

Society Matters



The Newspaper for all Social Sciences Students and Staff at the Open University

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World's urban population to double in 38 years

In 2007, for the first time in human history, the majority of the world's population will live in cities. Millions now cram into slums and shanty towns, often in desperate conditions. In Nairobi's slums, on average, 500 inhabitants struggle to share one toilet.

In 1900 only 14 per cent of the world's population lived in cities. By 1950 there were 83 cities with populations exceeding 1 million; by 2000 this had risen to 411. The expansion is rapid, especially in cities with between 500,000 and 1 million inhabitants.

In 2005 over 1 billion people lived in urban slums – one third of the world's urban populations. By 2030 this figure will double.

Over 180,000 people move to live in cities every day; 300 people daily move into the slums of Mumbai (Bombay), where many join the estimated 20,000 people who live on the pavement. The United Nations Population Division expects the world's urban population to double every 38 years.

The refugee crisis adds to the problem. Worldwide today at least 13 million people will become refugees, either from political persecution, armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing or environmental disasters.

Of the 1 billion people in the world designated very poor, over 750,000 live in urban areas, many in rapidly expanding mega-cities (those with over 10 million inhabitants) such as Mexico City, Mumbai, Karachi, Jakarta and Sao Paulo. The number of urban slum dwellers is expected to grow by 500 million by 2020.

Over the next three decades, the UN estimate that a further 2 billion people will move into cities in the Global South, doubling urban populations to over 4 billion people. Of the 23 cities which will become mega-cities by 2015, 19 are in the Global South. Asia has 60 per cent of the world's slum dwellers, Africa 20 per cent and Latin America 14 per cent; over a third of the populations of Mumbai, Dhaka and Sao Paulo live in slums and shanty towns.



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Editorial

Welcome to the ninth issue of *Society Matters*. I hope that, whether you are a new or a continuing student, associate lecturer, or a member of University staff, or a casual reader, you will discover something about the relevance of social sciences to the world you may not have known before.

Since 1998 *Society Matters* has been exploring contemporary events and changes which shape our world, and in some cases – such as climate change, globalization and terrorism – which have transformed our world and our lives significantly. *Society Matters* is a mixture of analysis, facts, evidence, debate, opinion and polemic. We try occasionally to see the funny side of life too. The newspaper is intended to be dipped into during your study year, though it can, if you have the time, be read in a morning.

This year's focus is both global and local. Demographic change within nation states and beyond, and its implications, is a key theme throughout our 24 pages. We have presented contemporary profiles of areas we have only partially explored in previous issues – China, India, and Africa. We look at disability in the developing world (and the Open University), maintain our growing concern over the environment (and its relationship to human conflict), look at the forgotten war in Chechnya, analyse the events in London of 7 July 2005 and their aftermath, explore innovative ways in which the University is embracing its use of media and the governance of the Internet, flag some of our new courses and study area innovations, examine the downside of migration, and take the lid off UK society, not least the social policies of New Labour's third government. Our authors are staff of the University, associate lecturers, honorary graduates, writers from other faculties and beyond the campus.

But students themselves have a platform too, not least our student cartoonists. The three student articles here offer important testimony. The first looks at those sometimes shattering life experiences which can so impact on 'normal study', even more so if you are disabled. The second speaks to us about what it can sometimes feel like being a minority ethnic student taking a course where skin colour may be perceived as problematic. The third looks at how technological innovation has transformed an ordinary citizen into a potential front-line news source.

Regular readers may notice a change this issue. *Society Matters* has been re-branded. This has meant incorporating new design guidelines, templates and fonts. But whatever the look, *Society Matters* remains your newspaper. I hope you enjoy the ride.

Richard Skellington, 1 July 2006



Cover art
Refugees, going where the blind lead the blind.

C. K. Purandare, from India, lives in Britain. Educated as a metallurgical engineer and a sociologist, he turned to painting recently without any training for it. His art project is an attempt to document collective miseries of peoples and investigation of social pathology. He tries to challenge the dominant political discourse dictated by the state, market and media. Art, for him, is more a means of communication than an exercise in eye-pleasing aesthetics. His entire work and a demonstration of a CD-ROM of his political paintings, with his own commentary, can be seen on his website: www.art-non-deco.com e-mail: artnondeco@yahoo.co.uk



BBC News website readers were asked to send images of how environmental changes are affecting their lives. Oliver Clissold from South Africa sent this picture and comment. 'Table Mountain: How the Cape Flats have changed over the last hundred years. Cape Town is still one of the most beautiful places on Earth, but this early morning look shows the smog and concrete that have reformed the landscape of this Eden.'

Interdependence is the key to Earth's survival

Our island Earth is under threat. By 2050 we will need three planets to support our lifestyles, especially given the rate the developing world is consuming those same resources which, for over a century, the developed world tended to take for granted. The future of our planet depends on the ways in which the interdependence of states, people and resources is managed. How should our affluent society respond? Why is there so little cultural depth in responses to environmental change and development problems? Thinking about interdependence helps us to overcome tensions between our own pursuit of pleasure and environmental security. It enables us to confront the conflicts between our desires to consume, and our knowledge of environmental impacts.

The Interdependence Day project, launched on 1 July 2006, is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to a better public understanding of the fate of the planet, and the people with whom we share it. This includes a partnership between the Open University and the New Economics Foundation. Initiator and director of the project, the Open University's Dr Joe Smith, explained the thinking behind it:

Nobody can look at issues like climate change, accelerating bio-diversity loss, or the downsides of economic globalization and deny that we're living in an interdependent world, ecologically, socially, and environmentally. But our politics and culture are in denial with potentially catastrophic consequences. Interdependence Day will give people a chance to look at the world afresh – throwing light on new thinking that has the power to connect politics and culture with the interdependent world we're living in.

The project grew out of the work of academics in the geography discipline. It includes a mix of research, events, publications, and new creative work, all grown from collaborations between researchers, the public, academics, artists, campaign groups, and the media.

In the summer of 2006, two major television programmes co-produced by the BBC and the Open University and fronted by David Attenborough did much to raise national awareness of the challenge of climate change. *Are We Changing Planet Earth?* and *Can We Save Planet Earth?* placed human activity at the heart of the causes of climate change.

I am no longer sceptical. Now I have no doubt at all. Climate change is the major challenge facing the world.

David Attenborough, 26 May 2006

Demands to save the planet from environmental catastrophe, or to act on poverty are often daunting in scale and distant from daily life. All over the world, people are responding to a growing awareness of their interdependence in a variety of creative and innovative ways. Interdependence Day will provide a focal point for the sharing of ideas that will help us all to greater awareness of the responsibilities and possibilities our interdependence offers. The Interdependence Day project seeks to refresh debates about the policies, choices, actions, and technologies that promise to change our world for the better. It will create some thinking space that will allow society to address difficult questions about globalization and environmental change. Materials from the two-year programme of seminars will be posted regularly.

The first in a series of interdisciplinary research seminars took place at the British Antarctic Survey in March 2006. It brought together, among others, leading scientists, cultural geographers and journalists to consider what the consequences might be of thinking about our place in the world in terms of interdependence.

The launch on 1 July featured declarations of interdependence, a fast-paced solutions' workshop broadcast on the BBC, and a communications festival which showcased new approaches to engaging people in understanding and debate of the state of the world. The launch included a Doctor's Surgery where solutions for the world's problems were facilitated by Open University academics.

The environmental dangers of air travel

- A fifth of all air travel in the world starts or finishes in the UK
- Five per cent of the UK's carbon emission output is caused by aviation.
- Aviation is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases
- In 2005, 200 million passengers travelled by air from UK airports
- By 2030 the number of UK passengers will have risen to 500 million
- Politicians and civil servants fly the equivalent of 100,000 trips to New York every year

The Dean's column

This is my first column since I succeeded Peggotty Graham as Dean in October 2005 and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank her for all she did for the Faculty, its staff and students during her two year term of office and throughout her time at the Open University. I wish her well for her retirement.

I thought I'd use the column to give a flavour of some of the projects we are currently engaged in. One of our major tasks is considering how to replace our largest course *DD100 An Introduction to the Social Sciences: Understanding Social Change*. The new course is due to be presented in October 2009 and we have already been discussing what shape it should take in order for it to be as successful in attracting and supporting as many students as *DD100* has been. One of the important things we are grappling with is how to introduce the characteristic and exciting features of the social sciences generally whilst also giving students a clear 'way in' to our different subject areas at Levels 2 and Level 3. Since the awards we offer include those in single disciplines such as Psychology as well as broader areas such as Environmental Studies this is quite a challenge!

We are also introducing a range of new degrees linking areas such as Criminology and Psychology, and in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (these awards will be available from 2007). We also have plans for awards in new interdisciplinary areas such as Family Studies (see the article on page 21 for the background on this), and in Citizenship. These two proposals have arisen from interdisciplinary research interests within the Faculty through one of our research centres of excellence – the Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance.

Our other research centres and groups, notably the International Centre for Comparative Criminological Research, the Innovation, Knowledge and Development Group, Geography, and our joint venture with Manchester University, the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, are currently busy helping staff prepare for the national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The RAE will be conducted at the end of 2007 and we need to further develop the Faculty's strong culture of research.

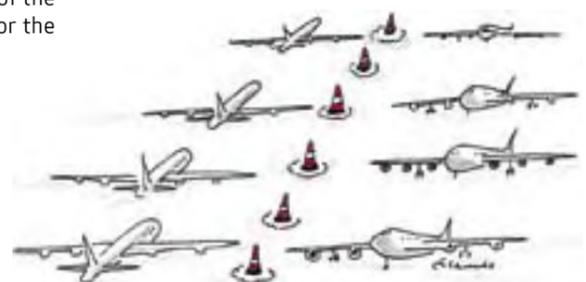
Finally, the Faculty is contributing to a major new initiative launched by the University in the autumn of 2006. *Open Content* is a project funded in part by a multi-million pound grant from the Hewlett Foundation to place educational materials online. This material will be freely accessible not only to existing students, but also to the public generally. It can also be used by students in those countries where people are unable to access text books or quality course material. The OU, with its commitment to openness, is the first higher education institution to do this in the UK. The Vice-Chancellor, Brenda Gourley, explained: 'The philosophy of open access and sharing knowledge is a wonderful fit with the founding principles of the Open University and with the university's very strong commitment to opening up educational access and widening participation.'

As you can see, we have an exciting time ahead of us. I look forward to updating you on how things are going next year.

Dot Miell

Research websites:

- www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/ccig/
- www.open.ac.uk/icccr/
- www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/geography/
- www.open.ac.uk/ikd/
- www.cresc.man.ac.uk/



Nothing is impossible

Sometimes life can seem too much for students and they withdraw from their studies. Catriona Nedin's tenacity demonstrates that despite a very tough year, it is still possible to cope even when your world falls in around you

2005 was my *annus horribilis*. I experienced distressing family troubles, a difficult divorce, a serious illness to a close relative, moving home to another region, and I had to cope with my disability. If I can pull through and finish with 75 points of credit then there is hope for all those students who, for every valid reason in the book, find life gets in the way of their studies. No matter what life throws at you, it is still possible to survive from one course to the next. What helped me most was the advice, understanding and support the University provided.

Some of it was my own fault. I registered for the full credit D218 *Social Policy: Welfare, Power and Diversity* and then decided to attend the 15-point residential course DXR220 *Social Science in Action*. Little did I realise what would be thrown at me before I finished both courses. I also registered for a British Sign Language Level 1 evening class, in Swansea College, with the exam – I passed – in late June.

D218 was my first course at second level and I found it very tough. I was fortunate to have my DD100 tutor from the previous year as my tutor again. I was relaxed when I set off for the DXR220 residential in early July.

I began at seven in the morning, watching rabbits from my window before meeting other students for breakfast, and then time for work, which was usually so interesting that meal times almost came too quickly.

Food here was so good that most of us had to strictly limit our intake to prevent weight-gain. Optional lectures and discussion groups filled the evenings, with topics ranging from in-depth discussions of theory to sport, even light-hearted quizzes.

Then life hit the fan. Within days of returning to Swansea, I was packing my life into the back of a van and disappearing to stay with friends in Cardiff.

Everything became difficult. I had to arrange mail redirection and informed the OU who were brilliant. A quick visit to the OU Student Page and my address change was registered. A quick call to the regional office and everything was sorted for me.

The extended course assignments for DXR220 and D218 were both double size, and despite being assured that the two courses wouldn't clash, they did, big-time. With a non-adaptable cut-off date for DXR220, I contacted my D218 tutor and she granted what would be the first of three crucial extensions without which I would have pulled out.

What with family problems and the house move, I struggled with the assessment and exam revision. With my tutor's help, I managed to have all my assignments in before the final deadline. Before my D218 exam I found out that my new partner, Jeff, had skin cancer and needed an urgent life-saving operation. I explained the situation to my D218 tutor who was very understanding and told me not to worry. Her support was vital in getting me through the examination.

Days after the exam, Jeff had his operation. This resulted in a deep stitched 6 by 4 inch lesion. For a week Jeff struggled up to the toilet and had to use a stick for support. At least it was over though, or so we thought. A fortnight later we went for stitch removal and the cytology results and received unpleasant news: a second operation was vital, this time involving skin grafts in Swansea hospital.

At the time we were living in a small two bedroom semi with a single living room and Jeff's son visiting at weekends. I therefore had nowhere to study and my computer system had

to be set up behind the door in the living room. Not ideal considering the workload undertaken by OU students!

For a fortnight we trawled the streets of Cardiff looking for a new house. Eventually we found one and put in an offer £16,000 below the asking price and this was accepted. Magic! Four bedrooms, so an office for me, an en-suite and a downstairs cloakroom that would be vital after Jeff's operation.

After several moving dates we eventually got to move in on the same day as Jeff's first visit to the hospital for his operation. The move day was panic stations. In the morning we left for the Burns Unit of Morriston Hospital, Swansea.

I accompanied Jeff in the role of interpreter. Jeff is profoundly deaf and all parties agreed that it was important that both he and the doctors understood each other. I was allowed to arrive on the ward in time for ward rounds and I left at around 11pm after signing TV programmes.

After four days in hospital we returned to our new home. I unpacked, alone, much to Jeff's dismay as he wanted to help, but there were limitations because he couldn't stand or get up out of a chair, so he was forced to sit and watch. We had many laughs as I attempted to put together flat-pack furniture with him helping whilst sitting on a chair.

For the following three months we would never have a day to ourselves. Initially we had to travel to Swansea every fortnight for a minimum three-hour round trip and, as I don't drive, we had to rely on volunteer hospital cars to take us.

We were told the wound must heal from the inside out. We were fortunate that a portable mini vacuum pump system was available, which meant that Jeff could remain at home. It was like having a baby in the house again as I had to change the canisters every ten hours. After a week I was used to sharing a bed with a gurgling, flashing, beeping machine which had to 'sleep' between us.

Being a 'disabled' student has its drawbacks. I too am deaf. I had to get over my phobia of using the phone, as, if I didn't make a call, there was nobody else there to do it. Water, gas, phone, Inland Revenue, banks, the list is endless. Even the simple task of watching course DVDs is complicated. I rely on transcripts for all the audio materials. It is also very time consuming, with course guides stating 'a half-hour viewing', but by the time the transcripts are read, the programme



watched and parts re-wound to see again, the study time is far, far longer.

In previous years I had received financial assistance for my studies. I decided to register for DD205 *Living in a Globalised World*. I registered on-line in June 2005 via the student page, requesting help with my fees. I was unemployed. But I was unable to prove my earnings because previously I had been self-employed and running a bed and breakfast. I gave the University finance office all the paperwork I could, even phoning the Inland Revenue who were very helpful.

I was going round in circles and could find no answer. It was mid-October. The D218 exam was upon me. Jeff was still poorly at home but still I could not get the University to grant me a FAF award to continue my studies.

I was going to drop out. In desperation I sent an e-mail to the editor of *Society Matters* and gave him the details, stating that I was upset to have to stop my studies having been with the OU for three years. Without FAF I simply could not afford it. The editor queried my case with Student Services. I received a reply by return, telling me not to give up. I was given an e-mail address for someone in Milton Keynes, and in reply to my e-mail, she kindly rang me and gave me the guidance I needed. Ten days before the course was due to start I was registered and I had FAF.

Why am I revealing my story? Whatever the problem, whatever is thrown at you, my advice now is to ask for help. Use the student page links to find the first port-of-call and then phone. If I can do it, then anyone can. I just thank my lucky stars that I am part of the OU 'family' as all my friends now are either students, past tutors, or are part of the OU network. Thanks to them, I am succeeding, and I am able to move on with my life.



I TOLD YOU THAT THE EARTH WAS FLAT

Flatpack empire now bigger than two city states

The retail giant IKEA now owns more sale floor space than the Vatican City and Monaco combined. In the spring of 2006 IKEA expansion claimed its fifth square kilometre of the planet Earth.

However, this figure does not include the car parks. If these are included you can add Andorra and San Marino to the comparison.



Making race visible: online study may not make people equal

Professor of Psychology Ann Phoenix, the University's first promoted black professor, has written for a wide range of Social Science courses, but she had never studied one, until now. Here she reflects on what being a black student really means, especially on an e-course where disclosing one's ethnicity might be problematic

In 1724 a Black Code that slaves had to obey was issued in Louisiana. Here are just two of the provisions: Article 13 forbids slaves who belong to different masters to gather in crowds, by day or by night, pretending to go to weddings or for other cause, either at the home of their masters or elsewhere, under the penalty of being whipped. Article 27 states that any slave who strikes his master, his mistress or their children, so far as to produce a bruise or shedding of blood in the face, shall be put to death

One of the first black codes for Louisiana slaves, 1724.

Those of us who contribute to OU courses are, quite rightly, encouraged to try out what it feels like to be an OU student. I thought I would take the first steps towards finding out what our students have to do. I completed two 10-point courses – A174 *Start Writing Fiction* and A173 *Start Writing Family History* – and started the 60-point course A215 *Creative Writing*. I immediately learned firsthand a number of things that have been sobering, salutary and uplifting. It prompted me to reflect deeply on how students generally feel when doing our courses, especially those of us from minoritized ethnic groups.

The courses are superbly written. They take the student, fresh to a new discipline, by the hand and, without patronizing, invite her (in my case) into areas full of promise and interest. I have loved the material I have been exposed to so far. I have been cravenly instrumental in doing the work set. My image of myself as a student has shifted to include someone who guts the course material the day an e-TMA is due in, and fillets the conferences for pithy gems from tutors to help structure my work.

We didn't invent fish and chips

What does food tell us about national identity and the cultures from which we spring? How 'national' are 'traditional' dishes? Freelance writer and author Patrick West puts some bogus recipes in their cultural place

Although ostensibly a means of securing sustenance and pleasuring the palate, food often has the capacity to bring out the nationalist in people. Regard the manner in which the French boast of their excellence in the kitchen, haughtily deriding the Americans for their sorry excuse for a national dish: McDonald's. Witness Italians sneer at the imitation pizzas found in Britain and the USA, or how Indian visitors recoil in horror from menus found in curry houses in the UK, with their strange, mangled neologisms. Food can be a source of pride, and it can thus be distressing when restaurants tamper with national dishes.

Gastronomy continues to be a source of anxiety. Terence Conran made known his displeasure at the barbarization of restaurant menus in Britain, excoriating the proliferation of 'franglais' gibberish. The restaurateur David Tang has expressed his own concerns about the state of Chinese food here, lamenting 'chop suey' and 'foo yung' as 'ridiculous' inventions of the 1960s.

It is odd how cooking brings out the Platonic essentialist in culinary connoisseurs. After all, one of cuisine's defining features is its capacity to evolve and innovate, with one culture appropriating a dish from another and fashioning something entirely new from it. What is more, the idea that there is such a thing as a 'traditional national' dish is phoney, first, because many of them are borrowed or adapted from elsewhere, and, second, because the idea of 'authentic' national food is just as erroneous as that of an 'authentic' national culture.

Consider the pizza. In 2004 the then Italian ambassador to the UK, Luigi Amaduzzi, complained about the fare being served in Britain in his country's name. 'A pizza base covered with pine-apple or with curry is no more Italian than a steak-and-kidney pie covered with chocolate is English.' To Italians, a pizza simply consists of flat bread, tomatoes, mozzarella and basil. Although some claim that the pizza dates back to

For my first Start Writing Family History e-TMA, I felt distinctly wobbly as I feared that I might not have left enough time to manage a pass at level 1 and thanked my lucky stars that I can write quickly and am not frightened of having people read what I write.

I learned something else, however, that was more unexpected. Both 10-point courses are e-courses and have e-tutorials as an optional, but integral part. I was surprised that, in the exercise to introduce ourselves to the other members of the tutor group, I found myself agonizing about whether or not to mention that I am black. While I agonized, I noted that other people did not mention their colour. What did that mean? Was it that they were all white and taking for granted their unmarked identities or were some from minoritized ethnic groups who had either not thought about this or who had similarly agonized and decided to go along with the apparently de-racialized form of introduction? Part of my indecision was because I couldn't see or tell how other people would receive my declaration and, in everyday life where colour certainly matters, I am expert at gauging reactions. Here I had no cues and if I alone mentioned my colour I would possibly be making the other students and tutor think about issues they didn't want to and would mark myself out as 'different' in many ways without wanting to.

What if the tutor unconsciously devalued my work? I decided not to mention it, but then felt I had to be careful how I described people in my fiction so that I did not inadvertently communicate my colour. If this convoluted way of thinking seems extraordinary, I agree that it is, particularly for someone like me who has written a great deal about racialization and who is comfortable addressing it in most settings. I learned that being online does not necessarily make people equal and remove barriers. It certainly does not remove the racialized dynamics that operate in society.

A harder lesson, and one that has to be addressed in course production, came from the second e-TMA for A173 *Start Writing Family History*. It was heartening that Block 1 mentioned that *Roots* by Alex Haley inspired many Black Americans to study their genealogy and that there was a sympathetic extended treatment of the autobiography of Mary Prince, who wrote about her experiences during enslavement. The course also made clear that since census data is only made available a century after it was collected, it is not possible to trace the history of families who moved to Britain after 1901.

However, the extended second e-TMA asked: 'With reference to a family history you have been investigating,

demonstrate how you can use family history to understand the history of families more generally?' The alternative, in case students were not researching their family histories, was to use the Census data presented in the course for one family and perhaps pair that with other sources discussed in the course. I was immediately thrown into a state of anxiety because, if I was going to do an extended piece of family history, I wanted to trace a Caribbean family if possible. The difficulty was in knowing where to start when sources were limited.

A piece of serendipity helped me out of my anxious impasse. A family therapist friend mentioned the published genealogical account of a black family therapist from the USA, whom we had both met, and sent me a copy of the paper. To my relief, Elaine Pinderhughes had given sufficient detail about her sources for me to find the data I needed using the Louisiana census online. I joined *Ancestry.com* and traced sufficient of her other sources to work back to slavery, and I obtained various texts and papers to contextualize black and white families in Louisiana.

Name	Sex	Age	Place of Birth
Sally Walker	F	20	Mississippi
John Walker	M	25	Mississippi
Mary Walker	F	15	Mississippi
Elizabeth Walker	F	10	Mississippi

An extract from the 1850 Louisiana Census.

The resulting TMA was, I thought, genuinely interesting. I learned something about black family history, albeit in a USA rather than UK context.

But there were other lessons. I felt black students were put at a disadvantage. I learned very little from what is an otherwise excellent course about black families and nothing about those with histories in the UK or of 'Asian' descent.

So my period as an OU student has been mixed. I am both delighted and sobered. However I feel we need to do much more to recognize processes of racialization in the courses we produce, to be more sensitive to the experiences and histories of others, and to be genuinely inclusive. To ignore racialization is, paradoxically, to racialize in unhelpful ways.

Roman times, tomatoes are a New World fruit, and the pizza as we know it may not have been invented until the 18th century – which is before the creation of the Italian state itself.

Other 'traditional' Italian dishes are even more suspect. Fettuccine primavera was invented in New York. So was chicken tetrazzini. And Caesar salad and spaghetti with meatballs are similarly American creations. As one observer put it: 'By the 1950s Italian-American food was all but unrecognizable to visitors from Italy. A businessman from Turin might peruse a menu in an Italian restaurant in Chicago and not be able to decipher a single item.' Chop suey is indeed a recent invention, emerging from San Francisco in the late 1880s, and there is little that is historically Chinese about the fortune cookie or chow mein, both devised in the USA in the early 20th century.

England's 'traditional' dish, fish and chips, is an imported hybrid. It became popular in the late 19th century, when workers decided to marry the Belgian/French custom of frying chipped potatoes with the immigrant Jewish tradition of deep-frying fish in batter. The dish has since been superseded by chicken tikka masala, another recent concoction. For many years, we had all assumed tikka masala to be a genuine import from the sub-continent, but now we know its defining ingredient to be tomato sauce.

Why do many people find culinary contamination so discomfoting? It is because such cross-fertilization threatens our sense of nationhood. All nations need artefacts to provide the illusion that theirs is a static, tangible and hermetically sealed entity, and food is invariably employed in this equation. The likes of fish and chips, steak-and-kidney pie, 'British beef', 'a full English breakfast', Marmite, tea and Yorkshire

pudding are held to be cultural signifiers of Englishness. This is why the BSE crisis was considered such a national humiliation: 'British beef' is John Bull's national dish.

Cuisine and nationalism are intimately bound. Roland Barthes wrote: 'food brings the memory of the soil into our very contemporary life .. food permits [the Frenchman] to enter daily into his own past and to believe in a certain culinary "being" of France! The Englishman searching for a pie-and-mash shop at a Spanish resort and the Australian in London trying to find a jar of Vegemite are not merely looking for familiar foodstuffs: they are looking for food that reminds them what country they belong to.

Those who believed tikka masala to be Indian may have been misguided, but purists who deride it as an abomination are missing the point. The idea that some foods are authentic and others are not is bogus. To label a collection of meat and vegetables 'authentic' is merely to claim: 'This is a national dish because I say it is.' We cling to this concept only because we are attached to the ideal of cultural essentialism. But cultures always change and innovate, borrow and mix facets from each other. And this includes recipes.



Citizen journalism is democratizing the media, apparently

Do camera phones and blogs put us more in control of the media? OU student Neil Baker, a freelance writer and journalist, finds more questions than answers, with a little help from actor Richard Dreyfuss

Zeyad is a 27-year-old Baghdad dentist. In October 2003, frustrated by what he felt to be blinkered media coverage of the war in Iraq, he decided to tell the world what was really going on and how he saw things on the ground. Armed with a laptop, a mobile camera phone and a broadband internet connection, Zeyad started to write a blog, a simple form of self-published website.

The articles and photographs that Zeyad posted gave a unique insight into everyday life in Iraq. At a time when mainstream media organizations were criticized for staying inside their fortified compounds, his amateur reporting gave a perspective that was hard to find anywhere else.

Zeyad was not the first Iraqi to write a blog. But he is often held up as a prime example of a media revolution. New technologies – notably blogs, mobile camera phones, text-messaging and broadband internet – are ‘democratizing’ the media; blurring the line between those who create media content and those who consume it.

One result, apparently, is that the power of traditional media is crumbling away. If I want to know what it’s really like in Baghdad, I can read Zeyad. I don’t have to put up with the filtering – or distortions – of the BBC, or CNN, or any other traditional media outlet. And if I disagree with Zeyad’s reporting, I can post my comments on his blog, which he will respond to, thereby creating a new sphere for discussion; making his media production two-way, rather than one way. A conversation, not a lecture, is a favoured metaphor.

I first heard of Zeyad at the WeMedia Global Forum, an annual gathering to discuss the direction, momentum and implications of this revolution, if indeed it is a revolution. Certainly those delegates attending the forum – ranging from BBC Director-General Mark Thompson to the editors of shoestring community news blogs – believe important

changes are afoot. Thompson said the foundations of traditional media ‘will be swept away.’ But has the genie been let out of the bottle?

Most platform speakers and delegates spoke with evangelical zeal about ‘open source journalism’, ‘participatory journalism’ or ‘citizen media.’ The air was thick with such neologisms, all of which attempted to describe the demise of journalism as it is practiced now and its replacement with something else; a replacement which the majority of delegates were either looking forward to with glee, or celebrating already, depending on how far they thought things had gone.

Some tried to inject a degree of context. David Schlesinger, Reuters’ global managing editor, said citizen journalism was nothing new; members of the public had always been able to send in their photos or their eyewitness accounts, some of which were highly newsworthy. What about Abraham Zapruder’s amateur cine film of John F. Kennedy’s assassination? Schlesinger said the only difference now is one of volume. New technologies just make it easier for people to write, photograph or film content, and to submit it to news organizations.

That’s true, in a sense. But Schlesinger sounded like a man arguing that a hurricane is a lot of wind, or that a Tsunami is just a big wave. In a roomful of people enthused by the democratizing potential of a clutch of new technologies, he found little support.

But is this really a democratizing revolution, and what does that mean, exactly? The whole WeMedia event was a fascinating day out for someone who, like me, had just finished The Open University’s MA module, *D852: Transformations in Media Culture*. I wanted to grab one of the floor mikes and challenge the audience on their technological determinism, or to ask them what



Buncefield, fuel depot, 11 December 2005. ‘Mobile’ photo, Andy Baxter.

they really meant by the word ‘democratizing.’ Is media more democratic simply because more people can create content, or are the evangelists redefining the notion of democracy so that it fits better with what their technology offers?

I did ask a few delegates, but they seemed uninterested by the questions. There were no academics at the event, or none that I could find. The only person to answer me was, perhaps surprisingly, Richard Dreyfuss, the Oscar-winning actor, who was at WeMedia to talk about democracy and civic responsibility, issues on which he has lectured for years. ‘I don’t know what democratizing means,’ he told me. ‘We’d have to use another word to make sense of what’s being said here. It’s just too cheap. The word’s been used too much.’

To me, it doesn’t look like media power will change hands any time soon. The BBC, for example, is still the eleventh most-visited English language website in the world, and is planning to extend its global news audience to 250 million people. As for Zeyad, the pioneering citizen reporter? He’s moving to New York, to study journalism.

You can read Zeyad’s blog here: www.healingiraq.blogspot.com and Neil’s at: www.neil.typepad.com

How political power shapes our lives

POLIS, the Faculty’s new Department of Politics and International Studies, will transform the teaching and study of politics. Professor Michael Saward explains

From international security post-9/11 to the more local politics of university funding, the urgency and impact of early 21st-century politics are clear. Across the UK, both politics and international studies are increasingly popular undergraduate subjects.

At the end of 2005 the University’s new Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) was launched. POLIS aims to capture this wave of interest by broadening its teaching and research into fresh areas, asking questions about the meaning and importance of the politics in what (according to the Chinese proverb) are certainly ‘interesting times’.

The OU has a strong history of politics teaching. From the University’s founding, the Government and Politics discipline worked with colleagues across the social sciences and other faculties to teach popular courses on global politics, politics in Europe, the idea and practice of equality, and politics and society in the Pacific and the USA.

Since 2000 the discipline has expanded, bringing in new expertise and building up an innovative profile of new courses. With a revamped course and research profile, we felt it was time to refresh our image too. The name POLIS highlights the importance of the international arena in determining our futures, and the close links between what used to be called ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ political issues.

The dropping of the word ‘government’ from our name does not mean we sideline the study of government – far from it – but it does indicate the fact that we are keen also to explore how political power shapes our lives outside formal institutions too.

POLIS is committed to the idea of producing engaging, challenging and innovative courses with strong interdisciplinary flavour. The department ensures the relevance of its courses to the day-to-day activities of a practical politics as well as to an informed intellectual audience. Among our new courses are *DD203 Power, Dissent, Equality: Understanding Contemporary Politics* and *DJ301/321 A World of Whose Making?* In 2008, we will present a ground-breaking new course, *D306 Living Political Ideas*, which uses highly innovative virtual and interactive teaching techniques. POLIS plays a key role in *DD100 Introduction to the Social Sciences*, and in the planning for its successor, along with planning around courses in environment, development and international studies.

POLIS has an international reputation for research within two broad areas. The first focuses on the politics of global, regional and national governance. This centres on challenges to state sovereignty, regulation in the global economy, democracy and democratization, parties and party change, institutions of governance, and the question of ‘globalization.’ The principal areas for study are Eastern Central Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and the United Kingdom, along with various aspects of the global system. The second explores and challenges contemporary political ideas. Here we examine a range of pressing issues in environmental politics, feminism, post-modern interrogations of traditional political theory, and the politics of social scientific practices and knowledge production. Attention is focused on justice, citizenship, democracy, representation, and political space.

POLIS output has already shaped UK and international agendas. Influential books have been produced, including: Geoff Andrews’s *Not a Normal Country: Italy After Berlusconi* (Pluto Press, 2005); Raia Prokhovnik’s *Spinoza and Republicanism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and *Rational Woman, A Feminist Critique of Dichotomy*, 2nd edition (Manchester University Press, 2002); Michael Saward’s *Democracy* (Polity Press, 2003); Will Brown’s *The European Union and Africa: The Restructuring of North-South Relations* (IB Tauris, 2002); and Grahame Thompson’s *Between Hierarchies and Markets: The Tonic and Limits of Network Form of Organization* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Many POLIS academics are active in the university’s newly created Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance (CCIG), which brings together researchers from across the social sciences to stimulate interdisciplinary innovation. Along with CCIG and OU Business School colleagues, POLIS will lead a series of seminars on *The Good Citizen* in 2006–07. We will be appointing a new Professor of Citizenship Studies this year.

At the POLIS launch we heard about the ‘next wave of globalization’ from our special guest speaker, Professor John Gray of the London School of Economics. This is one among a range of areas in which we plan to make an increasing impact under our new name, across both teaching and research. We hope very much that we can continue to bring the benefits of our transformation to the OU community, and beyond.



The politics of privilege

A private education gets you a long way in politics. Over one third of MPs and two thirds of the House of Lords had a private education, compared to 7 per cent in the wider society. So too does elite higher education provision. Twenty-seven per cent of the House of Commons and 42 per cent of the House of Lords studied at either Oxford or Cambridge.

The Sutton Trust, who conducted the research in the autumn of 2005, described the system as ‘educational apartheid.’ While a quarter of Labour ministers went to an independent school, only 16 per cent of Labour backbenchers did. Twenty-three per cent of ministers went to Oxbridge compared to 15 per cent of Labour backbenchers. Since 1983, the representation of private schools on the Labour benches has risen from 14 per cent to 18 per cent.

Among Conservatives the trust identified 59 per cent who went to independent schools, down from 70 per cent in 1983. Of the Old Etonians in the House of Commons, all but two serve on the Conservative front benches.

Great firewall of China and human rights

Just before Christmas, 2005, China officially became the world's fourth largest economy, overtaking the UK. China's economy is now worth £1.13 trillion, compared to the UK's £1.11 trillion. China is expected to rise above Germany into third place before 2009. By 2050 China will be the largest economy in the world, overtaking the USA.

China's economy is currently growing at 12.5 per cent a year, compared to the UK's 4.5 per cent.

In January 2006, China's trade surplus with the rest of the world tripled to £58 billion, as exports outstripped imports. The European Union (EU) is China's biggest trading partner, followed by the USA and Japan. Exports to the EU rose 22.6 per cent to £122 billion in 2005. China's exports to the UK are dominated by IT and telecommunications products. Already China consumes more meat, grain, coal and steel than the USA. By 2031, China's population will grow from 1.3 to 1.45 billion

China is a one-party state that does not hold national elections, has no independent judiciary, leads the world in executions, censors the Internet, bans independent trade unions, and represses minorities such as Tibetans, Uighurs, and Mongolians.

No official figures are available for the number of executions in China and legal experts say that this is partly because the authorities have never compiled a total. However, *Amnesty International* says that more people are executed in China than in the rest of the world combined, and estimates the total to be 3,400 each year – possibly as many as 6,000.

There are growing disparities between rich and poor and between urban and rural populations. In 2005, such disparities fuelled a rise in protests and demonstrations from workers, victims of police abuse, and HIV/Aids activists. In 2004, according to official figures, there were 74,000 protests in China. These involved 3.5 million people, up from 58,000 protests in 2003.

In March 2004, China amended its constitution to read 'the State respects and protects human rights.' Although the constitution is not directly enforceable, the concession does offer some hope that human rights will be legally protected.

In 2005, new laws were introduced which curtailed permitted religious activities and limited the formation of media organizations. Judicial processes continued to be compromised by political interference, a reliance on coerced confessions, legal procedures weighted in favour of the state, and trials behind closed doors.

China has developed an intricate system of Internet control known as the 'Great Firewall of China.' During 2005, new regulations on Internet portals and e-mail systems, designed to prevent distribution of any uncensored version of a news event, were introduced. More than 103 million Internet users now face sophisticated filters. Internet censorship has health implications, restricting information available to individuals at high-risk from HIV/AIDS.

In an increasing number of instances, global Internet companies have been complicit in the repression, insisting they must abide by the rules and regulations of the countries in which they operate. *Google*, for example, does not list links to sites banned in China.

Workers may not form autonomous unions. Officials insist that the Party-run All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) sufficiently ensures their rights, in spite of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. Miners and rural labourers continue to suffer disastrous accident rates. Official figures report 4,228 people lost their lives in 2,337 coal mining accidents in the first nine months of 2005.

Religious expression is tightly controlled. The Regulations on Religious Affairs introduced in March 2005 made it mandatory for all congregations, mosques, temples, churches, and monasteries to be registered to secure legality. Failure to register renders a group illegal and subject to closure, fines, and criminal sanctions. In rural areas China has pursued a policy of forced evictions in the run up to the 2008 Olympics. In September 2005, twelve villages near the 2008 site were condemned for demolition.

After 9/11, China used the 'war on terrorism' to justify its policies, making no distinction between the handful of separatists who condone violence and those who desire genuine autonomy or a separate state. In July 2005, the chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region announced that China would choose the next Dalai Lama. The Tibetan flag is banned and raising it is punished by lengthy imprisonment. For further information on human rights in China see: hrw.org/doc/?t=asia&c=china



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Neon signs, Nanjing Road, Shanghai.

Social cost of expansion

China ranks 85th in the United Nations Development Programme's 177-nation Human Development Index; China's 2005 National Human Development Report revealed the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, had increased by more than 50 per cent in the past 20 years.

Since 1990 the Chinese government has created one of the more unequal countries in the world. Hundreds of millions of Chinese people have been put out of work; collective agriculture has been dismantled; free education, healthcare and cheap housing for workers has been abandoned; trade unions have been banned, and workers routinely go months on end without pay. In 2005, The National People's Congress revealed that migrant workers are now owed more than £5 billion in unpaid wages.

China's expansion has coincided with increased international concern about human rights violations. Inside the country, violent protests against the social consequences of improving China's global power have increased. In August 2005, the government announced the introduction of specialized riot police units in 36 cities, and has banned any Internet material that incites illegal demonstrations. Protests deemed to be 'disturbing social order' increased by 13 per cent in 2004.

Pariah of the chopsticks

By 2025 China will have overtaken the USA as the leading emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. By 2031, China will have 1.1 billion cars on its roads, bigger than the current world fleet of 800 million. By 2031, on current trends, China will be consuming over 100 million barrels of oil a day, more than the total world consumption in 2006.

The World Bank estimates that 16 of the world's most polluted cities are in China. Seventy per cent of China's rivers are polluted while a third of the land mass is exposed to acid rain. More than 400,000 Chinese people die each year from pollution-related diseases.

Half of all the world's rainforest production heads each year to China. China is also rapidly deforesting. The Chinese use 45 billion pairs of disposable chopsticks a year, which accounts for 1.7 billion cubic metres of timber. The annual production of chopsticks alone consumes 25 million trees, depleting China's forests, especially birch and poplar. In 2006, in an effort to halt the decline, China introduced a tax on wooden disposable chopsticks.

China: well on its way to being the other superpower

The rapidity of the Asian giant's rise is overturning western received wisdom about politics and the shape of the global future, writes Martin Jacques, visiting professor at Renmin University, in Beijing

The past three years have marked an important moment in the global perception of China. There is suddenly a new awareness that encompasses both a recognition of China's economic transformation and an understanding that, because of its huge size and cohesive character, it will have a profound impact on the rest of the world, albeit in ways still only dimly understood. Until recently, China's economic rise always seemed to be qualified by the rider that something was likely to go amiss – a rider that is now rarely heard. China has arrived and will increasingly shape our future, not just its own.

A number of factors lie behind this new global perception of China: its continuing staggering growth; the recognition that China is a major factor in the rise in oil prices; the fact that Chinese oil majors have become players in countries such as Sudan and Iran; the recognition that Chinese companies will increasingly become global players (of which Chinese

recognition that China will be a very different kind of nation in almost every respect. Moreover, it would appear that China has been as much a beneficiary of globalization as the USA, perhaps more so.

A widespread belief that the 21st century would be an American century found even clearer expression in the aftermath of 9/11, with the pursuit of the neoconservative project. However, as doubts grow about America's enterprise in Iraq, and more widely in the Middle East, there is recognition that China is now a serious candidate to assume the role of 'the other superpower'. It is projected that China will overtake the USA in terms of GDP purchasing power parity before 2020. The American century could turn out to be more like a half-century.

There is a growing understanding that the future is unlikely to be dominated by the western world in the manner of the past two centuries. The major reason for this shift

is in decline and that the future belongs to unions of nation states, along the lines of the European Union. On the contrary, the rise of China – and India – marks the ascendancy of a new kind of mega nation state, which, together with the USA, the EU, Japan and Russia, will dominate the 21st century.

In the 1990s, after Tiananmen Square, China was overwhelmingly seen through the prism of human rights and democracy. For a long time it was virtually impossible to start a discussion in the west about China except in these terms, or when this question was a central part of the agenda. This remains part of the western agenda, but a much less important one in the light of China's stunning transformation. The question of western-style democracy remains no closer now than it was in the wake of Tiananmen. On the contrary, the regime has not only survived but prospered to an extraordinary extent over the last quarter-century.



involvement in Rover is a foretaste); the almost universal dawning that Chinese production is driving down the prices of footwear and clothing, and western fears for domestic textile industries; and the Pentagon report last year warning that Chinese military expenditure will grow significantly, and that it might be driven by energy concerns and expansionary desires.

Recognition of the new reality is provoking an intense debate among national policy elites, including China's. How should countries respond to China's new position and power – and how should China use it? These are questions that more or less everywhere – except perhaps Japan – are still in the melting pot, not least in the USA. Over the next decade, perhaps less, positions will begin to be struck that will have huge consequences for the world. But we can already list the ways in which this new perception of China's rise has served to change the nature of the debate about China itself and about the shape of the global future.

In the 1990s, the process of globalization was overwhelmingly seen as a process of westernization. That hubris has receded in the wake of China's rise. There are few who believe that China's modernization will simply result in a western-style state. On the contrary, there is an implicit

in perception is the rise of China and, to a lesser extent, India – which together account for well over a third of the world's population. The world is likely to look very different from the one with which we have become so familiar – and comfortable – since Britain's industrial revolution began in the 18th century.

From 1800 – some would argue much earlier – and until very recently, the centre of global developments was Europe. Admittedly, its hold became tenuous after 1945, but its bisection by the cold war faultline sustained its status – a status that was lost with the events of 1989. Now, without question, the most important region in the world is East Asia. It is economically the strongest, outdistancing both North America and Europe by some considerable margin. The main reason, of course, is China, together with Japan and, to a lesser extent, the Asian tigers. But east Asia's centrality is not just a question of economic strength, even if this underpins it – east Asia is also where the future will be played out, where the world will first see the wider meaning and implications of China's rise: not least in growing Sino-Japanese tensions, and in increasing pressure on the USA's role in the region.

The rise of China contradicts the commonsense view in the west, particularly strong in Europe, that the nation state

The final point is the least recognized and least discussed, but it is none the less a striking feature of China's rise. And it presents us with a profoundly paradoxical feature of the era in which we live. The events of 1989 represented the end of European communism. The Chinese Communist party was expected to go the same way – wasn't that supposed to be the import of Tiananmen? We couldn't have been more wrong. What everyone expected never happened. A communist party is presiding over arguably the most remarkable economic transformation in human history. It is true, of course, that the Chinese party is a very different creature to its European counterparts, not least in its ability, since 1978, to undertake the most extraordinary regeneration. This paradox presents us with one of the great enigmas of the early 21st century.

But these points, profound as they are, are merely the *hors d'oeuvre* to the kind of impact that China will have on the world over the next few decades.

India's widening inequality

India is a land which is home to a third of the world's poor and where some 300 million people live on less than \$1 a day. In the new millennium, India's wealth has expanded rapidly and the economy is expected to double in size inside the next decade. As the economy has expanded, however, the gap between rich and poor has widened. Below the super rich is a burgeoning middle class, estimated to number about 150 million. Beneath them come impoverished farm labourers; more than 400 million each earn India just \$375 a year in output. Then come the poor and the dispossessed. In the years from 1994–2004 rural unemployment nearly doubled

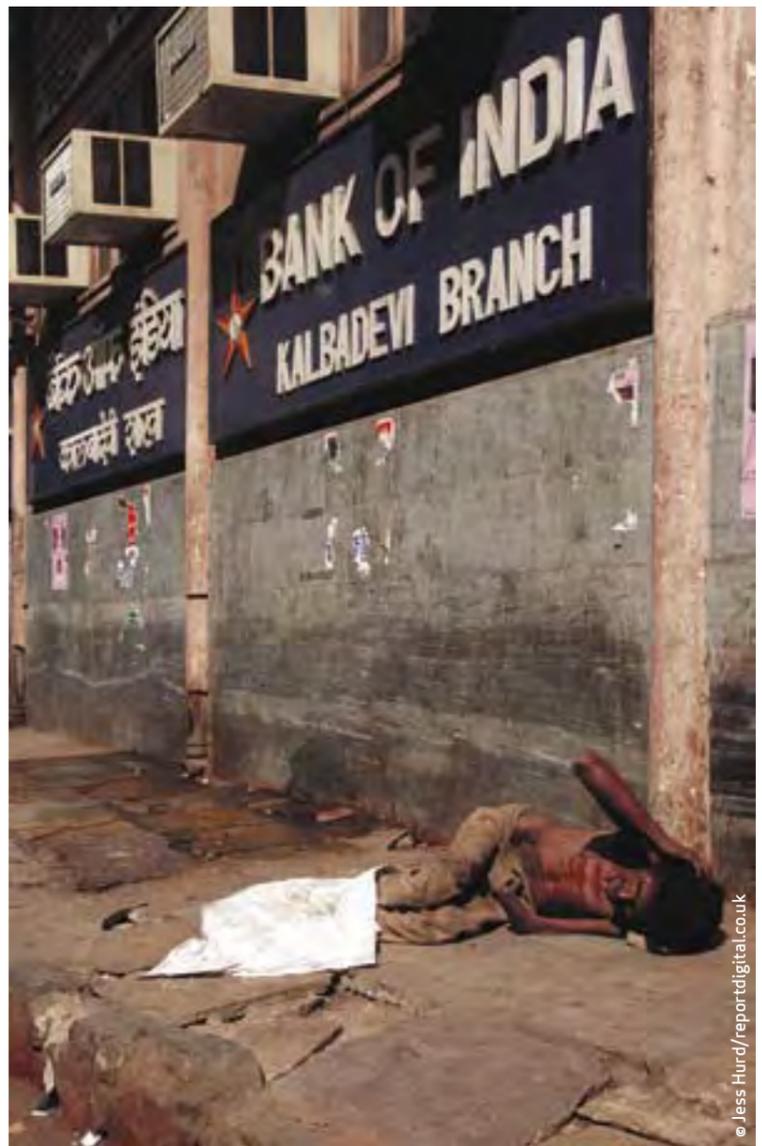
From 1947 until 1991, India's economy grew at 3.5 per cent a year, the so-called Hindu rate of growth which championed equality and social stability over wealth. In the 1990s, socialism was abandoned for economic liberalization. Between 1991 and 2002, economic growth rose to 6 per cent a year. In the past three years it leapt to 8 per cent a year.

Not that the wealth has reached all of the country. The rate of malnutrition in children under five is 45 per cent. Less than a third of India's homes have a toilet. Fuelled by the immense wealth that is being amassed by India's new money classes the gap between the haves and the have nots is growing. India will soon have 3.8 million households with an annual income of 10 million rupees, around \$240,000.

With the new money has come a redefinition of class, as investment bankers, real estate developers and software magnates grow in numbers and influence. Top business school graduates now receive pay packages that rival salaries in New York or London.

The truly rich form only around one-thirtieth of one per cent of the population, according to India's National Council of Applied Economic Research. That's about 50,000 households with annual incomes above \$225,000. However, this is more than twice as many as five years ago, and the number is expected to double again by 2010.

According to government statistics, barely half of rural Indian homes have electric lights and only four per cent have refrigerators. Hundreds of debt-burdened farmers have committed suicide in south India over the past four years, crippling water shortages are increasingly widespread and the schooling system barely functions in some states.



Disabled man begs outside the Bank of India, Mumbai.

The world's richest 500 individuals have a combined income greater than the poorest 416 million people in the world combined

The increase in UK defence spending since 2000 would be sufficient to reach the UN target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income on development aid

India

Total population: 1,080 million

- India is the second most populous nation on Earth, behind China; 80 per cent of the population live on less than \$2 a day
- 28 per cent of the population live in cities
- India is 127th out of 177 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index which combines economic output, literacy and health to produce a comparative measure of national well-being
- Adult literacy: 70.2 per cent of men; 48.3 per cent of women
- 870 million Hindus and 145 million Muslims live in India
- There are 22 languages with over one million speakers in India
- CO₂ emissions per capita increased by 50 per cent between 1990 and 2002
- The increase in electricity consumption per capita between 1980 and 2002 was 213 per cent (32 per cent in the UK)
- By 2010, two-thirds of India's population of 1.1 billion will be between 14 and 45 years old

Every year 10.7m children do not live to be five

According to the UN Human Development Report, 2005, 18 countries with a combined population of over 460 million recorded lower scores than in 1990 on HDR measures of life expectancy, income and literacy.

'In the midst of an increasingly prosperous global economy, 10.7 million children every year do not live to see their fifth birthday, and more than 1 billion people survive in abject poverty on less than \$1 dollar a day ... one fifth of humanity live in countries where many people think nothing of spending \$2 dollars a day on a cappuccino,' argued the HDR. Because of HIV/Aids, life expectancy in Zambia

is now lower than life expectancy in 1840 Britain. Elsewhere in Africa the sub-Saharan countries filled the bottom 25 places of the human development league table, with Scandinavian countries at the top of the 257-rung national ladder.

The HDR report concluded that there would be 4.4 million avoidable child deaths, the equivalent of three times the number of children under five living in London, Tokyo and New York, unless more help is provided. Depressingly, argues the report, though world per capita income has risen by \$6.070 since 1990, per capita aid has fallen by \$1.



Mary Waitera, Kenya Social Forum, Huruma slum. ActionAid 'Get on board campaign.'

Why equality was the best policy

Giving the poor a fair share in a country's economy is the best recipe for economic success according to the World Bank. Heather Stewart examines how the international community still feels the effects of Europe's colonization of the New World

When Christopher Columbus stumbled across America in 1492, he opened the way to a centuries-long struggle between the European powers to control and dominate the New World, from the frozen north of Canada to the fertile plains of Argentina.

But for the authors of a sweeping new report from the World Bank, the triumphant arrival of Columbus also inaugurated a real-life economic experiment, whose lessons are still relevant today.

The authors of the World Development Report use a wealth of examples from across the globe and through the centuries to prove that, in general, fairer economies are more successful. Inequality is not only unfair – it also wastes resources and stifles economic progress.

The Spaniards who colonized South America, with its gold and silver deposits and large indigenous population, were able to impose punitive taxes, slave labour, and political institutions that kept power in the hands of a wealthy few. Though enormously lucrative in the short term, this approach squandered resources, fostered political instability and handicapped the region's economies.

In North America, meanwhile, where there was a sparse native population that refused to submit to slavery and no lucrative gold reserves to exploit, resources had to be divided more equally in order to keep the European settlers alive and happy. In Virginia, for example, by 1619 the Virginia Company had created 'a relatively egalitarian society, with representative institutions giving even the poorest colonists access to the law and some political representation.' That meant that even the poorest had a stake in the country's success: and it worked, laying the foundations for what would become the world's richest, most successful economy.

'As in Latin America, there was a synergy between economic and political institutions, but this time it was virtuous, not vicious.'

Research suggests that 'good' institutions – those that divide resources relatively equally, and guarantee property rights – are more important in explaining the economic success or failure of a country than its geographical position, or whether it is ridden with diseases. 'Most of the gap between rich and poor countries today is due to differences in institutions.' Giving the poor a fair share in the economy is therefore the best recipe for success.

Francisco Ferreira, the report's lead author, says this lesson has immediate relevance for today's developing countries. An increase in the gap between rich and poor is sometimes excused as an inevitable by-product of economic development, the price developing countries have to pay to climb out of poverty. But Ferreira says that's simply wrong: leaders who sit and wait for the mythical 'trickle-down effect' to pour wealth through the economy will fail.

'We hope this report will change the perception that people often have, that the poor are almost charity cases, and the rest of the country generates growth,' he said. 'You shouldn't see those people as an ocean of unskilled labour. You should see them as a pool of potentially skilled individuals. Think how many brilliant inventors there could be in sub-Saharan Africa or in the slums of Latin America.'

'Some people tend to think of an alternative, between policies to redistribute, and policies to grow, and there's no such thing. There's a whole set of policies that can help growth by redistributing.'

A jog through European history since the Middle Ages also supports the argument of Ferreira and his colleagues. In Britain, they argue that the industrial revolution only gave way to sustained long-term growth when mass democracy arrived in the 19th century. That helped

to pave the way for more widely available education, and allowed more of Britain's population a share in its economic success.

China's extraordinary emergence as an economic powerhouse – GDP per capita has quadrupled over the past 25 years – is also held up as an illustration of the importance of equity in supporting growth. Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, in the 1980s, economic decision-making was decentralized to local governments and individual businesses and farmers, as the failures of post-war central planning became clear.

Although the political stranglehold of the Communist Party over China has not relaxed, Ferreira says opening markets and spreading wealth more widely has been crucial.

'We actually see China, particularly in the early 1980s, as an example of what we argue for here: a combination of equity and markets.'

In many parts of the world, that combination is a long way off – and so, as a result, is sustained economic development. Those who are excluded, because markets don't work properly, or the legal system doesn't protect them, can fall into 'inequality traps,' held back by their ethnic group, income level or sex, and unable to improve their own prospects or contribute to their country's expansion.

'With imperfect markets, inequalities in power and wealth translate into unequal opportunities, leading to wasted productive potential and to an inefficient allocation of resources.'

Poor rural villagers in India pay rates of interest four times as high as their richer neighbours, for example. Ferreira and his colleagues say part of the difference reflects the higher risk of lending to people with fewer assets; but much of it results from the fact that the credit market doesn't work properly. Many villagers pay interest rates of 100 per cent.

That means that instead of being directed by the 'invisible hand' of the market towards the most useful investments, resources are poured into the projects of the rich – and wasted. 'Because the poor cannot borrow, the non-poor cannot lend as much as they would like to. And because the non-poor cannot lend, it makes sense for them to keep investing in their own firms, even when the returns are low.'

The report is littered with shocking examples of the inequalities in income, opportunities and life chances faced by people within individual countries, and between one part of the world and another – and the resources that are wasted as a result.

A black boy born to a poor family in South Africa is twice as likely to die in his first year as a white boy born to educated parents. And he is likely to live to just 50, against 68 for his white counterpart. In Uttar Pradesh, in northern India, 60 per cent of women have to ask their husband's permission before leaving the house. In Ecuador, the educational level of children as young as six has been found to depend on their parents' educational level, perpetuating inequities through generations.

Ferreira and his colleagues are not suggesting this rag-bag of wrongs can be righted overnight, but they do argue that sharing wealth and opportunity more equally is a good first step to achieving long-term economic progress. They want developing-country governments, rich donor countries, and their own colleagues at the World Bank, to try looking at the world through an 'equity lens'. It's a peaceful, patient and pro-market revolution. 'It's a long-haul,' Ferreira says.



World population 2006

Total population	6,446,131,400
• China	1,306,313,812
• India	1,080,264,388
• European Union	456,953,258
• USA	295,734,134
Birth rate per 1,000	20.15
Death rate per 1,000	8.78
Male life expectancy at birth	62.73
Female life expectancy at birth	66.04
Male infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	52.1
Female infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	48.0

World population 2050

The world	9.1 billion
Developed world	1.3 billion
Developing world	7.8 billion

The global sanitation gap

- In 2006, 2.6 billion people in the world had no access to basic sanitation, according to the UN; 4 in 10 lived without lavatories
- Each hour of the day 4,000 children in the world die of diarrhoea-related conditions caused by unclean water and poor sanitation. Half the population of the developing world is suffering from water-related diseases; over 1 billion people have no source of drinking water
- In Britain, the average person uses 160 litres of clean water each day. Yet the poor in the developing world pay more for their water than the rich. In Kenya's urban slums people pay 10 times more for their water than Nairobi's urban elite, and 3 times more than the resident of Manhattan and London
- Meeting the UN's millennium development goal to halve the proportion of people in the world without access to clean water would cost \$4 billion a year for the next 10 years. This is roughly the cost of what Europe's population currently spends on bottled water in a single month

Data derived from the CIA World Factbook, January 2006.

Half of Asian children live in poverty

Child aid organizations estimate that half the 1.3 billion children in Asia live in poverty. *Growing up in Asia*, a report by Plan, the voluntary organization, reveals that 600 million children under the age of 18 lack access to one of food, safe water, health or shelter. Of these, 350 million were defined as 'absolutely poor' and lacking in at least two of these facilities. Despite high economic growth rates, weak government, corruption, lack of access to education and health care, and increases in population, all combine to diminish the life chances of the young. In India, 80 per cent of its 400 million children under the age of 18 are classified as severely deprived, while 60 per cent were defined as 'absolutely poor'. Half India's children under 5 are malnourished.

Ten children die each minute from malnutrition

The UN's aim to halve the proportion of malnourished people in the world by 2016 is in doubt because of a lack of progress tackling child malnutrition. A UNICEF report in 2006 revealed that over 146 million children under 5 in the developing world had insufficient food intake and consequent muscle wastage and infections. Three quarters of the 146 million undernourished children come from just 10 countries. India accounts for 57 million of the total.

In Africa it's good to talk – even better to sell

Africa is changing fast, argues Richard Dowden, director of the Royal African Society. Aid and debt relief may help, but mobile phones and trade with China are proving even more vital

Since the late 1990s Africa has witnessed the world's fastest growth in mobile phones. Although it still lags behind other regions, an average of 9 people out of every 100 now have a mobile subscription from a base of zero a decade ago. Penetration rates vary, ranging from 62 per cent in South Africa, 38 per cent in Botswana, 10 per cent in the Congo, and only 1 per cent in Ethiopia. Over 7 per cent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa has access to a mobile phone

World Telecommunications Indicators Database

The great divide

Income per capita, 2005

Burkina Faso, \$360; USA, \$41,460

Adult literacy in Burkina Faso is 12.8, the lowest in the world. Burkina Faso, which means 'land of the incorruptible', is the world's third poorest country according to the UN Human Development Index. Only Africa's Sierra Leone and Niger are poorer.

Africa

- Aid to Africa is planned to double in the next five years. An extra £14.4 billion a year was pledged by the rich nations at the Gleneagles G8 summit in 2005. The UK is meeting its commitment to giving £1 billion in aid each year
- All poor countries can expect 100 per cent debt relief. Thirteen poor countries in Africa are already benefiting from 100 per cent debt relief: another 38 may soon follow. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank are to implement the agreement made at Gleneagles
- Economists believe that raising Africa's trade by a mere 1 per cent would achieve more than a five-fold increase in aid and debt relief, but Africa's penetration of markets in the rich world remains minimal
- In April 2006, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, became the first in Africa to clear its debt to the 19 industrialized countries in the 'Paris Club' by paying over \$12.4 billion accrued from escalating oil income. The breakthrough, in a country where 60 per cent of the people live in poverty despite its vast oil wealth, will mean increasing investment in education and health care infrastructure. Nigeria still owes around \$5 billion to other lenders, including the World Bank



Elinata Kasanga (left), a Zambian farmer, speaks directly to Chancellor Gordon Brown by video link from her village Balakasau, 300 kilometres from Lusaka.

A common experience of people travelling to Africa for the first time is the shock of realizing it is nothing like the Africa you see on television. From the outside, the future of Africa sometimes seems to depend on western generosity. The close interdependency of aid agencies, journalists and government in Britain gives us a particular view of it: hungry, suffering, dependent. But travel around the continent and a different picture emerges.

Africa is changing fast. Driving those changes are mobile phones and radio stations and China's appetite for raw materials. The G8's agenda of aid and debt relief may, if delivered, play a secondary role. The external driver is China's search for minerals, particularly oil, which pushes up Africa's mineral prices. Cheap Chinese goods are flooding into Africa's markets. China's trade with Africa has increased from \$900m (about £500m) in 1990 to nearly \$30bn in 2005 – the equivalent of the EU's trade with sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria's oil revenues, for example, will leap to \$41bn next year – a third higher than in 2001. A recent study by the Overseas Development Institute shows that if the high oil price is sustained, African oil producers will earn £19bn a year in revenues. That's significantly more than Africa is promised in more aid.

The internal driver is the mobile phone revolution that has transformed business and politics in Africa in the past ten years. In 2001, only 3 per cent of Africans had telephones of any sort. Now there are 50 million mobile-phone users, with numbers growing by 35 per cent a year. The phone companies completely misjudged the market – they thought that only the super-rich would buy mobiles. But it turned out that the people who really needed them were small self-employed businessmen, market women, taxi drivers and the casual workers who keep Africa going. In some areas, beer sales have plummeted as people have invested their meagre earnings in mobile phone cards instead. The pace of life has picked up hugely.

Politically, too, mobile phones are having an immense effect. People no longer have to walk miles to talk to a friend or colleague or to make a business deal (there was no public phone system in Africa before mobile phones and the postal service, where it existed, took days or weeks). The chat programmes on radio stations in most African countries are also enabling ordinary people to express their frustrations and to know that others share their anger about the failures and corruption of their governments. A better-informed population that can listen to its own voices will put governments under pressure. I would even suggest that the Rwandan genocide could not have happened if mobile phones had existed.

Against this background, the promised aid from the West may still play a role. But there is no guarantee that it will happen. The promises were overblown and there is no sign yet that the British Government has a coherent plan to take the process forward and persuade the other G8 leaders to deliver. The debt deal was good, but it is small beer and limited to a few countries. Debt repayments have never been the reason African governments have failed to deliver to their people. If the promised aid does materialize, much of it may be given in direct budget support to governments, and that may mean it never

reaches the people who really need it. Corruption is one problem, but an even bigger one is the sheer lack of capacity, trained managers and administrators to deliver improvements. This will take time to change.

Will Africa's fractious politics allow that change to happen? Compared to ten years ago, Africa is more peaceful. The wars that then ravaged the continent have now quietened down, largely thanks to regional or external peace missions. But in most cases, the underlying causes have not yet been resolved.

Led by South Africa, African governments have pledged themselves to adhere to higher principles. The African Union (AU), the continent-wide organization of African states, has set high standards of democracy and human rights, mandating itself to intervene if genocide threatens. Military coups are no longer acceptable. But standards already seem to be slipping. The AU dealt with the crisis in Togo earlier this year by forcing an election, but then accepted its blatantly rigged result without a murmur. When a coup overthrew the government of Mauritania in August, the AU gave up trying to reinstate the elected government after just a few days.

How can outsiders be more involved in Africa? Partnership is the buzzword, but the historical inequality of the relationship between Africa and Europe makes partnership at an institutional level virtually impossible. Today, the relationship is still formulated as being between rich benevolent European – or American – and grateful African recipient. Even among those Europeans most committed to ending poverty in Africa, there is an assumption that African poverty implies African weakness. Rejecting their imperial grandfathers, Europeans want to forget their history in Africa. Africans cannot forget because their present is still conditioned by Europe's imperial past. At some stage it will be possible for Africa to move on – as, indeed, colonized Asia has done – but in the meantime it is vital for Europeans to know and acknowledge their history in Africa.

Give money to Africa, but only as a way of getting more involved with its problems, not to get away from them. Africa is going through hugely profound changes that may not bear fruit for decades. Things may get worse before they get better. It is essential that we don't turn our backs on the continent or despise it as hopeless. Giving aid is ambiguous. It may help at the moment, but it is not the solution, and in the long term it reinforces dependency and could prevent change in Africa.

An important, and often overlooked, principle of engagement is to do no harm. Instead of trying to do things to save Africa, we should concentrate on preventing more damage by ensuring that our banks are not laundering stolen African money, our health service is not denuding its health service of trained staff and our companies are not spreading corruption.

There is no substitute for going to Africa. Don't cruise around on a tourist bus. Spend time in one place, outside the big cities. Welcoming strangers is one of Africa's great qualities. Visitors are treated with time and generosity. But beware. Africa puts human existence in perspective.

It can change your life.

Meeting the challenges of multi-media broadcasting

The University's new broadcasting strategy encourages each of us to undertake a learning journey, whether along Britain's coastline, or in the African classroom. Caroline Ogilvie, the Open Broadcast Unit's project leader, explains

The world of broadcasting is changing rapidly. The television in our living rooms and the radios in our kitchens and cars are not the only ways we have to tune into the outside world.

How we consume media has been revolutionized by the development of the web and online technologies. In the past we were more passive recipients but today, and more radically in the future, we are active engagers, contributing and interacting in ways which seemed impossible just a decade ago. All broadcasters, the BBC included, have embraced the challenge of innovative multi-media platforms.

The Open University is uniquely placed to ensure that it is at the forefront of educational broadcasting. For over 30 years it has had a unique partnership with the BBC and over that period the emphasis has changed from producing course-specific programmes to commissioning programmes with a broader appeal whilst continuing to engage with our own students. This broadcast strategy provides coherent links to professional development and higher level study as well as promoting action, debate and greater understanding of current issues within the UK and global communities. The new style of Open University broadcasting is therefore interdisciplinary and interactive – using the web through *Open2.net* to appeal to audiences and encourage them to undertake a learning journey supported by the Open University.

The hugely successful television series *Coast* exemplifies what the broadcast strategy is seeking to achieve. The series brought together social and natural history, ecology, technology, science of environmental change and much more. *Coast* engaged the viewer on various levels: interactively people could use their mobile phones to provide an interactive guide and commentary as they walked around the coast; on *Open2* they could learn about related issues in more detail and request an 'Activity Pack', which included activities and information about the beach, rock pools, tourism, litter and rocks as well as a set of postcards. Viewers who 'clicked on' to *Open2* also had the opportunity to learn about the relevant OU courses and begin their 'learning journey'.

The BAFTA award winning *Coast* was a high profile success both for the BBC and the OU, generating average audience figures of over 3.5 million, with the OU receiving over 50,000 requests for the 'Activity Pack'. However, *Coast* is not just an example of a successful OU/BBC broadcasting project, it also illustrates the changing nature of the role of OU academic involvement in these projects.

The team of multi-disciplinary OU academics put together for *Coast* were not just involved in the ideas for

the programmes but also checked scripts, viewed and commented on tapes, designed activities for the pack and for the web as well as attending the various public walks that were organized around the coastline. Such academic involvement is a vital component of any broadcast, raising not only the OU profile but giving OU academics an opportunity to signpost specific areas of expertise.

This was particularly true for two OU academics, Dr Helen Yanacopulos and Dr Giles Mohan, who are both senior lecturers in Development Studies. They were the academic consultants on the *African School* series which was part of the *Africa Lives* season on the BBC in 2005. First broadcast on BBC4 during the summer, and later repeated on BBC2, the ten programmes focused on the daily lives, concerns and personalities of young Africans and their teachers in the Ugandan town of Masindi.

Dr Yanacopulos and Dr Mohan point out that *African School* provided an opportunity to 'raise awareness around difficult and serious issues as well as challenge the idea that Africa is only about war, famine and crisis'. They could put forward an alternative perspective to the one traditionally given in the media. A key aim was 'to unsettle conventional ideas around the people who are supposed to be "developing"'. How to achieve this aim is, of course, where OU academic expertise is most needed.

The role of the OU academic consultants is really two-fold. They contribute ideas, focus and consultancy around the television broadcast, but crucially they are involved in the multi-media presentation side as well, seeking new forms of engagement and accessibility. This provides opportunities to expand upon issues which have been raised in television programmes and ultimately to lead viewers into courses.

But as Drs Yanacopulos and Mohan point out, this raises some fascinating questions. 'How can you present complex developmental processes through the experiences of, for example, one child? Why was there a war in the north of Uganda? What role were the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) policies playing in funding education? Can we talk so easily about "traditional values"? At one level we did get these issues incorporated, but we were obviously constrained by keeping the narrative engaging and also letting the real drama speak for itself. Our other input, and part of the programme's wider aims, was to lead viewers into alternative learning resources.'



The OU TV series *African School* won two awards at the One World media awards held in London on 8 June. *Show Me the Money* won the Millennium Development Goals Award and *Run for Your Life* won the Children's Rights Award. The juries commended the series as a whole.

'We oversaw the content of an OU-hosted website that handles all OU/BBC projects: www.open2.net. Our website dealt in more detail with questions of debt, health and education, and the history of Uganda. Part of the University's involvement was, in addition to its public service obligation, to entice learners into higher education.'

The fact that *African School* was a project originally commissioned by BBC4 illustrates a further change in recent broadcast strategy. The Open Broadcast Unit now considers commissions across all the BBC channels, not just BBC2, which gives us the opportunity to link in to relevant high profile BBC campaigns such as *Comic Relief* and *Sport Relief*.

After an absence of several years the University has also returned to radio, with programmes on BBC Radio Three, Four and the World Service. An example of just how much broader the University's approach to broadcast has become was last year's Radio One *Sunday Surgery* series on sexual health. This Silver Sony Award winning programme was aimed at young people.

Sally Crompton, the Head of the Broadcast Unit sees this as a two way process in which we learn as well as the listeners. 'We used the programme to find out where sex education isn't working and to enable us to produce material which is more relevant to the target audience. It is about opening up a dialogue between academics and the research.'

The new broadcasting vision will ensure that learning remains central to the future OU/BBC partnership. The nature of broadcasting will continue to develop and amaze but the multi-media nature of the 21st century will mean taking students on journeys they never thought possible in the past.

Do we get the media we deserve?

Jason Toynbee, Course Chair of DA204 Understanding Media, says that studying this challenging new course will provide you with some fascinating answers

Remember when your fish and chips used to come wrapped in old newspapers? They served a useful purpose before ending up where they always belonged – in the bin. Now, though, old newspapers are more likely to be preserved in digital form, available to see on the Internet for all time.

For media lovers, the present seems a time of plenty. Not only are hi-tech offerings such as multi-channel television, MP3 and the web available, but older forms of media – newsprint, books, radio – have been carefully preserved. Societies accumulate media, and the more modern ones rarely throw any of them away, creating a media-topia. You need never be without a screen of some sort. You need never be more than a few seconds away from getting the facts you crave.

Opposing attitudes to the media – critical and pessimistic on one side, celebratory and optimistic on the other – are part of the common sense of everyday life. No doubt you'll recognize your own views somewhere along the line that connects them. And in media studies something of this opposition carries over into academic analysis. You can find out more on the new second level course, *DA204 Understanding Media*, which focuses on debates about the media's impact on society, as well as influences in the other direction – the social shaping of the media.

Although media studies is relatively new as an academic field, academics have actually been examining the media since the early twentieth century in a number of disciplines – sociology, psychology and literary studies. *DA204* draws on these traditions as well as more recent work.

The central framework is provided by the three media

'moments', each with its own block of material: audiences, production and texts (or media messages). One strand of contemporary research suggests that audiences are active. Take television. Far from being couch potatoes, so the argument goes, television viewers are actively engaged in their audience-hood. Most importantly, they talk about the media, exchanging views and turning private enjoyment into shared pleasure, even a way of making sense of the world.

The counter argument from more critical pessimists has none of this. Instead it conceives readers, listeners and viewers at the receiving end of a stream of messages produced by a giant media machine. From this perspective audiences are shaped and influenced, rather than being active interpreters.

DA204 has an introductory block on celebrity to open up the framework. Nowadays to be a celebrity may not depend on being famous for something. It may simply be a matter of fame for fame's sake. In reality television, for example, ordinary people can get elevated to the ranks of the famous. We are fascinated by watching people become famous on programmes designed to make them so.

Celebrity raises questions about the audience's role. But it also makes us reflect on production and the question of how celebrity is generated by a structure consisting of interlocking media and roles: TV producers, newspaper columnists, publicists and of course the celebrity herself. Just as important are discourses of celebrity, from the intimacy summoned up by many television personalities, to the full blown glamour of a film star, carefully nurtured by the Hollywood system.



Kylie Minogue: named Woman of the Year by Britain's *Glamour* magazine for her inspirational battle against breast cancer.

The celebrity 'persona' has a key role in media texts, and often a complex one. Kylie Minogue, for instance, has morphed from the mechanic, Charlene to a glamorous pop diva and gay icon. How and why we might ask. Chapter 2 of Block 1 addresses this very question.

Finally (and in the fifth and last block) there are the intertwined topics of markets, policy and technology. The media have always been sold through the market place. Yet states have also kept a hand in regulating markets, delimiting media content as well as who owns what. One important factor in the market-regulation mix is technology, which nowadays enables media to take on a trans-national, border-hopping character. Block 5 considers the issues at stake here.

The terrain of media studies is broad and varied, then, ranging from stardust to political economy and beyond. If you're interested, *DA204* could be your best introduction.

The risk of living in an intractable world

The mix of moral narcissism and cynical news management that is the core of much contemporary treatment of terrorism and climate change serves only to insulate us from their realities, argues John Gray, Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics

For those directly affected by them, the London bombings will always be an unalterable reality – an event, barely comprehensible in its pain and horror, which they will struggle to come to terms with for the remainder of their lives. For all the rest of us – the hundreds of millions or billions of people who watched the same images of bloodied commuters and cordoned-off Tube stations – the bombings were an episode in the virtual world that is being continuously manufactured by the media. In this simulated environment we can feel part of a global community facing a common problem. We are able to imagine that terror could be banished from our lives, as all the world's peoples and their leaders act in solidarity against a universal evil.

The trouble with the omnipresence of the media in politics is that it tends to blur the distinction between reality and appearance. The causes of human action are obscure, and the course of events at times indecipherable; a central task of the media is to contrive a coherent narrative from this chaos. In doing so, it can end up shaping reality – but not in a manner that anyone intended or predicted. There may no longer be anything resembling a globally organized terrorist network, but by instantaneously disseminating the same images of carnage and panic throughout the world the media have globalized our perception of terror. Governments act as if this media apparition were an actually existing entity, with the result that the policies that are adopted to resist terrorism are ineffective and sometimes highly counter-productive.

Western military intervention in Afghanistan practically destroyed Al Qaeda as an effective force. With its training camps in ruins and its leadership in hiding, the structure of the network fragmented and its capacity for action was correspondingly diminished. The ongoing western occupation of Afghanistan is problematic in many ways, and its long-term objectives are obscure; but military action in that country succeeded in its goal of inflicting a heavy blow on Al Qaeda as it then was. In contrast, the effect of the war in Iraq has been to revivify Al Qaeda, but in a new and possibly more dangerous form. It has become an idea or a cause that can be taken up by anyone, and if the fluid and shifting groups of which it is presently composed appear to act in a concerted fashion it may be a result of media reports of each others' activities rather than by any kind of direct, systematic coordination. The goal of these groups is to shift the public mood, and they attempt to do this by acts of spectacular violence that are transmitted worldwide via television. The type of terrorism that London suffered on 7 July 2005 may well have evolved as a by-product of the global media.

The development of terrorism illustrates a complex feedback between the virtual world constructed by the media and the actual course of history. Al Qaeda is now very largely an artefact of the communication industry – but it is also real, with a demonstrated capacity for mass murder. This is a development that exemplifies both the power of the media and the fragility of that power.

The war in Iraq was launched on the basis of deceptive claims about Saddam's links with the 9/11 attacks and the self-deluding belief that the USA would be accepted as a liberator of the Iraqi people. These fantasies have been demolished by events, and no amount of news management has been able to mask the scale and ferocity of the insurgency against the occupying forces. Reality has smashed through the media constructions.

There is a tendency among some media analysts to talk as if the global communications industry actually moulds the pattern of events. For them the world is what appears in the media, and there is no difference between perception and reality. It is a view of the media that, in thinkers such as Baudrillard, has been elevated into an entire philosophy; but while the media are now omnipresent, they are not – as Baudrillard's analysis implies – omnipotent. Certainly many politicians have come to subscribe to a version of this post-modern philosophy – Mr Blair being foremost among them.

But the world is not in the end a human construction. Climate change is a physical process that goes on entirely independently of human consciousness. The curious feedback loop that exists between the media construction of reality and human events such as terrorism does not apply to global warming. Whatever politicians, opinion formers or humanity at large may think or feel, a large shift in the planetary environment is currently underway that will alter irreversibly the way everyone lives in future. The basis for this belief is scientific observation of measurable changes in the material world. Human emotions and perceptions are irrelevant, and nothing that happens in the virtual world

constructed by the media has any leverage on the processes that are at work. Here – more than anywhere else – the mix of moral narcissism and cynical news management that is the core of contemporary politics serves only to postpone a brutal encounter with reality.

Terrorism and climate change have a common feature that helps to explain the way they are treated in the media and by politicians. Both are not wholly soluble problems. Terrorism has been greatly boosted by the Iraq war, and it is as true today as it was before the July bombings that the prudent and honourable course of action for Britain is to sever its connexion with the Bush administration's folly and withdraw its troops as quickly and as completely as possible. Yet while withdrawal may diminish the terrorist threat to Britain it will not remove it – there is too much hatred loose in the world, and terrorists are not always motivated by clear strategic goals. We will always be at some risk whatever we do.

The situation is even starker with regard to climate change. The scientific consensus is that there is a great deal of global warming in the pipeline, which even the wholesale abandonment of fossil fuels – if that were possible – would not much reduce. We no longer have the option of forestalling climate change; we can only adjust to it. But adjustment may prove extremely difficult, for the physical processes that are at work are not linear and the climate could shift abruptly and substantially. James Lovelock has argued in his rigorous and visionary recent book, *The Revenge of Gaia*, that the geophysical mechanisms that control the planetary climate are moving towards a new equilibrium that will involve large rises of sea-level. If he is right, and mounting evidence does not leave much room for reasonable doubt that he is, the result will be the inundation of many of the world's great coastal cities and the destruction of a significant portion of the world's arable land. Of course, as in any scientific prediction there is some uncertainty in Lovelock's forecast; and as long as that remains the case nothing will be done. Preparing for an eventuality of the sort he describes would be extremely costly, necessarily involving major alterations in our current way of life. Sensing this, politicians and the public prefer to continue the Kyoto ritual of announcing targets that will not be reached, and which even if they were met would not now make any perceptible difference. The likelihood is that a sense of urgency will be felt only when it



The Great Game – London 2005

is too late. At that point, persistent denial of the magnitude of the shift that is underway will be followed by blind panic.

Thinkers of the Left often berate the media for skirting round the truth, and some of them write as if there were a conspiracy to deny the facts of power and oppression. It would be more accurate to say that the media insulate the public from realities it cannot tolerate. We live in a feel-good culture in which every challenge in the world around us is quickly turned into an issue about subjective feeling. Feeling comfortable matters more than anything else – certainly more than doing what we can to mitigate problems we cannot hope to solve. We seem to have lost the art of living in an intractable world, so we contrive an alternate reality in which insoluble problems can be conjured away by displays of goodwill. Yet they never really go away, and we would be better off trying to think about them clearly rather than seeking false security in a collective dream.

Casualties in Iraq

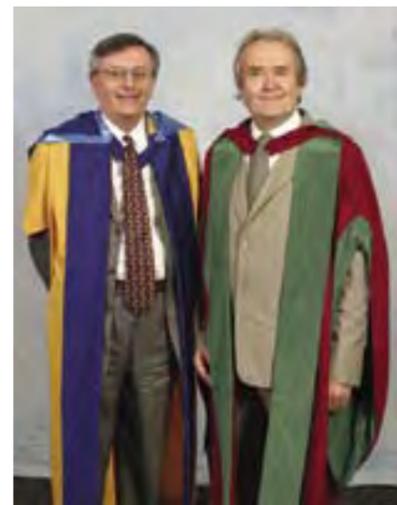
In March 2006, on the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, Iraq Body Count (IBC) published their estimates of the number of civilian deaths during the three years since the coalition forces moved in to topple Saddam. IBC reported the minimum number of civilian casualties to be 33,489 and the maximum, 37,589. The number of deaths has risen year on year. In Baghdad alone, in the 12 months up until the end of March 2006, between 780 and 1,110 bodies a month had been brought into Baghdad mortuaries. In late May 2005, civilian Iraqi deaths had risen to 42,180.

In April 2006, the Ministry of Defence published its first estimate of the number of British casualties since the Iraq invasion: 6,700 British casualties were identified (in addition over 100 serving soldiers had been killed). The total included soldiers and civilians hurt in the fighting, those injured in accidents, people taken ill, and people who suffered psychological damage. All required some form of hospital treatment. Over 4,000 of the casualties were injured or harmed sufficiently for them to be sent home to Britain for treatment. In 2005, 727 British soldiers serving in Iraq were diagnosed with psychiatric problems according to the Ministry of Defence, about ten per cent of the serving British presence in Iraq.

The number of attacks on British forces in Iraq rose 26 per cent to over 60 a month in the first five months of 2006. Between January and the end of April six soldiers lost their lives in Iraq. In May alone, nine were killed. At the end of May, 123 journalists had been killed in Iraq since the invasion in 2003, a greater number than during the whole of the Vietnam war.

The cost of the Iraq war rose to £1,098 billion in 2005–6, from £910 billion in 2004–5.

In June 2006, when *Society Matters* went to press, the British troop presence in Iraq totalled just over 7,000.



In the summer of 2005, John Gray received an Honorary Doctorate of the Open University for services to culture and the well-being of society. He is pictured here with the Faculty's Professor Grahame Thompson (right) at the award ceremony. John is the author of the influential *Al Qaeda and What It Means To Be Modern*, published by Faber and Faber, London, 2003.

Why did the London bombers take to suicide and mass murder?

Dr Max Farrar, Leeds Metropolitan University, believes explanations must go beyond sociological stereotypes and explore the connections between alienation and the growth of nihilism

Beeston, a multicultural, low income area of Leeds, was almost overwhelmed by the world's media in the weeks following the announcement that it was within its terraced streets where the four young British Muslims who set off bombs in London on 7 July 2005 had grown up.

The oldest of the bombers, Mohammad Siddique Khan, 30, worked as a teaching assistant in a local Primary School. According to a mother at the school he was a 'lovely man' who went out of his way to support the children's learning. The two other British Muslim bombers who lived in Beeston were described as normal young men, from 'good' families. They took part in the everyday life of the neighbourhood just like everyone else. The fourth bomber, a British Caribbean convert to Islam who used to live in Beeston had, according to an early report, experienced mental health problems.

Why did these young men take to suicide and mass murder? No 'broken homes', no criminal convictions, no affiliations with political or youth cults have been uncovered among any of the four bombers. None of the conventional sociological factors appear to apply. Initially, it was assumed that they were directed by Al Qaeda, which sociologists would probably describe as a religious cult, but it now appears that such links were tenuous.

Since commonsense (which sociology takes pride in refuting) suggests that they must have been led by Al Qaeda, it is worth examining this type of explanation. Ten days after the bombing it was announced that Mohammed Khan had been identified as a security risk some time before the bombings. Reports from the government's Intelligence Security Committee and from a committee of Members of Parliament (published 12.5.06) stated that Khan, and another of the bombers, Shehzad Tanweer, had had religious and military training in Pakistan, had been taped talking about making bombs, and, like Tanweer, were monitored as they visited jihadi internet sites. But they were classified as low risk, with no direct links to Al Qaeda.

Many observers have pointed out that Al Qaeda exists, if at all, simply as a network of loosely associated Islamist groups who skilfully use the Internet and other media. The video of Mohammad Khan's valedictory statement gives credibility to the suggestion that there was a 'virtual' link between the London bombers and the professions of Islam associated with Osama bin Laden. Thus, even if they weren't personally linked to actual members of Al Qaeda, it seems likely they were ideologically linked with a loose movement which uses the tactic of suicide and indiscriminate murder to further its goals.

But this explanation is too trivial for sociological purposes. It is like the explanation of crime which states the culprit 'fell into bad company'. Sociologists need to explain what this 'Al Qaeda' ideology is and why the men from Beeston adopted it.

I suggest the ideology is constructed around four basic themes. First, the belief that Western society (particularly the USA) is utterly evil, and is intent on enforcing its corruption upon the rest of the world. Second, to ensure the world is transformed into a replica of the Islamic Umma – the perfect state briefly established by the original followers of the Prophet Mohammed. Third, the belief that all existing Islamic societies have departed so far from the Umma that they too are an enemy on a par with Western governments. Fourth, that suicide and the murder of any types of people (of all religious beliefs, including those who claim to be Muslims) is a legitimate tactic.

Ideologies make most sense when their roots and the social systems they align themselves with become clear. The 'Al Qu'eda' ideology has its roots in the thinking and political practice associated with the Muslim Brotherhood which originated in Egypt in the early 1920s. Saudi Arabia, a country composed primarily of Muslims of the Sunni school

of thought, was conceived as the authentic theocratic state, where there is no separation between religious law and state law. The 1979 revolution in Iran established another type of theocratic Islamic state, this time based on Shia Islam. The West had largely accommodated to Saudi Arabia because its leaders, the Saudi royal family, showed no antipathy towards Western business or military interests. But Iran labelled the USA the 'Great Satan' and opposed Western interests at every turn. When Iran went to war against its nominally Islamic neighbour, Iraq, the West armed Saddam Hussein's retaliation. Despite their bitter rivalry, both the Sunni and the Shia versions of Islam in Saudi Arabia and Iran produced social systems characterized by the banning of women's presence in the public sphere, the criminalization of homosexuality, extreme divisions of wealth, and the prohibition of any leisure activity driven by music, drugs or sex.

Crucial to the understanding of the Beeston bombers is the distinction between the Al Qaeda tendency and the theocratic Islam of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The former, I want to argue, is not Islamic, but nihilistic. The latter are two rather different versions of the effort to institute a form of Islam which is claimed to be strictly derived from the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed and one or other of his earliest followers. Both the Iranian and the Saudi 'fundamentalist' states are criticized today by 'fundamentalist' Muslims for the very fact that they are states, when the original Umma proclaimed one world united under the Prophet's teachings, as explained by the Islamic elect.

Ideologically, these 'fundamentalist' Muslims divide into those who reject violence (called *Salaffiya* – followers of the Prophet's immediate circle) and those who advocate and practice suicide bombing without explaining how the tactic of suicide bombing accords with anything in Islamic theology. Like the nihilists of 19th century Russia they adopt the tactic of indiscriminate terror, but unlike the Russian nihilists who deny the existence of God, Al Qaeda terrorizes in the name of God. I would contend that this declared murderous intent towards anyone who is not of 'Al Qu'eda' puts it outside the realm of the godly.

Why then, might any of this prove attractive to Beeston's young British men? The problem for Al Qaeda is that Islam abhors suicide. Among the suicide bombers in Palestine today Durkheim's concept of 'altruistic suicide' might apply: the intensely held value of freedom combined with the intensity of communal bonds could lead people to overlook Islam's strictures and propel a young man or woman into what the movement calls an act of war. But in Beeston?

The furor over the attack on Afghanistan and the second Western war against Iraq did lead to significant numbers of young British Muslims saying they supported Osama bin Laden because of his military support for Muslims oppressed by Western government. But the complete condemnation by Muslims of the London bombings shows this support was mere rhetoric, defiantly offered to the media and opinion pollsters. The London bombers were psychologically open to the blandishments of the DVD and internet versions of Al Qaeda because of acute social-psychological trauma induced by the personal and social and political situation in which they were placed.

I suggest that they experienced conflict over their experience of women, particularly their tradition-oriented mothers, their ambiguously-placed sisters, and their relationships with white girls. They were further conflicted by their experience of hedonistic and spiritually empty, postmodern, capitalist culture. They became increasingly disturbed by the murderous intent of Westerners towards Muslims in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Suicide bombing became an attractive option.

The Internet played a crucial part because they could bypass the usual restraints placed by family, friends and the wider society. The Beeston bombers may have had some personal contact with people who profess militaristic Islam, but such intimate contact is no longer necessary and may well prove an impediment to the spread of a set of beliefs in which emotion must overcome reason if they are to successfully mobilize support. Nihilism is manifesting itself among the deeply alienated throughout UK society, not just among the Muslims, and sociology must offer cogent analysis as the basis for socio-political responses.



NEXT ISSUE

Shifting securities: news cultures before and beyond the Iraq war

The findings of a three year ESRC funded project on news cultures and the Iraq war conducted by OU academics were debated at a symposium held at Kings College London in June 2006.

The symposium brought together academics, journalists, government and military policy makers to discuss the making and shaping of news; securitization, mediation and racialization; transnational media and citizenship; changing audience configurations, and the consequences of new media for democratic debate and future security policy. The project included a collaborative ethnography of news reception in multi-lingual and multi-channel households; an analysis of news narratives and changing iconographies of war and conflict; qualitative research with security policy makers, news producers and 'experts', and their perceptions of the media-security nexus. The symposium addressed a range of policy, propaganda and public diplomacy issues. It evaluated the consequences of increased securitization for civil liberties and human rights in multicultural states like the UK.

A full report on the symposium and further developments on the media and international conflict will appear in the next issue of *Society Matters*.

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Black bands given out at a vigil for the victims of the London bombings called by Stop the War Coalition, CND and the Muslim Association of Great Britain. Peace Gardens, Friends Meeting House.

The spoils of war

Years of work in battle zones have convinced climate change expert Lutz Kleveman that the role energy resources play in causing conflicts is the big story behind the headlines

About three years ago, I visited the American airbase of Bagram in Afghanistan. A US army public affairs officer gave me a tour of the sprawling camp, set up after the ousting of the Taliban in December 2001. As we walked past the endless rows of tents and men in desert camouflage uniforms, I spotted two makeshift wooden street signs. They read 'Exxon Street' and 'Petro Boulevard'. Slightly embarrassed, the officer explained: 'This is the fuel handlers' workplace. The signs are a joke, a sort of irony.'

As I am sure they were. It just seemed an uncanny sight given that I was researching potential links between the 'war on terror' and American oil interests in Central Asia. Years of work in war zones have convinced me that the role energy resources play in causing armed conflicts is the big story behind the headlines. Dwindling supplies and the ever-surging global consumption of oil, especially in China and India, have caused its price to soar to new heights. As doubts grow about the true size of Saudi reserves, global production is expected to peak soon, making oil unaffordable to many people and countries, and raising the prospect of a 'last man standing' oil endgame.

The deepening rivalry over fossil reserves, especially between the USA and China, makes energy wars increasingly likely. No Iraqi I know believes America would send soldiers to the Gulf region if there were only strawberry fields to protect. My research in places such as Nigeria, Azerbaijan and Iraq has shown that oil wealth is more of a curse than a blessing. In all oil-producing countries (except Britain and Norway), it has led to environmental degradation, economic decline, corruption, political instability, *coup d'etats* or even civil wars.

Central Asia offers a perfect case study of what is the trouble with oil. The warlords, diplomats, politicians, generals and oil bosses are all players in a geo-strategic struggle that has become increasingly intertwined with the anti-terrorist campaigns: the 'New Great Game'. The main spoils in this rerun of the 19th-century 'Great Game' are the Caspian oil and gas reserves, the world's biggest untapped fossil fuel resources. While estimates range widely, the US Energy Department believes that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan alone could sit on more than 130 billion barrels of crude. Oil giants such as ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco and BP have already invested more than \$40bn in new production facilities.

In May 2001 Dick Cheney, the US vice-president and ex-CEO of Halliburton (a provider of products and services to the oil and gas industries), recommended in the seminal national energy policy report that 'the president make energy security a priority of our trade and foreign policy', singling out the Caspian Basin as a 'rapidly growing new area of supply'. Since 11 September 2001, the Bush administration

has accordingly used the 'war on terror' to further American energy interests in Central Asia, deploying thousands of US troops not only in Afghanistan, but also in the newly independent republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia.

By 2010, the USA will have to import more than two-thirds of its energy needs, and the Caspian region has become vital to its policy of 'diversifying energy supply', designed to wean America off its dependence on the volatile Middle East. Yet Central Asia is no less volatile than the Middle East, and oil politics are making matters worse. Disputes persist over pipeline routes from the Caspian region to high-sea ports. While Russia promotes crude transport across its territory, China wants to build eastbound pipelines from Kazakhstan, and Iran is offering its pipeline network for exports via the Persian Gulf. Washington, on the other hand, has championed the \$3.8bn Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline through the South Caucasus, which was recently inaugurated amid much pomp. Controversial for environmental and social reasons, the project has also perpetuated instability in the South Caucasus.

With thousands of Russian troops still stationed in Georgia and Armenia, Moscow has for years sought to deter western pipeline investors by fomenting bloody ethnic conflicts near the pipeline route, in the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Ajaria. In return, the USA has despatched 500 elite troops to Georgia. Moscow and Beijing resent the growing US influence in their energy-rich strategic backyard, and have repeatedly demanded that the Americans pull out. Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, has signed new security pacts with the Central Asian rulers and, in 2003, personally opened a new Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan, only 50km away from a US airbase.

China, in turn, has conducted major military exercises with Central Asian states. In August, China's biggest state-owned oil company bought a major oil producer in Kazakhstan for \$4.2 billion. The purchase fits in with China's efforts to quench its enormous thirst for oil by intensifying ties to major energy-producing countries and buying a wide array of foreign petrol assets.

Besides raising the spectre of interstate conflict, energy imperialism also exacerbates the terrorist problem. Many Muslims hate America because for decades successive US governments, in a Faustian pact, were indifferent towards



Ministry of Oil, Baghdad, Iraq.

how badly the Middle Eastern regimes treated their people – as long as they kept the oil flowing. In Central Asia, the Bush administration repeats the mistakes that gave rise to Bin Ladenism in the 1980s and 1990s. The Caspian region may be the next big gas station but, as in the Middle East, there are already a lot of men running around throwing matches.

Ultimately, no matter how many troops are deployed to protect oilfields and pipelines, the oil infrastructure might prove too vulnerable to terrorist attacks, such as in Iraq, to guarantee a stable supply anyway. In Iraq, chaos and violence have so far prevented any major oil companies from investing a huge amount in the country's old petrol industry. Efforts by Halliburton and the US army corps of engineers to rehabilitate the oilfields near Kirkuk and Basra have been largely undermined by insurgent attacks on pipelines.

With so much oil-related trouble looming, old-style policies of yet more fossil fuel production and waste continue in the wrong direction. The only wise strategy is a sustainable alternative energy policy that will steer us into the post-oil era. Reducing our dependence on oil will go a long way towards 'de-fuelling' terror-breeding regimes and lessening international tension.

A new energy policy is badly needed to slow the greenhouse effect and global climate change, which might turn out to be the worst energy-related source of conflict. Hurricane Katrina – with violence, anarchy and refugees in its wake – gave merely a foretaste of the suffering that global warming could cause. That was nature, some say with a shrug, but in fact it was nature on drugs – and we need a detox soon.

Lutz Kleveman (lutz@kleveman.com) is the author of *The New Great Game: blood and oil in Central Asia* (Atlantic Books, 2005).

Interested in exploring issues relating to conflict, war and development? The new technology course, *TU875 War, Intervention and Development*, places development at the heart of the solution to international and local conflict.

Arms spending, armed conflicts

The global trade in arms now exceeds \$1 trillion a year. In 2004, the USA accounted for 47 per cent of global defence spending. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council – the USA, the UK, France, Russia, and China – account for 88 per cent of the global reported spending on conventional arms exports.

Each year over 500,000 people are killed globally by armed conflict. In 1965, the UN reported 10 major wars were fought in the world. A major war is a military conflict which results in 1,000 battlefield deaths each year. By 2005, the number of major wars had risen to 16.

Global military expenditure as percentage of GDP

Rank	Country	Military expenditures	Date of information
1	United States	\$370,700,000,000	March 2003
2	China	\$ 67,490,000,000	2004
3	Japan	\$ 45,841,000,000	2004
4	France	\$ 45,000,000,000	2005
5	United Kingdom	\$ 42,836,500,000	2003
6	Germany	\$ 35,063,000,000	2003
7	Italy	\$ 28,182,800,000	2003
8	Korea, South	\$ 20,000,000,000	2005
9	India	\$ 18,860,000,000	2005
10	Saudi Arabia	\$ 18,000,000,000	2002

Source: CIA World Factbook, January 2006



UK and USA spending: defence and overseas aid

Share of total government expenditure in percentages, 2003 figures

UNITED KINGDOM	
Defence	13.3
Official development aid	1.6
USA	
Defence	25.0
Official development aid	1.0

In the centre of Grozny, near the ruins of the drama theatre, there was a block-long double line of senior citizens. Everybody was silent, they didn't shout any slogans. Each of them was holding a piece of green material inscribed with a protest against the referendum and bearing a coloured photograph. The photos looked as if they came from the files of a criminal case – corpses dismembered, corpses intact, old corpses, fresh corpses, corpses in the ground, corpses on stretchers. Sometimes the photos showed live faces – those who had just disappeared



Chechnya: the forgotten war on terror

Chechnya is still ravaged by war and anarchy. Ray Thomas explores why Russia has fought its own war on terrorism in its own backyard and examines why the conflict shows how not to deal with terrorists

President Vladimir Putin of Russia was the first world leader to commiserate with President Bush in response to the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Putin wanted to believe that he shared a common purpose with Bush in conducting a war against terror. But Putin's war on terror was different in a number of important ways from that shaped by the US/UK coalition.

Bush's war on terror took him to Afghanistan and Iraq – thousands of miles away from the twin towers in New York. Putin's conception of terrorism was based on civil wars in Chechnya, the small North Caucasian country that had long been part of the old Soviet Union.

The people of Chechnya have long had an uneasy relationship with Russia. The Chechen population was deported to Kazakhstan in 1944 and did not return until 1975. When Yeltsin dissolved the Soviet Union in 1990, Chechnya opted out of Russia and elected its own president. To Russia such an outcome was intolerable.

The first Chechen war began in 1994. The capital Grozny was largely destroyed by Russian bombers. The Russian army invaded the country. Russians were killing both Chechens and ethnic Russians who had settled in Chechnya. But there was vigorous resistance by ethnic Chechens. The war ended in a truce in 1996.

After the truce Chechnya declared independence and renamed itself Ichkeria. A presidential election was held in January 1997, monitored by international observers. Aslan Maskhadov was elected. In May 1997 Maskhadov was recognized as President of Ichkeria by Boris Yeltsin, then President of Russia.

The USA/UK alliance saw the democratic elections in Afghanistan and Iraq as major steps towards the solution of terrorism. But the results of the democratic elections in Chechnya in 1997, like those leading to the election of Hamas in Palestine in 2006, should remind us that elections do not always bring stability. Nor accord with prevailing views of what ought to happen.

The first war had destroyed the economy and had led to the exodus of Chechen's ethnic Russian population. Fighting among rival war lords became common: kidnapping for ransom increased. An armed incursion into neighbouring Dagestan in August 1999 by Chechen rebels under Shamil Basaev gave reason for Russia to intervene again. In the course of the second Chechen war three thousand people disappeared after being detained by the federal law enforcement agencies.

Maskhadov's stance for an independent Chechnya was not acceptable to Russia. After a military victory in the second war Russia deposed Maskhadov and labeled him a terrorist. In the West, terrorism is attributed to Islamic extremism. Ironically, in Chechnya, Russia created terrorism according to the western perception. Russia displaced Maskhadov, a moderate Islamist, with an extremist.

In June 2000, Russia appointed Akhmad Kadyrov as head of Chechnya. Kadyrov was a former mufti and supporter of an independent Chechnya who had changed allegiances. Kadyrov presented himself to the Kremlin as

strong, ruthless and determined to rid Chechnya of those he labeled as 'Wahabbists' – and anyone else who stood in his path. Wahabbists were pictured as an Islamic extremist group originating in Saudi Arabia. Kadyrov established a private army in Chechnya that was feared even by Russian troops. Under Kadyrov Chechnya descended further into lawlessness.

With the open support of the Kremlin, a stage-managed election in 2003 formally gave Kadyrov the title of President of Chechnya. But five months later he was assassinated. The assassination did little to change the situation. Kadyrov's private army was taken over by his son Ramzan – widely regarded as a thug. The inheritance principle was astonishingly reinforced by the Kremlin. Ramzan was appointed vice president, and is expected to be appointed as president when he reaches the statutory age of 30.

Russia had become victim of its successful annexation. In helping Akhmad Kadyrov to become a local dictator the Kremlin gave power to his lineage. Ramzan had taken over his father's power base. The Kremlin could oppose Ramzan only at the risk that he would change sides, as his father had done, and proclaim secession from Russia.

That episode indicates the nature of the focus of the Chechen wars. Alexander Mnatsakanyan, a Russian journalist writing in 2003 just before a referendum designed to legitimize Chechnya's return to Russia, summarized what he had learned in the first Chechen war.

I remember January 1995 watching federal soldiers throwing loaves of bread into a crowd of Chechen women and elders like a bone to a dog. I realized then that the objective of this war was not a matter of seizing territory or killing enemy soldiers. The key objective was to degrade the civilian population so that they become ready to accept any power – domestic, foreign, or even extraterrestrial – as long as that power ensures order, food and protection.

Lokshina et al., *The imposition of a Fake Political Settlement in the Northern Caucasus*, Ibidem-Verlag, Stuttgart, 2005, p. 37

A decade later, according to a leading Russian anthropologist, Valery Tishkov, this key objective had been achieved. Tishkov concluded that the Chechen people, and Chechen society, no longer existed as an agent or locus of social action.

But the destruction of Chechen society has not ended terrorist activity. There is terrorism by Ramzan Kadyrov's army and other powers-that-be in Chechnya. The moderate Maskhadov was killed by the Russians in 2005. The separatist terrorist Basaev is still at large, and the young men of Chechnya who have been at the receiving end of Kadyrov's 'cleansing' operations when members of their family, relatives, friends and neighbours were killed or 'disappeared' find it difficult to maintain a neutral role.

There are a number of parallels between the wars in Chechnya and those in Iraq. The situation in both countries is the result of policies and decision making by powerful

governments distant from the chaos these policies have helped to create. The human tendency to live in peace is now deeply driven by internal conflicts.

How do we know about what is happening in Chechnya? The short answer is 'only with difficulty'. The Russian press and TV are tightly controlled by the Kremlin. The Russian army and Kadyrov's army have made Chechnya a dangerous place for independent reporters. Accounts in the Russian and world press are largely dependent on information, and disinformation, from the Russian government. This situation may be challenged if Chechnya is included on the agenda of the G8 summit this summer when Russia is in the Chair.

It is important to indicate the main sources of information on the situation in Chechnya. Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya's press reports are more likely to appear in the *Washington Post* than in the censored Russian Press. She has written two valuable books that have appeared in English: *A Dirty War*, The Harvill Press, 2001; and *A Small Corner of Hell*, University of Chicago Press, 2003. John Dunlop's *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, Sprint Books, 1998, can be recommended for its account of the Chechen wars, as can his *The 2002 Dubrovka and 2004 Beslan Hostage Crises: A Critique of Russian Counter-Terrorism*, Sprint Books, 2005. But Chechnya remains neglected. Sometimes it is discussed at international conventions. The truth is, however, only found in books and accounts of personal testimony. Chechnya seldom surfaces on the big agendas of the West. It remains a conveniently forgotten conflict.

Will Chechnya get on to the G8 agenda? This seems unlikely. The situation in Chechnya exposes too many inconsistencies in the western war on terror for the USA or UK to want to see Chechnya on the agenda. Probably the most interesting aspect of the G8 summit will be to identify which other countries besides Russia, the UK and the USA give implicit or explicit support to keeping Chechnya off the agenda.

This article was inspired by my participation in a book produced by Tanya Lokshina and her colleagues of DEMOS associated with the Moscow Helsinki Human Rights Group (see www.mhg.ru/english). There are also books by Matthew Evangelista, Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, Thomas Goltz, Anatol Lieven, Andrew Meier, Anne Nivat, and Michael Orr.

For detailed report of current events there is a well-established, moderated e-mail list that receives messages from a variety of sources everyday at: groups.yahoo.com/group/chechnya-sl/

For an account of recent international discussion of the situation in Chechnya see the report of the Parliamentary Assembly in Europe meeting in January 2006 at: www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/01/DB6660D3-511A-407B-A489-F3C8E833A6C6.html



Father begs with his severely disfigured daughter, Shanghai.

Disability in the developing world

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that over 620 million of the world's population – some 10 per cent – have a disability. Four out of five of the world's disabled people now live in the developing world. Many suffer from both mental and physical impairments.

In the developed world, disability movements have long raised the profile of people with a disability, but in the developing world the rights and experiences of disabled people have received less prominence. Since 1999 the focus has gradually shifted towards disability issues in the Global South. Today both the developed and developing world are actively engaging with the issue, seeking to empower the vast majority of the world's disabled population.

Following the establishment of the 1999 Disability Charter for the Third Millennium, greater pressure has been placed on both the UN Convention for the Rights of Disabled People and world governments to do more for the plight of people with a disability, especially in those countries ravaged by famine, poverty, environmental disaster and armed conflict. As *Society Matters* reported in its last issue, over 26,000 civilians in the world are invalidated by landmines each year. In Cambodia, 1.4 million of its 8 million inhabitants have

been disabled as a result of war and human rights' abuses. Depleted uranium is a major contributor to disability.

What do we know about the disabled in the developing world? Many disabilities are preventable and treatable through immunization programmes, and vitamin and iodine supplements (500,000 children every year are visually impaired due to vitamin A deficiency). In the developing world, 70 per cent of children's blindness and 50 per cent of children's hearing impairments could be easily treated, in similar ways to children in the developed world. Death rates among children with disabilities can be as high as 80 per cent, even in those developing world nations with relatively low infant mortality rates.

The WHO and the World Bank have documented the extent to which the disabled in the developing world, like the disabled in the developed world, are far more likely to live

Useful organizations and websites on disability in the developing world:

- Disability Awareness in Action – a human rights and information network run by disabled people at: www.daa.org.uk
- International Disability Alliance at: www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org
- Disabled Peoples' International at: www.dpi.org
- Disability World at: www.disabilityworld.org

Promoting disability equality at the OU

A Disability Equality Scheme (DES), promoting disability equality across all University functions, is currently being developed in the University. To make the ensuing action plan more effective the University is consulting disabled students and staff in developing its priorities. The development of DES is a new duty under disability discrimination legislation in England, Scotland and Wales (separate but similar disability discrimination legislation covers Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland).

The OU has a long commitment to widening participation for people who have found it difficult to access traditional Higher Education provision, including disabled students. Our aim is to be a truly inclusive organization where individual differences are respected, where staff and students are treated solely on their merits, and where everyone has a fair opportunity to fulfil their potential. Two of the Open University's strategic priorities are to promote fair access for all and to diversify and develop our staff base.

Feedback from the consultation has helped us to identify what is working well, what is not working well, and where there are gaps in our provision, and to prioritize actions which we hope will make practical improvements to the experiences of disabled students and staff. The DES will be reviewed and revised after three years, and progress on the action plan will be annually assessed and new actions identified.

With over 9,000 disabled students studying with the University, we need to ensure that the services that we offer support individual requirements wherever possible, and that potential students are aware of the services we can provide.

The University has a relatively small number of staff who have self declared as having a disability, and activities in our action plan are aimed at increasing the number of job applicants who are disabled people, and ensuring that the work environment and working practices do not create unnecessary barriers.

It is essential that the University receives ongoing feedback about how our policies and practices are working, and the impact of the actions that we are taking, if we are to be successful.

The University's Disability Equality Scheme 2006–2009 and associated action plan will be available on: www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies from December 2006. Comments are welcome on the scheme and action plan, and on other actions that may be appropriate. There is a dedicated email box to which this feedback can be sent at: Pdg-Equality-Voice@open.ac.uk, or you can write to: DES Consultation, EO Office, Offices 6, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

in poverty. The World Bank estimates that over 20 per cent of the world's population live in poverty. In the developing world, the proportion living in poverty is far greater. According to the WHO, 50 per cent of disability is poverty related; malnutrition alone is estimated to generate 20 per cent of impairments. In Kenya, of 160,000 people with visual impairments, only 2 per cent are employed. In the developing world, 20 million people who require a wheelchair have none and a mere 0.1 per cent of hearing and sight impaired people receive adequate services.

The disability issue severely handicaps educational opportunities. UNESCO estimates that 40 million of the 115 million children who do not attend school have a disability. School non-attendance affects more girls than boys.

Women and children are especially vulnerable. The WHO's *World Health Report 2005* estimates that over 20 million women a year are disabled as a result of pregnancy and childbirth; millions of others are disabled through forced sterilization, genital mutilation, and rape. The report revealed that women with disabilities are up to three times more likely to suffer physical and sexual abuse than women without disabilities.

Governments can make a difference, but limited international aid and debt relief payments, plus a lack of political will, combine to frustrate millennium disability goals. The disparity between what governments of the developed and the developing world spend on health is huge. In 2002, according to the latest WHO figures, the USA spent \$2,388 and the UK \$1,693 on health per person; in the developing world the Cambodian government spent \$5, Sudan \$4, and Burundi barely \$1.

Epilepsy, which affects 50 million people in the developing world, is treatable at a cost of around 5 dollars a day. In Africa 1 in 5 people suffering from epilepsy receives treatment. However, there are positives. In 1988 the WHO targeted polio eradication and by 2004 polio incidence had been reduced from 350,000 to 1,255 cases a year.

But much more needs to be done. People with disabilities remain relatively low on the priorities of governments and the international community. By 2050 the predicted increase in the number of people requiring daily care in the developing world is alarming. China will see a 70 per cent increase, India a 120 per cent increase, and sub-Saharan Africa a 257 per cent increase. Only 2 per cent of people with a disability in the developing world have access to basic amenities and services. Improving that would be a place to start.



Alison Lapper Pregnant – Trafalgar Square.

OU staff disability profile below average

In January 2006, only 1.5 per cent of all salaried staff at the Open University described themselves as disabled. According to the Higher Educational Statistics Agency (HESA) the national average of academics who consider themselves disabled is 2 per cent: for the OU it is 1.2 per cent. In December 2005, among senior staff at the University, only one out of 212 considers themselves to be disabled.

In 2002 the University employed 81 staff with a disclosed disability (1.8 per cent); in 2006 the total had fallen to 68 (or 1.5 per cent).

The Associate Lecturer profile is more encouraging. In Social Sciences, 4.4 per cent of our Associate Lecturers regard themselves as disabled. Across the University as a whole 3.57 per cent do (AL Equality and Diversity Statistics, 2006).

In 2004, the University attracted 14,824 students onto undergraduate courses, around 7 per cent of all students. Of the disabled students, 49.4 per cent passed; of the non-disabled, 59.5 per cent passed.

Migrants and the Middle East: welcome to the other side of Dubai

For the people who visit, it is a world-class centre of finance and tourism. But for the people who are building it – mainly labourers from the Indian subcontinent – the reality is very different. The Independent's Kim Sengupta reports on a rising tide of protest

It is the fastest growing city on earth, a landscape of building sites full of workers feverishly constructing the highest, the largest and the deepest in the world. It's a Neverland, rising out of the barren desert and fringed by beaches and a ski resort. There are no taxes. And it is the favoured destination of Britons wishing to work and play abroad.

Fifty per cent of the world's supply of cranes are now at work in Dubai on projects worth \$100bn – twice the World Bank's estimated cost of reconstructing Iraq and double the total foreign investment in China, the world's third-largest economy.

But there is also a downside to the glistening towers that soar above the shopping malls, the six-lane highways and the world's only seven-star hotel with suites that can cost \$50,000 (£28,000) a night. Here striking – and unions – are illegal.

Semi-indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent are building this glitzy oasis. In March 2006, complaining of unpaid wages, and demanding better conditions, the labourers marched out of the cramped, stifling dormitories where they are corralled 25 to a room in violent protests which caused \$1m worth of damage. They overturned cars and smashed up offices in a very graphic reminder of a problem which normally receives little publicity.

Almost everything is for sale in this part of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Those investing in this frantic construction boom are convinced there will be no shortage of moneyed buyers. Among the developments springing up daily are Flower City, which aims to take over the international flower trade from Amsterdam; Hydropolis, an underwater hotel alongside another with revolving mountains; a Chess City with buildings in the shape of chess pieces; the \$5bn Dubailand, which will become the world's biggest theme park – bigger than Manhattan and dwarfing Disneyland. Then there are the 300 manmade islands in the Arabian Gulf in the shape of different countries of the world.

Like some other Arab countries, Dubai's oil reserves are dwindling and the ruling family, the Maktoums, want to reinvent their personal fiefdom as a financial and transport

centre using the profits, while stocks last, from oil at \$70 a barrel.

The one thing money cannot buy in Dubai, however, is UAE nationality. Around 80 per cent of the population are foreigners from no less than 160 different countries and the Maktoums appear to be prepared to let the foreigner-to-local ratio grow even wider. But however long the expatriates stay, they will not be allowed citizenship. Visas are tied to jobs, and there is always the risk of being thrown out when the contract ends.

The people most vulnerable to this are the very workers putting up Dubai's glossy edifices. Thirty-nine of them died in building-site accidents in 2005 – with at least some of the casualties resulting from inadequate safety provisions. Another 84 committed suicide last year, up from 70 in 2004.

The average pay for an unskilled labourer is around \$4 a day, and that is enough of a lure for the impoverished of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to flock to the UAE. The jobs are arranged through contractors and those who get them have to take out loans, often at exorbitant rates of interest, to pay for their passage. On arrival in Dubai, their passports are confiscated to prevent absconding while they are on contract. Workers are often not paid for months as their contracts draw to an end.

But now, in an attempt to become a serious commercial player, Dubai is negotiating with the World Trade Organization and, as a result, is cleaning up its act. A big sign at the arrivals lounge of Dubai International airport professes 'Dubai Cares'. The police and the labour ministry has set up a hotline for foreign workers with complaints.

But the problems have continued, with a series of demonstrations and withdrawals of labour by workers who have become more aware of their legal rights and their market value in a society bent on expansion.

In 2006, a group of Asian workers at Jebel Ali, adjacent to Dubai city, who had not been paid for a year, complained to a labour court and won their case. Their employers' response was to stop providing them with food. 'Thirty of us went to the Labour Court to get our wages and we got the verdict



Emirate businessman with migrant construction workers.

in our favour. The company has not yet implemented it,' said Laxman, one of the workers. 'We were getting food from the mess hall. All of a sudden the management said that the 30 workers who had filed the case will not be allowed any food.'

It is not just construction workers who claim to be used and discarded in Dubai. Nannies and maids brought over from south-east Asia, mainly the Philippines, also complain of mistreatment. In extreme cases they are badly beaten. Many end up without jobs after disagreements with their employers. Some drift into prostitution.

Of course, not all expatriates feel they are exploited or downtrodden. Peter Watts, a 36-year-old financial analyst, from south-west London, points out that Dubai offers a lifestyle which people like him would find hard to match in Britain.

'I can go sailing and skiing in one day and I have bought a brand-new Audi for a fraction of the price I'd pay back in England. I pay no income tax, and I live in a safe, clean city where the cost of living is pretty low,' he said.

But what about the citizens of Dubai? How do they see this influx of foreigners – many of whom, especially from the West, bring with them an alien culture which jars with Muslim customs. Jamal, who sells real estate, said he has done well out of the commercial boom. But, in the back of his mind, he said, there is a feeling of uneasiness.

'Our leaders want to turn us into a modern, first-world country, and that is good. But the place has become all about money. Do you know, there wasn't any real protest here about the Danish cartoons of the prophet – Dubai was the only place in the Muslim world where there was no outcry. What does that say about us?'

37 million Americans live in poverty

Over one million Americans dropped below the US poverty line in 2004, according to the US Census Bureau's latest published data, an increase of 12.7 per cent on 2003. The last time poverty fell in the USA was in 2000. A further 6 million Americans have slipped below the poverty line despite strong economic growth.

The UN Human Development Report (HDR), in September 2005, confirmed the extent of American poverty and claimed there were parts of the USA that were as poor as any in the developing world. Hurricane Katrina exposed more of this poverty to the world. Among Native Americans poverty rates are up to 4 times greater than the rest of the population.

The HDR scrutinized inequalities in US health provision and found an increase, for the fifth year in succession, in infant child mortality rates, with black American children twice more likely than whites to die before their first birthday. The report criticized the US development aid record abroad and accused the USA of having 'an over-developed military strategy and an under-developed strategy for human security'.

The report headlines included:

- The infant mortality rate in the USA is the same as Malaysia
- One in five children in the USA live in poverty
- One in three American families who live below the poverty line have no health insurance
- Over one in six Americans of working age lack cover
- Blacks in Washington DC have a higher infant death rate than people in the Indian state of Kerala

If you want to find out where Mississippi is do not ask a young American

American insularity has long been questioned and Americans' grasp of geography deemed problematic. No one would therefore be surprised by the findings of a national survey of 18–24 year olds in the USA. It revealed some astonishing levels of spatial ignorance. Over a third of young Americans could not place Louisiana on the map, even after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Over half did not know where Mississippi was.

If their domestic ignorance was bad, their knowledge of global locations was sometimes even worse. While 4 out of 10 could not place Pakistan in Asia, a staggering 6 out of 10 could not find Iraq on a map of the world, despite the decision of their President to invade. Forty-seven per cent could not find India on a map; 70 per cent did not think it was important to know the locations of places in the news.

John Fahey, the president of the National Geographical Society (NGS), which commissioned the research, called the findings 'appalling'. He concluded: 'Geographic illiteracy impacts on our economic well-being, our relationships with other nations and the environment, and isolates us from the world ... without (geography) our young people are not ready to face the challenges of the increasingly interconnected world of the 21st century.'

The NGS has launched a fascinating website to stimulate geographical awareness: www.mywonderfulworld.org



Psychology futures

Psychology has undergone substantial re-organization in its teaching and administrative structures. Ilona Roth, Senior Lecturer in the Psychology in Science Group, gives her personal take on why these changes have occurred, and looks at their implications for students

Psychology at the Open University has been restructured. Whilst the Faculty of Social Sciences' psychology discipline constituted the largest group of psychologists involved in psychology teaching and research in the University, these were not the only psychologists working at the university.

Over many years, staff in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS) and the Faculty of Science contributed to the psychology core curriculum and research, as well as pursuing teaching and research priorities appropriate to their own faculties.

Psychology has always had a cross-faculty existence at the OU, and now this *modus operandi* has evolved to a further stage, one that reinforces the importance of psychology's key role in the University's teaching and research enterprise. Staff involved in cognitive psychology and related teaching and research activities (previously the Cognitive Science Group in Social Sciences) have relocated to the Department of Biological Sciences.

The newly formed Psychology in Science Group (PSG) has the major responsibility for a number of courses in the psychology undergraduate and post-graduate programme. The group works within and across faculties in the production and presentation of other courses. There are currently six academics in PSG, and we expect to make several new appointments during 2006.

This change consolidates the cross-faculty nature of the OU psychology provision: there is no one psychology discipline or department at the OU. The responsibility for producing and presenting the courses within the cross-faculty programme is shared by three groups:

- The Centre for Childhood Development and Learning in FELS (ChDL)
- The Psychology in Science Group in the Science Faculty (PSG)
- The Psychology in Social Science Group in the Social Science Faculty (PSSG)

These groups are represented on a new and strategically defined committee, the Psychology Programme Committee (PPC), which involves representatives from both undergraduate and masters-level courses, regional and central staff, and all three faculty groupings. Sharon Ding, the Associate Dean for Curriculum in FELS, is the new Programme Director for Psychology at the OU and chairs the PPC. Operating with such a distributed group will inevitably be a challenge, and time will tell how readily the committee decision making will be streamlined with the priorities and



resources of the three faculties responsible for the courses in the programme.

Why the changes? It may seem strange that just at the time when the Open University is moving towards programme-based study, the staff involved in the psychology programme have become even more distributed and diffused.

A School of Psychology, which would have brought the OU psychologists together within a single administrative structure, was one of a number of options considered by Professor Linda Jones, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Curriculum and Awards, as part of an OU-wide review of the organization of subject areas. However, in the end her review team decided in favour of the distributed structure.

The aim is to capitalize *fully* on the teaching and research synergies among groups of staff. For instance, the Psychology in Science Group is now in closer contact with Neuroscience and Health Science colleagues, and possibilities for new curriculum developments and research projects are under discussion.

One of the new courses is *SDK125 Introducing Health Sciences: A Case Study Approach*, due for first presentation in October 2007. The course, comprising 30 points at level 1, provides an initial introduction to disciplines ranging from human biology and physiology to psychology, health and social care. The case-study approach involves a multi-

disciplinary perspective on topics of everyday concern, including pain, alcohol and breast cancer screening. The teaching methods feature interactive multi-media, and 'vignettes' of individuals' experiences presented in film, audio and print.

Production of *DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others*, the third level replacement for D317, is proceeding apace, with first presentation in February 2007. Students will conduct their own research project, with tutor guidance; a DVD features as one of the main teaching resources.

Students who have already studied D317, and prospective students, will be able to check out the approach of the new course in 2007 when the course books, *Social Psychology Matters* and *Social Psychology: A Critical Reader*, are co-published by Open University Press. *DD303 Cognitive Psychology* is now in its second year of presentation, and has received excellent external reviews.

Finally, a few words about psychology research activities. In the Psychology in Science Group projects include work on visual attention, emotion, problem solving, concepts, hypnosis and autism. Among the group's new research enterprises are two which aim to offer participation opportunities for all OU undergraduates: the collection of cognitive norms, and the testing of cognitive processes on the web. As part and parcel of these developments we will be launching a virtual participant panel (VPP) which will enable all OU students to participate in psychology experiments and studies, online and in the comfort of their own homes. Staff and students who live close to the OU will also be invited to register for the participant panel, and will have the option of participating online or being tested 'live' at the PSG experimental lab.

The Psychology in Social Science Group includes several research sub-groups including the Discourse and Psychosocial Research Group and the Forensic Psychology Research Group. Members of PSSG also play a key role in two OU interdisciplinary research centres: the Centre for Citizenship, Identity and Governance and the International Centre for Comparative Criminological Research. Members of the Centre for Childhood, Development and Learning are similarly active in the OU Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology.

Want to find out more about all these developments? You should look at the new Psychology Programme website: www.open.ac.uk/programmes/psychology where you will find information about the programme and all associated courses.

The science of health and well-being

Hilary MacQueen, Chair of the Faculty of Sciences new Health Programme, shows how our knowledge is increasingly crossing not just discipline, but faculty boundaries, and outlines plans for a new Level 1 course

A healthy society is something we all aspire to live in. Many of the measures of a healthy society involve parameters such as longevity, infant mortality, and incidence of particular diseases. Why are these factors indicative of a society's health, and how do we know what to measure? These questions are important to us all, yet many people fail to grasp that they are founded in the science of health, and that to understand the answers, we need to understand the underlying science.

The Faculty of Science has been teaching the science underlying health for many years. Courses such as *U205 Health and Disease*, hosted by Science, have been hugely successful, and student numbers on *SK277 Human Biology* have been buoyant for many years. This shows two things: first, that people are genuinely interested in the area, and second, that it is possible to teach science to people with little or no science background.

Although Science has been beaver away on these courses and others in a quiet way, market strictures mean that we now have to be more proactive in recruiting students in all areas. To capitalize in the obvious interest in health, a new Health Sciences programme has been launched. Currently it offers a Diploma based on courses at Levels 2 and 3, but does not yet have the specifically health-focused underlying Level 1 courses – at the moment, students approach the Diploma from the Science foundation course. This appears unsatisfactory to students, even though we can make a good academic case for a broad base in science.

To remedy matters we are making a new Level 1, 30-point course, *Introducing Health Sciences*, that takes a multidisciplinary approach to studying health. The course code, SDK125, emphasizes this, and signals that although this is first and foremost a health science course, the science is approachable and readily accessed by students from a

wide variety of backgrounds. To dispel the myth that 'health science' really means 'biology', I should point out that the course team comprises not only biologists but physicists, chemists, epidemiologists, psychologists, and sociologists – and even a lone earth scientist!

Besides offering a jumping-off point for students wishing to achieve a B.Sc. Health Sciences, SDK125 will also be the starting theory course for the forthcoming Foundation Degree in Health Sciences, due to come on stream in autumn 2007. Other Level 1 theory will come from an eclectic mix of 10-point and 15-point taster courses in hot topics in science and medicine – more on this shortly. The Foundation degree theory will also comprise our old friend *SK277 Human Biology*, and a new course, code unconfirmed at present, entitled *Psychology of Health and Ill-health*. This course, besides underlining the strong links between mind and body, acknowledges the widespread mental health issues that accompany many physical ailments. It is alleged that as many as 70 per cent of people attended by ambulance crews have mental health problems of one kind or another – a worrying statistic.

This is all very well, many of you will be thinking, but what about me? We are all preoccupied with our own health and well-being. We are developing a suite of 15-point courses on a variety of chronic conditions, aimed at patients and carers. Top of the list is *SK120 Living With Diabetes*, launched in 2005 and so popular that an unplanned second annual presentation has been introduced. At various stages of planning are similar courses about living with, and managing, arthritis, autism, cancer, coronary heart disease, obesity, respiratory disease and kidney disease. All the courses will explain the science behind the disease and its treatment, as well as taking a holistic approach to the problems of living with such debilitating conditions.

The Science Faculty is keen to share its vision of health and well-being more widely, and besides existing collaborations, such as with the Faculty of Health and Social Care, we are hoping to contribute to the Sports programme being developed by FELS, with courses in human biology, nutrition and biomechanics. We hope also to play a major role in the emerging University-wide public health offering. This is an exciting time for the expanding health sciences area.

The diet paradox

Despite being one of the biggest spenders on diet products in Europe, Britons still possess the largest waistlines, according to research based on medical and government figures for 2004. The report, *Overweight Consumers*, found 40 per cent of the UK's population was overweight – the highest in Europe and only one percentage point behind America; 21 per cent of the UK population were identified as 'obese', second only to America's 24 per cent. The authors conclude that long working hours, eating 'on the go', and a heavy drinking culture all contribute, but they



identified one significant cultural influence, the decline in traditional cooking and the increase in ready-made meals. It is estimated that every Briton spends on average £80 a year on diet products, mainly low-fat dairy products, with growth in the dietary sector increasing faster than growth in the regular food and drink market.

Quality of provision, not choice, is the key to public service provision but don't expect New Labour to take any notice

After a two-year investigation into the views and aspirations of public service users and staff, a team of Open University researchers led by John Clarke, Professor in Social Policy, concluded that they reject the consumer model and that quality, rather than choice, was their key concern. Yvonne Cook, editor of *Sesame*, reports for *Society Matters*

The New Labour Government is committed to reforming our public services, and it knows just what we voters want – choice. Choice of schools to send our children to; choice of hospitals to attend when we need an operation; an extension of the benefits of consumerism into an area where the provider, rather than the consumer, has traditionally called the shots. Prime Minister Tony Blair embraced this philosophy perfectly in June 2004: 'Choice puts the levers in the hands of parents and patients so that they, as citizens and consumers, can be a driving force for improvement in their public services' (quoted in the *Guardian*, 24 June 2004).

But a study recently published by a small group of social scientists at the Open University suggests that the government could be barking up the wrong ideological tree. A team led by John Clarke, Professor in Social Policy, which spent two years investigating the views and aspirations of public service users and staff, found quality of provision came first.

'From about 1999, it became increasingly obvious New Labour were talking about the public as consumers,' explained Professor Clarke. 'But this raised important questions about whether people expect public services to be like shopping for commodities.'

The research team sought the views of users, front-line staff and managers in health, social care and the police services, using questionnaires to elicit how people defined their relationship towards these services and how positively they viewed key aspects of consumerism. They collected qualitative evidence through face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

The work was carried out between April 2003 and May 2005 in two contrasting locations, which to protect the confidentiality of participants are identified as Oldtown, a former industrial area with a relatively poor population, and Newtown, a younger town in a more generally affluent area, with only a short history of public service provision.

When asked to identify themselves in relation to three key public services – health, police and social care, only 4.4 per cent picked the term 'customer', while 'consumer' was chosen by a mere 2.2 per cent, the lowest figure of all. The largest number of people – 23.5 per cent – preferred to call themselves a 'member of the local community', with 'service user' (19.6 per cent) and 'patient' (18.9 per cent) next in order of preference.

The term 'citizen' has figured large in the debate surrounding public services. Do people see themselves as consumers or citizens? Here 'citizen' preferences received a

relatively low score of 9.5 per cent, suggesting that perhaps the assumptions underlying this debate may need to be re-thought.

People see their relationship with public services in a more complex way than previous arguments have allowed for. A key concept for the majority is membership. 'When talking about their relationship to the public services, people talk about things that connect them, about being part of something larger,' explained Professor Clarke.

The study also suggests that one of the reformers' assumptions – that the term 'patient' implies someone who feels passive and dependent – is not shared by those who call themselves patients. 'Part of the argument for reform of the health service is that the producers dominate and make people passive and dependent,' says John. 'The people we have talked to do not see themselves as passive and dependent. Our research suggests it is possible to be assertive, demanding, knowledgeable and persistent – without thinking of yourself as a consumer.'

When it comes to choice, people are ambivalent. On the one hand, when asked if they wanted more choice, most people gave a positive response, with service users generally being more positive than service staff. On the other hand, most people said they thought choice would increase inequality, and disproportionately benefit those with the best negotiating skills, or the loudest voice. From the interviews conducted by the research team it emerged that consumer-style choice was problematic. John explained: 'Generally, when people are ill, they want to be treated well and promptly at their local hospital, not to be offered a series of choices.'

But if the reformers' consumerist model does not accurately reflect what people want from these key public services, does the research tell us anything about what they do want? One consistent theme from the interviews was, not surprisingly, quality of service: people want public services which are better resourced and more responsive to the needs of users. It may be, the researchers suggest, that people express a preference for choice because they see it as an alternative to unsatisfactory service – a view backed by the work of others such as American psychologist Barry Schwartz.

The message to New Labour, then, said Professor Clarke, is that what people most want is not more choices to have to make, but more quality. 'Our research suggests that government should make sure resources go as a priority to providing high-quality, locally-accessible services, and make sure these services deal with people well. This does not

mean they will solve all your problems – if you are ill, there is no guarantee they will make you well, but you will be treated respectfully. We also need to build in the notion that this involves dialogue; we need to add time for negotiation.

'It may seem a bit of a glib message – do basic things well – but it saves chasing other mirages. Once you have got the basic things right, you can go on and do whatever else you want.'

So are New Labour, having pored over the social scientists' research, about to rush off and change their policy on the public services? Professor Clarke is not holding his breath in anticipation. 'I think our study will have minimal impact on this government's policies. It seems clear that this government, whatever it may say, is not interested in evidence-based policy making. There has been research stacking up against this consumerist approach for some time.'

But if government does, as Professor Clarke suggests, 'systematically ignore the difficult evidence', is there any point in collecting it in the first place? Professor Clarke thinks there is.

'I think this research will have three consequences,' he said. 'In the first place, it will become part of the wider debate about public services and consumerism, a resource which other people can draw on.'

'Second, it has academic consequences: most of the academic work around this area has operated on the simple distinction between 'citizen' and 'consumer'; the line we have taken suggests this will need to be re-thought.'

'And, finally, I am sure the research will seep its way into OU courses, such as the new Level 2 course on welfare, crime and society which we are working on.'

The study, *Creating citizen-consumers: changing relationships and identifications*, is part of the joint Economic and Social Research Council and Arts and Humanities Research Council's Cultures of Consumption programme. Full details are available at: www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/citizenconsumers

The findings and the debate will form the basis of a book by the research team, provisionally entitled, *Creating citizen-consumers: changing relationships and identifications*, due to be published by Sage in 2007.



Placards rest on the Accident and Injury Department of Bridgnorth Hospital. The hospital faced closure as the Shropshire County Primary Care Trust needs to make cuts.

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Our ageing population

By 2026, the number of people in the UK over the age of 85 will have risen by almost two-thirds. More of the elderly population is ageing too. In the last 35 years the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 13 per cent in 1971 to 16 per cent in 2004; among those 85 and older the increase has been more dramatic, from 7 to 12 per cent. In the same period the median age of the UK has risen from 34.1 to 38.6 years.

The countryside is going to be particularly affected. The age of the rural population is going to age more quickly than the rest of the UK. In rural areas of England, for example, the number of those aged over 85 is going to treble, and in many rural towns and villages, the over 50s will form the majority of the population. Research by Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy estimates that in the next 20 years the countryside's over 50s population is going to rise by 47 per cent compared to 30 per cent in urban areas, an increase driven partly by families moving to the rural areas from cities. The issue is compounded once children of these families return to the cities in adulthood to seek employment. The effect is a rapid escalation in the number of rural pensioners and a rise in pressure on the care

services. In 2006, the average age of the rural population was 42, compared to 36 for urban dwellers. This gulf is expected to widen by 2026.

In March 2006, the Wanless Report recommended that the Government treble the money spent on personal care for the elderly from the current £10 billion a year to £30 billion by 2026 (2 per cent of National Income). By 2026, 450,000 more people would require either a care home place or social care services to remain at home.

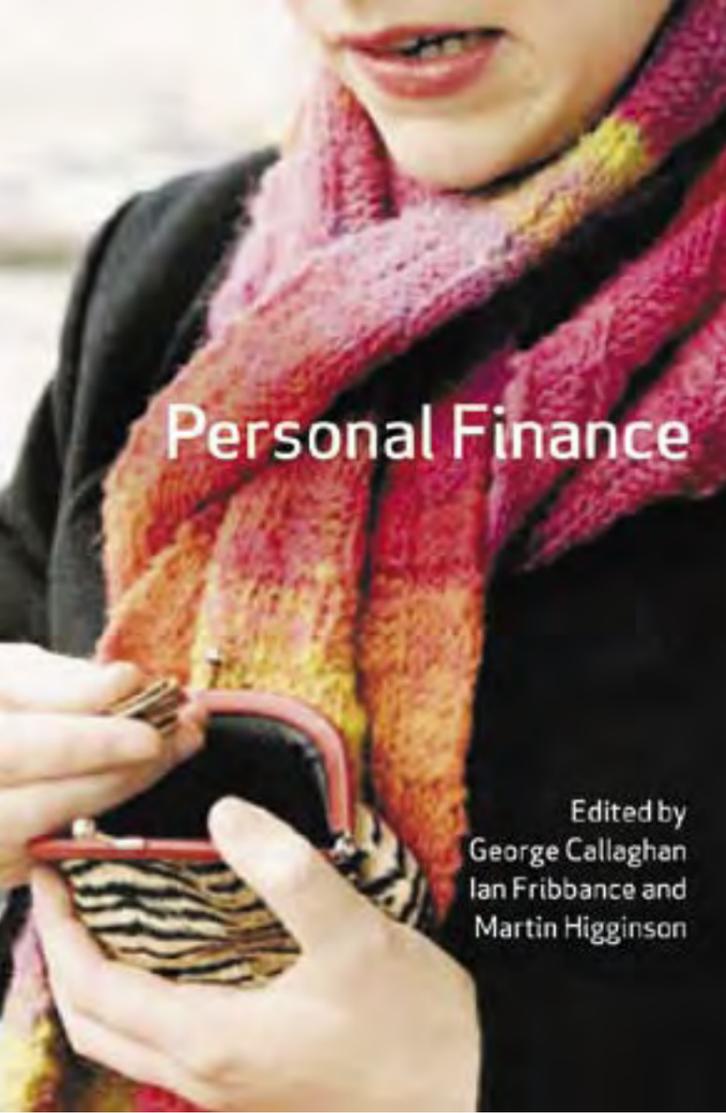
The Report also called for an end to means testing which was causing 'anger and distress' to millions of elderly people. It called for the state to fund 66 per cent care for the elderly with the rest coming from individual contributions. Care for the poorest would come from state benefits.

Carers UK estimate that carers who look after relatives or friends are missing out on over £750 million in benefits. Over 7 out of 10 older carers are unable to afford adequate heating or clothing. Between 40 and 60 per cent of all disability entitlements remain unclaimed each year, mainly because the rules are interminably complicated and involve intrusive questioning and scrutiny.



Elderly holidaymaker and carer wait to cross the road.

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Riding the ethical wave

People with incompatible views of how things should be all have to live on the same planet, and there are some unreasonable thugs in the world. How can practical ethics help? Would it provide a moral guide to what we should and should not do? Derek Matravers, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, provides some answers

At the moment we are riding an ethical wave and witnessing an explosion of interest in ethical concerns. New anthologies, handbooks and guides appear with a metronomic regularity as we become more aware of how ethical considerations shape our lives.

Over the past few years the University has been involved in practical or applied ethics. There is plenty of ethics in our curriculum but few courses that are explicitly labelled as such. There is also plenty of research about with an ethical dimension; the seminars on ethics given by people from across the University are lively and well attended.

But what is practical ethics? How does it relate on the one side to ethical theory and on the other to life and action? To answer this question we need to ask for something else – a moral framework which provides a guide to action. That is, will practical ethics tell us what we ought, or not, to do?

Even if we have a theory of conduct, there may still be a gap between whatever it delivers and our behaviour. In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Bernard Williams asks for what a professor's protestations count when people kick his office door down, break his spectacles and take him away.

Ethics need not be just talk. Williams thinks we have a double reason to be sceptical of theory – it is not clear that spouting reason would be the best thing to do when the door gets kicked down (why would the assailant stop to listen?), and it is not clear that even if he or she did stop to listen, we could find arguments that would convince through reason alone. Fortunately, in this country at any rate, not many people go around kicking down doors and, to the extent they do, nice people like us are unlikely to bump into them (on the other hand, we might need only to bump into them once).

So, to the extent that we are aiming to be practical rather than theoretical, there is this double issue between academia and practical ethics. Why should people listen to us, and, even if they do listen to us, what can we say to convince?

It is difficult to know what to say in answer to the first question. One answer, of course, is legislation – to require people to include some ethical component. Other extraneous factors might be important. If all our competitors are taking an ethical stance, then we might lose our position in the market if we do not pay attention. However effective such appeals to extraneous self-interest might be, it somehow seems a cheat: it would be more satisfying (and stand a greater chance of success) if people were motivated to be ethical in and for itself.

But what can we say to convince? There are two different issues here. First, what can we say that *ought* to convince the people we are talking to, and second, what can we say that *actually will* convince the people we are talking to? Optimistically, we might think that arguments that ought to convince will convince and, what is more, only arguments that ought to convince will convince.

Let's look at the second first. Clearly, people are swayed by more than mere rational argument: the profession of advertising and spin doctoring is testimony to that. Indeed, it is often easier, even if one has rational arguments, to put them to one side in favour of rhetoric. There may be good arguments for eating spinach, but few are as motivating as the thought that one might turn out like Popeye.

Even if we take a scenario in which people are likely to listen, and in which they are likely to be swayed by rational argument, matters are not simple. Consider a committee dedicated to sorting out some tricky ethical issue, on which some specialist in ethics might sit as an expert. One view of their role might be this. He or she has some high-powered philosophical theory and applies it to particular situations to draw practical consequences. If the ethical theory incorporates a theory of conduct (for example, Utilitarianism recommends that we should act so as to bring about the maximum balance of pleasure over pain) this will at least be possible. Hence, it is clear what a utilitarian should say in a committee deciding whether to put money into this or that part of the local medical provision: do the maths – put the money into that project which will bring about the greatest balance of pleasure. The problem – one problem – is that the force of this argument depends on whether one accepts the utilitarian way of seeing things, and the rest of the committee might not be utilitarian. It would be counter-productive and painful for everyone concerned, if one had to run impromptu seminars defending the philosophical theory one wanted to use every time one wanted to use it.

The relation between theory and being effective on a committee is not so direct. Between the two we can put a layer of considerations that are widely recognised as reasons for action. All of the following are reasons for doing something (which can, on particular occasions, be outweighed): that it causes pain to someone, that we gave our word, that it will enrich us, that it will enrich me at your expense (well, it is a reason for me to do something), that it is a Sunday – the list is endless. To state the obvious, reasons can be of many different sorts but some reasons may not be widely shared, and some reasons may be reasons for me to say something must be done, but reasons for you to say that this something must not be done.

It is a pain attending departmental meetings. Not only does it involve travel into work, but the meetings are interminable and the decisions rarely decisive. However, someone has to think through the issues, contribute to a departmental view and so on. It is a Tuesday morning – I have got up late so will not miss the rush hour. What should I do? Stay and write this article, or go to the departmental meeting? My not going will make little difference; my colleagues will cover for me and divide up whatever work there is between them. I have reasons not to attend the meeting. What, however, would my colleagues feel? My not being there means that the burden of keeping the show on the road falls disproportionately on them: they need to work more to cover my not working.

The Harvard Professor, T.M. Scanlon, developed a view that might deliver the required flexibility. One has to be able to justify one's actions to those affected on grounds that they could not reasonably reject. This is good because it enables us to appeal to shared reasons without having to worry about how those reasons are grounded. What is nice about this is that it presupposes that central to human motivation is the desire to be seen to be reasonable. In this context practical ethics recommends courses of action that those affected by the action could not reasonably reject. It can buy into reason giving, without worrying too much about why those reasons are reasons.

This is all well and good, but its limits are demonstrated by two problems. First, what is a reason for one person may not be a reason for another. The decision to open for business on a Sunday could be reasonably rejected by those who have strong religious objections. Second, what of the person who kicks the door down to take away the Professor? There may well be reasons for him not doing it but he is not motivated by the desire to appear reasonable. At a practical level these are just facts that are part of what makes life miserable: people with incompatible views of how things should be all have to live on the same planet, and there are unreasonable thugs in the world. In the long run we just have to hope that reason will triumph, and that pluralism will cease to be a problem and people will stop being thuggish. There is no reason to think, however, that the triumph of reason is inevitable.

You and your money textbook set to become a bestseller

DB123 Course Chair Ian Fribbance reports an unprecedented achievement for the new Level 1 course in personal finance

The book for the new Faculty course *You and Your Money: Personal Finance in Context* looks set to become a breakthrough text in the study of personal finance, following a record-breaking co-publication deal with John Wiley's. The deal, representing the largest initial order for books in the University's history, looks set to help make the book the leading textbook in this rapidly developing field.

The study of personal finance is burgeoning in schools, colleges and increasingly Higher Education. Personal finance qualifications are now available in both the 14–16 and 16–18 curricula. A recent study showed that many 18–40 year olds had significantly worse financial knowledge than other age groups. The study, by Bristol University and the Financial Services Authority, led to calls for a national strategy to improve the UK's financial capability, including personal finance playing a bigger role in educational curricula.

And yet there is still a yearning gap for a UK-based introductory personal finance textbook. The co-published DB123 text, entitled simply *Personal Finance*, looks set to fill this gap. Uniquely, it places the study of personal finance squarely within its proper social and economic context, introducing students to important concepts such as liberalization, regulation, the consumer society and changing household structures. It also introduces the added dimension of the relationship between individuals and households in financial decision making, and devotes a chapter to the neglected subject of care, and household formation and dissolution.

The book has already attracted favourable academic comment. Dr James Mallon of Napier University said it 'presents the subject of financial planning in an intellectually stimulating way, which links theory to practice, and is comprehensible to both the student of personal finance and the layperson wishing to develop a sound knowledge base'. Bob Curry of UCE said that it will become an 'ideal core text for first and second year undergraduates', while Jane King of Oxford Brookes said 'it will encourage students to think about the wider social and economic context of their [financial] decisions'.

The book is the core text on DB123, which also features a fully interactive DVD-Rom containing financial planning tools and calculators, interviews and household scenarios, as well as a Course & Study Guide. The course – now open for recruitment for the November 2006 presentation – is also featuring in The Open University 'Young Applicants in Schools Scheme' and is going to play its part in bringing financial education into the school classroom.



Family studies: cultural change and social connections

Elizabeth B. Silva and Janet Fink outline an exciting proposal to bring family studies into the curriculum

Exciting developments are under way to create a programme of studies on 'The Family', drawing on current OU teaching and the innovative research on projects related to family issues across the University.

A two-day workshop in July 2006, funded by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Curriculum and Awards and the Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance (CCIG), explored challenges involved in establishing a new Family Studies curriculum. Ideas ranged from a suite of short courses to a degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

We aim to embed our wide-ranging family studies oriented research more fully into our teaching so we can meet clear external demand. Representatives of agencies working on issues of 'family' attended the workshop.

The centrality of 'family' in social and cultural life makes its concentrated study particularly attractive to the student population profile of the OU. Professionals in various public services looking for extended expertise, people in the age group 25–40 seeking re-training and those interested in understanding the historical and personal connections to their roots, environments and circumstances, are all likely to find an interest in this kind of curriculum.

'Family' concerns are found everywhere these days. Tony Blair's agenda for dealing with crime and disorder is based on creating a 'culture of respect' which places great emphasis on parenting and family responsibilities. In the media a series of television programmes such as *Child of Our Time*, *Supernanny*, *House of Tiny Tearaways* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* have addressed the future and the past as markers for the cultures we create, the worlds we live in and the desires, possibilities and choices for our family lives. The *Guardian* has recently created a new 8-page weekly supplement on 'Family', where stories of connections with significant others are given prominence. These attest to an eagerness to know more about this dimension of our personal life and its different effects upon our understanding of ourselves.

The OU already has considerable expertise and investment in the provision of courses in areas related to the family. The third-level course, *DD305 Personal Lives and Social Policy*, explores some of the key issues connecting the individual, the family and social policy. *DD308 Making Social Worlds*, currently in production,

will channel students' interests directly to a family studies curriculum. At the postgraduate level *D860 Rethinking Social Policy* and *D845 Research Methods Dissertation in Social Science* deal with texts relevant to family studies interests. In other areas of the University there is a wide array of equally valuable short courses and undergraduate courses: *A173 Start Writing Family History*, *Y156 Understanding Children*, *ED840 Child Development in Families, Schools and Society*, *K204 Working with Children and Families*, *K224 Social Work with Children and Families*, *U212 Childhood* and, in production, *KE308 Youth*. We are currently surveying our own OU experience more fully.

In putting together a recent research bid for a Leverhulme Trust research programme on Family and Intergenerational Research (FAIR) we were made aware of the strength of the OU research in this field and of the importance of maximizing our expertise. CCIG has been an 'umbrella' for work in this area. This encompasses research on internalized family relationships, materiality, practices and representation, and on narratives of belonging. Concerns with theory development and the application of innovative methods are also prominent in this work. Other projects on 'the family' in Social Sciences, FELS and in the Faculty of Health and Social Care have been funded within the ESRC 'Identities and Social Change' Research Programme. The Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change (CRESC) also has work in this area. These represent thinking at the edge of knowledge in the field which could be valuably incorporated into OU teaching. The suggestion is to develop a family studies curriculum that builds upon the extensive range of teaching expertise and research interests in departments, faculties and research centres across the University.

We shared our early ideas at a University wide curriculum conference in January 2006. It enabled us to present some ideas about the development of teaching links across units and the extent of research into family to discuss how this might be progressed. The workshop in July reinforced our commitment to offer students pathways to awards in family studies and how to use our research to develop an innovative curriculum in this area. This is part of a broader agenda to undertake inter-faculty discussions, market research, collaborations with other external agencies and possible relationships with other



Mother and child, Dublin street market, Ireland.

institutions of higher education. Given our increasingly multicultural society and accelerated demographic changes, this area of our personal and relational lives seems a particularly pertinent topic for investment and attention.

We would be very interested to hear views about these ideas – our emails are: e.b.silva@open.ac.uk, j.fink@open.ac.uk

Workplace romance

Research at Westminster University revealed that large employers are creating the 'perfect playground' for workplace romance to flourish and fuelling the escalation of UK divorce. The study, reported at the 2005 British Psychological Society's national conference, was based on interviews conducted with a range of employees, from finance houses and banks to airlines and IT companies, who had experienced

an affair with a work colleague. While the trend in the USA is for companies to develop policies which outlaw work-based romance, in the UK employers turn a blind eye. The research found that most of the relationships did not develop; some ended in abortions, others in moves out of the work place. Most interviewees said they did not regret their workplace affairs. Many thought that employers should be more aware, especially helping employees cope when the romance has ended. Chantal Gaultier, an occupational psychologist, explained: 'We have to change the culture and accept that romances are going to happen but create policies to support people.'

A tall story?

Women who are taller are more likely to possess higher career aspirations than shorter women. Research by academics at Stirling and St Andrew's Universities interviewed 1,220 women from Britain, the USA, Canada and Australia and discovered that taller women were more ambitious, less broody, and less inclined to start a family. Shorter women were more likely to be more maternal and 'homely'.



Hello, could I speak to an occupational psychologist please?



Scottish decline

Scotland has the highest rate of population decline in Europe and by 2009 the population is expected to fall below 5 million. According to the European Commission there is a critical population mass which determines the viability of an island population. Any island with a population of less than 4,000 is likely to experience net migration, an ageing population, poor facilities and an influx of second home buyers from mainland UK. Only six islands had achieved this critical mass by 2004: Arran, Bute, Skye, mainland Orkney, Shetland, and Lewis and Harris.

The country needs to attract around 50,000 relatively young migrants each year to stave off a population crisis and decelerate the population decline. The population in Scotland's 95 inhabited islands has fallen by over 100,000 since 1991, the number of people of working age has reduced significantly, and the number of pensioners has increased.

Does living together make you fat?

Research in the last two years has provided contradictory evidence on that burning issue of lifestyle magazines: does moving in with a partner make you fat? A Newcastle University study now maintains that women tend to put on weight when they move in with a boyfriend whereas men became healthier once they had moved in with a girlfriend. After analysing raw data from several different studies across the world, the researchers found that diets change because each partner tries to please the other. This explains the gender differences in weight gain and loss and well-being. Men tended to eat the lighter healthier green options favoured by their partners. Women shifted their preference towards the richer meals preferred by their partners, often with larger portions than before, and a high fat content.

Young women reject Superwoman careers

The 2005 Young Women's Lifestyle survey of Britain revealed the new generation of 20-somethings reject careerist aspirations and pledge to devote themselves to staying at home and having babies. A mere 1 per cent of those surveyed considered a career to be a top priority once they had children, signalling a rejection of the Superwoman ideal. Over two-thirds defied conventional feminism wisdom and declared: 'a man should be the main provider for his family if possible'. Only one in ten wanted to work full time and put a child into a nursery.



Hello, is there anyone there?



Governing the Internet

The first World Summit on Communications and the Information Society, hosted by the UN, raised important questions about the global governance of the Internet. How should the world ensure the Internet does not become dominated by the great powers at the expense of the weak? What are the implications of this power struggle for civil society? Professor of Media Studies, Richard Collins, who participated in some Internet governance meetings, explores what the future may hold

In 2005 the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) met for a second time in Tunis. The stakes were high: who controlled the Internet?

The summit was the first where the United Nations got to grips with governance implications in the growth of global communications. For the first time civil society featured as an official partner and participant in finding solutions.

The debates that ensued focused on conflicts between types of governance and struggles between governments for control and domination. When the summit first convened in Geneva in 2003, it was impossible to secure agreement on vital Internet governance issues and so a Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) was set up in the hope of establishing a basis for agreement. The fulcrum, and still unresolved, issue of the WSIS was governance of the global Internet addressing system – the domain name system (DNS) – which is administered by the United States.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was established under US law and a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Department of Commerce, and is thus accountable to a single government, rather than the United Nations. This makes administration of the global Internet addressing system different from the systems used for other global communication systems – notably posts and telecommunications – which are governed by UN agencies. Would the deliberations over the governance of the Internet show further how the arrogance of the great powers erode the multinational order represented by the United Nations? Some participants in both the WSIS and the WGIG saw issues in this way. For example, Syria stated that: 'The Internet today is governed by American law and managed by an American business. It's no secret. We all know it, and we cannot accept it'.

While great powers (is there more than one?) obviously exhibit a huge influence on the Internet it is possible that the push for UN control, especially in hierarchical forms, could also be problematic. Critics of the WSIS push to bring the Internet under a UN regime, and specifically under the UN's International Telecommunication Union. They argue that top-down, hierarchical governance are unnecessary and unworkable. The Internet Society argued that the assumption the Internet needs hierarchical top-down governance ignored the decentralized structure on which the Internet was so successfully built. Such neglect, the Society argued, could harm the Internet's further growth.

The development of the Internet has been one based on non-hierarchical governance where networks have been of vital importance. One of the prophets of the Internet, John Perry Barlow, proclaimed in his *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*, in 2003: 'Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather'.

Civil society participation at the Summit was facilitated

by a formal civil society bureau. The WGIG, in particular, drew in substantial civil society participation (which provided a significant increment of substantive expertise to the Summit). But opening the door to civil society (and business) left open the question of how such communities of interest should organize themselves for democracy. How should they (how can they) deliberate? How are their boundaries to be set? Who should represent them and how should representatives be accountable?

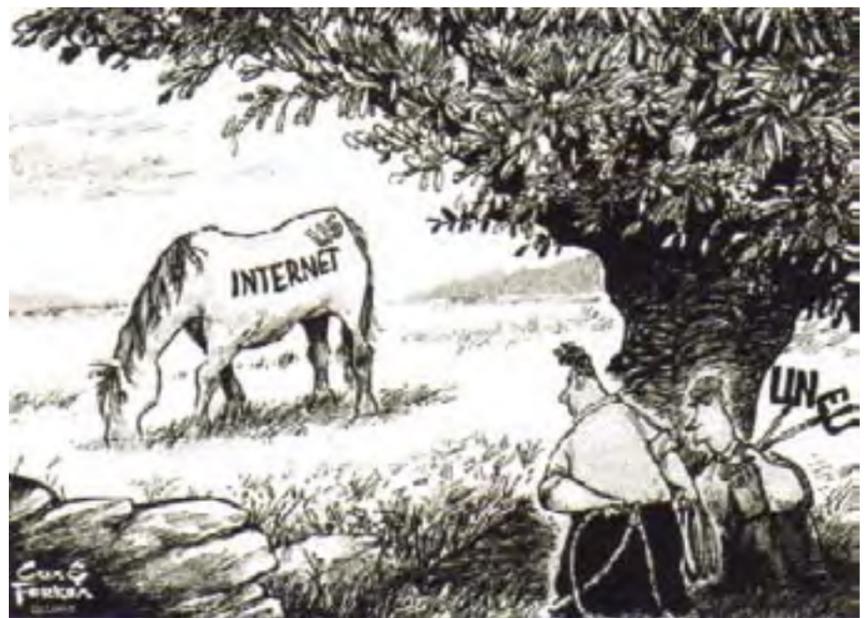
I was an accredited civil society representative to the WSIS, and decided to conduct a piece of action research. The rather haphazard process whereby this took place lends credence to some of the criticisms of civil society participation in events such as WSIS/WGIG.

Some states participating actively in the WSIS/WGIG fought hard against civil society presence and participation (and succeeded in excluding two notable civil society organizations committed to freedom of expression, *Reporters without Borders* and *Human Rights in China*). Others observed that some civil society organizations appeared to have very close relationships indeed with the governments of their states of domicile.

Opposition to civil society participation sometimes also extended outside the conference hall. The European Union made a formal complaint to the government of Tunisia following incidents in Tunis during the second WSIS meeting, which included police obstruction of civil society organizations.

And although there are undoubtedly grounds for questioning the legitimacy of civil society participation in events such as WSIS/WGIG, it may be thought that there are also grounds to question the legitimacy of states' participation. Though few would claim the great power(s) adhere spotlessly to the highest human rights practices, some of the states which were most vociferous in their criticism of US hegemony in international Internet governance score considerably lower than the USA in democratic legitimacy (e.g. when rights such as freedom of expression are considered). And there is some absurdity in a system of political representation which awards Tuvalu (population 11,636) and China (population 1,306,313,812) similar status.

Here too there was a clash between Internet tradition and practice on the one hand and the practices and expectations embedded in the treaty-based management of global communication infrastructures, on the other. ICANN's



memorandum of understanding, for example, mandates 'bottom up' co-ordination and ICANN retains a so-called 'at large' system of representation and consultation in order to 'promote structured involvement and informed participation of the global individual Internet user community in ICANN'.

So what did the Summit actually achieve? Internet governance remains substantially unchanged after the WSIS/WGIG. Although it would be hard to make a convincing 'in principle' case for the status quo, the ICANN is certainly open to well-founded criticism on operational and politico-democratic grounds.

WSIS/WGIG suggested that the status quo may be preferable to at least some of the obvious alternatives. The Internet works – not perfectly its true but it works. On balance the status quo is friendly to freedom of expression. And, though sometimes it is seen as peculiarly aberrant, ICANN and its ad hoc governance of a key global infrastructure are by no means unprecedented. For example, important aspects of global financial and banking regimes are governed by procedures formulated outside any inter-governmental agreement.

Part of the fascination of the issues raised by Internet governance was to see a representative instance of a class of global phenomena being enacted. We saw an instance of international interdependence outrunning the capacity of established formal political institutions to manage it. Certainly, the arrogance of the great powers was in evidence but so too was competition between different systems, institutions and philosophies of governance, all, in varying degrees, of imperfect legitimacy. As the UN acknowledged in its *We the peoples* report of 2004, 'Global governance is no longer the sole domain of Governments'.

Gender inequalities

- 70 per cent of the 1.2 billion people in the world living in poverty are women and children
- 85 million girls in the world do not attend school, compared to 45 million boys
- 700 million women in the world live without adequate food, water, sanitation, health care, and education
- 67 per cent of illiterate adults in the world are women
- 12 of the 191 countries in the United Nations are led by women
- 21 per cent of the world's managers are women
- 62 per cent of unpaid family workers are female
- 1 in 19,000 women in the UK die in childbirth; in Ethiopia 1 in 7 women die in childbirth
- Women in the UK have an average life expectancy of 81; in Swaziland it is 39
- Women in full-time occupations in Britain earn 17 per cent on average less than men
- Women in part-time occupations in Britain earn 42 per cent on average less than men

Cyberspace chat is the way to woo

Research into the communication habits of 229 people aged 18–65 reveals wooing on-line can be effective. Psychologists at Bath University found that when couples who had built up a relationship electronically met for the first time, 94 per cent of them saw each other again. However, though email was found to be important, of greater significance was the use of live communication through meetings or by telephone. The researchers found that email liaison was more likely to be more calculated while the anonymity of online meetings allowed clients to shed their inhibitions. Women were found to be more sexually adventurous online than in the 'real world'. Men were found to be more committed to on-line relationships than women.

The researchers found that the average length of online relationships was seven months, and nearly a fifth of the successful relationships lasted longer than a year.





Little Britain



British population surges above 60 million

In 2004, the latest year for which data is available, the UK population rose by a record 222,600, forcing the government to revise population projections. The Office for National Statistics now believe that by 2011 the UK population will rise to 61.9 million, and that by 2031 it will have reached 67 million. In 1951, the UK population was just 50.2 million.

The increases are due to rising birth rates, increased life expectancy and immigration, especially from the new EU countries, including Poland, the Czech Republic and Lithuania. In 2004, 208,000 Britons left the UK to live abroad, an increase of 18,000 from 2003.

Violence against women increasing to record levels

Women are experiencing record levels of domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse and harassment according to End Violence Against Women, a new coalition of voluntary organizations, launched in the autumn of 2005, which includes Amnesty International, Refuge and the TUC. The coalition aims to raise awareness of growing fears about the relative safety of women in society. In the UK during 2004-5:

- 400,000 incidents of domestic violence took place, the majority against women; over 100 women were killed
- 24,000 women reported sex attacks and 13,000 women reported rapes, double the rate in 1997
- 600,000 are estimated to have been stalked
- 1,000 British Asian women were forced into marriage; Scotland Yard re-opened 117 'honour killings' for investigation

In England and Wales, the government estimate the cost of domestic abuse exceeds £23 billion a year through lost earnings, 'emotional harm', health care and housing provision. The Home Office report that while reported rape is rising, convictions for rape are falling. The latest figures available, for 2002, show only 5.6 per cent of 11,766 reported rapes led to a rapist being convicted. There were just 655 convictions, 258 of which had come from a guilty plea. Only 14 per cent of cases pursued made it to trial.

Male use of prostitutes increasing

Sex tourism, increases in stag holidays, growing divorce rates and an escalation in the commercialism of sex by the media, have all been cited in a research study to explain why, in the 1990s, 1 in 10 men used prostitutes compared to 1 in 20 in the 1980s. The study, revealed by the journal *Sexually Transmitted Infections* for the first time in December 2005, attributed the rise partly to a greater openness by men to admit to going with prostitutes as sex commoditization intensified in society. However, the researchers were cautious. The study revealed that research carried out in 1949 showed that 1 in 4 men used prostitutes.

Britain in numbers

- 1 The percentage of women aged 16-44 who say they have had 40 or more sexual partners
- 6 The average number of sexual partners reported by men aged 16-44
- 60 The percentage of men who do ironing
- 17 The percentage of people living beneath the poverty line
- 33 The percentage of men aged over 85 who own a mobile phone
- 7 The percentage of households which are lone parent families
- 51 The percentage of the adult population who are married
- 10 The percentage of men aged 30-34 in England who still live with their parents
- 26 The percentage of people who belong to a trade union
- 42 The percentage of birth outside marriage
- 17 The median age at which both men and women lose their virginity

Sources: Office for National Statistics and Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006

Health gap widens

In the early days of the first New Labour Government, Tony Blair pledged to reduce the health inequality gap – measured by life expectancy and infant mortality – by 10 per cent.

Research by the Scientific Reference Group of Health Inequalities, a government advisory body for the Department of Health, has found that, despite progress on reducing child poverty, the gap has in fact widened. The research revealed the gap in life expectancy between the bottom fifth of the population and the population as a whole widened by 2 per cent for males and 5 per cent for females between 1997-9 and 2001-3. Life expectancy in wealthier areas can be up to eight years longer than poorer areas of the country.

In 2003, the infant mortality rate of the bottom fifth of the population was 19 per cent higher than the rest of the population, an increase of 6 per cent since 1997.

Our mental health time bomb

In 2006, the Department of Health revealed that as many as 1 in 5 of the British population may be suffering from a psychiatric illness. The Mental Health Foundation and the World Health Organisation identified a growing problem among children. In Britain 1 in 15 children self-harm and over 10,000 teenagers attempt suicide each year. The situation is not helped, according to the charity Childline, by the pressure upon children to care for mentally ill parents and relatives. Childline estimates that over 175,000 children are being deprived of their childhoods because they have been forced into caring for psychiatrically disturbed parents abandoned by social services. Each year over 25,000 people are sectioned under the Mental Health Act. *Social Trends, 2006*, published by the Office for National Statistics, reported that children from broken homes were twice as likely to suffer from mental health problems as those living with married parents. Boys whose parents had split up displayed the highest rate of childhood mental illness in 2004. ONS also report that children from broken homes show more signs of mental illness as they age than children from stable relationships, resulting in greater exclusion from school and society.

Percentage of women MPs, 2006

Rwanda	48.9
Sweden	45.3
Norway	37.9
Finland	37.5
Denmark	36.9
Netherlands	36.7
Cuba	36.0
Spain	36.0
Costa Rica	35.3
Argentina	35.0
United Kingdom	19.7
USA	15.2



A young girl who was blown out to sea on a set of inflatable teeth was rescued by a man on an inflatable lobster. A coast guard spokesman commented:

'This sort of thing is all too common!'

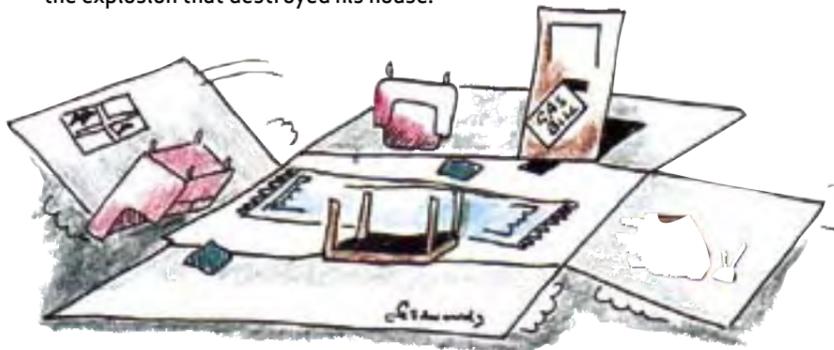
You couldn't make it up!

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS VAN?
Well, one very similar ...
Maybe ... maybe not!
CONTACT THE IRISH POLICE

Irish police are being handicapped in a search for a stolen van because they can not issue a description. It's a Special Branch vehicle and they don't want the public to know what it looks like.



Commenting on a complaint from a Mr Arthur Purdey about a large gas bill, a spokesman for North West Gas said: 'We agree it was rather high for the time of year. It is possible Mr Purdey has been charged for the gas used up during the explosion that destroyed his house.'



Bagpipers suffer for their art. According to research by the *Pipe and Drummer* magazine, people who play the bagpipes suffer from hearing loss, RSI, marriage breakdown and alcoholism.





History's top ten boycotts

Imagine a gross injustice: you pay taxes but are refused the vote; you have to give up your seat on a bus because of the colour of your skin; your village is bulldozed to build a security wall. Nobody cares, and nothing happens. Is there any way you can make a stand without resorting to violence? The boycott always features in any list of best strategies. Andrew Trigg, Senior Lecturer in Economics, reveals his top ten boycotts of all time

1 Apartheid in South Africa

Pass laws, Bantustans, institutional discrimination, seizure of land, house demolitions – these were just some of the horrors of the apartheid system. In 1959 a meeting took place at the Holborn Halls in Camden calling for an economic boycott of South Africa. Julius Nyerere, later to become President of Tanzania said: 'Each of us can remove his individual prop to the South African system by refusing to buy South African goods.' Although Margaret Thatcher held out till the last against sanctions, the senate of our very own Open University voted for an academic boycott of South African universities. Students also played a full part, with Barclays Bank forced to pull out of South Africa to shore up its declining student client base.

2 The Montgomery bus boycott



On the first day of December 1955, Rosa Parks was sitting in the black section of the bus taking her home from work in Montgomery, Alabama. The bus was full, and she was asked by the driver to give up her seat to a white person. On this occasion, Rosa refused and was arrested under Alabama's 'illegal' segregation law. With the help of a local pastor called Martin Luther King, the local black population carried out a 13-month boycott of the bus service. In the face of great intimidation – King was arrested and his

house petrol bombed – the boycott forced the bus company to integrate, and a civil rights movement was born. Rosa died in 2006.

3 Ghandi

One of the inspirations for the civil rights movement was the non-violent approach expounded by Mahatma Ghandi. To oppose the British occupation of India, Ghandi organized a boycott of all British-made goods, together with a campaign for people in India to spin their own cloth. The mass participation in this action also included the boycott of law courts and educational institutions. Unfortunately, Ghandi called off this action in 1922, when it was at its most successful, fearing that it could lead to increasing tension and violence. In the aftermath, he was imprisoned by the British on several occasions. There is some debate over whether calling off the boycott was a mistake that delayed the struggle for Indian independence, resulting in even more violence.



4 Charles Cunningham Boycott

Boycott was an ex-serviceman and land-agent who ruthlessly expelled tenants from their land in eighteenth century Ireland, and opposed land reform. The tenants refused to work for him – he was the first person to be boycotted. Although Boycott tried to fight this action, in 1880, by employing 50 Orangemen to tend his land, the costs were prohibitive, not least because of the 1,000 soldiers the government had to hire to protect them. In 1886 he left Ireland for good, a defeated but not forgotten man.

5 Apartheid in Israel

Pass laws, Bantustans, institutional discrimination, seizure of land, house demolitions: does this sound familiar? We might also add air strikes, assassinations, collective punishments, and an illegal security fence that divides Palestinian villages and a university campus. Whereas crimes committed by other states are met with sanctions, Israel is given financial support by the West. Trade unionists cannot turn a blind eye to the call for solidarity from Palestinian trade unions. In addition to support from UNISON, the former lecturers union NATFHE voted for an academic boycott of Israel. Apologists have tried to paint Israel as the victim, smearing the boycott campaign as anti-Semitic, even though it is led by prominent Jewish academics such as Professor Steven Rose here at the Open University.



6 Grunwicks

A respectable feminist professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences mentioned to me in passing that she has for a long time worn contact lenses – ever since her spectacles were smashed by a policeman in the hot summer of 1976. She was supporting a strike by workers at the Grunwicks factory in North London. The mainly female and Asian workforce were scraping 70 pence an hour, in sweltering conditions, even forced to raise their hands for permission to go to the toilet. One day Jayaben Desai and her son walked out, and others followed, starting one of the last great trade union disputes. The mainly male and white postal workers of Cricklewood boycotted all Grunwicks post, bank workers refused to deal with its accounts, and the dispute became national. Eventually the campaign was lost, an important turning point in the decline of the labour movement; but in true Dunkirk spirit it is often such defeats that are most remembered.

7 The Boston Tea Party

Why do Americans drink coffee instead of tea? In the 1700s, the population of Britain's American colonies objected to a tax that the British Government imposed on imported tea. Since Americans did not have the vote, why should they pay this tax? No taxation without representation. A boycott of tea consumption was started, which culminated in the dumping of imported tea into Boston's harbour – the Boston Tea Party – an important turning point in the struggle for independence. Even now tea is seen as an English drink, which shows the potential power of consumer boycotts.



8 University pay catch-up

A more recent trade union dispute that has surprised us all is the 2006 pay dispute by university lecturers in the UK. After years of starting actions and then collapsing at the first opportunity, the AUT joined NATFHE in making a determined stand for the salaries of university lecturers and supporting staff. The Open University has the largest branch of the AUT, and has a big say in national policy. We have supported a boycott of exams and assessment as a way of bringing the employers into negotiation. Our main argument is that universities cannot recruit staff if university pay is allowed to fall further behind comparable professions (a scenario that will, in the long-run, be very detrimental to students). On the eve of going to press a 3-year deal was agreed of 13.1 per cent, with more for low paid workers in the sector. The third year offer, however, is subject to an independent review of University pay.

9 Fair trade

I was recently buying coffee at Euston station when another distinguished professor in the Faculty told me off for not buying fair trade. It was, she informed me, the same price as ordinary coffee and I should make a moral stand on this issue. It occurs to me that buying such goods, for which we are assured the suppliers in developing countries are paid a reasonable amount, does technically represent a boycott of non-free trade goods. But can I get her to attend union meetings where other boycotts are discussed?

10 MK Dons

Wimbledon Football Club had been based in the Merton area of South London for over a hundred years, but in 2002 a group of businessmen moved the franchise to Milton Keynes. The resulting boycott by Wimbledon supporters led to the formation of a 'real' alternative, Wimbledon AFC. This semi-professional outfit has climbed the lower leagues, just missing out on promotion to the conference last season. But this did not prevent celebrations by the AFC staff and supporters when they heard that MK Dons had been relegated to League 2. Forget Mourinho versus Wenger – the big one will be when AFC Wimbledon face MK Dons in the football league. (Apologies to our course manager, a season-ticket holder who checks the MK Dons website every day.)

Some of these ten boycotts have been chosen for their OU connections; others are entirely due to my own political bias. The ranking of these ten has been chosen, in part, on the basis of their international impact. Please let me know if you disagree with the ranking or can suggest any other boycotts that should be included in any top ten. In the next issue of *Society Matters*, I will reveal my top ten 'colonial partitions'. Comments please to: a.b.Trigg@open.ac.uk

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All articles are written by the editor unless indicated. We welcome all contributions, and although there are no letters in this issue we welcome them. If you would like to write for our tenth issue – deadline 1 April 2007 – please contact the editor, Richard Skellington, at the address above or e-mail him at: r.s.skellington@open.ac.uk

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