**Help us forge UK applied sociology**

by Nick Fox and Marguerite Regan

For the past 18 months, the British Sociological Association (BSA) group *Sociologists outside Academia (SOA)* has been focusing on the potential for careers working as applied or practical sociologists, beyond the traditional remits of academia. Sociology is essential not only for understanding the big problems that face society, but also the daily issues that need addressing at work, at home or in the community. We believe sociologists have the concepts, the theories and detailed knowledge of organisations and human interactions that can address such everyday situations.

In the US and elsewhere, sociology has already established a profile for solving these kinds of problems, but much less so in the UK. That’s not to say there aren’t UK sociologists already using their skills and knowledge in applied settings. Some call themselves ‘consulting sociologists’, others run businesses that provide sociological expertise to industry, local government and voluntary organisations. There are also many sociologists working in areas where they bring to bear their knowledge and expertise, even if they don’t have the job title ‘sociologist’. But there is a lack of visibility around this application of sociology outside academia.

Last year an SOA workshop kick-started work on developing a field of applied and practical sociology here in the UK. We considered the kinds of knowledge, skills and models needed to solve the problems that organisations, businesses and the public-sector face, and started to map out how careers as an applied sociologist could pan out. Doing this kind of applied sociological work required specific skills to explore how social and cultural factors link individual experience to everyday events. Generic skills were also needed, including reasoning, communication and collaborative working.

SOA now wants to evolve this work further, by developing a curriculum in applied sociology for final year undergraduate students. This curriculum can not only be offered to universities as an option they might develop for their students, but will also be a way to really clarify the knowledge, concepts, and subject-specific and generic skills that an applied sociologist will need to work effectively in non-academic organisations and settings.

We invite applications from sociologists who would like to join an **SOA task and finish group to work on this development of an applied sociology curriculum**. We conceptualise a six-month programme, in which the group will meet virtually. At the end, we will seek funding for a public launch of our curriculum for applied sociology.

If you are a sociologist who works predominantly in a non-academic setting, but use your sociological skills and knowledge to inform your work, we would like to hear from you. We would also welcome one or two current undergraduate or master’s students to join the team, to provide input in terms of what is needed educationally in an undergraduate applied sociology curriculum.

Unfortunately, we cannot pay any fees for this work, and we do not have a budget for face-to-face meeting expenses. This will be a labour of love, for those wanting to flex their sociological imaginations, and due credit will be given to all those involved.

Please contact Nick Fox, SOA co-convenor (n.j.fox@sheffield.ac.uk) for more information about the project and details of how to apply. Applications will close on 19 June 2017 and successful applicants will be notified shortly thereafter.