

# Informing civil society

The work of the **Third Sector  
Research Centre**

2008-2011

# Third Sector Research Centre

The Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) is a collaborative venture hosted by the Universities of Birmingham and Southampton with contributions from Middlesex and Kent. It is led by Director, Professor Pete Alcock at the University of Birmingham, and Professor John Mohan, Deputy Director, from the University of Southampton.

TSRC began formal operation on 1 September 2008 bringing together experts from a range of disciplines to develop a research programme leading to an improved understanding of the key patterns, processes and impacts of developments in the third sector. This, in turn, will strengthen the evidence base for policy towards the sector giving policy makers, practitioners and academics the ability to create a positive impact in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors.

TSRC co-ordinates the activities of three Capacity Building Clusters (CBCs) delivering CASE Studentships, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Placements and Research Vouchers to support the development of research capacity within the third sector.

Our Knowledge Exchange team ensures that TSRC's research is both exchanged and transferred through different activities. Our findings are fully accessible online and to enhance this TSRC has been working in partnership with the British Library to develop a third sector Knowledge Portal. This is an online catalogue of research and information on voluntary and community action and social enterprise. This has been made possible by additional funding from the BIG Lottery Fund.

The Third Sector Research Centre is a five year investment funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Office for Civil Society (OCS), and Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT).



# Economic and Social Research Council



ESRC is delighted to be supporting the work of the Third Sector Research Centre. The Centre is an important initiative which demonstrates our commitment to co-funding research in relation to the third sector and to the promotion of research which contributes to the creation of ‘A Vibrant and Fair Society’ – one of ESRC’s three new strategic priorities. TSRC was established to respond to the relative under-development of research capacity and activity in this field; and in particular the need for the development and maintenance of reliable and independent sources of quantitative and qualitative data. ESRC is committed to supporting research

which maps the causes and consequences of social and economic change in a complex and dynamic environment for policy and practice and to see research making a lasting impact.

We are also pleased to see the success of the Capacity Building Clusters of the Centre which help to train future third sector researchers and improve and expand the capacity for research in and on the third sector.

In a complex and changing economic and social environment there remains a continuing need for independent and robust research which can have tangible benefits for policy and practice in the third sector. We look forward to seeing the further development of the research of the Centre and its continuing commitment to contribute to these broader social and economic aims.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'P Boyle'.

**Paul Boyle**  
Chief Executive

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# Foreword



**Professor  
Pete Alcock,**  
Director



**Professor  
John Mohan,**  
Deputy Director

This report provides a summary of, and guide to, the research which has been undertaken in TSRC over the first half of our initial funding period from 2008 to 2011. The Centre was commissioned to undertake a specified programme of research on the third sector in the UK. In implementing this we have developed a number of streams of activity which aim to focus our work around particular data sources or issues of policy and practice. This report is organised around these research streams. However, it should be recognised that neither policy and practice, nor research, can be constrained within such neat categories and so aspects of enquiry sometimes cut across different streams, and our core data sources are drawn on to inform research activity across the Centre. In addition, an early priority for our work was to undertake a review of the existing research evidence-base in the country. This informed the development of our research streams and, where appropriate, has been published in TSRC Working Papers or in scoping reports which have underpinned further research activity. The extensive material captured in our evidence review has also formed the basis of our Knowledge Portal, discussed below.

Central to our work has been our commitment to developing core data sources for research on the sector, both quantitative and qualitative; and, as can be seen, these have remained a major part of our work. The absence of such reliable data sources was one of the main reasons for the establishment of TSRC, in particular because applied funders of research from policy and practice could not be expected to support such commitments. We have maintained this data collection and analysis as a core commitment, and we believe that this work should be continued as a permanent resource for research on the sector. We are also committed to making this data available, in time, to other researchers through established data archives and through our website.

In addition to data collection, however, our research has also addressed key issues of policy and practice for the sector. We recognise the need to engage with policy makers and practitioners to inform the development and delivery of this activity. We have established an Advisory Board and a series of Reference Groups to engage with key informants and ensure that their

knowledge and expertise can underpin our work, and we have also established extensive engagement and consultation with other stakeholders through our website and newsletters. Inevitably over the period of our work there have been changes in the environment of policy and practice – not the least following the change of UK government in 2010. We have sought as far as possible to incorporate analysis of new developments within our work, whilst maintaining the broad commitments agreed in our initial specification.

More generally, TSRC is committed to working closely with a wide range of research users to ensure that our work is relevant and useful to policy makers and practitioners across the sector and is able to make an appropriate impact on their work. Our Knowledge Exchange Team was recruited to lead on this process of engagement, and this report includes a summary of some of their work. We have also produced a range of outputs from our work, tailored to the needs of different audiences of research users. This includes our extensive Working Paper and Briefing Paper series, referred to throughout the report, as well as academic publications, conference presentations and coverage in the trade and national media.

In addition to carrying out our research TSRC is committed to supporting and developing the capacity of academic and practice researchers to undertake third sector research. This includes co-ordinating the activities of our three Capacity Building Clusters, which are reported below, as well as providing more general training and support to practitioners on using, commissioning and undertaking research. We also collaborate with cognate ESRC investments, in particular the Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy on funding and organisational development and the Centre for Market and Public Organisation on economic

performance. We have undertaken the development of our third sector Knowledge Portal, in partnership with the British Library, to make as wide a range as possible of other research on the sector available to research users through an online catalogue.

TSRC was established to undertake research on the UK third sector, although the remit of the Office of the Third Sector, and now the Office for Civil Society, is for policy implementation in England only. Third sector policy is devolved to the separate administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We include analysis of policy and practice in these countries in our work and we have recruited separate Reference Groups to advise us on research, policy and practice here. We are also working to establish quantitative data sources on the sector in these countries, although our major qualitative research is focused on England only. Although our work is focused on the UK, TSRC is keen to promote international and comparative analysis. We participate in international fora on third sector research and publish in international journals, and we have developed collaborative relationships with a number of leading academic scholars and undertaken comparative work where additional resources have been forthcoming to support this.

\* ‘Professor John Mohan’ - Photograph provided by Third Sector Magazine

# Summary of research highlights

Following are a summary of key outcomes from each of the research streams. We also seek to address cross-cutting themes where possible, for instance, equalities issues.

## Theory and Policy

- Definition of the third sector is complex and contested, and debates about definition need to reflect the variety and diversity of organisational form and activity and the context in which debate is conducted.
- The third sector policy environment has been developed rapidly in the UK from high levels of horizontal support under the previous Labour government to the new Coalition government's plans to create a 'Big Society'. Third sector policy is now devolved within the UK, however, with different trends developing in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Policy is not only developed by government. Key sector agencies also play a central role in shaping policy and practice. New research will examine in particular the role of funding by the Big Lottery Fund.

## Quantitative Analysis

- We are constructing a very substantial quantitative database which will provide a foundational resource for future research.
- Our work has built on previous analyses by highlighting the multidimensional character of voluntary activity (e.g. the discussion of the "civic core") or by demonstrating that what appears to be quite straightforward associations (e.g. between volunteering and social capital) are much less so in practice.
- We have conducted in-depth analysis of the extent to which voluntary organisations rely on public funding streams, showing that this reflects a complex set of influences at both the organisational and community level.

## Real Times

- Real Times is TSRC's qualitative longitudinal study of third sector organisations.
- Through successive waves of research over the period 2009–13, the study is examining the fortunes, strategies, challenges and performance of a range of case studies of third sector activities, in order to understand change over time.
- The study illuminates the experiences of different third sector organisations as they encounter a changing political and economic context.

## Social Enterprise

- Social enterprise means different things to different people across different contexts and at different points in time.
- Its contested nature leads to wide variation in estimating the number of social enterprises, and to policy confusion.
- This conceptual confusion provides opportunities for organisations and policy makers to present strategic impressions to different audiences to achieve different goals.

## Below the Radar

- Small-scale 'below the radar' (BTR) community groups and activities may be, numerically, the largest part of the third sector, but is the least researched. Understanding of how these groups operate, their life-cycles and motivations is therefore limited.
- BTR groups operate beyond formal listings of regulatory bodies and out-with government policy, though they make a substantial contribution to the delivery of policy objectives in terms of community health and wellbeing.
- BTR groups represent a pre-existing 'Big Society', albeit one that is not fully acknowledged or valued as such.

## Service Delivery

- Research on service delivery has explored generic themes such as procurement and partnerships while providing a grounded picture of change in specific services such as criminal justice, employment, health and housing.
- A thriving third sector is dependent upon strong inter-organisational links and it is therefore important for research to consider the ecology of organisational fields.
- Procurement and commissioning practices and third sector organisation (TSO) responses to them are among the principal drivers of the future shape of the sector and will largely determine the impact of TSOs on public services and are therefore worthy of sustained research.

Economic and Social Impact

- A key research priority for TSRC has been to explore the development of the new drive towards impact assessment and performance management, and to provide critical analysis of the tools being offered to do this.
- This has included theoretical analysis of the economic environment context of performance measurement and its relationship to the value base of the sector.
- Major tools for measurement of performance have been subject to critical analysis, including in particular the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model.

Workforce and Workplace

- A period of continuous growth to reach around 800,000 employees has come to an end.
- The ‘warm glow’ of working for the sector may be dimming, perhaps as the sector itself changes.
- There is greater gender equality in the third sector than is found more generally.

Environment

- While the role of the third sector in responding to environmental issues is increasingly promoted in policy debates, the realities of life for most organisations, particularly given the current political and fiscal climate, makes systematic engagement difficult to realise.
- The development and adoption of performance management tools to evaluate social impact has not yet been replicated in relation to environmental impact.
- Emerging work on ‘social practices’ offers an effective conceptual framework through which we can better understand the impact and effectiveness of third sector interventions to promote low-carbon living.

TSRC's Impact

TSRC has raised the profile of its research through partnership events, media work and targeted presence at events and seminars, which reach audiences beyond usual knowledge flows. Through the work of the Knowledge Exchange Team we have established strong working relationships with key stakeholders, in the voluntary sector, government and academia.

Our research receives regular coverage in the sector press, including Third Sector Magazine, Civil Society and Charity Times, in the public sector press, such as E-Gov monitor and Guardian Public, and on various voluntary sector websites and newsletters. Our work has also been covered by the national press, including the Guardian, Observer and Financial Times, and our researchers have featured on Radio programmes such as Radio Four's Thinking Allowed. This has enabled us to expand our reach and ensure our research reaches our target stakeholders.

We are currently identifying impact pathways created from our research. These will demonstrate: instrumental, process and conceptual impacts. Some examples of these so far are:

**Instrumental impacts** have been demonstrated by policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners citing TSRC research. For example, there have been references to TSRC research on volunteering and the impact of funding cuts in parliament and mentions of TSRC evidence in other organisations' reports and publications.

TSRC is working to ensure that its research findings reach government policy makers in a way that enables impact on policy making. This includes submitting timely evidence to government, for example through the Public Administration Select Committee enquiry into ‘smaller government, bigger society’ and the Joint Ministerial and Third Sector Taskforce on Climate Change.

TSRC researchers have taken part in government and political advisory groups, such as the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Social Science, the APPG on social enterprise, an expert workshop on Community Rights and Decentralisation, the Labour Party Civil Society Policy Review Group, and the advisory board of the Office for Civil Society's Measuring Social Value project. Regular discussions with senior officials in the Strategy Unit, Office for Civil Society and DCLG have been held on a range of topics, including the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Giving White Paper and social enterprise.



Regular policy circles have also provided opportunity for direct discussion of findings.

TSRC research is also feeding directly into policy. The Department of Health commissioned TSRC to evaluate the Social Enterprise Investment Fund, a £100M grant and loan fund which aims to stimulate the growth of social enterprises involved in the delivery of health and social care services. TSRC's social enterprise team are also evaluating the School for Social Entrepreneurs' programme that aims to support social enterprises spinning out of the NHS under the Right to Request policy. The results of this are being fed into ongoing policy development of support for new forms of mutuals and social enterprises in public services.

**Process impacts** have been generated by people accessing our website, attending our events, participating in the research process through the Reference Groups and Advisory Board, and collaborating with our researchers on a number of projects. TSRC researchers have and are working with a number of sector bodies to both develop and use evidence.

For example, the quantitative research team are collaborating with NCVO to develop databases that will allow for expansion of third sector research. The social enterprise team are working closely with Co-ops UK to refine their database. TSRC researchers are also collaborating with Skills Third Sector and NCVO to develop intelligence on the third sector labour market. Research on housing has involved working closely with a number of housing bodies, including the National Housing Federation and HACT to explore the impact of housing organisations and developing measurement tools to assess

their community investment activities. They have worked with self-help-housing.org, BSHF and HACT to explore the potential of self help housing and make recommendations to government and housing organisations. The research has tracked the implementation of the £100 million Empty Homes Programme announced in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review and will continue to assess the outcomes.

The criminal justice team have produced tailored reports for each of the eight prisons (and probation trust) sites that they used in their research. Feedback has shown that each of these establishments has been able to feed these findings into their professional development and planning. TSRC has contributed to development in academic thinking through PhD summer schools and the work of the Capacity Building Clusters. Researchers are working with a range of third sector organisations to conduct research that will directly inform their work. For more information see the CBC section of this report.

In addition to the work of the CBCs, TSRC has worked to increase the capacity of the sector to conduct research. They have run workshops on conducting and using research (Rethinking Research) and are planning to expand these across the country. Their work to build a Knowledge Portal (also detailed within Knowledge Exchange) will help increase the capacity of the sector and policy makers to access and use research.

**Conceptual impacts** are being made by TSRC through contributions to the advancement of thinking in academia and elsewhere. TSRC researchers have presented at many major UK and international conferences, including the International Conference for Third Sector Research, the European Research Network on Philanthropy, the Social Entrepreneurship Research Colloquium and the Voluntary Sector Studies Network. They have also taken part in many smaller conferences and seminars, on for example refugee and migrant organisations, climate change, and community groups.

TSRC research has been recognised through best paper awards, including Teasdale's social enterprise paper at the Public Administration Committee

Conference 2010, and a Criminal Justice paper by Gojkovic, Mills and Meek at the NCVO/VSSN Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference 2010.

As well as our media coverage, our work has often been cited in other publications. Some TSRC evidence has received regular citations, such as our work on volunteering and the civic core, social enterprise definition and measurement and SROI.

A full list of journal articles and published papers by TSRC can be found at the back of the report.



# Theory and Policy

## Understanding and shaping the sector

Stream lead: Pete Alcock

Researchers: Jeremy Kendall, Rebecca Taylor

### Aims

This stream provides TSRC's major contribution to the development of improved theoretical and conceptual analysis of the third sector in the UK. This theoretical work includes critical interrogation of existing debates about the sector both within the academic community and amongst practitioners and policy makers. This stream provides a lead in examining and explaining these debates.

The other aim of the stream is description and analysis of the policy environment for the sector. The focus here is on the UK. TSRC was established as a research resource on the UK third sector. However, international comparative analysis of other policy environments, particularly in comparable OECD countries, is essential to understanding the development of policy here, and so research does include some collaboration with colleagues internationally.

What is more, UK third sector policy is now devolved to the separate governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and so this stream also includes comparative analysis of the four separate policy regimes within the UK.

Informing the work in this stream are a few key questions:

- What is the third sector?
- How is third sector policy changing?
- Who are the key policy actors?
- How do policy makers decide what matters?
- How does practice respond to policy change?

### Methodology

Theoretical research is almost entirely based on critical analysis of existing literature in the field and has drawn on some of the scoping work developed in the Evidence Review. Policy research also draws on existing published analysis of third sector policy regimes. However, here documentary analysis of government and third sector policy proposals is also included, as well as regular monitoring of online sources of policy information and debate. In order to support the comparative analysis of policy development across the UK TSRC has recruited separate Reference Groups in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, comprising leading academics, policy makers and practitioners.

The various projects within the Theory and Policy stream also make use of direct data gathering, through qualitative interviews with key respondents in the policy making and practice communities. TSRC has recruited a panel of respondents for this activity and these are drawn on as appropriate for different projects and particular research questions. All respondents have been recruited following ethically approved invitations and all qualitative data is reported anonymously, unless specifically agreed otherwise.





## Findings

### Defining the third sector

TSRC research has made a significant contribution to academic analysis of the third sector in the UK. This builds on earlier work by Kendall, in particular his influential book on the UK voluntary sector (Kendall, 2003). Central to this analysis has been the development of the notion of the UK third sector as constructed through 'Strategic Unity' i.e. the sector is understood as a strategic response to developing government policy and internal sector dynamics. This is explored in Alcock's article, 'A Strategic Unity: Defining the Third Sector in the UK' (2010a: 5–24).

Kendall has also examined the different ideological discourses which underpin different conceptions of the sector, and its engagement with politics and policy, suggesting that in practice there are competing and potential contradictory ideological frameworks in play (Kendall, 2010a; TSRC Working Paper 13).

In addition to this general investigation there has also been a more focused study of the key concepts in third sector analysis. In a review of some recent debates on volunteering Kendall explores what William Beveridge may have made of these (TSRC Working Paper 37). A feature of debate about the definition and delineation of the third sector has been the extent of 'hybridity' amongst third sector organisations operating at the boundaries with other sectors. This was explored in detail in relation to third sector organisations operating in the homelessness field by Buckingham, drawing on case studies of organisations in South-East England, and concluding that this is an important

issue for policy makers working with organisations in this field (TSRC Working Paper 50).

Extensive analysis has been undertaken of the changing policy environment for the sector developed by the Labour governments from 1997 to 2010, again building on previous work by Alcock and Kendall. This has been informed by Kendall's description of the Labour government as one of 'hyperactive mainstreaming' in policy development, which has been widely taken up by analysts (Kendall, 2009a).

Kendall is also taking forward this work through further analysis of the extent to which Labour's policy development could be seen as a process of 'modernisation', based on interviews with policy makers and practitioners.

Description and analysis of the Labour policy regime, has revealed that policy engagement with the sector developed to previously unprecedented levels during the first decade of the new century, with the provision of major new programmes of financial support for the sector, new terms of engagement such as the Compact, and the creation of the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office (Alcock, 2011; Alcock and Kendall, 2011; TSRC Working Paper 32).

This has also included comparative analysis of the English policy regime with other European countries. This work was commenced prior to TSRC, but was completed as part of TSRC's initial policy analysis (Kendall, 2009b).

### Policy devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Third sector policy was one of the areas of policy devolved to the new administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1999. Analysis of the impact of devolution on third sector policy has been undertaken by Alcock, with support from the TSRC Reference Groups in these countries. This has identified the importance of the new institutions for policy development created in these countries and the changing nature of third sector politics which has flowed from this, which can be described as a 'nationalisation' of third sector politics. At the same time broadly similar policy agendas have been pursued in all four countries, following to a significant extent the hyperactive mainstreaming environment identified in England (Alcock, 2010c).

The election of the new Coalition government at Westminster in 2010, followed by the elections in the devolved administrations in 2011, which left different parties in control in all countries, may challenge this policy convergence in the future. These changes are explored in a new paper, currently under consideration for publication (Alcock unpublished paper).

### The response of the sector to the economic recession

The economic recession of 2008–9 was a matter of concern to practitioners and policy makers, in particular if, as many expected, it was likely to have an impact on the sector in reducing income from both government and private sources, and in increasing demand, at least in some areas of activity. The response of practitioners and policy makers was examined in a research project focused on the 2008



to 2009 period, based on documentary analysis (including media coverage) and interviews with key practitioners and policy makers. This analysis revealed that the recession was a focus for extensive policy engagement with the sector, including a number of high profile 'summit meetings'. However, many of the impacts of the recession on sector funding and development may take longer to be realised. Completion of this work was delayed due to maternity leave, but a full research report, led by Taylor, is in preparation and will be available shortly.

The presentation of the sector in the 2010 General Election

The 2010 election afforded an opportunity to engage in real time analysis of the politics of the third sector in the UK. This was undertaken in a research project led by Parry. The research was based on documentary analysis of a wide range of election manifestos, media coverage and online debates, together with interviews with key practitioners, policy makers and politicians. It found that the sector was very active in promoting political debate during the election; but that in practice there was a significant consensus on support for third sector engagement amongst all the leading political parties. This research is reported in full in the TSRC Research Report and Working Paper 44. Further analysis has also been developed in an additional paper (Alcock et al., unpublished paper).

The Big Society: third sector policy under the Coalition government in England

The ‘Big Society’ has become a central feature of the politics of the new Coalition government since 2010. The Big Society discourse extends beyond third sector policy to embrace many aspects of politics including public service reform, citizen/state relations and the devolution of power to more local levels; however, the sector is identified as central to the government’s ambitions for the Big Society, with voluntary and community action and social enterprise seen as essential to all these broader political goals. TSRC has engaged in ongoing analysis of the Big Society discourse, through real-time analysis of policy pronouncements and independent external

analysis. More extensive analysis of the early development of Big Society policy was published in Voluntary Sector Review (Alcock, 2010b).

More detailed analysis was carried out on the Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill, introduced into the House of Commons as a Private Members’ Bill in 2011 and given support by the government. This research is based on discourse analysis of the Second Reading Debate of the Bill and explores the tensions revealed in this between the social enterprise and free market dimensions of Conservative Party political support for public service reform (Teasdale, Alcock and Smith, 2012 forthcoming).

Research has also identified the changing nature of support for infrastructure agencies in the sector as a result of the Cabinet Office policy review (Macmillan, 2011a).

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) as a policy actor within the third sector

Research commenced in March 2011 on a project examining the role of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) as a policy actor in the third sector. Lottery funding has been the largest single source of income for the sector, apart from government, over the last decade or so and yet there has been no analysis of the extent to which this has impacted at a strategic level on the development of the sector. This project is co-sponsored by BIG, enabling TSRC to carry out more extensive fieldwork, and to contribute directly to the internal development by BIG of strategic planning for third sector funding. The research is based on documentary analysis, interrogation

of BIG’s statistical data, a survey of funded third sector organisations, interviews with key internal and external stakeholders, and focus groups with representatives of organisations and policy makers.

Associative democracy

Analysis exploring and developing Paul Hirst’s work on associative democracy, social economy and the regulatory challenge has been developed by Smith and Teasdale.

Future plans

Research is continuing on:

- the completion of the report on the third sector response to the recession;
- the modernisation of the third sector under Labour;
- the impact of devolution on third sector policy;

- the role of BIG as a policy actor;
- the development of the Government’s Big Society policy agenda.

Collaborative research is planned with the Service Delivery research stream on the impact of the Public Services Reform White Paper.





# Quantitative Analysis

## Mapping and measuring the distribution of resources in third sector organisations

Stream lead: John Mohan

Researchers: Peter Backus, David Clifford, Frida Geyne Rajme, Andrew McCulloch, Stephen McKay, Peter Smith, Laura Staetsky

### Aims

One of the central aims of our work is to establish robust quantitative databases on organisations and resources in the third sector, and to conduct high level analyses of these and other datasets so that policy makers and practitioners have a better understanding of trends in the sector and a better basis for prediction of future developments (TSRC Working Paper 62 gives an overview).

Our work therefore involves:

- obtaining, evaluating and preserving datasets such as the records made available to us from the register of charities;
- collating and cross-referencing a range of data sources – an example would be our work on volunteering, where we have reviewed many datasets to allow informed judgements of trends in the scale of voluntary activity and demonstration of the effects of research methods on the answers we get;
- analysing this data in a more robust and rigorous way than has previously been possible.

### Methodology/data resources

#### Creation of a third sector database

We have taken action to develop a database of third sector organisations to underpin our research. We now have a regular supply of data from the Charity Commission and access to other sources for information on Companies Limited by Guarantee, Industrial and Provident Societies, and Community Interest Companies (CIC). We are also in discussion with other organisations about incorporating their databases into ours. We have established a joint initiative with NCVO to capture information from charities' annual reports and accounts for up to 10,000 charities with a declining sampling fraction depending on the size of the charity. A particular feature is that, in collaboration with the Charity Commission, we will capture data for a subset of small charities (with income of less than £25,000) for the first time.

Our intention is to play a leading role in the creation of a public use database of sector organisations. There is interest in this from leading sector bodies across the UK as well as from government centrally and locally. We will seek resources to develop and manage this, since the volume of available data is growing and likely to expand further as a result of open data provisions.

#### Acquisition of existing data sources

This refers to joint work with the centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (CGAP). We have now extended our coverage of the Charity Commission register back to 1993 and for a small subset of charities to 1992 and

1991. This has been possible with the help of the School of Electronics and Computer Science (ECS) at the University of Southampton, enabling us to recover data from old media.

We intend to extend this work to cover the whole of the UK subject to discussions with the charity regulators for Northern Ireland and Scotland. Such an exercise has not been conducted to date and would require work on classification to ensure comparability.



## Classification

Prior to the establishment of TSRC considerable work had been done by NCVO to classify registered charities in England and Wales against the ICNPO (International classification of non-profit organisations) schema developed initially in the USA. We have sought to build on previous work by classifying such data as we have on third sector organisations which take other legal forms, such as Companies Limited by Guarantee, Community Interest Companies, and Industrial and Provident Societies. Geyne Rajme and Clifford have worked

extensively on this using keyword searches and also SIC (standard industrial classification) codes, supplied at the point of registration by those registering a company with Companies House.

This work is important because it affects comparability between datasets. The 2008 National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO), for example, excluded some third sector organisations from its sampling frame on the basis of their SIC code, but keyword searches suggest that this is unsatisfactory (TSRC Working Paper forthcoming).

income, depending on legal form, size, client group served, geographical location, and age of organisation (TSRC Working Paper 45). A revised version of this paper, with more complex analyses, has been submitted for publication.

## Survey data on volunteering

Staetsky's Briefing Paper on volunteering rates from national surveys has been updated and is now available as TSRC Working Paper 6. A TSRC Working Paper on the influence of survey methodology on reported rates of volunteering will also be published in 2011.

Headline figures on single dimensions of participation, such as volunteering, may be misleading since individuals contribute to the functioning of communities in several ways, and volunteering is only one of them. We need to look at combinations of behaviours such as volunteering, civic participation, informal help, and charitable giving. In a well-known paper, Reed and Selbee (2001) put forward the idea that a disproportionate amount of voluntary effort (giving to charity, volunteering, and civic participation) was provided by a small subset of the population. Using data from the Citizenship Survey on amounts given to charity, hours of unpaid help given to voluntary organisations, and participation in associations, Mohan has calculated the relative shares of different groups of the population and characterised the "civic core" as those who provide at least two thirds of the total amount of effort contributed on each of these dimensions. There are strong socio-economic gradients in the likelihood of being in the "core groups" but there is also evidence that when these dimensions are considered together, only a very small proportion of the population



are not engaged at all in any voluntary activity. There are also substantial differences between neighbourhoods in the likelihood that those who live in them are part of the core groups, and this conclusion clearly has relevance for current policy debates (TSRC Working Paper forthcoming).

## Relationship between formal volunteering, area deprivation, and social capital

Using the Citizenship Survey a cross-classification of sampling units by decile of deprivation and region was developed so that volunteering rates could be calculated for 90 types of area (nine regions, 10 deciles). A measure of social capital was developed and then correlated with the area measure of volunteering, but the association disappeared once controls were introduced for area deprivation. This raises questions about whether volunteering can improve the level of social capital in an area in the absence of improvements in economic circumstances (McCulloch, Mohan and Smith, 2010).

## Findings (substantive analyses)

### Growth and change in the charity sector

Our very substantial panel dataset on registered charities was used by Backus and Clifford for two major papers on the theme, colloquially known as "Tescoisation", of growth and concentration of resources in the charity sector (TSRC Working Papers 38 and 39).

There is considerable potential for further analysis of this data focusing on sub-sectoral analyses of particular types of charity rather than the entire charity sector. Analysis of probabilities of survival of charities will also be a natural extension of this work.

### Exposure of third sector organisations to public sector funding streams

The National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO) data represents the most comprehensive survey dataset which asks organisations about their different sources of income. It does not ask them how much they receive from a particular source but it does identify whether they receive income from a number of different types of public sector bodies. Substantial work was undertaken to clean this data set; only 80% of responses were complete cases, necessitating considerable work on the imputation of plausible values from other sources of statistics.

The analysis showed considerable variation in the extent to which organisations either (a) receives public funding or (b) regards the public sector as their most important source of



Volunteering and participation

There is limited longitudinal research on participation in the UK, other than relatively small-scale qualitative studies, from which limited generalisations can be made. However, the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) has asked questions about volunteering at two-year intervals since 1996. We can therefore assess the extent to which individuals move in and out of volunteering “states”. Although only a very small proportion of people have volunteered at every wave of the survey over time nearly twice that proportion volunteer on at least one occasion. This indicates something of the extent to which cross-sectional surveys may under estimate the extent to which the population engage in volunteering. An extension of this work will involve modelling movement in and out of volunteering states.

A related piece of work explores trends in the level of membership of voluntary organisations. In this regard a fundamental challenge is that of attempting to distinguish the effects of age and cohort. If we do not do this there is a risk of assuming that there is a common trend with age, along which individual membership will develop across cohorts. We need to study cohorts because of the possibility that those born at different times (e.g. those born before World War II compared with those born after it) exhibit different patterns of behaviour which reflect the different social and economic circumstances through which they have lived. This work, by McCulloch, used the BHPS to investigate variations in membership for four cohorts defined using year of birth. This allows comparison of people who are members of different cohorts at the same ages (e.g. comparisons between those born in 1941, observed at age 50 in 1991, with those born in 1951, aged 50 in 2001). Initial findings appear to suggest evidence of a cohort decline in levels of participation.

Future Plans

Research is continuing on:

- work to develop our large-scale database of third sector organisations, in conjunction with NCVO;
- work on survey datasets on volunteering, including work on longitudinal analysis;
- work on organisations operating at the neighbourhood scale, and comparison of results across the two waves of the survey, in addition to continuation of the existing work on the NSTSO.

In addition, we will work on the panel of registered charities and other third sector organisations. This will include longitudinal work on the growth and distribution of third sector resources over time.



# Real Times

## An in-depth study of third sector organisations over time

Stream lead: Rob Macmillan  
Researchers: Malin Arvidson, Andri Soteri-Proctor, Rebecca Taylor, Simon Teasdale

### Aims

‘Real Times’ is the Third Sector Research Centre’s qualitative longitudinal study of third sector organisations, groups and activities. We are following the fortunes, strategies, challenges and performance of a diverse set of 15 ‘core’ case studies of third sector activity, and their relations with up to 35 ‘complementary’ case studies, over 2010 to 2013.

The intention is to gain a more in-depth and realistic understanding of how third sector organisations, groups and activities work in practice over time. This involves attention to three supplementary questions: what happens within third sector organisations over time and why; what matters to third sector organisations over time and why; and how might we understand continuity and change in third sector activity.

- There are four substantive focal points for the research:
1. Fortunes: what influences the fortunes of third sector organisations?
  2. Strategies: how do third sector organisations regard and negotiate the environments in which they operate?
  3. Challenges: what challenges do third sector organisations face and how do they respond?
  4. Performance: how is the ‘performance’ of third sector organisations understood by different stakeholders?
- Through these the study aims to contribute to the development of a theoretically informed account of the third sector ‘from the inside’. The longitudinal approach allows us to examine the dynamics of third sector activities over time, in effect to understand what happens next and why.

### Methodology

#### Contextual baseline and theoretical framework

The basic structure of Real Times is illustrated in Figure 1. The study is taking place during what may become regarded as an intensified period of transformation for the third sector. The transformation may involve a combination of a ‘shake out’, where some organisations scale down or cease operations, and a ‘shake-up’, where organisations are being re-cast (and exhorted) to become more enterprising, to work collaboratively or merge, and to demonstrate the difference they make. These developments form the backdrop or substantive contextual baseline against which Real Times is set, and the research is able to follow and explore the experiences of different third sector organisations longitudinally as these developments unfold.

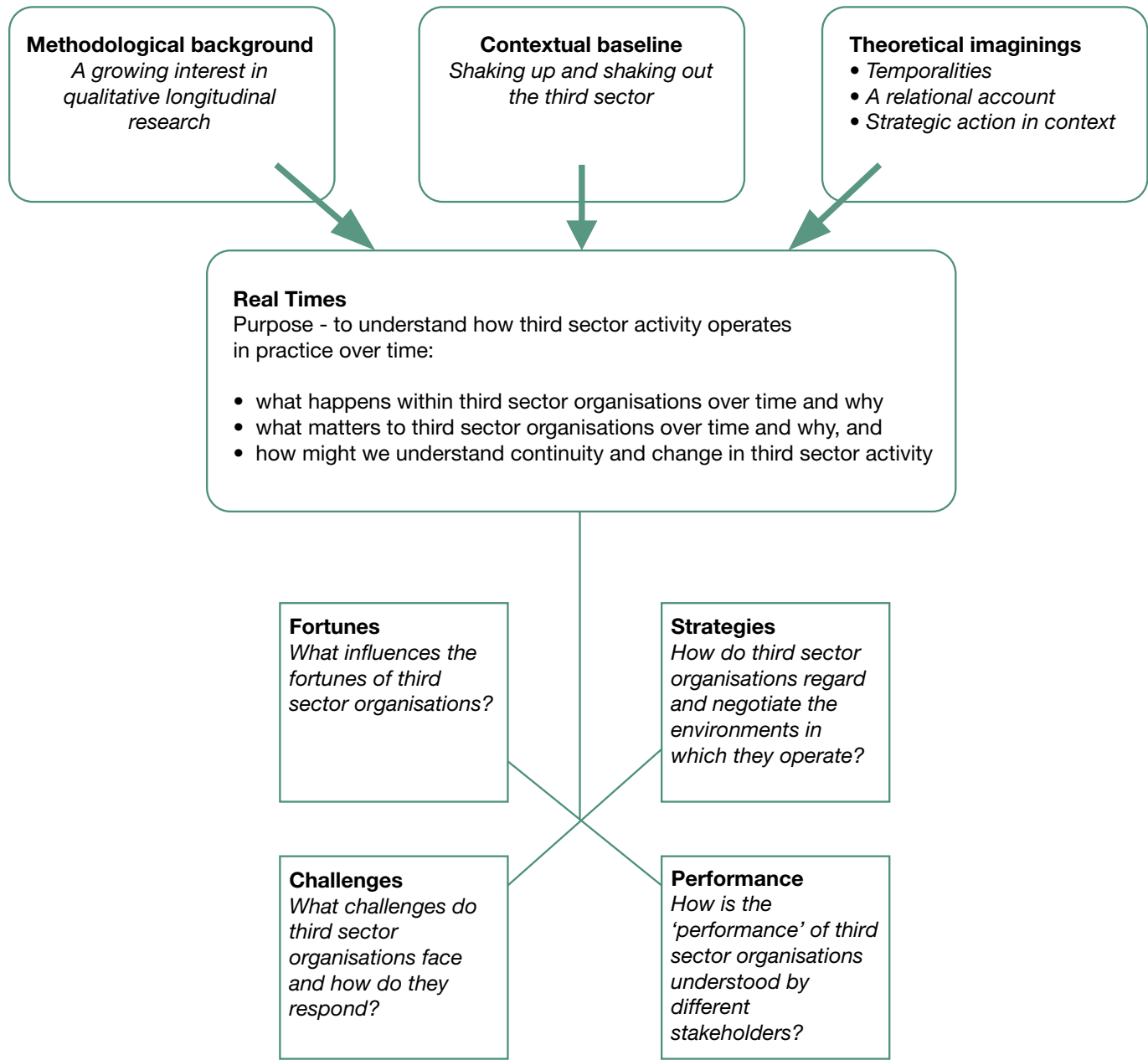
In addition, Real Times has been informed by a range of theoretical considerations, including, for example:

- the different kinds of temporalities through which third sector organisations and activities work in practice, including exploring intended and unintended aspects of continuity and change;
- the idea of a ‘relational’ account of the third sector, in which organisations and activities seek to secure or advance their ‘room’ for continued operation; and
- attendant questions of how strategic agency in and of third sector organisations and activities relates to a wider structural context.





Figure 1: The rationale and structure of the ‘Real Times’ qualitative longitudinal study



Research design

Real Times involves a prospective longitudinal case study design involving research with case studies over an initial period of three to four years. It follows Sayer’s (1992) description of ‘intensive research’, where close examination of a number of concrete cases facilitates a qualitative exploration of processes and dynamics.

The study has three key features. First, the ‘cases’ are different forms of organised third sector activity. The case study sample involves a diverse range of organisations and groups, based on internal aspects such as, for example, organisation size, age and function/policy field, and on different aspects of the setting in which cases operate such as, for example, urban and rural, relative affluence and deprivation, and local political context. The sample should not be regarded or described as ‘representative’ in a statistical sense; instead it aims to be broadly reflective of a diverse range of third sector activities and the range of contexts in which they occur. Second, the sample involves a ‘tiered’ relational structure, with cases studied at two levels of intensity: 15 ‘core’ case studies and, for most of these, up to three related ‘complementary’ cases. The relationships between ‘core’ and ‘complementary’ cases may be collaborative, competitive, harmonious, conflictual, or perhaps all of these. The design enables an examination of these inter-organisational relationships over time. Third, in order to explore the dynamics of third sector organisations and activities, the study envisages successive waves of fieldwork for ‘core’ and ‘complementary’ case studies.

Case selection and recruitment

Real Times is explicitly designed as a general qualitative research programme of use and interest across the Third Sector Research Centre, so its design incorporates a deliberate attempt to reflect the centre’s range of research interests. Real Times is proceeding with a group of fifteen core case studies (Table 1), which include advocacy and campaigning organisations as well as community activity and large service providing bodies. We identify these using pseudonyms.

Research methods, sources of data, and analytical strategies

Real Times involves semi-structured interviews with a range of people associated with each case study, observations of activities, such as meetings and events, and collecting various documents produced by and about the organisation or locality.

There are three analytical approaches in operation. First, an ongoing narrative profile of each case study is being constructed following each wave of research. The aim here is to develop a longitudinal account of each case study’s movement over time. Second, using NVivo8 qualitative software, transcripts and field notes are being labelled and categorised using a general coding frame. This approach lends itself to the development of specific thematic reports and papers, for example on inter-organisational relationships, values and ethos or career trajectories. Third, specific ‘story-lines’, involving issues arising and unfolding across a number of cases, are being explored, such as the question of governance and leadership, or work around influence and campaigning.

Table 1: Real Times core case studies

Case study pseudonym	Description
ASH	a social housing group formed in the 1990s from the merger of several small community-based housing associations
BEECH	a relatively new environmental social enterprise focusing on recycling and training with disadvantaged young people and adults
BIRCH	a large, local information, rights and advice organisation based in an urban area in the north of England
CEDAR	a consortium of third sector organisations aiming to bid for and deliver large scale public service contracts
CHERRY	a multi faith-based network which aims to raise awareness and understanding of social issues by working alongside the most disadvantaged people in society
FIG	a longstanding charity working with children, young people and families to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion, particularly in deprived areas
FIR	a member-owned and controlled co-operative football club based in a large town in the South of England
HAWTHORN	a family support and parenting project for young mothers and mothers-to-be in a town in the north of England
INDIGO	provides culturally sensitive services and support for older people from a particular minority ethnic community drawn from several parts of a large city
LARCH	a former mining area of several small settlements in the north of England
MIMOSA	a local health and social care charity specialising in mental health and located at two sites in a large city
MULBERRY	a multi-purpose community centre based in a deprived urban neighbourhood in the north
PINE	a resource centre in a multi-cultural community in a large city
SYCAMORE	a relatively affluent village in the South of England
TEAK	a social enterprise regeneration group comprising of several distinct subsidiary companies operating in different markets

Real Times in practice

Selection and recruitment of case study locations took place in late 2009. Fieldwork for wave 1 started in March 2010 and was completed by the beginning of September 2010, and wave 2

by the end of March 2011. Wave 3 fieldwork is due for completion in September 2011. A fourth wave has been scheduled for Spring 2012. A fifth wave, involving feedback discussions with case study participants and verification of general findings, will take place in Spring 2013.

Findings

Wave 1 was effectively a scoping exercise to find out more about the history, development, current structure, staffing, funding, activities, challenges and position of each case study. Undertaken during the period leading up to and immediately after the 2010 General Election, interviewees also offered reflections about the changing context, and potential implications for their organisation and activities.

A number of issues have been identified from this, which are under further analysis.

- Several organisations were beginning to plan significant cutbacks in activities and staffing in anticipation of a financial squeeze following the public spending review, which we have initially characterised as ‘anticipatory anxiety’.
- Several organisations were attempting to read the newly emerging policy environment and position themselves in different ways for the new context.
- A number of organisations were undergoing significant restructuring programmes.
- The case studies illustrate some interesting and contrasting examples of centre-periphery third sector relationships; and these issues are being explored further in conjunction with analysis of this within TSRC’s Service Delivery work stream.

A range of interesting ‘story-lines’ appear to be developing across a number of cases, which can be compared and followed through time. Potential story-lines include:

- who is in charge? (or thinks they are in charge, if anybody), reflecting on questions of governance, leadership and particularly the relationship between senior executives and boards, and the ways in which influence is exercised within third sector organisations.
- Uncertainty and crisis, or how are substantially state funded third sector organisations coping with the uncertainty of the policy and funding environment created by the new government, end of large contracts and the public sector cuts?
- Between the personal and the professional, concerning the ideas of ethos, commitment and identity in third sector organisations.

Others in development include the choice and significance of different legal structures, the implications of the personalisation agenda, and the uses, viability and prospects of and for community spaces and buildings.



## Future plans

Current papers in preparation, using material from Real Times, include:

- a wave 1 overview report: 'First Impressions', providing boxed descriptions of each of the core case studies at wave 1;
- a report on 'partnerships for third sector delivery' with TSRC's Service Delivery work stream, involving a contribution from the experience of partnership working of Real Times case studies;
- a paper on how social ventures are formed, drawing on the experience of the establishment of several Real Times case studies;
- a methodological paper on recruiting case study organisations to a long term study;
- a paper by Arvidson under review in Third World Quarterly: 'The making and unmaking of moral values in NGO work'; and
- a paper examining career trajectories in the third sector, with specific reference to the boundaries between private, public and third sectors.





# Social Enterprise

## What lies behind the label?

Stream lead: Fergus Lyon  
Researchers: Heather Buckingham, Ann Humbert, Steven Pinch, Leandro Sepulveda, Peter Sunley, Simon Teasdale, Ian Vickers

### Aims

Social enterprise has received much policy attention since the late 1990s, yet the concept remains ill-defined and poorly understood. Our research includes theoretical analysis of the concept of social enterprise, quantitative descriptions of the extent of the social enterprise sub-sector, and qualitative work to understand the distinctive (or otherwise) contribution made by social enterprise.



### Methodology

#### Academic and policy literature

We have reviewed different definitions of social enterprise, explanations for its emergence, and its relationship to the third sector. We also show how the term has been constructed in different ways and for different purposes by policy makers since the late 1990s.

Organisations and the Annual Small Business Service surveys, while work on the relative prevalence of women in the third sector has been conducted through analysis of the Labour Force Survey and the Citizenship Survey. We have also had access to a large nonprofit database from the USA which we have developed allowing us to explore the growth of social enterprise activity in a comparative context.

#### Quantitative data

A wide range of statistical sources provide evidence on social enterprise, although few have been constructed solely for this purpose. To provide estimates of the number of social enterprises and their economic impact, we reviewed and conducted further analysis of the National Survey of Third Sector

#### Qualitative data

Much of our qualitative work has used interviews to collect data on specific issues. Additionally, as part of the Real Times stream, three core cases have been selected specifically to shed light on the behaviour of social enterprises over time through in-depth longitudinal research.

### Findings

#### Meanings of social enterprise

The term social enterprise means different things to different people and varies across time, context and place (Teasdale, 2011). One can distinguish organisational types by the ways in which they reconcile social or economic goals, and by their degree of collective decision-making and democratic process (Teasdale, 2010a). There has been much debate as to whether social enterprise should be seen as part of the third sector with many commentators fearing that the label is being used as a smokescreen for privatisation (TSRC Working Paper 15). Policy makers have used the

label in a range of ways. Initially use of the term originated through an alliance between practitioners from the co-operative movement and high profile politicians. The term was subsequently broadened to include community enterprises and, later, to draw attention to the potential role of social businesses in providing 'business responses to social problems'. Further expansion of the construct saw voluntary organisations deriving some of their income through trading, particularly those delivering public services, labelled as social enterprises (Teasdale, 2011). Under the new Coalition government it would seem that social enterprise is predominantly seen as a way of delivering public services, although





it remains unclear whether the policy emphasis will remain on third sector organisations or switch to for-profit businesses appropriating the label. It would appear, though, that the collective nature of social enterprise emphasised in much of the early literature has been abandoned in favour of more entrepreneurial approaches to 'getting the job done'.

### Mapping the scale and scope of social enterprises

The contested nature of social enterprise makes it impossible to reach a commonly accepted estimate of their scale and scope (Lyon and Sepulveda, 2009; TSRC Working Paper 35). We show that existing estimates range from 16,000 to 281,000 organisations and explain why these wide discrepancies occur (TSRC Working Paper 43).

Additional research has focused on charities in England and Wales, particularly the extent to which they are becoming more reliant on commercial revenue when compared with nonprofits in the United States (TSRC Working Paper 47). More detailed analysis has shown that when controlling for time, on both sides of the Atlantic, commercial revenue is a substitute for grants and donations. Causation would appear to work in both directions. That is, commercial revenue rises as a response to a decline in grants and in donations, but would also appear to precipitate a fall in grants and donations.

### Public policy and social enterprise

One advantage of a loose social enterprise definition has been to allow policy makers to aggregate the positive characteristics of the different organisational forms and so claim to be addressing a wide range of problems using social enterprise as a policy tool (Teasdale, 2011). Our research shows the wide range of policy initiatives that have been developed in the UK to support social enterprise. We place a particular emphasis on the role of business support and social investment. Research on third sector partnerships in the delivery of public services has examined issues of trust in social enterprises' relationships, both with suppliers/contractors (vertical) and with other social enterprises (horizontal).

Our research has also focused on the role of social enterprise in specific areas of public service delivery. Within the health sector the contested nature of social enterprise is clearly apparent, and we have explored the claims made in relation to the innovative nature of social enterprise, its reliance on trading income, and the different ownership structures open to social enterprises (Dickinson and Lyon, forthcoming TSRC Working Paper on contested meanings of social enterprise in the English health service reforms). Much of the policy literature emphasises the potential for social enterprises to serve as vehicles for spin-outs from the NHS. However despite this policy attention there has been limited action in this area (TSRC Working Paper 52).

Within the homelessness field policy makers have adopted a more clearly defined definition of social enterprise as an organisational form adopted by third sector organisations and designed to move homeless people into employment (Teasdale, 2010c). More detailed analysis of the ways in which these organisations balance social and commercial

goals demonstrates that they are able to compete with private sector organisations by drawing upon a hybrid range of resources from other sectors of the economy. This effectively transfers the additional costs of employing homeless people to consumers, government, philanthropic donors and other third sector organisations (Teasdale, 2012 forthcoming).

### Finance, networks and clusters

The Coalition government is looking for ways to strengthen the sector, with much attention given to social investment. Research by Buckingham et al. (TSRC Working Paper 35), examined the factors affecting the emergence and development of social enterprise in four different geographical contexts within the UK, focusing particularly on finance and networks, and explored the influence that local government can have on these. The strongest local contexts exist where public agencies and third sector institutions have both encouraged and supported the growth of local and regional social enterprise associations. There is little evidence of diversification of funding away from grants and public sector contracts and there is a low level of demand for debt.

Learning and management issues in social enterprise

The complex and multi-faceted nature of social enterprise offers particular opportunities to organisations presenting as social enterprises to attract funding. Ethnographic research showed how social entrepreneurs are able to present different facades of their organisation to different funders. This enables them to ‘demonstrate’ that they are successful at meeting the funders’ objectives (Teasdale, 2010b). However this may not be a sustainable strategy over time (TSRC Working Paper 31). Follow-up interviews with those involved with a failed social enterprise have sought to understand what can be learned more generally from studying failure of social enterprises (Scott and Teasdale, unpublished paper).

Our research has explored learning and innovation in social enterprises with analysis of three case studies showing that innovation came about through new products and new ways of operating, most notably through harnessing parts of the market.

Our research shows the importance to social enterprise managers of being able to demonstrate their impact to stakeholders. Thus measuring social impact is used for both marketing and learning purposes. The Social Return on Investment (SROI) model is widely used in this context. Our review of this methodology identifies the potential of this approach, and also the challenges such as quantifying social benefit, problems of attribution, and how to use judgement in setting indicators (TSRC Working Paper 49).

Diversity and social exclusion

Social enterprises are widely claimed to combat social exclusion, and promote gender and ethnic equality through their activities and working practices.

We found evidence of a sizeable and growing BME social enterprise sector in London. However these organisations do not generally accept being characterised as ‘social enterprise’ and their growing reliance on commercial revenue is actually an artefact of reduced grant funding from government. Moreover BME social enterprises in London are not well connected to the mainstream social enterprise support bodies or to related policy mechanisms (TSRC Working Paper 48).

Secondary analysis of existing data sources found that female social entrepreneurs are under-represented as leaders of private sector social enterprises, but are more equally represented leading or initiating third sector organisations. Moreover the gender pay gap was lower in the third sector than in the private sector, and women were more likely to reach management positions in third sector organisations (Teasdale et al., 2011).

When testing these assumptions we found that different forms of social enterprise combat exclusions and inequality in different ways – economically, through the provision of employment, or socially, by offering space for excluded individuals to bond together. Some of these outcomes can be related to the nature of the governance structures of social entities (Teasdale, 2010a).

Future plans

Ongoing quantitative analysis seeks to understand whether hybrid forms of social enterprise are sustainable over time. Early findings suggest very few nonprofits derive a broadly equal mix of revenue from trading and from grants/donations. We will conduct longitudinal analysis to determine what happens to this subset of third sector organisations over time. Are they able to maintain a balanced resource mix, or is this merely a temporary position en-route to a more stable position?

We also aim to understand why an increase in commercial income leads to a fall in grants and donations. Is this because the organisation reduces fundraising efforts, or because the donors change their views?

Further work on scaling up social impact and organisational growth will be undertaken, as well as studies of how organisations manage their social and financial objectives. This work will draw on case study material as well as historical records.

- We also plan to address the following issues:
- co-operatives and democracy in social enterprise;
  - environment and social enterprise;
  - gender and social enterprise;
  - policy responses to social enterprise, specifically health;
  - social investment and finance.



# ‘Below the Radar’

## Small community groups in policy and practice

Stream lead: Angus McCabe  
Researchers: Jenny Phillimore, Andri Soteri-Proctor

### Aims

Much third sector research relates to formal, often publicly funded, voluntary organisation in terms of role, function and management. There has been less activity around more informal community based activities: those groups that do not appear on the records of regulatory bodies such as the Charity Commission or are ‘below the radar’ in terms of publicly available printed or on-line directories.

The aim of the Below the Radar (BTR) work stream is to develop research agenda which focus specifically on small, informal and semi-formal community groups and activities and to develop a series of key research questions, including:

- What do BTR groups, activities and organisations look like? What is their role and function and how do they operate?
- Is it possible to more accurately quantify BTR groups and their contribution to civil society?

- What are the motivations of those involved in BTR groups and activities?
- What is the life cycle of BTR organisations and how do those active in them learn and develop?
- What is the impact of more informal community action and organising?
- What is the relationship between BTR groups, the formal third sector and government policies?

The research stream is addressing these questions alongside other TSRC streams, in particular the Real Times ‘whole community’ case studies, and aims to contribute to the Centre’s theory and policy work.

### Methodology

Below the Radar has adopted a mixed methodology model. This has included a baseline literature review, updated and supplemented through regular desk research. Further, given the speed of change in the sector, particularly since the 2010 General Election, there has been increased access to, and participation in, online discussion fora. In addition, the research has used both individual semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore the core research questions.

These ‘traditional’ methods have evolved alongside more action research orientated approaches. One particularly innovative method has been the ‘street-walking’ element of the micro-mapping project. This element of the research stream started with

a standard search (both in directories and on-line) for voluntary and community groups in two areas of England with a view to gaining an overview of the range of community activities within particular localities. This indicated that there was substantially more activity than might be suggested through an analysis of Charity Commission and other regulatory body databases, but it did not reach beyond groups that were known, in some way, to third sector umbrella bodies or local authority departments. ‘Street-walking’ (visiting shops, community meeting places, café’s etc.) therefore became a means of identifying community based activities (often highly informal but regular) which could, more accurately, be described as ‘below the radar’.



## Findings

### Literature review

This drew attention to the lack of a common definition of ‘below the radar’, and the limited nature of academic research into community groups and activities. Much coverage takes the form of ‘grey’ literature (in particular in evaluations of regeneration and area-based initiatives) though the quality of these materials is highly variable. There is no homogeneous ‘community sector’, but rather a series of subsectors.

### Distinctiveness

A key claim surrounding community based groups and activities is that they are distinct and different from the formal and formalised voluntary sector. This hypothesis was tested through a series of interviews with key academics, policy makers and practitioners active in ‘the community sector’ and formed the basis for TSRC Working Paper 33.

In exploring claims to distinctiveness, this research highlighted characteristics such as the multiple purposes and functions fulfilled by BTR groups, their flexible and informal nature, the potential beneficial impacts of such groups (particularly in terms of acting as a bridge between communities and political systems), their role in sustaining the free exchange of resources (even in the absence of funding), and their potential ability to attract resources to communities or to support existing resources.

### Below the Radar in a big society

Building on the distinctiveness paper, the research stream explored the relationship between changing policy towards community groups in the Big

Society. Discussion covered the continuities and discontinuities between the Coalition government policies and the previous New Labour administration’s approach, the expectations placed on BTR organisations in the Big Society agenda, the range of attitudes to the Big Society agenda in both BTR community groups and the formal voluntary sector: from positive and welcoming to sceptical and hostile, different models of working with communities, and whether it was possible to ‘scale up’ community activity as a means of delivering the ‘Big Society’. TSRC Working Paper 51 also explored the early/anticipated impacts of deficit reduction strategies on BTR community groups and activities. This is currently being explored in more detail for a follow-up working paper later in 2011.

### Other activities

The literature review highlighted substantial gaps in the knowledge base around BTR groups and activities. This has led to joint work with the Universities of Exeter and Glamorgan and Voluntary Arts (co-funded by AHRC), and a working paper on the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma third sector in the UK, undertaken by Ryder (a TSRC Associate Fellow). In addition, the research stream has instigated a series of discussion papers. To date, three have been produced:

- exploring the potential of social network theory to inform BTR research (by Burnage, TSRC volunteer);
- using complexity theory to examine the relationships between community groups and statutory agencies (by Conn, TSRC Associate Fellow);

- a case study on rural community enterprise and responses to the recession by McCabe.

There has also been an international dimension to the work stream’s impact and knowledge exchange work (funded through alternative sources of money). To date these have included:

- Eurasia Foundation/Centre for Strategic Research and Development Georgia social economy and Social Return on Investment conference (March 2009) [www.csrdg.ge](http://www.csrdg.ge) funded by Oxfam Novib.

- A study exchange visit (supported by the British Council and University of Birmingham) with the Centre for Strategic Research and Development, on social enterprise and community development in the UK and Georgia. This has resulted in forthcoming articles in the Community Development Journal and Voluntary Sector Review.
- A seminar on international comparisons of non-governmental organising.
- Presenting at the Community Development Journal Global Symposium and the European Cities of Migration Conference.

## Future plans

There are a number of priorities for the immediate future.

Micro-mapping: the field research for the micro-mapping of BTR activities in two communities in England has now been completed. A Working Paper is due for publication and discussions are underway to explore the potential to replicate this exercise in other urban and rural community settings, and to develop a ‘toolkit’ for others to undertake similar mapping activity.

Family trees: interviews for pilot phase research exploring how resources, skills and knowledge are gained and shared in small community organisations has now been completed. A discussion paper will be presented to the BTR Reference Group (October 2011) for the publication of a working paper later in 2011/early 2012.

Grassroots arts: the literature review on the role of grassroots arts groups is currently in draft form. A summary will be presented at a ministerial launch event in October this year at Cecil Sharp House, London, with a working paper and journal articles to follow. A second Connected Communities proposal is being prepared to ‘test’ the findings of the literature review through a series of case studies and workshops.

Big Society and community: this research builds on the earlier distinctiveness and Big Society papers (TSRC Working Papers 33/51). A discussion paper will be presented to the BTR Reference Group (October 2011) for the publication of a full working paper later in 2011/early 2012.



# Service Delivery

## The changing role of the third sector in delivering public services

Stream lead: David Mullins

Researchers: Tony Bovaird, Heather Buckingham, Helen Dickinson, Dina Gojkovic, Rob Macmillan, Rosie Meek, Alice Mills, James Rees, Rebecca Taylor, Simon Teasdale

### Aims

Third sector organisations are involved to an increasing extent in the provision of public services. These services are usually provided under contract from various levels of government and other public agencies, sometimes through partnerships with public and private organisations, and often have remits to increase responsiveness to citizens, service users and local communities.

Critical understanding of service delivery by the third sector is important to policy making. Our research has interrogated the political and policy discourses around the 'added value' of TSOs vis-à-vis their public and private counterparts, and explored the dangers inherent in the third sector becoming over-dependent on funding from service contracts, including the potential loss of independence and the distribution of risk between small and large, local and national organisations in different sub-sectors.

The context for this work encompasses challenging economic and political conditions, including the Green Paper on Modernising Commissioning (Cabinet Office, 2010), the Localism Bill (HM Government, 2010), the Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill (House of Commons, 2010) and the Open Public Services White Paper (HM Government, 2011).

### Methodology

An evidence review (TSRC Working Paper 20) examined four themes from the literature relating to emerging commissioning and procurement practices, the experience of third sector service providers, support and capacity building needs and service delivery impacts. This review shaped the Service Delivery agenda suggesting work on commissioning models, inter-organisational responses, the tension between scaling-up and local responsiveness, sustainability and resilience and impact on organisational mission.

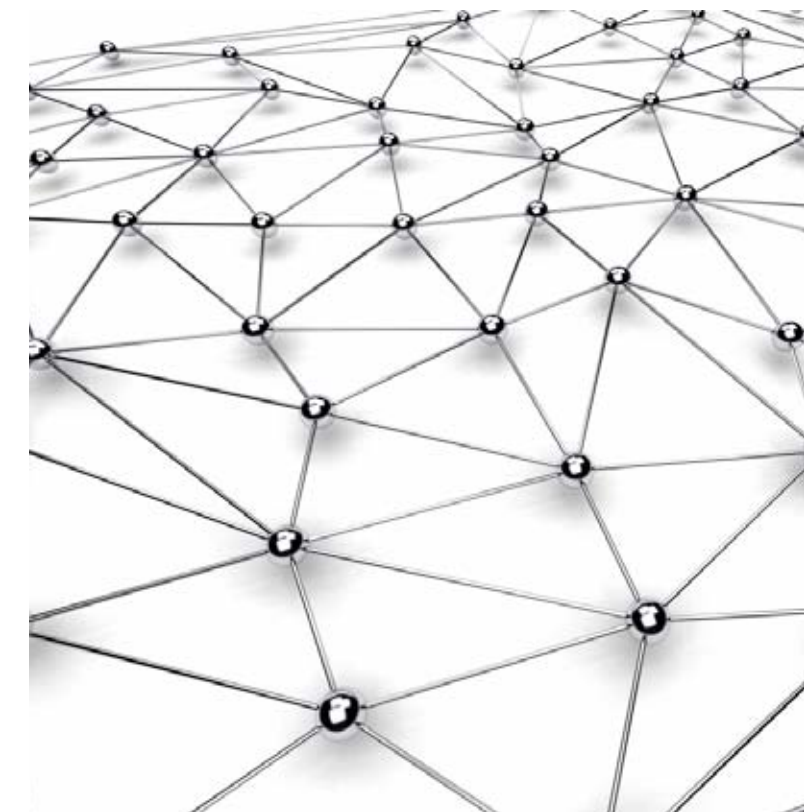
Further scoping work for the Service Delivery work stream included the mapping of organisational fields. Housing scoping studies used an institutional perspective to map the history, numbers, activities, funding, policy and regulation drivers and umbrella bodies in each of six housing sub-fields. Scoping work for the Employment Services project is mapping the supply chains of a selected number of 'prime' providers, as well as cross-programme key characteristics of all subcontractors to inform sampling strategy.

Service Delivery projects have generally adopted a mixed-methods approach with literature reviews and stakeholder interviews used to scope topics. Surveys of organisations and service users have occasionally been used to provide broad coverage, and case studies widely used to provide in-depth exploration of issues in different contexts, including individual organisations, organisational fields and networks, or sectors and sub-sectors.

We have also benefitted from the longitudinal perspective on organisational change and

adaptation provided by the Real Times team (TSRC Working Paper 45).

Most work to date has focused on the English context, but the partnerships project has also explored procurement groups and Supporting People partnerships in Northern Ireland in collaboration with the University of Ulster and Queens University, Belfast. We have also contributed to wider international comparative work, for example, in relation to co-production in public services (TSRC Briefing Paper 12) and on the role of housing associations in neighbourhood work in the Netherlands and England (Close Neighbours Project).



# Findings

## Scoping work

The preliminary evidence review examined four themes relating to emerging commissioning and procurement practices, the experiences of third sector service providers, support and capacity building needs and service delivery impacts.

A key issue to emerge concerning commissioning practices was the shift from ‘giving’ to ‘shopping’ by public bodies and concern to ensure that services are not cross-subsidised from reserves. The dominant finding in relation to organisational experiences was uncertainty of the commissioning landscape and the importance of building good relationships with commissioners. TSOs were thought to need capacity building in relation to business and strategic planning and a culture shift to embrace commissioning but there was lack of clarity on the best ways to provide such support. There was considerable anxiety about the impact of involvement in service delivery on independence, mission and innovation.

The five housing scoping papers (summarised in TSRC Briefing Paper 11) explored specific features of sub-sectors concerning housing associations, homelessness advice and support, co-operative and mutual organisations, tenants and residents groups, social enterprises and self-help housing organisations. A key finding was that a thriving third sector is dependent upon strong inter-organisational links and it is therefore important for research to consider the ecology of organisational fields (nationally, regionally and locally). The papers also helped to prioritise, for more detailed study, the under-researched field of self-help housing.

## Commissioning

Research has highlighted the need to differentiate TSOs’ responses to commissioning based on organisational values and positioning. This was captured by the four response categories of: ‘comfortable contractors’, ‘compliant contractors’, ‘cautious contractors’, ‘community-based non-contractors’ (TSRC Working Papers 41 and 50). This may have resonance with work in other fields such as Employment Services.

Procurement and commissioning were identified as key stimuli to new forms of collaboration including vertical supply chains, sometimes involving private sector organisations and TSOs, as in the case of the Work Programme which is the focus of a new project on employment services (see below).

## Partnerships

Work on third sector partnerships for service delivery has sought to understand the key forms of inter-organisational collaboration in service delivery involving TSOs, the main drivers and rationale for collaboration and partnership, the relative advantages of different types of collaborative arrangements in terms of e.g. service outcomes, accountabilities, efficiency, cost and impacts on innovation, and learning. A diverse set of case studies have identified the difference between internal motivations and external drivers, the importance of cultural barriers to collaboration, the difficulties of evidencing the benefits of merger and the tensions of developing ‘partnerships’ within vertical supply chains.

## Sub-sectors

Sub-sector studies have explored more specific policy developments in health and social care, criminal justice and housing.

## Health and social care

The development of personalisation has been tracked by two studies in the health and social care stream. While the underpinning philosophy of personalisation aligns well with values advocated by some TSOs for a long time, TSOs in general are not ready to engage with implementation issues (TSRC Working Paper 30). Further work was also done to highlight the important role played by carers in implementation of personalisation and concluded that more evidence is needed on how to support users and carers (TSRC Working Paper 64).

Research on the Right to Request scheme, under which NHS staff have been able to set up community health services as social enterprises, found from case studies in the Midlands that much more support would be required if this is to happen on a larger scale (TSRC Working Paper 52).

Our work on the potential impacts of the Health Service reforms for third sector organisations indicates that health reforms have the potential to be a threat for those TSOs who have managed to establish good relationships with health commissioners. However, it may also provide opportunities for TSOs to establish new relationships with clinical commissioners who are looking to commission innovative or different types of services from TSOs who have expert knowledge in terms of particular service user groups or conditions.





Criminal justice

Work has focused on the role played by TSOs within prison establishments, looking at this from the perspectives of TSOs and prisoners themselves. This found that knowledge of and engagement with third sector organisations was low. On the other hand, whereas in the past volunteers in the criminal justice system had traditionally been undervalued and viewed with considerable suspicion, this is no longer a prevalent opinion and the expertise and time of third sector organisations are strongly valued by prison staff, and professional rivalries are rare. Concerns remain, however, about information sharing and the appropriateness of third sector staff working in an environment that prioritises security and risk management over the aims of their organisation. There is need for a greater use of third sector coordinators within prisons, who should promote services offered by these organisations more widely in the prisons and improve communications between offenders, staff and TSOs.

Self-help housing

Self-help organisations can play an important role in working with homeless people to provide a route out of homelessness and unemployment as well as contributing to tackling the empty homes problem (TSRC Working Paper 53). There are, however, considerable challenges involved in expanding and scaling-up such activities which are inherently small-scale. This requires attention to the potential ‘policy fit’ of self-help to the localism agenda and how it can be converted into ‘policy action’ when matched with the continued emphasis on large-scale procurement and efficiency within the mainstream housing procurement programme (TSRC Working Paper 54, Mullins et al., 2011).

Future plans

The latest statement of policy in the Open Public Services White Paper has provided an opportunity to revisit the Service Delivery research stream to identify evidence of relevance to espoused policy directions involving choice, decentralisation, diversity, fairness and accountability with distinct approaches to individual services, neighbourhood services and commissioned services.

A number of projects are now commencing or are under development:

- The third sector and delivery of employment services. Following a literature review, there will be an exploration of the possibilities for mapping a carefully selected number of supply chains of some prime contractors in certain Contract Package Areas. This will help with the sampling and selection of case studies of third sector providers (subcontractors) who will be studied through in-depth interviewing.
- What can be learnt from the English experience of spinning out public services into the third sector? This project will compare evidence from the health, housing and leisure sectors to inform future policy (including in the context of the Mutuels Taskforce).

- Community Investment and Housing Associations: what has changed since 2008? Analysis of National Housing Federation Neighbourhood Audits 2008 and 2011. This work will build on the audit of 1200 members of the NHF published in 2008 which found that associations were investing ‘at least £435 million into this work, made up of £272 million of their own funds’, that ‘there are more than 6,980 identifiable projects’ and that ‘this work benefits the equivalent of one in ten of the population’.

Procurement and commissioning practices and TSO responses to them are among the principal drivers of the future shape of the sector and will largely determine the impact of TSOs on public services. These will be the focus of a core project for 2012/2013 drawing on inputs from the whole team giving us the opportunity to explore issues raised by stakeholders in many of the earlier service delivery projects.



# Economic and Social Impact

## Measuring the value of the third sector

Stream lead: Pete Alcock  
Researchers: Malin Arvidson, David Clifford, Fergus Lyon, Domenico Moro, Stephen McKay, Simon Teasdale

### Aims

There has been an increasing emphasis in recent years on the economic and social impact that third sector organisations have. This has particularly been focused on organisations themselves with new agencies such as New Philanthropy Capital encouraging organisations to pay more attention to the outcomes of their activities and promoting different means of measuring performance to achieve this. What is more many funders, especially in the public sector, are expecting, or requiring, organisations to demonstrate the value and impact of their work, especially in order to bid for and deliver public service contracts.

A key research priority for TSRC has therefore been to explore the development of this new drive towards impact assessment and performance management, and to provide critical analysis of the tools being offered to do this. This includes empirical work to survey the different tools available and their use by third sector organisations,

theoretical analysis of the policies and practices that have informed these, and technical analysis of the use of leading forms of measurement.

TSRC also aims to develop means for measuring the aggregate impact of third sector activity and the purported ‘added value’ that the sector may bring to social action and service delivery, for instance, through the development of models to establish a proxy monetary value for volunteering.

Key questions for the research programme are:

- contrasting and combining economic and social impact;
- the effectiveness of existing tools for impact assessment within TSOs;
- defining and measuring the added value of third sector activity;
- development of aggregate measures of impact.

### Methodology

Research in this stream has included documentary review of current literature in the field, including international literature on impact measurement models. Qualitative interviews with key respondents have been used to discover the range of models currently in use and the strengths and weaknesses identified by respondents.

Economic analysis of leading models of impact measurement has been employed to assess the effectiveness of these – notably Social Return on Investment (SROI). Economic modelling will be developed and employed to provide aggregate measures of third sector performance and value creation.

Research in this stream has also included analysis of statistical data on trends in sector funding, developing comparative analysis with the United States, to model the complex interactions between commercial income and donations.

### Findings

#### Economic analysis and the third sector

Theoretical work by Westall took both a practical and critical view of economic analysis in relation to the third sector. TSRC Working Paper 14 considers issues of both practical and conceptual importance, in order to identify possibilities and priorities and enable further in-depth work of the economic analysis of the third sector. A second paper (TSRC Working Paper 25) on value and the sector provided a broad sweep across the ideas and practices around ‘value’, and how these relate to third sector organisations and activities.

#### Measuring social and economic impact

Research has reviewed material presented by third sector organisations, funders and academics with the aim of outlining the way evaluation is practised, experienced and discussed within the third sector. This has revealed that third sector experiences of performance measurement often include frustration and tension due to the mismatch of expectations and poor communication with funders (TSRC Working Paper 27).



Policy and practice interest in measuring the social impact of third sector activities has focused in particular upon one approach to this – Social Return on Investment (SROI). This received support and promotion from government through the Office for the Third Sector and has also been promoted by a number of third sector organisations. Research in the Centre has examined this approach in detail and identified a series of issues that require further investigation. These include technical and methodological issues; and the ways in which SROI is being used by stakeholders. This is part of ongoing research to assess the use of SROI by third sector organisations and to compare its take-up and value with other models for performance measurement (see TSRC Working Paper 49).

**Comparative analysis  
of sector funding**

Analysis of the relationship between commercial revenue and grants and donations demonstrated that in the US, commercial income and grants and donations are inelastic substitutes – that is a small rise in one leads to a decline in the other. In England and Wales the shorter imbalanced panel supplied by Guidestar UK did not permit such intricate analysis. Nonetheless we were also able to show that a 1% fall in grants and donations was associated with 0.31% increase in commercial revenue here.

**Future plans**

Further research is planned on the use of SROI and other forms of performance and impact measurement by third sector organisations, with the aim of developing a comparative analysis of the implementation of these by different organisations. Research will also be developed to undertake sector-wide analysis of the economic impact of

third sector activity and its contribution to the wider economy, including analysis of workforce trends, volunteering and third sector value. Our aim is to develop quantitative measures of aggregate impact and we will utilise existing datasets to explore operationalisation of these.



# Workforce and Workplace

Jobs and careers in the third sector

Stream lead: Stephen McKay

Researchers: Katie Bruce, Susan Halford, Pauline Leonard,  
Domenico Moro, Rebecca Taylor

## Aims

This stream provides TSRC's contribution to the development of information on the labour market aspects of the third sector. It sets out to analyse both the paid labour force and volunteer labour for understanding the operation of the sector compared with the public and private sectors. To date the emphasis has been on the paid labour force, but current and future research is considering volunteering in greater detail, including its effects on employability and paid employment.

This work stream looks at the people, relationships and conditions that define third sector employment, and analyses the implications of these. Key research questions include asking what attracts people to working in this sector, and what the implications are for their work identities and career trajectories. How can we understand the nature of the relationship between paid and unpaid work in the sector? Are there distinctive ways of managing and running third sector organisations, including

managing volunteers? How are working lives and careers made in third sector organisations?

These are well-rehearsed problems in measuring the size and value of the third sector. One means of measuring activity is by considering the number of paid employees working within third sector organisations. This does not include all activities relevant to third sector activity – such as volunteering – but does provide a clear means of looking at the sector.

Work in this stream has been supported by additional funding from Skills Third Sector, for activity in collaboration with NCVO, for which TSRC conducts the analytical work. This includes timely statistics on the size and composition of the workforce, with quarterly data being supplied in a manner similar to an ‘observatory’ function.

## Methodology

Whilst often associated with volunteering, the third sector employs at least 700,000 workers and this number has grown significantly over time, although the size of the sector seems to have been static in the last few years, and may now be falling.

The research in this stream has been undertaken using both quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation.

We are using in-depth ethnographic methods to analyse workplaces in the third sector, observing the day-to-day activities of both workers and volunteers in third sector organisations.

A key element of our published research in this area has been secondary data analysis of large-scale data resources. Our analysis has drawn on the following two sources in particular:

- *The Labour Force Survey (LFS)*. This quarterly dataset, generally available around 12 weeks after data collection, provides a long time series of information relating to employment in the third sector, and allows direct comparisons to be made between people in the different sectors, and between different industries. There is a short panel element that permits analysis of transitions between sectors, and to and from unemployment and economic inactivity. Around 120,000 people are included each quarter, and around 1,300 work in the third sector.
- *The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)* contains 18 years of observations on the same people over time, and with new individuals joining the panel. As with the LFS, it is possible

to identify those working in the third sector and their characteristics – including their views about their jobs. This is a much smaller dataset with around 15,000 adult interviews each year. This data is now largely being superseded by the much larger UK household longitudinal survey from 2009, known as *Understanding Society*.

We use mostly cross-sectional methods when analysing the LFS, and panel regression techniques for the BHPS. We have also made use of the 2006 Skills Survey and the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS).





Findings

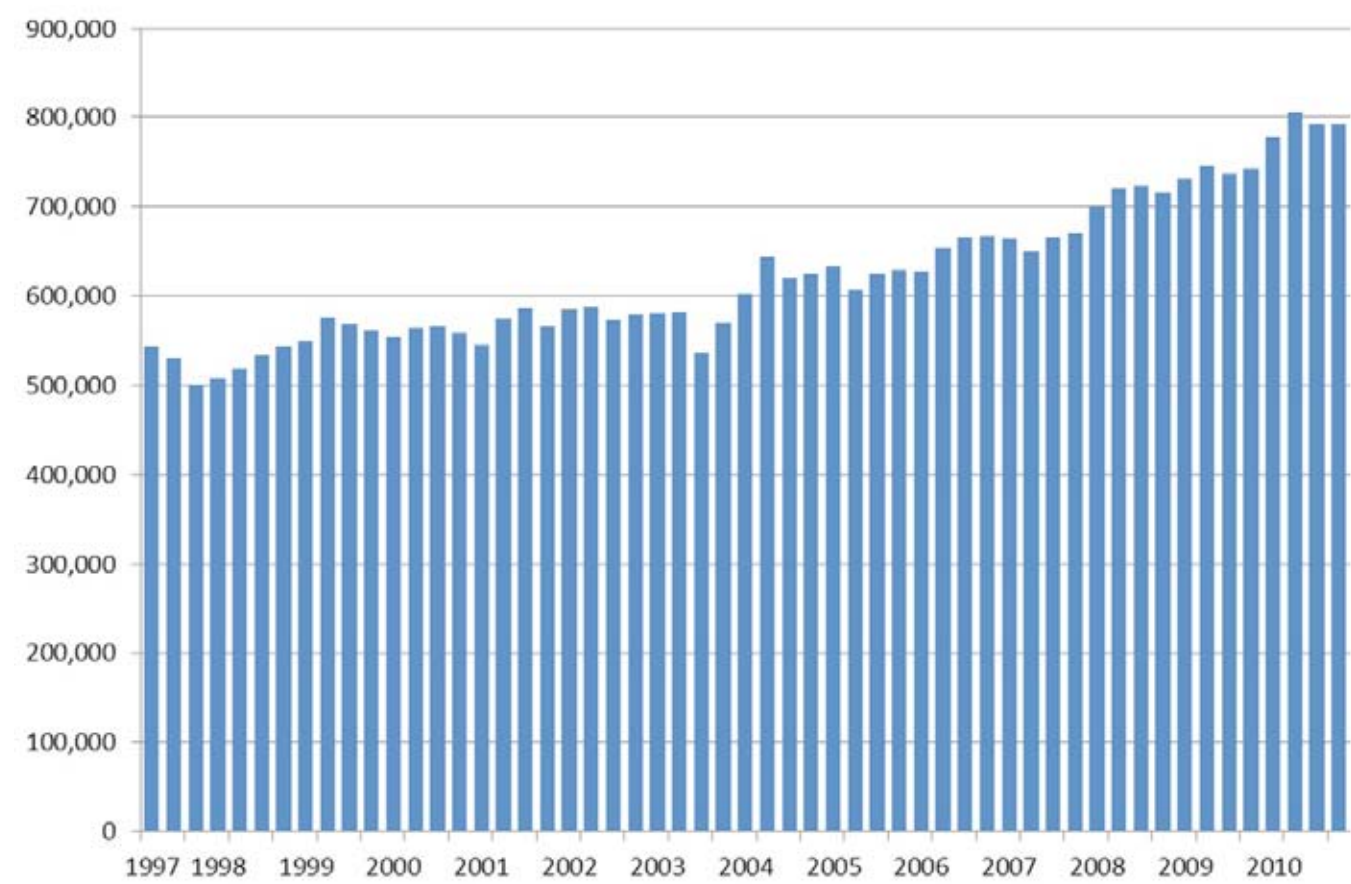
The workforce almanac

In collaboration with NCVO and Skills Third Sector, we are currently producing a new workforce almanac. This sets out key details about those working in the third sector, and is an authoritative source on such matters. This contains details about the size of the sector, average hours of work, contractual basis of employment, the rate of remuneration and so on.

Recession and the workforce

We produce regular statistics looking at the changing situation of the third sector workforce. Numbers have been growing since 1998, with only a few quarters when that growth has been reversed (see Figure 2). The workforce reached a peak of just over 800,000 in early 2010, after a period of growth stretching back to 2004, and has since fallen back slightly below this level in the second half of 2010 and into 2011.

Figure 2: Growth of the third sector workforce 1997–2010

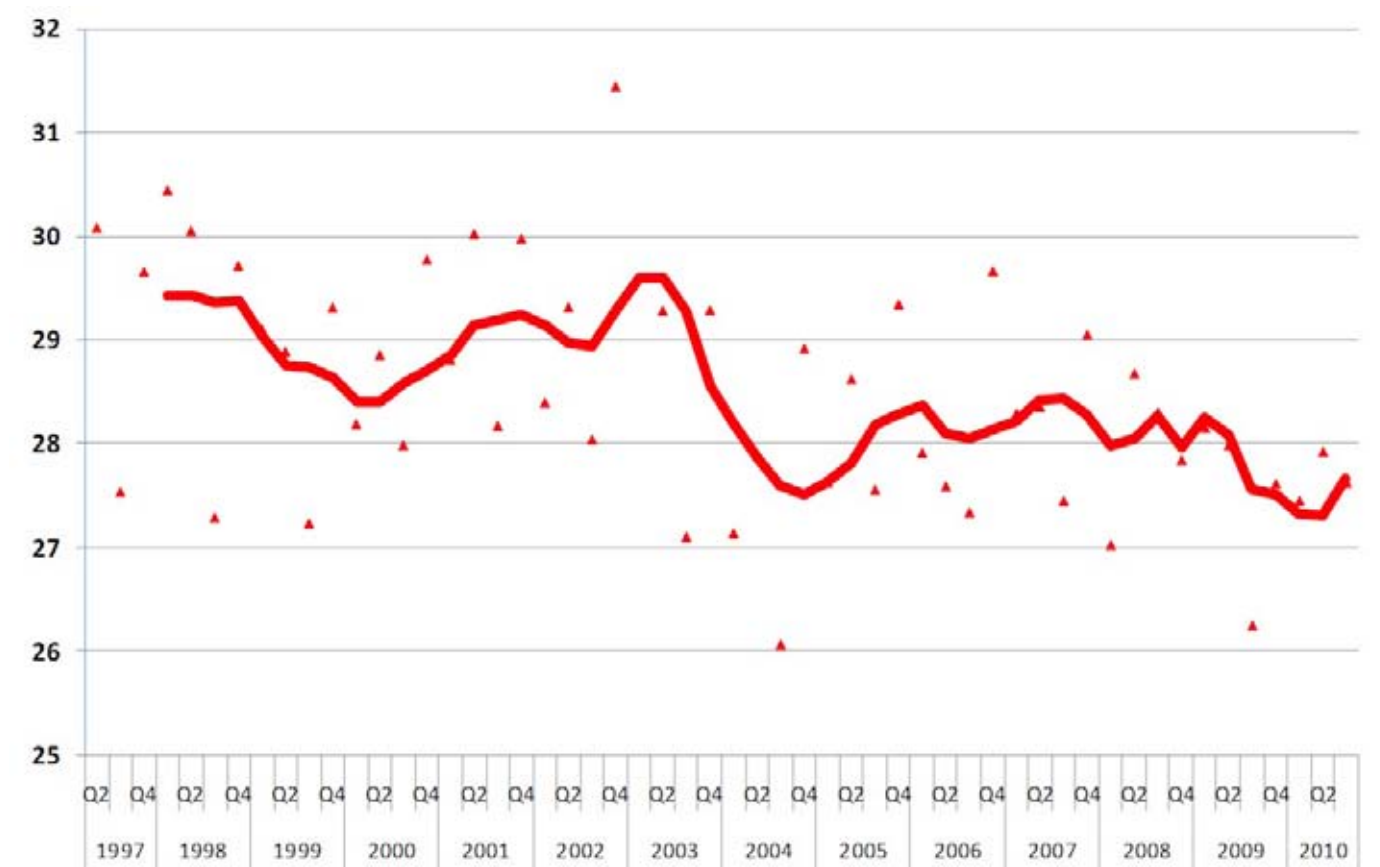


Source: quarterly Labour Force Surveys

While the average number of workers in the sector has generally increased, over time the average working hours of these workers has decreased by around two hours a week – from 29½ to 27½ per week (see Figure 3). This may be reflecting, in the

latter years, a response to the recession that consists of shorter term working and fewer job losses than might have otherwise occurred – a ‘labour hoarding’ process that other commentators have also found.

Figure 3: Changes in average weekly working hours of the third sector workforce 1997–2010 (moving average)



Fuller results about workers in the sector are available in TSRC Working Paper 28. This looks at the qualifications of those in the third sector (higher than average), the gender balance (more women), the age distribution (fewer younger and more older workers), the industrial balance (concentrated in a small number of sectors, including health and social

care), working hours (more are part-time) and so on. Comparisons are made with the workforce as a whole, and the paper looks at trends over time.

The workforce in the devolved administrations: evidence from the Labour Force Survey, 1997–2010

Research was initially conducted for Wales, following discussions with the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). This has since been extended to look at employment in the different devolved administrations including Scotland and Northern Ireland, and will be published as a TSRC Working Paper.

Job satisfaction in the sector

Theories of the third sector – the ‘warm glow’ of working within it – assume that levels of job satisfaction will be higher among third sector workers than those in other sectors, once other factors are taken into account. Alternatively, workers will be content to work for less, given their higher levels of satisfaction. Our research has found that this picture is true, but to a declining extent. Levels of job satisfaction do remain higher in the third sector, even controlling for a range of differences in job and personal characteristics. However, there is evidence that this advantage over other sectors has been declining over time.

Organising the third sector: working lives and organisational challenges

The project team, using key criteria, selected six appropriate case study organisations from around 10,000 potential organisations. Two of the six case studies are now complete. A working paper on the initial literature review is forthcoming.

Gender equality in employment

An exploration of differences in management level and pay rates in the voluntary, private and public sectors found that there was greater gender equality in the third sector – albeit there were still gender gaps with women receiving lower pay than men (Teasdale et al., 2011).

Estimates of the third sector workforce and volunteering in organisations

Geyne Rajme has generated estimates of the workforce, and also the number of volunteers in the third sector, using branded NSTSO data to arrive at estimates of the organisations which employ staff and which have volunteers, by legal form, local authority and region, and other characteristics. We have also made efforts to assess the extent to which these estimates are consistent with those derived from other sources (e.g. reports to the Charity Commission by charities, or survey datasets). The results will be published as a TSRC working paper during 2011.

Future plans

The importance of the unpaid labour force – volunteers – forms the subject of ongoing research. The current two projects are:

- whether volunteering leads to changes in employability;
- what is the economic value of volunteering, drawing on techniques from cost–benefit analysis.

Ongoing research on employability is making use of the BHPS, which has asked about volunteering from 1998 onwards. The value of volunteering may be assessed using different techniques from

the economics of cost–benefit analysis, relating volunteering to changes in life satisfaction in particular.

We continue to provide labour market information about workers in the sector, and will do so over the next year supported by Skills Third Sector. We will look at the effects on wages of working in the third sector, and how differences in wages are ‘compensated for’ by differences in overall job satisfaction.





# Environment

## An under-developed agenda for the third sector?

Stream lead: Milena Büchs and Graham Smith  
Researchers: Rebecca Edwards

### Aims

This work stream is investigating activities of third sector organisations (TSOs) on environmental and climate change issues through three interconnected strands.

1. Mapping the environmental third sector. This strand of work draws on existing databases such as the Charity Commission Register and the National Third Sector Survey to analyse the characteristics of those TSOs whose primary mission is environmental.
2. Mainstreaming the environment. An analysis of the extent to which the environment is recognised and considered within the decision-making and other activities of the third sector as a whole. One element of this work is an exploration of the role of environmental performance management tools across the third sector – this is the area with the most systematic research

findings to date. A central consideration of this stream of work is the impact of the broader policy framework within which TSOs operate.

3. Shaping low-carbon practices. This third strand investigates the extent to which TSOs have developed innovative approaches to shaping low-carbon practices amongst individuals and communities. It aims to analyse what type of interventions work and under what conditions.

### Methodology

#### Mapping the environmental third sector

This strand of work has involved close collaboration with members of the quantitative work stream. Much time has been spent cleaning the data on the Charity Commission Register (CCR). There is no ‘environment’ classification on the Register, so the team utilised the technique developed by NCVO which applies the International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations (ICNPO) framework to the CCR. This will provide useful feedback to NCVO about the efficacy of their analytical technique. Statistical analysis of the environmental third sector is progressing with a comparison of the data from CCR and NSTSO.

#### Mainstreaming the environment

This strand of research has been developed through:

- a review of key policy documents from within the sector and relevant public authorities;
- stakeholder interviews with representatives from peak organisations and public authorities;
- attendance at key sector events;
- participation in expert seminars.

#### Low-carbon practices

Work on this strand began by focusing on the conceptualisation of social practices, how they change, and the development of a particular approach to understanding types of intervention by TSOs (TSRC Working Paper 59). On the basis of this conceptual work, pilot interviews have been undertaken with potential case study organisations, plus interviews with ‘policy strategists’ within the third sector to learn more about the discourses that are currently circulating within the sector and that are potentially shaping different interventions.



Findings

Mapping the environmental third sector

Analysis of the data is currently in process. A working paper with initial findings will be produced in October 2011.

Mainstreaming the environment

The role of the third sector in responding to environmental issues, and in particular climate change, is increasingly being promoted in policy debates. Our analysis suggests that there is an opportunity for the third sector to embed the environment into their working practices. However, without changes in strategic support from within and beyond the sector it is difficult to see how the environment can be mainstreamed to an extent that the third sector’s potential can be fully harnessed.

A number of lessons can be drawn from our empirical work about the future development of environment performance management tools (EPMTs) across the third sector:

- There is reasonable concern about the costs of implementing EPMTs, in particular ISO14001 and other accredited tools. TSOs – particularly those that are small and medium-sized and make up the largest number of organisations in the sector – often find their resources stretched.
- Experience from two of our case studies suggests that there is room for the development of sector-specific tools that take into account the needs – including the

- limited resources – of different organisational forms and activities across the third sector.
- There is a tension between environmental and a more holistic sustainability management approach, which suggests that trade-offs between different priorities (environmental, social and financial) are not made explicit.
  - The development of bespoke systems raises important questions about accreditation which at the very least provides a reference point as to the efficacy of the environmental management in place.
  - There remains a significant question of the demand for environmental performance management.

Shaping low-carbon practices

A move to a low-carbon society will require significant changes in everyday lives. Studies of social practices help us understand why it can be so difficult to change well-established and embedded, but environmentally unsustainable, practices related to energy use, travel, eating, leisure and the consumption of other goods and services. TSRC Working Paper 59 sets out a framework which unpacks aspects of the context that co-constitute practices and identifies different features of TSOs and their interventions. This will facilitate further research within TSRC on the effectiveness of TSO interventions aimed at reshaping the way we live. Initial analysis of this material points to key issues on which the next phase of our research will focus.

Knowledge Exchange  
Creating opportunities for research impact

Razia Shariff and Naomi Landau

The overall aim of the Knowledge Exchange Team (KET) is to ensure that TSRC’s research is fully accessible to those for whom it is relevant, both in terms of reach and understanding, and to ensure that policy makers and practitioners are fully engaged in the research process.

Our key goals are to:

- bridge gaps and build understanding between research, decision making, policy making and practice;
- ensure that the experience and knowledge of policy and decision makers, practitioners and funders informs our research;
- make knowledge available in meaningful and accessible ways;
- ensure we reach those isolated from existing research knowledge flows.





## Virtual engagement

- *Website.* We launched our website in September 2009 and now have on average nearly 4,000 visits a month (3,889 in June 2011), with between 10,000 to 15,000 web page views a month (based on Google Analytics figures). We have set up 98 RSS feeds and regularly monitor these to keep researchers informed of relevant debates and issues raised by third sector stakeholders. We also monitor key Google alerts for TSRC.
- *Media coverage.* We regularly issue press releases about our work and work with the media on behalf of our researchers. As a result TSRC has attracted growing media coverage from the third sector press, national press, radio and TV. KET have also been asked to write feature articles and opinion pieces on different aspects of our research, which have appeared in publications and websites, including the Guardian, E-Gov monitor, Charity Insight Magazine and other sector publications. TSRC researchers have also written blogs and articles for media publications, including the Guardian and Third Sector Magazine.
- *E-newsletter.* This was launched in September 2010, and by July 2011 had 1,484 subscribers who receive regular updates on our latest research as well as news about forthcoming events and activities organised by TSRC.
- *Twitter.* We set up an account in January 2011 @3sectorrc and by July 2011 had over 150 followers.
- *Partnership online discussions.* The first of these, in July 2011, was held in conjunction with the Guardian Voluntary Sector Network Q&A.

## Dissemination

### Events

TSRC has organised and co-hosted a total of nine events to date. The Knowledge Exchange Team works in consultation with the researchers and partner organisations to develop events that give practitioners, policy makers and other researchers a chance to discuss research findings and what these might mean for their work or decision making. KET has worked in partnership with the following organisations: National Council of Voluntary Organisation (NCVO), the Public Management Policy Association (PMPA), AURIL, Social Research Association (SRA), National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) Realities Node, ARVAC, Ipsos Mori, Charities Evaluation Service (CES), Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT), Social Enterprise Coalition (SEC), Co-ops UK, Institute of Small Business Enterprise (ISBE), HACT, Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Cumberland Lodge.

Details of the following events are available at [www.tsrc.ac.uk](http://www.tsrc.ac.uk):

- The Big Society Evidence Seminar – Oct 2010 (with NCVO)
- Service Delivery and Social Enterprise – October 2010 (with PMPA)
- Ethics of Knowledge Exchange – November 2010 (with AURIL)
- Rethinking Research – April 2011 (with SRA, NCRM, ARVAC, Ipsos Mori, NCVO)
- Impact of Evaluation – April 2011 (with CES)
- Housing and Community Empowerment National Conference – June 2011 (with HACT)

- The future role of the third sector – June 2011 (Cumberland Lodge)
- Bridging the Social Investment Gap – July 2011 (with SEC, Co-operatives UK and ISBE)
- Beyond the Radar: maximising the impact of community activities – July 2011 (with BCT and CLG).

### Policy circles

KET introduced a policy circle format to offer closed meetings between researchers and key government officers on priority policy areas. To date, OCS and CLG officers have attended two policy circles with TSRC on SROI and social enterprise.

### Seminars

We have had regular seminars, organised by local academics, in Birmingham and Southampton, but a recent innovation has been a series based in London, inviting researchers to meet and discuss their research with London-based participants.

### Knowledge exchange

KET has been invited to be part of the Association of University Research and Industry Links' (AURIL) JISC CPD national Steering Group to develop national standards in knowledge exchange. Presentations have also been made to national and international conferences concerned with knowledge exchange. In addition, TSRC researchers and KET have taken part in, and presented at, a number of policy and practitioner conferences and seminars, including NAVCA, NCVO, CES, and many more.



## The Knowledge Portal

The Portal is a new destination site for research and information on the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. It is a free-to-use online library and web catalogue with a unique third sector indexing thesaurus, developed in partnership with the British Library to help meet the sector's knowledge sharing needs. It will be launched in October 2011.

TSRC will seek to build a dynamic and topical collection, including content drawn from a broad range of sources including our own research, reports and research produced from within the sector both nationally and internationally, government documents, and abstracts from

books and journal articles. The Portal will link to full text electronic versions of reports, either on the internet or held in our own repository, and link to online journal home pages that those with Athens passwords can follow to the article. Copies of printed books and reports will be held at both the British Library and TSRC (where possible).

We are actively seeking to build partnerships with relevant organisations/individuals across the UK to grow the collection. We intend that the Portal will house a comprehensive collection creating a one-stop-shop for research on the third sector.

## Future plans

KET's main focus for the future is to strengthen its media profile and promote TSRC's research to wider audiences, in particular policy makers at the national and local level.

We also plan to make greater use of social media. We have started this with a 'civicrowd' online space for engagement and interaction with the Below the Radar research stream, and are planning other online discussions in partnership with key social networks.

Partnership events are being planned:

- Work Futures Research Centre with the workforce research stream;

- PMPA, targeting local government councillors for the service delivery research stream;
- an equality and diversity event for the BME cross-cutting theme.

We are also exploring regional events in Scotland and Wales with our regional reference groups.

We have received approval to establish a quarterly ESRC Policy Seminar Series in partnership with NCVO, NESTA, ACEVO and GMCVO which will start in December 2011 and cover the following topics: Theory and Policy, Below the Radar, Service Delivery and social investment.

# Capacity Building Clusters

TSRC co-ordinates the work of three Capacity Building Clusters (CBCs) on Social Enterprise, Community Engagement, and Economic Impact. The CBCs help train future third sector researchers and give organisations an opportunity to work in partnership with academics. The CBCs offer:

- PhD CASE studentships – partner universities host PhD students, who work with third sector organisations on a project of mutual interest. This helps promote the exchange of knowledge, skills and research between academics and third sector organisations.
- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) – are long-term partnerships between researchers and third sector organisations. Researchers work directly with organisations, applying their skills and knowledge to important organisational problems and issues.
- Placements – the CBCs work with third sector organisations to exchange skills and knowledge through reciprocal placements. Practitioners spend time in a university or with academics to acquire new research skills and techniques; and academics and research students spend time in TSOs, gaining experience of the sector and building an understanding of their research needs.

- Vouchers – allow organisations to commission specific projects by academics, allowing researchers to respond directly to the information needs of third sector organisations.





Social enterprise

Professor Fergus Lyon at Middlesex University works in partnership with colleagues at Durham University and London South Bank University to run the Social Enterprise CBC. The CBC trains researchers on social enterprise issues and develops links between social enterprises and academics.

Middlesex, Durham and London, South Bank universities are working with 23 third sector organisations to provide 10 CASE PhD studentships, six KTPs, six vouchers, and three three-month placements. The projects are social enterprise-centric but involve work on ethnic minority issues, environmental issues, housing and homelessness, co-operatives, employment, poverty particularly around childcare, impact measurement, and mapping social firms. The TSOs range from large well-known charities such as CRISIS and RNIB to smaller less well known groups such as the Hour of Revival Association.

Active citizenship and community engagement

Working in partnership with Goldsmiths, University of London, and Manchester Metropolitan University, Zoraida Mendiwelso-Bendek, University of Lincoln, is leading this research cluster, developing innovative approaches to community engagement and empowerment. The cluster has a particular emphasis upon enabling the voices of the most disadvantaged groups to be heard effectively, as part of wider agendas for social change, social solidarity and social justice. This CBC is working with 19 third sector organisations to provide

seven CASE PhD studentships, two KTPs, eight vouchers and three three-month placements. Projects include topics such as citizenship, community cohesion and empowerment, education, devolution, rural engagement, sustainability, and gender participation. A number of faith and youth based organisations are involved together with trade unions and voluntary councils.

Economic impact of the third sector

This capacity building cluster led by Sarah Smith at the University of Bristol, offers opportunities to develop partnership projects between TSOs and academics, focusing on economic impact. The aim of these projects is to help organisations to assess the impact and value of what they do and to use data and analysis to improve service delivery.

This CBC will be working with 14 third sector organisations to provide four CASE PhD studentships, one KTP, nine vouchers, and two three-month placements. In addition Bristol will also be managing three internships. Topics covered include behavioural economics, performance measurement, the evaluation of money skills programmes, long-term trends in charitable giving, commissioning, and the impact of voluntary sector services. Organisations working with this CBC include Barclays, the Charities Aid Foundation, Tree Aid, and Care Forum.

Details about the CBCs and a full list of organisations, staff and students involved in this work can be found at [www.tsrc.ac.uk](http://www.tsrc.ac.uk) or on the websites of the participating universities.

Conclusion

This report provides only a short summary of the research undertaken within TSRC over the past two to three years. We trust that those who want to examine our work in more detail will read the publications on our website and in the academic press, or follow our reports in the media. In particular, we are committed to continuing the publication of our findings through our Working Paper and Briefing Paper series, and more of these are due out shortly. We will also continue to share our findings and our future plans with our funders, with the major stakeholders represented on our Advisory Board and Reference Groups, and with the wide range of research users across the academic, policy and practice communities.

We are committed to maintaining our engagement with these user communities in developing our future research plans and activities. As policy and practice continues to change and develop, we want to ensure that as far as possible we are able to reflect on this changing environment and incorporate analysis of its central features within our research programme. We will continue to use our stakeholder communities to inform future research priorities therefore, and will seek to ensure that our findings provide an up-to-date and robust source of analysis and information on the UK third sector for all. Our commitment is also to ensure that TSRC remains as a permanent research resource for the sector and we are working with our funders, partners and stakeholders to secure continuing support for our core research and knowledge exchange activities.

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## TSRC papers

Paper 63: UK Gypsies and Travellers and the third sector, Andrew Ryder (July 2011)

Paper 62: Mapping the Big Society: perspectives from the Third Sector Research Centre, John Mohan (August 2011)

Paper 61: Offender engagement with third sector organisations: a national prison-based survey Dina Gojkovic, Rosie Meek and Alice Mills (July 2011)

Paper 60: Third sector partnerships for service delivery: an evidence review and research project, James Rees, David Mullins and Tony Bovaird

Paper 59: Low-carbon practices: a third sector research agenda, Milena Büchs, Graham Smith and Rebecca Edwards (May 2011)

Paper 58: The black minority ethnic third sector: a resource paper, Lucy Mayblin and Andri Soteri-Proctor (June 2011)

Paper 57: Scoping the involvement of third sector organisations in the seven resettlement pathways for offenders, Dina Gojkovic, Alice Mills and Rosie Meek (May 2011)

Paper 56: Seeing things differently? The promise of qualitative longitudinal research on the third sector, Rob Macmillan (March 2011)

Paper 54: Self-help housing – towards a greater role. Case study findings summary to inform consultation at St George's House, Windsor Castle, December 2010. David Mullins, Patricia A. Jones and Simon Teasdale (Feb 2011)

Paper 53: Connecting the dots: the potential for self-help housing to address homelessness, Simon Teasdale, Patricia A. Jones and David Mullins (Jan 2011)

Paper 52: Social enterprise spin-outs from the English health service: a Right to Request but was anyone listening? Robin Miller and Ross Millar (Feb 2011)

Paper 51: 'Below the radar' in a Big Society? Reflections on community engagement, empowerment and social action in a changing policy context, Angus McCabe (Feb 2011)

Paper 50: Hybridity, diversity and the division of labour in the third sector: what can we learn from homelessness organisations in the UK? Heather Buckingham (Dec 2010)

Paper 49: The ambitions and challenges of SROI, Malin Arvidson, Fergus Lyon, Stephen McKay and Domenico Moro (Jan 2011)



<p>Paper 48: Social enterprise and ethnic minorities, Leandro Sepulveda, Stephen Syrett, Sara Calvo (Nov 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 38: Are big charities becoming increasingly dominant? David Clifford and Peter Backus (June 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 27: Impact and evaluation of the third sector, Malin Arvidson</p>	<p>Paper 12: User and community co-production of public services: fad or fact, nuisance or necessity? Tony Bovaird</p>
<p>Paper 47: A comparative study of changes in earned income among third sector organisations in England and Wales, and the United states, Simon Teasdale (Oct 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 37: The value of volunteering in Europe in the Noughties, Jeremy Kendall (September 2009)</p>	<p>Paper 26: Business or third sector, Andrea Westall</p>	<p>Paper 11: Housing scoping papers: self-help housing, David Mullins</p>
<p>Paper 46: What's in a name? The construction of social enterprise, Simon Teasdale (Sept 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 36: Mainstreaming the environment? The third sector and environmental performance management, Rebecca Edwards, Graham Smith, Milena Büchs (June 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 25: Value and the third sector, Andrea Westall</p>	<p>Paper 10: Housing scoping papers: overview, David Mullins, Patricia A Jones, Ricky Joseph, Rob Rowlands and Simon Teasdale</p>
<p>Paper 45: How dependent is the third sector on public funding? David Clifford, Frida Geyne Rajme, and John Mohan (Oct 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 35: The regional geography of social enterprise in the UK: a review of recent surveys Heather Buckingham, Steven Pinch and Peter Sunley (July 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 24: A strategic unity, Pete Alcock</p>	<p>Paper 8: Exploring 'below the radar': issues of themes and focus, Angus McCabe and Jenny Phillimore</p>
<p>Paper 44: Opportunity and influence: the third sector and the 2010 General Election, Jane Parry, Pete Alcock and Jeremy Kendall (Oct 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 34: The role of the third sector in work with offenders: the perceptions of criminal justice and third sector stakeholders, Rosie Meek, Dina Gojkovic and Alice Mills (May 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 23: The contradictory faces of social enterprise, Simon Teasdale</p>	<p>Paper 7: Measuring the value of social and community impact (the role of social enterprises in public services), Fergus Lyon</p>
<p>Paper 43: Approaches to measuring the scale of the social enterprise sector in the UK, Fergus Lyon, Simon Teasdale and Rob Baldock (Sept 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 33: Understanding the distinctiveness of small scale third sector activity, Jenny Phillimore and Angus McCabe (May 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 22: Social enterprise and the environment, Ian Vickers</p>	<p>Paper 6: Individual voluntary participation in the UK, Laura Staetsky</p>
<p>Paper 42: Constituting the third sector, Pete Alcock and Jeremy Kendall (August 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 32: Partnership and mainstreaming, Pete Alcock (May 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 20: The third sector delivering public services: an evidence review, Rob Macmillan (July 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 5: Innovation in the homeless field: how does social enterprise respond to the needs of the literal homeless population? Simon Teasdale</p>
<p>Paper 41: Capturing diversity: a typology of third sector organisations' responses to contracting based on empirical evidence from homelessness services, Heather Buckingham (Sept 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 31: Black boxes in the wreckage? Making sense of failure in a social enterprise, Duncan Scott</p>	<p>Paper 19: Housing scoping papers: homelessness advice and support, Ricky Joseph</p>	<p>Paper 4: Mapping social enterprises: past approaches, challenges and future directions, Fergus Lyon and Leandro Sepulveda</p>
<p>Paper 40: Womens' leadership, employment and participation in the third sector, Simon Teasdale, Stephen McKay, Jenny Phillimore and Nina Teasdale (October 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 30: The personalisation agenda, Helen Dickinson</p>	<p>Paper 18: Housing scoping papers: the tenants' and community movement, Patricia A Jones</p>	<p>Paper 3: Can social enterprise address social exclusion? Evidence from an inner city community, Simon Teasdale</p>
<p>Paper 39: Trends in the concentration of income among charities, Peter Backus and David Clifford (June 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 29: 'Below the radar': a summary review of the literature, Angus McCabe, Jenny Phillimore and Lucy Mayblin</p>	<p>Paper 17: Cooperative and mutual housing in the social rented sector, Rob Rowlands (August 2010)</p>	<p>Paper 2: Devolution or divergence? Third Sector Policy across the UK since 2000, Pete Alcock</p>
	<p>Paper 28: The growing workforce in the voluntary and community sectors, Domenico Moro and Stephen McKay</p>	<p>Paper 16: Housing scoping paper: housing associations, David Mullins</p>	<p>Paper 1: Research approach and strategy of TSRC, Pete Alcock</p>
		<p>Paper 15: Outsider, missing link or panacea? The place of social enterprise (with)in and in relation to the third sector, Leandro Sepulveda</p>	
		<p>Paper 14: Economic analysis and the third sector, Andrea Westall</p>	
		<p>Paper 13: Losing political innocence, Jeremy Kendall</p>	

# Glossary of acronyms

ACEVO	Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
ARNOVA	Association for Research on Nonprofit Organisations and Voluntary Action
ARVAC	Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector
AURIL	Association for University Research and Industry Links
BCT	Barrow Cadbury Trust
BHPS	British Household Panel Survey
BIG	Big Lottery Fund
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
BSHF	Building and Social Housing Foundation
BTR	Below the Radar
CBC	Capacity Building Cluster
CCR	Charities Commission Register
CES	Charities Evaluation Services
CGAP	Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy
CIC	Community Interest Companies
CLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
ECS	School of Electronics and Computer Science, University of Southampton
EPMT	Employment Performance Management Tools
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FSA	Financial Services Authority
GMCVO	Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations

HACT	The housing action charity
ICNPO	International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations
ISBE	Institute of Small Business Enterprise
ISTR	International Society for Third Sector Research
KET	Knowledge Exchange Team
KTP	Knowledge Transfer Partnership
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LSE	London School of Economics
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
NCRM	National Centre for Research Methods
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NESTA	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts
NHF	National Housing Federation
NSTSO	National Survey of Third Sector Organisations
NWTRA	North West Tenants and Residents Assembly
OCS	Office for Civil Society
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCR	Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
PASC	Public Administration Select Committee
PMPA	Public Management Policy Association
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SEC	Social Enterprise Coalition
SIC	Standard Industrial Classification
SPA	Social Policy Association
SRA	Social Research Association
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TSO	Third sector organisation
TSRC	Third Sector Research Centre
VSSN	Voluntary Sector Studies Network
WERS	Workforce Employment Relations Survey
WCVA	Wales Council for Voluntary Action



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