



## Issue 1 – March 2015

**WELCOME** to the first edition of the **SPA E** newsletter

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Dear Members - welcome to the first edition of the SPA's new Newsletter. As advertised in the last hard copy issue of Policy World, the Association decided to move its communications online in the form of this publication and the SPA's significant contribution to Discover Society (published with the BSA). I hope you find this first edition of interest - there's plenty to read about including summaries of the new Policy Roundtables, last year's conference awards, the REF, the aftermath of the Scottish Referendum and reports on a range of activities funded by the SPA. Happy reading!



### **SPA Policy Events**

As members know the Association advances the role of social policy research within policymaking, practice and wider public debates. As part of this, a

number of policy roundtable events have been arranged to take place before and after the general election in May 2015. They are aimed at policy makers, think tanks and practitioners as well as academics. A short summary of each event will be published on our website.

The first, looking at *pensions policy*, was held in London in November 2014 at the LSE, The event took the form of a Question Time-style panel comprised of representatives from six leading think tanks providing a 10-minute overview of the current problems facing UK pensions policy and possible future policy options from their perspective. Participants were: Nigel Keohane (Social Market Foundation); Kristian Niemietz (Institute of Economic Affairs); Andrew Harrop (Fabian Society); Mel Duffield (Pensions Policy Institute); Vidhya Alakeson (Resolution Foundation) and Ashley Seager (Intergenerational Foundation – IF). The event was chaired by Professor Sir John Hills. A short report on the roundtable can be found at <http://www.social-policy.org.uk/events/report-from-spa-pensions-policy-round-table-october-29th-2014-lse/>

*After the Referendum: The Future for Scottish Social Policy* took place in February 2015 at the University of Strathclyde. The aim of the event was to highlight the contribution Social Policy research can make to the understanding of social policy questions in contemporary Scotland. Given the role of social policy issues in the recent debates over Scottish independence there was considerable discussion of the role played by social policy questions during and after the independence debates. Presenters included Bernard Harris (University of Strathclyde), Gerry Mooney (The Open University) and Bea Cantillon (Antwerp University). A panel discussion included comment on the role of academic evidence in social policy making this event attracted a diverse range of participants including practitioners from social care, youth work, NGOs, policy makers and academics. The event was chaired by Professor Adrian Sinfield, University of Edinburgh. A report will be available on the SPA website.

Information about future policy roundtables can be found on the SPA website - <http://www.social-policy.org.uk/what-we-do/events/>

### **Congratulations to Professor Jane Millar**

The outstanding social policy research of Professor Jane Millar OBE, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University, sees her elected as a Fellow of the British Academy. The British Academy is the UK's expert body that supports and champions excellence in the humanities and social sciences.

Professor Millar's research interests include social security policy, gender and poverty, family policy and the policy implications of family change. She has been a Special Adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee for Work and Pensions, to the Department for Work and Pensions, and the UK Representative on the EU Observatory on National Family Policies.

Professor Millar said of her Fellowship: *"I am tremendously proud to be elected as a Fellow of the British Academy. The Academy is pivotal in inspiring and supporting excellence in the humanities and social sciences, and it is a great honour to be chosen to join its Fellowship. I would like to thank my colleagues at Bath and throughout my academic career for inspiration and collaboration over the years. Their expertise and support for my research is reflected in this award."*

### **SPA Awards 2014**

The 2014 UK Social Policy Association Awards were presented following this year's annual conference dinner on 14 July 2014 at Sheffield City Hall, hosted by the University of Sheffield. The six winners across three award categories were presented by acting SPA President, Professor. Adrian Sinfield.

### **Special Recognition Award**

#### **Winners**

The Special Recognition Award is made to SPA members who have retired, are due to retire, or hold

an Emeritus position and marks contributions in the field to research, teaching and learning; impact on political process and discourse; and recognises the esteem in which the recipient is held.

**Professor Gary Craig:** Now Professor of Community Development and Social Justice at the University of Durham, Gary Craig became the world's first Professor of Social Justice during his time at the University of Hull. He established WISE, the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation, the first interdisciplinary slavery research centre, and is recognized for his work for participatory approaches to policy development, and much further research and campaigning on 'race' and ethnicity, slavery and poverty. His social policy career started in community development and action research projects. He turned the *Community Development Journal* into the field's leading international journal, and he has made an enormous contribution inside and outside the UK, recognised for example by a Special Consultative status from the UN. Following his formal acceptance speech, Gary sang 'Hard Times' by Stephen Foster from the floor, to rapturous applause.



**Professor Caroline Glendinning:**

Caroline is now Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York. Caroline spent much of her time as a career researcher at the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at York. She has conducted pioneering research into families with disabled children and her editing, with Jane Millar, of two editions of *Women and Poverty in Britain* is a classic for teaching and for provoking much further work. Recently her 7-year leadership on adult social care and individualised budgets has provided great strength to SPRU's Department of Health-funded research programme. Caroline has always had to raise funds to support herself and her research team. In the last decade her average strike has been over half a million pounds a year; in addition Caroline has produced over 100 refereed journal articles and some dozen books written or edited. There can be few teaching, researching and practising in the fields to which she has contributed who have not drawn on her findings, her insights, her advice and her lobbying.



**Professor John Veit-Wilson:** Now Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, Northumbria University, and Visiting Professor in Sociology, Newcastle University, John has long worked for a clearer and broader understanding of the meaning of

poverty and the value of a minimum income standards approach. He was a key member of the big poverty study led by Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith in the 1960s. The range of his work with the Child Poverty Action Group deserves particular comment for its scientific, public and organisational content. A founder-member with his mother, Harriett Wilson, in 1965, then active on its Executive and Board, for over half its existence, and recently its Vice-Chair, John has been fighting, counselling and writing, keeping it going through very difficult periods and getting its message out precisely and forcefully. Active engagement with cross-national and international groups such as the European Anti-Poverty Network has strengthened the campaign for a European Minimum Income Directive with a broader and research-based consideration of adequacy.



**Award for Best Non-Academic**

The award for Best Non-Academic is granted to a non-academic who, in the opinion of the judges, has made a significant and lasting contribution to the field of social policy, either through campaigning, lobbying, service provision, fundraising, journalism, funding of research, dissemination of research (particularly to practitioners and other non-academic audiences) or through other non-academic

means. This year, judges made two awards in this category.

**Anna Coote:** (Head of Social Policy, New Economics Foundation) has been involved with research, analysis and lobbying on some of the most pressing issues concerning social welfare, from health, to gender equality, working time and the environment. Prior to her post at the New Economics Foundation, Anna worked at the UK Sustainable Development Commission, the King's Fund, IPPR, and the New Statesman. Throughout, her work has remained radical and particularly relevant to social policy with a strong, persistent commitment to social justice. She has persistently challenged us to question power and authority and the existing way of doing things. But she does so, as the nominees said, 'not simply in order to *comment and critique* the world, she sets out to *change it*'.



**Carey Oppenheim:** (Chief Executive, Early Intervention Foundation) has played a key role in well-evidenced campaigning, challenging and shaping policy, both within and outside government. Although her work may not have been high profile, it has been very influential with extensive publications, making Carey a very effective advocate for social policy and social justice. In addition to her work with the Early Intervention Foundation, Carey's great contribution to

social policy has included three years co-directing IPPR; two years chairing the London Child Poverty Commission; and five years from 2000 as Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister. This included developing policies for the Child Trust Fund, work-life balance, Sure Start and child care.



**Award for ‘Best Postgraduate Paper’**

**Faraz Vahid Shahidi**, Doctoral Researcher at the University of Toronto, Canada won the award for his paper presented at the 2013 SPA Conference in Sheffield, entitled ‘*Varieties of Welfare Capitalism in Crisis: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Labour Market Reforms in 18 Advanced Welfare States*’. Judges had scored the paper at a combined total of 55 out of 60, commenting ‘using the findings very effectively, his innovative approach enables him to draw new insights, providing something articulated and original which reverses the established literature’.



In a break from SPA tradition, special mention was also made of runner-up **Ruth Patrick**, doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds, for her paper, ‘*Working on welfare: early findings on the lived experiences of welfare reform*’.

*Photographs courtesy of the Sociological Studies Department at the University of Sheffield.*

**Congratulations to all our winners and many thanks to all those who nominated.**

**Feature: The Post 2014 Independence Referendum Landscape: Towards another Referendum?**

**Gerry Mooney , The Open University in Scotland**

The 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum was widely regarded as a one-off event that would settle Scotland’s constitutional future for ‘a generation’. However, only months later, most observers would claim that it has only served to increase uncertainty, not only around Scotland’s future, but that of the entire UK. The possibility of a second Referendum is already on the horizon, with the majority of Scottish voters believing that this will happen within 10 years – and not a few thinking that it will take place within 5 years. To understand the reasons for this we need to consider the fall-out from the 2014 Referendum but also the ways in which it has changed the political landscape of Scotland for ever – with huge consequences for the rest of the UK.

As is now well known, the September 18th Referendum

resulted in a NO vote, by 55% to 45% voting for YES to Scottish

Independence. Of particular interest for students of UK social policy, is that the debate around Scotland’s constitutional future was primarily concerned not with narrow issues of Scottish nationalism and national identity, but with social welfare issues. This was reflected in movement that arose around the YES campaign. This included a broad range of organisations and parties, particularly the SNP, Greens and Scottish Socialists, who campaigned and mobilised around issues from the rejection of UK Government ‘austerity’ and welfare ‘reform’ policies, and opposition to privatisation, to the rejection of nuclear weapons, for land reform, for environmental sustainability and the development of a fairer welfare state which would effectively challenge deep seated problems of poverty and inequality.

However, these issues were also crucially linked with the question of Scotland’s constitutional future, with the majority of supporters of Independence viewing it primarily as a means through which to achieve a fairer and more socially just Scotland. For the SNP, Scottish Independence was overwhelmingly the goal in itself.

The question of constitutional futures and further devolution has become the key political debate post September 2014. It is now shaping the political environment in the run-up to the May 2015 General Election. However, in the aftermath of the September 2014 Referendum, the question of additional powers for Scotland, reflected in the established of the Smith Commission within days of the

Referendum, was linked by David Cameron to devolution and

powers for England, and also to additional powers to Wales and Northern Ireland. The primary outcome of the Scottish Referendum, therefore, has been wide and heated debate around the constitutional arrangements of the entire UK in which what appears to be a gain for one part of the UK is being viewed as a cost to others. Territorial politics is on the agenda in the UK today in ways not seen for generations – if at all.

The publication in November 2014 of proposals by the Smith Commission for additional powers for Scotland has not surprisingly led to considerable controversy. The main pro-Union parties, Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats, disagree over the amount and range of powers that should be given to Scotland. The Smith proposals, the headline aspects of which relate to the devolution of some areas of taxation, have to secure the approval of the House of Commons, have been criticised by some Tory MPs as going too far, and by the SNP as not going far enough and as renegeing on promises made by the 3 UK party leaders in the days before the Referendum itself that Scotland would receive additional powers, powers that would, in the words of former PM and Scottish Labour MP Gordon Brown, amount to ‘home rule’. For the SNP the Smith proposals do not even closely correspond to the ‘devolution-max’ (that is maximum devolution with Scotland remaining within the UK) promises made during the Referendum campaign.

This is now the central fault line between the pro-union and pro-independence parties in the post-

Referendum landscape. It was entirely predictable that the

Smith proposals would not receive universal support but there is evidence that they fall well below the expectation of the majority of those contributing to the Commission. According to the breakdown of submissions received in terms of what additional powers were being asked for, the highest recorded was for devolution-max, followed by full fiscal autonomy, then the devolution of welfare benefits, and home rule ([www.smith-commission.scot/resources/](http://www.smith-commission.scot/resources/)). This has led to claims that the proposals of the Smith Commission amount to the devolution of ‘responsibility without power’.

The absence of any powers around social welfare in particular has been hugely controversial, not least that it has been widely reported that these were in an initial draft of the Smith proposals but were removed at the instigation of the UK Government. This is having major consequences for the main UK parties, but primarily for the Labour Party which looks certain to lose many of its heartland Scottish seats. 2015 General Election preference opinion polls at the close of 2014 have the SNP well in front with around 43% of the vote and Labour on 26% with the Tories and Liberal Democrats far behind.

Claims are already being voiced that the outcome of the 2015 UK General Election and any Referendum on EU membership in 2017 will spark renewed demands for a further Referendum on Scottish Independence. The 2014 Referendum has secured nothing – only more uncertainty in the

immediate future – with UK wide consequences.

**REF 2014**

**By Professor Peter Taylor Gooby, University of Kent and Chair of REF Social Work and Social Policy Panel**

**A View from the Social Work and Social Policy Sub-panel (SP22)**

The first point to make is that we were extremely fortunate to have a group of people on the sub-panel who established good working relationships from the outset and who committed themselves to carrying out the substantial amount of work involved in calibrating, assessing, moderating and finalising assessments. The workload turned out to be rather greater than anyone had anticipated, but people did it – the Big Society in action, or something.

**Background**

SP22 dealt with a range of material from Social Policy, Social Work, and a number of other areas. The sub-panel received submissions from 62 institutions covering 1,302 FTE staff, an increase of 4.7 per cent on the 1,243 included in RAE2008. We assessed 4,786 outputs against 5,271 in the previous exercise. This is slightly fewer institutions than the 68 submitting in 2008 but with more staff and noticeably fewer outputs per staff member (3.4 against 3.73). Main Panel C, covering social sciences, experienced a 2.8 per cent fall in the number of staff submitted and a similar fall in number of outputs for each staff member. This indicates that by the most basic measure of

maintaining body-weight, the areas covered by the sub-panel are in reasonably good health. We received and double-read 453 authored books, 430 book chapters, 3,695 journal articles and 153 research reports.

In addition to Social Work and Social Policy, the sub-panel also received a substantial quantity of material in criminology and criminal justice. The three sub-panels that dealt with material in this field, Sociology, Law and SP22, made arrangements to check consistency of scoring. A cross-panel member, Ben Bowling from Kings College London, was appointed to work with all three sub-panels. In addition shared calibration activities took place. An exercise carried out by the main panel after about half the outputs had been assessed indicated a similar distribution of scores across all three sub-panels. The exercise also showed that nearly two-thirds of criminology outputs assessed by that stage had come to SP22, just under a third to law and about ten per cent to sociology.

After criminology, the next largest disciplinary area coming to the sub-panel with a distinctive identity and professional association was gerontology.

**Process**

The assessment process involved a great deal of calibration and moderation work both at sub-panel and main panel level. The sub-panel carried out calibration exercises for each of the three components of submissions (outputs, impact and environment) and moderation at various stages during the scoring process. The calibration of impact material between academic and user members of the sub-panel

required relatively more care. Main Panel C also pursued parallel calibration exercises across its constituent sub-panels, and moderation when a substantial proportion of scores were available. It also called on the international members to scores samples of sub-panel material as a further check.

**Outcomes**

SP22 overall scores come roughly in the middle of the Main Panel C group (see the table below, material taken from the Main Panel C overview report on the HEFCE REF2014 website).

**Scores in SP22 and Main Panel C**

	4	3	2	1	Unclassified
<b>SP22</b>					
Output	19.4	44.4	30.1	5.6	0.5
Impact	43.8	36.0	14.9	4.1	1.2
Environment	36.9	39.3	20.5	2.6	0.7
Overall	27	42	25	5	1
<b>MPC</b>					
Output	21.1	43.0	29.8	5.5	0.6
Impact	39.1	40.3	16.4	3.6	0.6
Environment	39.9	39.1	17.7	3.0	0.3
Overall	27	42	26	4	1

In outputs (weighted 65 per cent of overall score) SP22 scored slightly lower than the average for the Main Panel and in environment (weighted 15 per cent) it scored substantially lower. However in impact (weighted 20 per cent) it scored rather higher. Perhaps this is not surprising. We are an applied social science and most people in our field are committed to achieving external impact for their work.

The impact scores contained a number of high scores typically but not entirely from large established departments

The dispersion of SP22 scores is broadly similar to the Main Panel average.

**The Future**

How or whether REF scores will relate to QR funding is unclear. In general the places that improved their position greatly or maintained high positions were places that had made substantial investments in staff. High impact scores also helped. This suggests three things, none of them particularly surprising:

- You can't stand still, you have to keep investing;
- One way of spending the windfall income from higher fees is on shiny new libraries, directed at improving attractiveness to students, but it is wise to put some of it into bright new staff members; and
- Impact is important, especially in applied subjects like social policy.

**Pure Speculation**

The indications from HEFCE consultancy exercises are that citation material may perhaps play a larger role in future REF exercises, and also that impact will carry greater weight.

Another possibility is that the number of sub-panels may be further reduced through merger and acquisition. Social Work and Social Policy (plus a substantial slice of Criminology) is a broad area already. There are a number of potential partners.

One thought is that our strengths (so far as the outside world sees them) lie in applied social science. It is unclear whether the

social sciences that see us as essentially under-labourers within the theoretical frameworks that they develop will ever respect our work in the way they respect the work of colleagues within their discipline. This suggests (or perhaps doesn't) that it is with other self-confessed applied areas (criminology, education, sports science and so on) that we might forge the most rewarding links.

Note: more details in the sub-panel overview report at:

<http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/expanel/member/Main%20Panel%20C%20overview%20report.pdf>

### Reports on Events Supported By Social Policy Association Small Grants Programme

The SPA Standard and Postgraduate Small Grants Schemes are designed to help fund seminars and workshops dealing with research and/or learning and teaching which will benefit the UK social policy community, or involve dissemination of knowledge about UK social policy internationally, or work on international issues that would be of interest to UK social policy academics and practitioners.

#### Postgraduate and Early Career Fuel Poverty Research Symposium, Queen's University Belfast, July 2014.

*Ryan Walker (PhD candidate, Ulster University)*

*Ben Christman (PhD candidate, Queen's University Belfast)*

This one-day Symposium, jointly organized by Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster, brought together postgraduate and early career researchers from a range of disciplines, to explore fuel poverty. The issue is of increasing social concern across Europe, where up to 125 million households are thought to live in fuel poverty – a state whereby they cannot keep their homes adequately warm at affordable cost. This event followed on from a similar symposium held in Sheffield in 2012 (see <https://www.shef.ac.uk/cees/pgfuel/poverty>) and envisioned a similar agenda: to provide an

opportunity for postgraduate and early career researchers to present and disseminate their research in a hospitable, but critical, atmosphere, and to foster the sharing of ideas, potential research collaboration within an emerging early career fuel poverty research network.

The event attracted over 30 postgraduate and early career researchers working in the UK and Europe, as well as a number of experienced academics, practitioners and policy-makers working in the field of fuel poverty. The event was generously sponsored by the SPA Postgraduate Small Grants Scheme, as well as contributions from Queen's University School of Law, Human Rights Centre and Postgraduate Centre, and the Housing and Human Wellbeing Research Group at the University of Ulster.

The opening session featured guest presentations by three fuel poverty professionals, who gave some insights on the importance of research within various fuel poverty projects in Northern Ireland. *Pat Austin*, Director of

National Energy Action in Northern Ireland discussed experiences of campaigning for affordable warmth within the charitable sector. *Oliver McHugh* from the Northern Ireland government's Department for Social Development and *Dean McBride* from the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, described how authorities in the region are tackling fuel poverty by developing holistic and innovative programmes, underpinned by strong partnership approaches.

#### **Energy efficiency and fuel poverty**

Several papers focused on energy efficiency and household studies. *Ryan Walker* from the University of Ulster described a method of estimating household fuel poverty by reviewing the energy efficiency of homes and the personal circumstances of the occupants, and how this approach could be used to aid the targeting of fuel poverty schemes. *Chris Maidment* from Sheffield University outlined the impacts of energy efficiency interventions for human health, using a meta-analysis of 36 published studies, and discussed the significant, positive health outcomes which result from domestic energy efficiency improvements.

Using a case study of a retrofit programme in East London, *Felicity Davies* from University College London talked about the need to understand the entire retrofit process (rather than a simple before/after comparison) and how residents interact with retrofitting from a social capital perspective. *Ron Mould* from Glasgow Caledonian University spoke about his research on fuel spending among low-income urban and rural households. His

analysis showed that poor rural households spend more on fuel than poor urban households, despite living in comparable houses (e.g. similar age, type and energy efficiency). He argued that targeting the rural poor may yield greater returns on investment, in terms of carbon reduction and social benefits, relative to poor households in urban areas.

**Fuel Poverty and issues of governance**

Papers also covered aspects of governance and decision-making in relation to fuel poverty. *Ruth Bush* from the University of Leeds discussed district heating as an emerging solution to fuel poverty and the role of local authorities in coordinating district heating schemes. Local authorities are well placed to encourage the use of district heating and thus to realize the objective of reducing fuel poverty. However, there is a ‘gap’ between motivations and current policies and decision-making processes. Funding and capacity within local authorities is also an issue. *Ben Christman* from Queens University Belfast discussed fuel poverty policy in the EU. EU Member States cannot lawfully ignore fuel poverty, but problems including a lack of consensus on definitions and weak obligations mean that little progress is actually being made. He argued that existing laws and directives regarding fuel poverty need to be strengthened if an effective fuel poverty eradication strategy is to be developed.

*Sergio Tirado Herrero* from the University of Manchester explored particularly high rates of fuel poverty in Central and Eastern Europe and how it is primarily driven by inadequate residential infrastructure and energy systems. *Pau Lillo Rodrigo*

from Universitat Politècnica de Valencia (Valencia Polytechnic University) in Spain described the Spanish energy system in similar terms. He discussed how fuel poverty appears to be a low priority for the Spanish government and how a network of advocacy groups is beginning to mobilize and gain a political voice. He argued how this so-called ‘citizenship mobilization’ will be crucial in forming a platform for change. *Martin Kunze* from Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenburg in Germany discussed the relationship between energy companies and social welfare. Using cross-country analysis between Germany and the UK, and cross-company analysis (between publicly- and privately-owned utilities), he suggests that there are clear differences in the ways that German and UK companies practice corporate social responsibility, and that the relationship between German utilities, fuel poverty and social welfare is comparatively undeveloped.

**Human-centered approaches to fuel poverty research**

*Anne Baudaux* from the University of Louvain in Belgium outlined the lived experience of fuel poverty amongst vulnerable households in Brussels. Using a broad, anthropological approach, what emerges is that households are interested in pursuing measures to reduce fuel poverty, but that the systems required to do this are either poorly managed, too complicated or do not exist. What can result is stress, embarrassment and sometimes a loss of dignity, all of which impact negatively on mental well-being.

*Victoria Pellicer Sifres* from Valencia Polytechnic University discussed fuel poverty according to a ‘human development’ approach, using households in Spain as a case study. This concept views fuel poverty not simply as a matter of access to resources, but as social and environmental injustice. Fuel poverty prevents households from having the freedom or capability to live the way they want to or to achieve goals that they have reason to value (i.e. a warm, healthy, comfortable home). *Kirsten Jenkins* from the University of St Andrews also picked up on this concept, arguing that notions of justice, equity, rights, participation and sustainability need to be integrated within policies if fuel poverty is to be addressed effectively.

**Conclusions and emerging research themes**

As part of a concluding session, *Christine Liddell*, Professor of Psychology at the University of Ulster offered her thoughts on her experience in the field of fuel poverty and the emerging role of early career researchers. She expressed a degree of dismay that, to date, research has had little meaningful impact on government thinking on fuel poverty, or on developing policies which effectively address it and the lives of those who experience it. Nevertheless, she expressed a great deal of encouragement and hope in the ‘next generation’ of fuel poverty researchers, in whom there is great potential to influence fuel poverty and associated policies in proactive ways. In her view, the holistic and multi-dimensional nature of the approaches adopted by all the studies presented on the day is exactly what the discipline of fuel poverty needs.

A final round-table discussion drew together key emergent themes from the day's proceedings. These included the following inter-related points, which may merit further consideration and study:

- (a) The emerging appreciation of *social capital*. For example, how social factors influence the effectiveness of policy (e.g. interactions within communities, citizenship mobilization and advocacy) and how policy, in turn, influences social practices and behavioural responses, and how this process takes place across multiple stages.
- (b) What is needed is *more focus on the actual, practical implementation and delivery of measures*; this is a more pressing research issue than discussions on statistics and definitions.
- (c) *Place and scale is an important concept for fuel poverty*. For example, there are differences in the causes and effects of fuel poverty between countries, within countries (e.g. urban and rural areas) and between individual households.
- (d) There are opportunities for more *human-centred approaches* within fuel poverty research, incorporating the notions of justice and equity. Fuel poverty research needs to stay focused on improving the circumstances of those experiencing deep hardship.
- (e) 'Hard' quantitative/statistical approaches are often favoured in fuel poverty research, but there would seem to be value in combining such approaches with *new*

*theoretical approaches and methods of interpretation* – e.g. anthropology, human development – to provide more rounded insights into what fuel poverty actually means for people.

A special edition of the Queen's Political Review (a journal organized and edited by students at Queen's University Belfast) has been commissioned to publish (on-line) some of the papers presented at the Symposium, aiming to publish in late September/Early October this year. Plans are currently afoot to organize a similar event for 2015, which it is hoped will consolidate a burgeoning early career fuel poverty research network.

Further information about the event, including links to the presentations outlined above, is available at <http://blogs.qub.ac.uk/fuelpovertysymposium2014/>

The Special Fuel Poverty edition of the Queen's Political Review will be available at [www.queenspoliticalreview.com/](http://www.queenspoliticalreview.com/)

**Public involvement in policy making: Lessons to be learnt from the United Kingdom**

*Lia Levin, Tel Aviv University*

Public involvement in policy making has become progressively prominent in social and health services reforms in the United Kingdom in recent years. Thus, the formation and documentation of British social policy provides an opportunity for other countries interested in increasing public involvement to critically assess and learn from experiences associated with it. Israel, too, has recently begun incorporating various strategies

aimed at increasing public involvement in policy making mechanisms in a quickly expanding array of areas, including social care, health services, urban planning, and more. Such mechanisms are prevalent at both local and national levels.

Parallel to policy makers' interest in public involvement, Israeli academia is also growing increasingly interested and savvy in the study of public involvement, ways to implement it and the various meanings it holds. Generally, it is reasonable to assert that the idea of public involvement in policy making in Israel stands at a critical junction, in which involvement is undergoing formalization, is overall considered an important element of participative democracy, but is still in many ways premature in terms of conceptualization and long-term planning and vision.

The end of 2014 marked what is developing into the formation of a new research group in Israel, who first convened at an international seminar held with support from the Social Policy Association's Small Grants Scheme. The seminar, entitled "Public involvement in policy making: Lessons to be learnt from the United Kingdom" took place at the Bob Shapell School of Social Work at Tel Aviv University, and included lectures, discussions and open spaces for networking.

The keynote lecture at the seminar was delivered by Professor Shula Ramon, mental health research lead from the School of Health and Social Work at the University of Hertfordshire. Professor Ramon presented the UK Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) policy and its implementation in health and social care services and

educational systems. Background for the Keynote was given by Dr. Roni Holler from the Paul Baerwald School of Social

Work at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and briefly covered principle components and terminology used to discuss contemporary British social policy and the British welfare state. The seminar continued with three examples of public involvement at various levels. Dr. Carolyn Gutman from Tel-Hai College and Dr. Merav Moshe-Grodofsky from Sapir College introduced their model for incorporating social care users into social work education in the context of social policy implementation. This was done by analyzing a project in which service users and students of social work jointly researched service users' experiences of accessing rights and having their human rights upheld. Following a short lunch break, Professor Asher Ben Arie from the Haruv institute and the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem reviewed the specific case of child involvement in correspondence with up-to-date data on child well-being in various countries. The seminar concluded with a talk concerning Israel's governmental stance on public involvement in policy making on national issues with Tamar Peled Amir, LLM, senior division head in the Social Affairs and Tri-sectorial Cooperation, at Israel's Prime Minister's Office Department for Governance, and former Coordinator of The Rotlevy Public Committee on Children and the Law. Participants at the seminar included representatives from academia, research institutes, governmental offices, nonprofits, as well as social work practitioners and graduate

students. The seminar was led by Dr. Lia Levin from the Bob Shapell School of Social Work at Tel Aviv University and Centre for Public Policy Research at King's College London and coordinated by Mrs. Talia Tayri-Schwartz, a graduate student from the Bob Shapell School of Social Work at Tel Aviv University.

Discussions at the seminar touched on several potent issues, including but surely not limited to:

- Elements of public and patient participation in the United Kingdom and their applicability to the Israeli social, political and cultural policy environment.
- Differences and similarities between shared decision making with social and healthcare service users and public involvement in local and national policy making - Differential perspectives on implicit and explicit hierarchies and power relations.
- The intricacy of defining public involvement in social and health policy making in a way which captured the challenges and complexities it entails, across different contexts.
- The interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary nature of participatory democracy versus representative democracy.
- The relationship between service providing trends such as personalization, outsourcing and privatization and public and patient involvement in the United Kingdom and Israel.
- Accessibility of participation and involvement mechanisms with regard to various service using populations.

- Measuring and defining successful public involvement in policy making.
- The need for compound models and theoretical frameworks for defining public and patient involvement.
- When can public involvement in decision making turn from listening to placating or silencing? What mechanisms can control or diminish such instances?

In the time that has passed since the seminar took place, a number of its participants have decided to form a working group consisting of researchers and policy makers. Initial collaborations intended to increase public and service user involvement in national policy making are underway. Due to the seminar's success in bringing together leading figures in research, formation and implementation of social policy in Israel, some participants and speakers have put together a steering committee aimed at making it an annual event.

Lunch at the seminar was provided by a social cooperative, promoting fair trade, sensible consumption, small business empowerment and environmental awareness. The seminar was filmed in its entirety and will be soon appear on the Tel Aviv University YouTube channel.

### **MENA Social Policy Conference**

***Rana Jawad, University of Bath***

International researchers and partners from the Institute for Policy Research (IPR) and MENA (Middle East & North Africa) Social Policy Network convened at the end of November 2014 for a major conference to discuss

social policy issues affecting the MENA region.

At the second Annual Conference for the network, hosted in Bath at the Bath Literary & Scientific Institution, delegates heard from keynote speaker H.E. Dr Ghada Waly, Egyptian Minister of Social Solidarity, alongside distinguished speakers from academia, policy-making and NGOs. Over 100 delegates from 15 countries were in attendance at the event. The conference marked the end of an ESRC-funded project exploring the interconnections between religion and the social welfare systems of the MENA region, using three case studies of Lebanon, Iran and Turkey.

The event highlighted the central importance of social policy for advancing social science knowledge in the MENA region and also for more contemporary current affairs issues linked to the wider political challenges faced across the region – from the lead up to and fallout of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. The presentations covered a wide range of social and public policy topics including how effective social security systems in MENA countries were in responding to labour informality, lack of access to basic health care and the gendered impact of social policies. Drawing on latest findings = including a new ESRC research project authored by Dr Rana Jawad from the Department of Social & Policy Sciences, with colleagues Ali Saeidi (University of Tehran, Iran), Burcu Yakut-Cakar (Kocaeli University, Turkey) and Daniele Joly (University of Warwick) - the conference considered how research in this area can better assist policy-makers.

The ESRC project is the first to map what social policy provisions are in place across the MENA

region in order to better target interventions. Based on a three country case studies (Lebanon, Turkey and Iran), this highlights the strengths and weaknesses of existing welfare systems and explores policy solutions to some of the long-standing challenges, in particular in respect to the informal economy.

In a candid presentation, keynote speaker Ghada Waly highlighted how ineffective social policy in Egypt had led to a stark lack of opportunities for its people, and a stagnant jobs market had disproportionately hit women and the poor. For Egypt, she suggested, better social policies were essential if the country was to achieve its economic growth target.

The next MENA social policy conference were subsequently agreed and this conference will take place on 23-24 June 2016 at the German Development Institute in Bonn, Germany which will partner with the IPR/University of Bath.

**The first deadline for 2015 for applications for both the Standard Grants Scheme and Postgraduate Small Grants Scheme is 17th April 2015.**

**The Association will fund up to two awards for each Scheme in this initial Call. There will be a subsequent opportunity to submit applications for the second Call in September 2015.**

**The maximum payment for awards is £500.**

**‘For further Information on how to apply go to <http://www.social-policy.org.uk/what-we-do/grants/>**

**SPA International Conference Support Scheme: Call for Applications**

**Round Two: Applications by 17th April 2015.**

Each award offers a maximum of £300 per applicant towards the conference registration fees of:

- UK-based SPA members who have been accepted to present a paper at an overseas conference;
- Non-UK based SPA members who have been accepted to present a paper at a conference overseas.

The scheme covers conference registration fees only, and is not available for travel, accommodation or other subsistence costs.

For further eligibility and selection criteria please see: [www.social-policy.org.uk/international](http://www.social-policy.org.uk/international)

Applications should take the form of a short letter (no more than 2 pages A4) and be sent to [stefan.kuehner@york.ac.uk](mailto:stefan.kuehner@york.ac.uk). It is the SPA Executive Committee that will select subsidised members.

**Forthcoming Event:**

**Promoting Educational Change and Social Development in a Highly Competitive World**

**With contributions by:**

Prof. Nicola Yeates, Open University

Prof. Lee Shuman, Stanford University

Prof. Chris Husbands, University of London

Prof. Nick Ellison, University of York

**Hosted by:**

The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong

**Supported by:**

Social Policy Association, UK  
East Asia Social Policy Research Network  
Society for Higher Education Research of Hong Kong  
Global Alliance for Educational Change and Social Development

**Date: 9-10 April 2015**

For the full programme and additional information please see:

[www.social-policy.org.uk/international](http://www.social-policy.org.uk/international)

or contact:

[stefan.kuehner@york.ac.uk](mailto:stefan.kuehner@york.ac.uk)

**Joseph Rowntree Foundation [A UK Without Poverty](#)**

In this pamphlet the Joseph Rowntree Foundation sets out the public case for tackling poverty and outlines the policy options available to governments. JRF will be refining these further over the coming months and will publish the UK's first costed, evidence-based anti-poverty strategy (for all ages) at the end of 2015. Downloadable version of pamphlet available at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/a-uk-without-poverty>

**SPA 2015 Conference**

The 2015 SPA Conference will be hosted by the Ulster University in Belfast from 6-8 July 2015. The theme of the conference is **Social Policy in the Spotlight: Change, Continuity and Challenge**'.

**Plenary speakers:**

- **Mary O'Hara**, author of 'Austerity Bites' (Policy Press, 2014)
- **Jane Jenson**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Montreal. This plenary is sponsored by the *Journal of Social Policy*
- **Colin Crouch**, Professor Emeritus, University of Warwick and External Scientific Member, Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, Cologne.
- **David Donnison**, Professor Emeritus in Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow

To book go to

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/cpsp/spa/>

