

Overview

'The Time-Spaces of Soft Paternalism' is a research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust which runs for 3 years from November 2009.

Soft paternalism describes a type of governing which is said to be aimed at increasing personal freedom at the same time as ensuring the welfare of citizens. It is soft because it doesn't force people to act differently, and is paternalistic because it gently 'nudges' people to make better decisions to improve their health, wealth and happiness.

This research seeks to uncover the different mechanisms that are used to encourage people to change their behaviour through public policies. These might include things like *persuading* people to give up smoking, establishing *social norms* such as recycling, or setting *default positions*, such as automatic enrolment in pension schemes. These so called 'choice architectures' make some decisions more likely than others.

Our project is aimed at understanding how government schemes and other organisations try to change people's behaviour and how people respond to these initiatives. Our findings will inform current debates about the appropriate role of government intervention in the environment, health and personal finance sectors.



The time-spaces of soft paternalism

The research is being conducted at Aberystwyth University by a team of Human Geographers: Dr Rhys Jones, Dr Mark Whitehead (co-investigators), and Dr Jessica Pykett (researcher).

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