

# **Old values, new practice? The politics of happiness and wellbeing in daily lives and development policy and practice**

## **Call for Papers**

**Panel convened by WeDNetwork: Neil Thin and Sarah White**

**Development Studies Association Conference 2010: "Values, Ethics and Morality", Friday 5th November, Church House, Westminster**

**To submit papers send abstract (maximum 400 words) by 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010 to:  
WeDNetwork convenor: [S.C.White@bath.ac.uk](mailto:S.C.White@bath.ac.uk)**

**Deadline for full papers: 30 September 2010**

Submissions are now invited to this panel (up to a maximum of nine). Our aim is to have a series of three sessions which focus quite tightly on the themes specified, so as to generate high level and focused discussion. Abstracts should state clearly which of the themes they address, the data and theory on which they will draw, and the general outline of the argument to be made. We are at present approaching journals with plans for a special issue based on the panel papers.

## **Panel Concept**

Economic crisis and climate change suggest the need for a new model of development: one that puts people and the planet at the centre. A focus on wellbeing gives a positive '360 degree' perspective which links people's experience to policy outcomes. This comprehends and advances the MDGs, moving from the quantitative achievement of indicators to the quality of lives that result. Augmenting the focus on outcomes with equally strong attention to process, it re-casts familiar questions about power between development workers and their client groups, and the ethos of relationships that agencies embody. It also raises a whole set of unfamiliar questions about the nature of happiness and the ways that it can be found which lead off the development studies highway into pathways better travelled by philosophy, psychology, and spirituality. Interest in wellbeing has thus been steadily building amongst researchers, policy makers and practitioners, placing questions of values, ethics and moralities at the centre of development discussion and debate.

This panel aims to take these debates forward, with a set of focused sessions around the following themes:

1. How does happiness feature in the values that people in different social contexts draw on and live by? What are the different ways in which personal happiness is seen as related to a more collective vision or a broader based understanding of wellbeing? Do some policy-makers and decision-makers explicitly or implicitly set higher value on the happiness of some kinds of people over others? If happiness is considered by policy-

makers, how is this justified? Is a concern with happiness a cultural universal, and if so, are there any commonalities in the ways this is conceived?

2. To what extent do the day to day interactions within development agencies and between them and the people they aim to serve promote or inhibit wellbeing? How do relationships within development and humanitarian assistance need to be re-envisioned so as to maximize wellbeing and minimize harm? What structures and processes might be introduced to support this?
3. What is the range of ideologies, values and politics that underlie the present promotion of happiness or wellbeing in public policy? What are their understandings of the person and polity, individual and collective responsibility, public and private, market and state? How do they articulate either explicitly or implicitly with issues of power and social difference (e.g. by class, gender, age, ethnicity and (dis)ability)? What kinds of politics do they in practice promote?