

## Editorial Statement

Richard Crisp and Will Eadson\*  
CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

---

The question of for what, or for whom, a journal is intended is one that is rarely explored in detail save for a curt and often general statement of aims on the website homepage. For the author, the answer may be relatively simple. It is an opportunity to publish original work that furthers debate or understanding and also reaches a wider and, hopefully, receptive audience. More instrumentally, it is also a means to achieve the requisite number of outputs in the Research Excellence Framework that guarantees (again hopefully) continued institutional support for further writing and other academic activities. But the question of 'why publish?' is seldom asked of a journal. This editorial addresses that directly by reflecting on why *People, Place and Policy* was set up and what it hopes to achieve. Rather than an exercise in navel gazing, we have written it as an attempt to stake out a claim for validity in the increasingly crowded and competitive world of academic publishing.

If we can indulge a cliché, the answer to the question of what we are for is captured by "the name on the tin". The journal emerged from a concern among research-focussed academics at the Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR) based at Sheffield Hallam University to provide a forum for debate about the way in which social and economic policy in the UK impacts upon people and places. Frequently cutting across this is a concern to understand the challenges (and less often) opportunities facing disadvantaged groups and areas. At the risk of engaging in the sort of normative statements that would have our reviewers frowning their brows, we aim in some small way to publish research that makes a difference. Furthering understanding of empirical, methodological and academic debates is both an end in itself and a means to bring about change. Of course, lofty ambitions do not automatically translate into practice. A sceptic would be entitled to ask what difference looks like, how it could be demonstrated and, for those of a post-structuralist bent, who are we to decide what kind of difference matters anyway.

A starting point is to think about impact in terms of coverage. PPP is cross-disciplinary in scope and has received contributions from academics working in a broad range of fields including social policy, sociology, political science, economics and geography. The journal covers the full gamut of social and economic policy from welfare through to regeneration, regional development, education, health, housing, crime and anti-social behaviour. So far, so unremarkable. PPP occupies very similar ground to a number of UK-based and international journals. Moreover, breadth of content is not the same as impact. However, we would suggest that PPP does have a wide reach as measured by readership. Google Analytics allows us to see which articles are most

frequently viewed and how many 'unique' viewers there are (in the sense of different people viewing the same article rather than multiple views by the same person). The table below shows the five most popular articles:

**Table 1: Most viewed articles**

Year	Title	Author(s)	Link	Unique hits
2008	Special Issue - Housing and mental health	Caroline Hunter and Judy Nixon	<a href="http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/special-issue-housing-and-mental-health/">http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/special-issue-housing-and-mental-health/</a>	2771
2007	What future for social housing in England?	Ian Cole	<a href="http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/what-future-for-social-housing-in-england/">http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/what-future-for-social-housing-in-england/</a>	2643
2008	Treasures, trash and tenure: hoarding and housing risk	Michele Slatter	<a href="http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/treasures-trash-and-tenure-hoarding-and-housing-risk/">http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/treasures-trash-and-tenure-hoarding-and-housing-risk/</a>	2595
2007	Gated communities in England as a response to crime and disorder: context, effectiveness and implications	Sarah Blandy	<a href="http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/gated-communities-in-england-as-a-response-to-crime-and-disorder-context-effectiveness-and-implications/">http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/gated-communities-in-england-as-a-response-to-crime-and-disorder-context-effectiveness-and-implications/</a>	2017
2008	Anti-social behaviour and disability in the UK	Judy Nixon, Nick Hodge, Sadie Parr, Ben Willis and Caroline Hunter	<a href="http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/anti-social-behaviour-and-disability-in-the-uk/">http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/anti-social-behaviour-and-disability-in-the-uk/</a>	1834

The intention here is not to produce a competitive league table of the most viewed articles but to give a sense of the scale of our readership. The figures show that some articles across a range of topics have engaged well over 2,000 readers since publication, although housing notably occupies the top three spots. This is, we suggest, a reasonable performance for a journal that does not have the 'heft' of a major publishing house behind it. Of course, thankfully we cannot say more about who those 'unique' viewers are: indeed it would be alarming if Google Analytics could do so. This translates into a good level of academic citations for papers in PPP: notable examples include Wells' (2007) piece on New Labour and evidence-based policy (49 citations); Robinson's (2007) piece on A8 migration and social housing in the UK (25 citations); and Lawless' (2011) reflections on the New Deal for Communities programme in relation to the Big Society (20 citations). Many others have received ten or more citations.

What we can say is that we hope our readership is as broad ranging as our authors. PPP has a deliberate policy of both publishing established academics whilst supporting early career researchers. We have, for example, commissioned articles from national experts in their respective policy fields for special 'election' (Volume 4, Issue 1) and later mid-term issues (Volume 7, Issue 2); we aim to add to this series in spring 2015. At the same time we have supported early career academics to turn a fascinating and thought provoking one day symposium on welfare reform into (we think) one of our best

special issues yet (Volume 6, Issue 1). We have also spent time supporting new academics to turn promising pieces into credible articles that meet our quality thresholds based around a stringent peer-review process. PPP also reaches out to the practitioner community and we are excited to have some colleagues directly involved in practice contributing to our forthcoming community energy special issue in December 2014. For us, engagement with the world of policy and practice should be direct and not something simply mediated through an academic lens. The high numbers of practitioners attending a recent symposium we held on 'Roma integration in the UK' suggest PPP has caught their eye as we would hope.

PPP has also always sought to make this engagement with a non-academic audience as simple as possible by making content available free of charge. Previous experience among the editorial team of working as researchers in local authorities means we are only too aware of the frustrations of staring longingly at elusive abstracts hidden behind paywalls. Our commitment to open access, which is increasingly being adopted more widely by academic publishers, is one of our founding principles. This left us fascinated, if also bemused, by the recent furore over subscription only journals. We perhaps have the luxury of working with a relatively small number of issues (three per year) compared to larger counterparts. But we still can't deny the satisfaction that comes from knowing that anyone, anywhere can read a PPP article whilst no-one profits from the freely volunteered labour of editors, reviewers and, above all, authors. It's a principle worth holding onto in an increasingly commercial academic world.

But that still leaves the question of making a difference or, at the very least, having some sort of tangible impact. In this respect, there are several examples we can point to. Archer and Cole's piece on housebuilders (2014, this issue) was published in the Guardian Housing Network and cited in the Lyons Housing Review. This also provides a useful example of the benefits of PPP's commitment to publishing articles while they remain topically relevant and not years after they were first submitted. Eadson's (2008) paper on local carbon reduction targets (in his pre-editorial days) featured in Nobel prize-winner Elinor Ostrom's (2009) World Bank report on a polycentric approach to climate change which also informed the 2010 World Development Report. Sprigings and Smith's (2013) paper on the combined impacts of the local housing allowance and right to buy generated significant policy interest, notably in Scotland where the paper was cited in a number of policy and comment pieces relating to the decision to end right to buy in Scotland. Similarly, Beatty, Fothergill and Powell's piece on *living in caravans* (2012) led to engagement with the Welsh Government on their approach to housing on the Welsh coast. A number of authors have seen their papers used as features in national, local and practice-based media, for instance Dayson's (2013) paper on social value and new-start social enterprises was taken up by [New Start](#) magazine. And many other authors have commented on the reach of their papers into the policy world, with (albeit unmeasurable) citation of their influence in policy-making. Citations or newspaper articles, of course, are hardly in the same league as fingerprints all over a particular policy development, strategy or (every academic's wild dream) screeching U-turn based on incontrovertible evidence. But we would suggest, albeit humbly, that these things are still important. Finally - and this is not something that might be in the forefront of the academic writer's mind when submitting a piece - Ryan Powell's piece on societal responses to Gypsies (2007) provoked a deeply personal response from one reader:

*"I made reference to the forced removal of Gypsy children in the UK by social services in that paper, a practice continued until the 1960s. That resulted in an email from a Gypsy woman in Australia who was forcibly removed from her Gypsy family in 1950, transported across the world and given to an Australian family to raise" (Powell, 2014, personal correspondence with PPP editors)*

Proof perhaps that an open access policy can expose academics to a wider range of connections than might otherwise be possible.

To have an ambition of making a difference exposes us to criticisms of being naïve, romantic or hopelessly old-fashioned, even if we do occasionally tweet. We take all this on the chin. The reason we give up our time to run PPP is a commitment to publishing for a purpose. And for that we make no apologies.

\* Correspondence Address: Richard Crisp and Will Eadson, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, Unit 10, Science Park, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB. Email: [r.crisp@shu.ac.uk](mailto:r.crisp@shu.ac.uk) / [w.eadson@shu.ac.uk](mailto:w.eadson@shu.ac.uk)

## References

- Archer, T. and Cole, I. (2014) Over-reliance on private housebuilders is fuelling UK's housing crisis. *The Guardian*: [http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/sep/12/private-housebuilders-uk-housing-crisis?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/sep/12/private-housebuilders-uk-housing-crisis?CMP=tw_t_gu)
- Archer, T. and Cole, I. (2014) Still not plannable? Housing supply and the changing structure of the housebuilding industry in the UK in 'austere' times. *People, Place and Policy*, 8, 2, 93-108.
- Beatty, T., Fothergill, S. and Powell, R. (2012) Living in seaside caravans: New survey evidence and the implications for local authority funding. *People, Place and Policy*, 6, 2, 90-100.
- Eadson, W. (2008) Climate Change Mitigation in Local Area Agreements: an enforced lack of ambition? *People, Place and Policy*, 2, 3, 140-150.
- Lawless, P. (2011) Big Society and community: lessons from the 1998-2011 New Deal for Communities Programme in England. *People, Place and Policy*, 5, 2, 55-64.
- Lyons, M. (2014) Mobilising across Britain to build the homes our children need. *The Labour Party*: [http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/The\\_Lyons\\_Housing\\_Review\\_2.pdf](http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/The_Lyons_Housing_Review_2.pdf)
- Ostrom, E. (2009) A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change. *World Bank*: [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2009/10/26/000158349\\_20091026142624/Rendered/PDF/WPS5095.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2009/10/26/000158349_20091026142624/Rendered/PDF/WPS5095.pdf)
- Robinson, D. (2007) European Union Accession State Migrants in Social Housing in England. *People, Place and Policy*, 1, 3, 98-111.
- Sprigings, N. and Smith, D. (2013) Unintended consequences: Local Housing Allowance meets the Right to Buy. *People, Place and Policy*, 6, 2, 58-75.
- Wells, P. (1997) New Labour and evidence based policy making: 1997-2007. *People, Place and Policy*, 1, 1, 22-29.
- World Bank (2010) World Development report 2010. *World Bank*: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2010/Resources/5287678-1226014527953/WDR10-Full-Text.pdf>