

## SOAC Keynote Abstract by Susan Thompson

**TITLE:** *Connecting with the everyday lives of people in places: reflecting on contemporary social and community planning*

**ABSTRACT:** "... the challenges of the twenty-first century may be global in the sense that their causes and consequences are widely distributed, but their impacts will be felt most acutely in specific villages, towns and parts of cities – in the places where people live and work" (Edward Relph, "Senses of Place and Emerging Social and Environmental Challenges", in John Eyles and Allison Williams (eds) *Sense of Place, Health and Quality of Life*, Ashgate, Aldershot, p. 34; emphasis in original).

As we face environmental challenges of enormous scale and consequence, against a confronting backdrop of economic difficulties, it is all too easy to dismiss as unimportant the social and cultural aspects of our lives. And yet it is the ordinary and familiar routine of everyday life, played out in the places and spaces we inhabit and know well, that can sustain us in turbulent times. The importance of place and place-making has long been advocated by urban planners, geographers and philosophers. Marc Fried, Jane Jacobs, Edward Relph, Yi Fi Tuan and Edward Casey are all classics in this field – their message as relevant today as it was when it first appeared. In reflecting on contemporary social and community planning, I will look to these luminaries for inspiration for how we as researchers, practitioners, educators and students might work alongside communities seeking ways to create and sustain contented, healthy and resilient lives. I will suggest how we can respond to diverse opportunities (at times making trouble in both academe and practice) that will allow connections, initiation of new and different ideas and ways of doing things, inspiring and potentially transforming the places and spaces that will sustain everyday life.