'we' is introducing the concept of 'questioning restlessness' to a world that prefers certainty of identity.

For Professor Kristeva, it is multilingualism that is at the heart of Europe's cultural and identity diversity. Europe is the political identity that speaks as many languages as, if not more than, the countries it encompasses. 'Today, European linguistic diversity is in the process of creating what I call "kaleidoscopic individuals", capable of defying not only the bilinguism of the English imposed by globalisation, but also the *Francophonie* steeped in Versailles' gilded dreams', individuals who can act as a carrier wave of tradition and innovation in a cross breeding of languages and cultures. This polyglot citizen is emerging as a new species. 'Will the future European be a singular subject with an intrinsically plural psyche because he or she is trilingual, quadri-lingual, multilingual, or will she be reduced to a global speaker?'

Professor Julia Kristeva FBA

Professor Kristeva said she had noticed that young Europeans in particular, such as her students, are becoming both linguistically and culturally polyphonic: 'More and more young Europeans are going from one country to another, speaking the language of their country with that of the other country.' This creates questions about identity. Professor Kristeva herself long ago left her native Bulgaria to live and work in France: 'At the crossroads of two languages at least, I need an idiom which, under the smooth appearance of the Cartesian French, contains a secret passion for the black gilding of the Orthodox icons.'

Audio recordings of both occasions may be found via www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary/

New finds at Star Carr

Recent press reports have highlighted research on the location of Britain's earliest house. **Chantal Conneller**, **Nicky Milner** *and* **Barry Taylor** *provide further information on the British Academy-supported excavations at Star Carr.*

BETWEEN 2006 and 2008 the British Academy funded excavations at the Mesolithic site of Star Carr, North Yorkshire.[1] The site dates to between 9000 and 8500 BC, a time immediately after the end of the last ice age, but when temperatures had risen to levels similar to the present day. At this time Britain was still joined to continental Europe and sites with strong cultural similarities are known from northern Germany and southern Scandinavia. People lived by hunting and gathering; the only domesticated animal was the dog. Animal remains from the site include deer, elk, wild cattle, pig and water birds, as well as animals that were probably hunted for their pelts such as bear, pine marten, beaver, fox, hare and badger.

Earlier excavations

Star Carr was first excavated by Grahame Clark between 1949 and 1951, and has dominated archaeologists' understanding of the Mesolithic period in Britain. The site is waterlogged and, conserved in peat, Clark's excavations uncovered an extraordinarily well preserved array of finds: large quantities of butchered animal bone, barbed antler projectile points, elk antler mattocks, bone scrapers, beads, and even several masks made from red deer skulls and antler. Clark suggested these may have been worn in ritual dances or acted as disguises designed to aid hunting.[2]

Additional small-scale excavations at the site in the 1980s uncovered part of a platform of worked aspen timbers on the edge of the lake (Lake Flixton) on which Star Carr sat, the earliest evidence for systematic carpentry in Britain. These excavations also revealed both that the site was much larger than originally thought, and that it had been repeatedly occupied over a period of around 300 years.[3]

New work at the site, undertaken by the Universities of Manchester and York, recommenced in 2004. Despite all the previous work at the site, we felt that many important questions remained to be answered. For example, none of the previous excavations had ever opened up extensive dryland areas (the kind of location where people were likely to have lived), focusing instead on the boggy but well-preserved water-logged areas. Furthermore the wooden platform discovered in the 1980s was only known from a narrow trench 2 metres in width, making it difficult to understand how it was used. Finally excavations of sites around the edge of Lake Flixton by Tim Schadla-Hall suggest that Star Carr played a unique role in the lives of the people who lived there. The sites located by Tim revealed lots of evidence for Mesolithic activity, but none of the finds – the antler masks, beads and barbed antler points – that had made Star Carr so famous in the first place. This may support recent ideas that Star Carr, rather being a typical domestic base camp as Clark supposed, was actually a site where certain rites also took place, involving the ritual deposition of antler barbed points and frontlets into the waters of the lake.

Recent findings

Our work started with a programme of fieldwalking, which revealed a continuous spread of stone tools and manufacturing debris stretching for over 150 metres and tripling the known extent of the site. Testpitting and more extensive excavations have followed. These have revealed evidence for dense occupation on the dryland areas of the site, with intensive flintknapping and the processing of animal bones.

By far the most exciting find on the dryland has been the Mesolithic house, the earliest so far known from Britain, dating to at least 8500 BC. This structure consists of a ring of 18 posts enclosing an area about 3.5 metres in diameter (Figure 1). Clusters of postholes suggest the house may have been repaired during its lifetime. Within the posts, a pit 2.5 metres wide had been dug into the ground. This contained very dark sediments, and micromorphology by Charly French has revealed that these were composed of decayed organic matter, perhaps reeds or grasses. These would have created a soft floor for the inhabitants. The upper layers of the pit contained large quantities of domestic debris:

Figure 1. *Excavation of the Mesolithic house.*

stone tools and animal bones. People were making tools such as arrow points, repairing arrows, making or using scraping tools, and working bone and antler. Three axes – tools that are relatively rare – were also found in the house. The sediments did not preserve charcoal, but the house contained burnt stone tools and manufacturing debris, suggesting it once contained a hearth. In the vicinity of the house were external hearths around which further activities were focused.

In the wetland area of the site a key aim was to discover the extent and function of the timber platform. Excavations to the east of the 1980s excavations in 2006 did not encounter any traces of it, though clusters of worked antler and stone tools were found amongst brushwood at the edge of the lake. However, a trench opened up 20 metres to the west in 2007 did reveal a row of planks along the edge of the lake (Figure 2). This was overlain and reinforced with natural brushwood. During this season's excavations we opened up a trench between these two areas, and again encountered wooden planks, suggesting that it represents a single continuous structure, stretching at least 20 metres along the edge of the lake.

Significance of the structures

This evidence for substantial structures at the site is significant. The people who lived at Star Carr were some of the earliest migrants back to Britain after the last cold phase of the last ice age. Classic stereotypes of hunter-gatherer behaviour state that they are very mobile, with few possessions and thus leave few traces in the landscape. What we see at Star Carr is different. There appears to be considerable investment in modifying the local environment: the platform is extremely large, necessitating considerable amounts of labour; the house is relatively substantial.

Environmental analysis undertaken by Petra Dark in the 1990s also demonstrates that people were using fire to change the appearance of the local vegetation. In particular, the reeds that fringed the lake were being burnt. This would have encouraged fresh shoots that would encourage animals to browse. Since reeds can grow very tall, the burning would also open up the site and make it visible across the lake.

It seems then that the post-glacial immigrants to Britain were very attached to particular places in the landscape, and the evidence indicates that they returned to them again and again (at least 300 years in the case of Star Carr). This seems to strengthen the idea that Star Carr was a special place in the landscape, perhaps one associated with ritual activity.

Decay

One of the most important findings of the recent excavations is how much organic preservation has deteriorated in the 60 years since Clark dug at the site. Bone and antler finds are extremely poorly preserved and need expert conservation to survive. Drainage over the years has lead to peat shrinkage and the site drying out. Work by Steve Boreham and Andy Needham (funded by English Heritage) has revealed that the sediments are now highly acidic (as low as pH 2.67) and that this acidity is concentrated at the level of the organic artefacts. It is clear that much of the bone and antler that has made the site so famous has decayed; specialist work indicates that the wood is also in an extremely fragile state. It seems to be only a matter of time before this material decays entirely.

Figure 2. *Excavation of the wooden platform.*

We hope to continue work at the site in order to gain as much information as we can before it is too late. This is, however, dependent on us securing funding for future excavations.

Notes

1 As well as the British Academy we would also like to thank NERC, English Heritage, the Vale of Pickering Research Trust and the Universities of Manchester and York for funding these excavations. We would also like to thank all those who have worked on the site over the years.

2 J.G.D. Clark, *Excavations at Star Carr* (Cambridge, 1954).

3 P. Mellars and P. Dark, *Star Carr in context* (Cambridge, 1998).

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From Land’s End to John o’Groats: A fundraising challenge

In August 2010, to raise money for the British Academy, its President, **Sir Adam Roberts**, *undertook a cycle ride from Land’s End to John o’Groats (LE JoG) – aiming to complete the journey on his 70th birthday. His companion along the way was his daughter Hannah. Here are edited extracts from the daily blog that Sir Adam posted on the British Academy website to chart their progress.*

Tuesday 10 August

Hannah and I were met today at Land’s End by Nick Round FBA and his wife Ann. It was great to have such a surprise and such a warm send-off on our journey.

Nicholas Round and Adam Roberts at Land’s End

Balliol is supposed to be a college of ‘effortless superiority’, but all I’m feeling after the first punishing stage of the journey is laborious inferiority: the hills on Cornish roads are remorseless! We have now arrived in St Agnes, a delightful village on the N coast of Cornwall where we will stay for the night.

Thursday 12 August

Today we made it out of Cornwall, in cool weather that made the pannier-laden hill climbing easier. Two people spontaneously gave us cash donations for the British Academy, both totally unasked-for and unexpected. I am becoming suspicious of Hannah’s preference for detours on minor roads (with endless more hills). But who said that the straight line is more interesting than the circuitous detour?

Friday 13 August

Members of the Académie Française are sometimes referred to as ‘les immortels’. No such luck for Fellows of the British Academy. The nearest I can get to immortality is my oxymoronic life membership of the Youth Hostels Association. Last night, as we will often be doing on this journey, we stayed in a youth hostel. The one in Okehampton is wonderfully idiosyncratic – it’s the old railway station, and an excellent stopover in a long journey. Today, Friday 13th, apart from the N wind we had good fortune all the way: an exceptionally varied run through Devon with many hills and some lovely rural by-roads, arriving at the tiny village of Churchinford just as it started raining. We stayed at a pub that is so brilliant that it had better be kept secret.

Sunday 15 August

The two cliffs that we see today are the Avon Gorge, in Bristol, and Wintour’s Leap, above Chepstow. Both are magnificent climbing areas – the two best within a shortish drive from Oxford – where I’ve spent many days on great routes. It’s a nostalgic treat to revisit them and show Hannah the scenes of past crimes.

We weave our way out of Bristol on a brilliant route that is a rural idyll until delivering the traveller to the ‘old’ (1966) Severn Bridge. In the separate bike and pedestrian lane you can stop and enjoy the bridge and the views from it. Soon after, another treat in the form of the Chepstow Bridge (1816), a lovely gem best enjoyed when you are not in a car.

Chepstow Bridge

Monday 16 August

At Welsh Bicknor we meet a man cycling from John o’Groats to Land’s End. He has done 770 miles to get here, and therefore deduces that Land’s End must be only 230 miles away. But we have over 300 on the clock already. I do the maths, and slowly it dawns on me that this is a problem not just for him, but for us: it seems we are talking well over 1000 miles here. Maybe I should get back to kind sponsors and, like Oliver Twist, ask for more.

Tuesday 17 August

The weather forecast for today was dire, but the weather itself (apart from some unconvincing showers that never really got started) was excellent. I prefer this arrangement to the alternative. The one snag was that the strong northerlies, which have been getting at us for days, got even stronger. Indeed, we can’t use the word ‘headwind’ without prefacing it with an expletive.

We battle on to Chester, wondering whether there is any cycling equivalent of nautical tacking. What we do find in Chester, not for the first time on this journey, is the warmth and generosity of strangers. We go to a bike shop in Chester, for a minor repair to a gear cable on my bike and new brake blocks on Hannah’s, plus a check-over. We are given cups of tea while we wait, and then they refuse any payment except for the cost of the brake blocks – and even then at trade rates. It’s oddly heart-warming, and they will get a card from John o’Groats.

Wednesday 18 August

Chester to Chorley is easier said than done. Our CTC-recommended cycle route – cunningly avoiding the Scylla of Manchester, the Charybdis of Liverpool, and many other hazards too – weaves its improbable way through, up and down Delamere Forest and the jigsaw-pretty town of Lymm. It is extraordinary how urban sprawl and delightful countryside intermingle

hereabouts. We end up at an excellent B&B in a converted farm, where we meet four of Hannah's friends who have driven over from Yorkshire to share in her 40th birthday celebrations. Over a pub dinner we all reminisce on past disasters in the manner of old soldiers everywhere. At the end they generously insist on making a contribution to the Academy.

Punctures!

Thursday 19 August

Hannah's forties have begun badly, with a puncture on her birthday and two more today on the other wheel. It is time for new and superior outer tubes, but, oddly, the small towns through which we ride on the route from Chorley to Slaidburn are bereft of cycle shops. This is our punishment for avoiding Blackburn.

Friday 20 August

From Slaidburn, in rain showers that soon comply with the meteorologists' terminology of 'showers merging', we head up through lovely wild moorland. This is one of the many parts of Britain which has extraordinary beauty but is little visited by tourists, who rush up the M6 (miles to the west of us) to better-known destinations. Near Kirby Lonsdale, in wild winds bringing the rain in horizontally, we briefly resort to a main road – hateful in the conditions. Then blessed relief, back to tiny back roads over the hills to my birthplace, Penrith. To my surprise, after 66 years, I manage to find the house where our family (having been evacuated from Newcastle-on-Tyne) lived till I was 4 years old. Wet and bedraggled, we nervously ring the bell. The gentleman who answers is kind and welcoming, and recalls that it was his father who, as our landlord, had tried to evict us from the house. In the intervening years, and on both sides, any bad feelings about this court case have evaporated. We go on to another great B&B and dinner in a Mexican restaurant – one thing I don't remember from my infancy.

Saturday 21 August

The tyres problem is sorted in a brilliant cycle shop, which also recommends a cunning route to Carlisle, only about 5 miles longer than the main road, and totally enjoyable. An equally cunning route out of Carlisle gets us to Gretna Green, that curious shotgun-weddings capital of the UK. After charging on to Annan in strong headwinds, we stay in a B&B next to the local school, the Annan Academy – a reminder that the word 'Academy' has a different meaning north of the border.

Sunday 22 August

From Annan, by the Solway Firth, through stunning valleys and cunning detours, to Wanlockhead, in the rolling Lowther Hills. At 1531 feet it is the highest village in Scotland. I eat haggis and tatties in the highest pub in Scotland. The village was built because of lead and gold mining, which had started here before the beginning of the 17th century – an activity that continues to this day with gold panning competitions. Wanlockhead also has a strong tradition of self-improvement: on 1 November 1756, 32 men from the village drew up a solemn foundation document to form a reading society 'for our mutual improvement'. So the miner's library beat the British Academy to it by a century and a half. And Dorothy Wordsworth, in her *Tour Made in Scotland* (1803) tells how, when travelling here with Coleridge and her brother William, she met a group of boys 'all without shoes and stockings. They told us that they lived in Wanlockhead, went to school, and learned Latin (Virgil) and Greek (Homer).' If the school were still functioning I would be wondering whether a village could be elected to Honorary Fellowship of the British Academy, but since it has been replaced by a bus I don't think I'll pursue it.

Tower block demolition in Glasgow

Monday 23 August

Our ride from Wanlockhead to the shores of Loch Lomond runs inescapably through Glasgow, the largest conurbation of the whole trip and my mother's birthplace. There we see a symbolic sight: a huge 1960s tower block – its outer wall already torn off, and wallpaper and decorations of each flat

Lancashire

Glencoe

showing pathetically – being demolished by a gigantic machine resembling a prehistoric reptile in a horror film.

Tuesday 24 August

Any readers of this journal must be tired of the word 'tyre', so I will get this matter sorted quickly. In the morning we look at the tyre on Hannah's bike. It has a rip so big you could get your little finger into it. We face a ghastly dilemma: either (1) we go back 10 miles to the nearest bike shop and get a new outer tyre, or (2) we do the best repair we can with patches meant for inner tubes, not for outers, and hope that it will last until the next bike shop up the road, which is over 85 miles away. To have any chance of sticking to our schedule, we decide on the second – a big gamble as we risk being stuck 40 miles from the nearest bike shop. Amazingly, the patches, including one stuck heretically and with manic care onto the outside of the tyre, stay in place and do their job not just for today's 72-mile run, but also beyond.

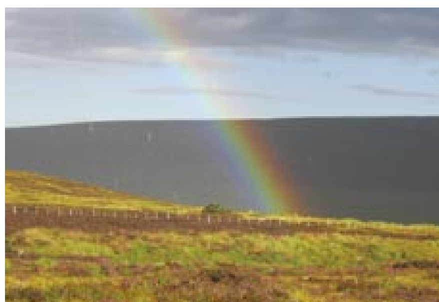
Rannoch Moor and Glencoe (the latter the scene of past climbs) are as atmospheric and dramatic as ever. Stunning views, and of course a strong and bitingly cold NW headwind to remind us that these places just don't do Riviera-type weather.

Wednesday 25 August

At Fort William we get a new tyre for Hannah, but in a spirit of scientific curiosity she treats the new tyre as a spare, and carries on riding on our spatchcocked repair.

Thursday 26 August

From Loch Ness to Carbisdale, both overlooking magnificent patches of water, is a journey from a youth hostel in a converted half-way house to one in a magnificent castle-cum-stately home. The rain that has always seemed possible hits us only in the last hour, and rewards us with a double rainbow over Dornoch.



Rainbow over Dornoch

Our destination for the night, Carbisdale Castle, is surreal: overlooking the majestic Kyle of Sutherland, this very stately home, full of statues (almost all of nude women) is not exactly everyone's image of a youth hostel. The library, the ballroom, the dining room – all trump the best clubs in Pall Mall. Enjoying all this grandeur are notably un-grand 21st century travellers (ourselves included), whose functional clothing is gloriously out of keeping with their temporary surroundings.

Friday 27 August

Today is almost entirely on the A836. However, this road has no road markings, is so narrow that it has to have passing places, and has more cattle grids than cars.

It's a delightful day, meandering up and down heather-covered hills and by unspoilt lochs. This is an area to which salmon swim upstream, overcoming incredible obstacles such as the Falls of Shin. We stop at a small

hostelry, the Crask Inn, the only building for miles, and a prime candidate for inclusion in any Lonely Pub Guide. Our destination for the day, Tongue, a magnificent place that affords great views of the Atlantic.

Nearly there!

Saturday 28 August

Tongue to Thurso is technically a short day at 46 miles, but is slow for the first half because of Cornwall-like hills. We cycle past Dounreay, the nuclear power station now being decommissioned, which is overlooked by a wind farm. It is tempting to see this sight as the past and future of power generation in this country, but two days later, in Orkney, we will see a wind turbine that has been knocked over and destroyed by the wind – an awesome symbol of the power of nature.

Sunday 29 August – Final Day!

John o'Groats, reached on my 70th after 20 miles' struggle in a northerly gale and with 1090 miles showing on my milometer since Land's End, is perfectly situated and constructed to prove the proposition that it is the journey that matters, not the destination. It is no headland, just one place on a coast. It is a haphazard collection of ugly buildings, the largest of which is an abandoned and derelict hotel. It is a place for a few snaps, a quick hot drink in the cafe, a signature in the book which is full of bizarre records, and off.

It is the journey that has been wonderful. I have enjoyed it all. It reminds me of mountain holidays in the Alps and elsewhere: the daily travel to a new destination, the hugely varied character of the land through which we travel, the alternation of huts (or youth hostels) and hotels (or B&Bs), the camaraderie of meeting people engaged in the same mad endeavour.

For the privilege of doing this I have to thank many people. I thank colleagues at the British Academy who believed I could do this almost more than I did myself. I thank all those who gave me support, including some lovely messages on the Justgiving page. But above all I thank Hannah. This is her fifth LE JoG, and I could not have had a better guide, philosopher and friend for this journey. She finished on the patched tyre repair that we had done at Loch Lomond, 315 miles back.

Hannah and Adam Roberts at John o'Groats

Sir Adam and his daughter Hannah raised over £3,700 en route from Land's End to John o'Groats. The British Academy is very grateful for their dedication, and for the support of all our donors, whose generosity over the years has greatly aided the Academy's ability to support scholars and research.

For further information on Sir Adam's fundraising challenge, and to find out how you can support the Academy, please go to www.britac.ac.uk/on_yer_bike.cfm

The British Academy

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