

**ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY WITH THE INSTITUTE OF BRITISH
GEOGRAPHERS ANNUAL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: MANCHESTER, 26TH – 28TH AUGUST 2009.**

Final call for papers

'Volunteering: the making of communities?'

Against a background of concern at declining political participation, anxieties about welfare provision, and worries about the meaning of citizenship, increasing attention is being given to voluntary activity as a potential panacea to the problems of post-Fordism (Brown et al., 2000). Associated with this has been increased interest in social capital and norms of trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 1995) and claims for the relationship between volunteering and social capital, active citizenship, social inclusion and health and wellbeing significantly raising the profile of volunteering in political and academic discourse.

Research assessing geographical variations in the quantity of voluntary activity being undertaken at the international (Salamon et al. 2003, Dekker et al. 1998) and national (Low et al. 2007, Kitchen et al. 2006) scales is well established. Whilst variations in the amount of voluntary activity undertaken by individuals of particular socio-economic group (Williams 2003a, 2003b, 2002), ethnicity (Reilly 2004, Pankaj 2002) and age (Onyx and Leonard 2002), for example, is also increasingly well documented. The nature - that is – the motivations for, processes of and experiences and meanings generated through voluntary activity for both individuals and groups remains relatively under-researched, however.

This session uses the above as a starting point, to facilitate discussion between academics, practitioners and policy makers. Themes covered in the session may include, but are certainly not limited to:

- * How far is the commonly postulated relationship between voluntary activity and social capital, active citizenship and 'community' justified?
- * To what extent can it be said there are links between nature, well-being and voluntary activity?
- * How does the nature of and motivations for voluntary activity alter throughout the lifecourse?
- * To what extent are barriers to the establishment of, and participation in, voluntary activities successfully negotiated?
- * To what extent is a sense of 'place' generated through voluntary activity?
- * Is there a relationship between 'informal' and 'formal' voluntary activity?
- * What are the aims of 'grassroots' initiatives including Time Banking and LETS, and how successful are they in achieving these?
- * What are the implications of the 'professionalisation' of certain forms of formal voluntary activity for (potential) volunteers and volunteer involving organisations?
- * How are policy initiatives aiming to 'develop' voluntary activity, and to what ends?

Please submit any questions and abstracts (of approximately 250 words) to: Mike Woolvin (m.r.woolvin@dundee.ac.uk) or Stuart Muirhead (s.z.muirhead@dundee.ac.uk) or phone 01382 384 286.

Deadline for abstracts: Friday 30th January 2009.