



## **How to design and undertake quantitative research in the built environment Workshop 2: Exploring the impacts of quantitative research**

*Tuesday, 26 February 2019, UCL, Bartlett School of Construction and Project Management, 1-19 Torrington place, London, WC1E 7HB*

This is the second of two workshops aimed at bringing together researchers, policy-makers and practitioners who are interested in and/or engaging in quantitative research in the built environment. The emphasis for the first workshop held in December 2017 was on how construction management researchers can better design quantitative research by reflecting on the kinds of research questions asked, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. The first workshop was therefore designed to consider the *what*, *how*, and *why* questions associated with quantitative research in the built environment. In this second workshop, concern shifts towards answering the *so what* question, as we seek to debate and discuss the impacts of quantitative research and of quantitative data in the field.

To participate in this workshop, we invite doctoral students to submit short, reflective contributions of up to two double-sided pages (A4 size) **by 23:59hrs on Friday 18 January 2019** that examine the impacts of quantitative research in the built environment. In particular, we welcome short, theoretical, methodological or empirical papers that critically reflect on how numbers are produced and used (or even misused) by policy-makers, practitioners and/or researchers, and to what effects for the construction industry.

We also encourage contributions that consider one or more of the following:

- Despite over twenty years of methodological debates (see Seymour and Rooke, 1995) that raise interesting questions about the nature and culture of the field, construction management research is still dominated by positivistic and quantitative research (see e.g. Taylor and Jaselskis, 2010). How do we mobilise theoretical and methodological pluralism (cf. Dainty, 2008) in the production and use of numbers in built environment research?
- The relevance of quantitative research has recently been called into question. Koskela (2017) in his provocative piece entitled '*Why is management research irrelevant?*' argued that mathematical representations offer only an idealised version of industry practice, a product of researchers dreaming up problems in Ivory Towers so divorced from the realities of practice. He maintained that while quantitative researchers offer (at times, flawed) descriptions of reality, they are less adept at offering solutions to the problems of production. In what ways can and do we make quantitative research relevant to industry practice? To what extent do the numbers produced by such research offer fresh solutions (or even new problems) to industry practice?
- In today's *Audit Society* (see Power, 1997) dominated by quantitative metrics and rankings, what type of numbers do construction professionals and policy-makers rely on? How do numbers shape our understanding of construction

projects, firms and the sector? What aspects do they highlight and what do they obscure? How do people engage with these numbers, and with what effects? How do numbers influence policy-making, industry practice and researchers' behaviours, and in what ways are these effects oppressive or empowering (see e.g. Shore and Wright, 2015)?

While we are not prescriptive on the style and structure of the short papers, these should clearly and succinctly describe the research problem you are addressing, the role numbers play in your research (whether as a subject or object of your study), and a critical reflection of what these numbers do in and for policy, industrial and/or societal stakeholders. Please include a title, author(s) and their affiliation(s), along with a list of references cited. Send your short paper to

[paul.chan@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:paul.chan@manchester.ac.uk) before **23:59hrs on Friday 18 January 2019**.

Notification of acceptance as a presenter at the workshop will be given before the end of January 2019. The workshop is likely to start at 10am and finish at 5pm.

### References

- Dainty, A. (2008) Methodological pluralism in construction management research. *In*: A. Knight and L. Ruddock (Eds.) *Advanced Research Methods in the Built Environment*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 1-13.
- Koskela, L. (2017) Why is management research irrelevant? *Construction Management and Economics*, **35**(1-2), 4-23.
- Power, M. (1997) *The Audit Society: Rituals of verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seymour, D. and Rooke, J. (1995) The culture of the industry and the culture of research. *Construction Management and Economics*, **13**(6), 511-523.
- Shore, C. and Wright, S. (2015) Governing by numbers: Audit culture, rankings and the new world order. *Social Anthropology*, 22-28.
- Taylor, J. E. and Jaselskis, E. J. (2010) Editorial: Introduction to the special issue on research methodologies in construction engineering and management. *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, **136**(1).