

**Radstats Annual Conference 2018*****21<sup>st</sup> Century Inequality in the UK***February 24<sup>th</sup> 2018

The 2018 conference was held in London at St Luke's Community Centre. Attendance was small but enthusiastic. There were four excellent plenary speakers; three addressed the issue of inequality as it relates to income, reproductive health and intimate partner violence, while the fourth explored the feasibility of low-carbon towns. The day included three workshops specifically related to these themes, and one on the role of the statistician in the age of alternative facts. The full programme follows at the end of this report.

The day started with an update on the Radstats collection book from Jeff Evans, Sally Ruane and Humphrey Southall and a brief but interesting discussion about statistical literacy and statistics for activists.

The first plenary speaker was Stewart Lansley who outlined the potential for citizen's wealth funds to be a 'counterforce for divergence' and reduce inequality. The Swedish experience and the governance of such an initiative were among the issues discussed. Following Stewart's presentation Alison Macfarlane described how data from individual European countries compiled by members of the Euro-Peristat group were used to measure socioeconomic inequalities in stillbirth rates, providing a fascinating insight into the challenges of getting consistent data from the countries which collected data in different ways, and measure inequalities despite these difficulties.

Workshops followed on the themes of the first two plenary talks:

***Workshop 1 Citizen's wealth funds and universal basic income***

**Sarah Magnusson** [magnusson.sara@live.se](mailto:magnusson.sara@live.se)

Mechanisms needed for: implementation, management, future protection against theft by government and capital/ financial consultants; ensuring democratic control. Particularly discussing local initiatives where PFI or oil money had produced local benefit (Scotland), investments, if not just having more money to play with.

1. How is it supposed to be funded? Government borrow for investment and then hand over to local control? This is because government can borrow, but local councils can't. Reiterate than not by general taxation, but via special scrip/levy tax.
2. How to move on? Big national debate. Already had presentation to LibDems, one planned for Labour front bench, even Conservatives offering.

A written constitution, which we do not have?

Future funds based on initiative, N2 + Aus. Also pushing for a 1% wealth tax, and whether further wealth tax should be policy.

### ***Workshop 2 Measuring socioeconomic inequalities in reproductive health***

**Alison Macfarlane** [A.J.Macfarlane@CITY.AC.UK](mailto:A.J.Macfarlane@CITY.AC.UK)

The advantages of data linkages and pooling data from a number of countries were discussed, as well as the challenges of using different statistical systems, indicators and study designs, including longitudinal studies. Workshop participants were interested in the origins of the Euro-Peristat project, the role of the European Research Council and how the research was funded, and the data managed in practice. Research into the association between educational level, age and mental health in pregnancy and aspects of reproductive health was discussed, as well as possible confounders and how they were dealt with.

The afternoon session started with a fascinating - and concerning - presentation on inequality and intimate partner violence by Jude Towers. Resilience was described as an important lens to see the issue through, as well as the more common motivation of the perpetrator. The difficulties that can be faced when trying to report incidents was described - in some cases the need to be computer literate - and the gendered nature of austerity was explored. The final presentation of the day was given by Mike Page, who looked at the feasibility of building a low or zero-carbon town in the UK, the clear benefits and why it hadn't happened to date.

Two afternoon workshops followed:

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**Workshop 3 Statistics in the age of alternative facts: the statistician's role**

**Diana Kornbrot** [d.e.kornbrot@herts.ac.uk](mailto:d.e.kornbrot@herts.ac.uk)

Wide ranging discussion with following issues raised

- Climate change
- Taxation
- Interpretation of alternative facts. Guidance from statisticians/radstats? Reality checks. Checks of stakeholders and conflicts of interest
- Media communication. Demystifying figures. Giving concrete examples. Good relationships with journalists. Role of rhetoric. Expertise in interpreting qualitative findings
- Role of data in informing policy
- Storage of databases and rebuilding if necessary.

**Workshop 4 Measuring violence: opportunities and threats**

Jude Towers [j.towers1@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:j.towers1@lancaster.ac.uk)

Starting from Jude Towers talk on 'Inequality and intimate partner violence against women', the workshop initially focussed on issues around data on violence, which we returned to at a number of points throughout the workshop. The issues we discussed in terms of data and defining violence included:

- Data collection methods (Crime Survey for England and Wales); use of computer assisted self-interviewing (CASI) without any support from the interviewer for module on Intimate Violence, limiting respondents to those with sufficient computer literacy and by age. We also discussed how this could be the result of oversensitivity over asking about GBV. Unlike other self-complete modules in the crime survey that allow interview to assist, the Intimate Violence module does not allow interviewer assistance because of the nature of the acts being surveyed.
- Changing definitions; the definitions used in police recorded crime change periodically. Most recently this has included the new crime of 'coercive or controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship', which is defined by two or more incidents by

a current or ex-intimate partner or other family member. This is a particularly significant change, as the data have gone from reporting incidents (like hospital episodes) to an on-going situation (like general practice records) and there will be no way of telling whether the data refer to two incidents or dozens.

- What is violence and what should be recorded; does violence just mean physical abuse or also emotional, financial, sexual, etc.? Should the data record the nature of the incident, or the harm caused by it, both physical and emotional? If so, how do you consistently define harm? Are health and social care even recording data on violence? What about violence in older couples e.g. where one partner has dementia? An aging population means that these forms of violence may become more common, although it is unlikely to be what people picture when they think of intimate partner abuse.
- Policy driving data, or data driving policy; we also briefly mentioned how changes in policy (especially around funding) impacts on what is reported and what gets classified as violence or not.

Beyond these matters we discussed a few broader topics:

- Political motivation; when there isn't political motivation, however high quality the data are they will not be sufficient. So, is focussing on data quality a distraction?
- Communication; how can the statistics be communicated to bring about change. Data currently need to be communicated carefully to prevent the media manipulating the 'story'. However, there are some media outlets who produce good and accurate articles on research.
- Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) has set international targets to reduce/eliminate gender equality including specific targets in relation to gender-based violence. However, the Sustainable Development Goals don't appear to have had significant political impact in the UK. As a UN initiative, the four countries of the UK are combined, which will mask differences between the devolved nations.
- Analyses need to take into account the complexity of the different types of violence and the different causes. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) may be a fruitful method for analysing intersectionality.

- Professionalization of the police and academic collaboration; from April 2018 it will be mandatory for police officers to hold or be in the process of obtaining an undergraduate degree; higher degrees are being linked to promotion. At the same time police forces are starting to collaborate with universities to develop evidence based policing. These reflect the increasing recognition by the police that in order to maintain a service under funding cut regimes they need to become more pro-active and less reactive – EBP is seen as key to this. In addition, there is widespread recognition by police that their role is expanding into areas they would not formerly have dealt with because of cuts in public sector spending - especially mental health. Examples of these collaborations include the N8 Policing Research Partnership (<https://n8prp.org.uk/>) in the North of England and PenCLAHRCs evidence based policing work (<https://penclahrc.exposure.co/evidence-based-policing>) in the South West of England.

The day ended with a plenary discussion that picked up on some points from the talks and workshops and looked ahead to the effect of Universal Credit on inequality and the pros and cons of the influence of algorithms on data collection.

The organisers would like to thank all the presenters and workshop leads, the Social Team, student members of the organisation team, and the Troika for their invaluable contributions and support, and to everyone who came for lively and informed discussion and a fascinating day.

Diana Kornbrot  
Marion Birch  
Alison Macfarlane

**2018 Conference & AGM**  
**21<sup>st</sup> Century Inequality in the UK**  
**Saturday, 24 February 9.30 - 18.00**  
**St. Luke's Community Centre, EC1V 8AJ**

9:30 Arrival & Registration

10:00 **Welcome** *Diana Kornbrot*

**Plenary Session 1** *Chair: Andrew Williams*

10.10 **Radical Statistics: a call for contributions** Roy Carr-Hill

10.15 **Data in Society: Challenging Statistics in an Age of Globalisation. A Progress Report on the Rad Stats Collection**

Jeff Evans, Sally Ruane & Humphrey Southall, Radical Statistics

10.30 **The people's stake: Can citizen's wealth funds solve the inequality crisis?**

Stewart Lansley, University of Bristol & City, University of London

10.55 **Socioeconomic inequalities in stillbirth rates in Europe: Measuring the gap using routine data from the Euro-Peristat Project**

Alison Macfarlane

11:20 Coffee/Tea break

11:40 **Workshops I & 2** (*choice of*)

**1. Citizen's wealth funds and universal basic income**

**2. Measuring socioeconomic inequalities in reproductive health**

12:40 Lunch

**Plenary Session 2** *Chair: Shirley Coleman*

13.40 **Inequality and Intimate Partner Violence against Women**

Jude Towers, University of Lancaster

14.05 **Greentown by numbers: Exploring the feasibility of a new low- or zero-carbon town in the UK**

Mike Page, University of Hertfordshire

14.30 Coffee/Tea break

14.50 **Workshops 3 & 4** (*choice of*)

**3. Statistics in the age of alternative facts: the statistician's role**

**4. Measuring violence: opportunities and threats**

16:00 **Q and A Panel Discussion. Speakers & workshop leads.**

*Chair: Paul Bivand*

16.50 Close

17:00 **Radical Statistics Annual General Meeting**