

EGRG Post-Graduate Symposium Abstracts

Ian R. Cook

Private sector involvement in urban governance: The case of Business Improvement Districts and Town Centre Management partnerships

Public-private partnerships have become common-place institutions in the contemporary British city. Bringing private sector personnel and views to the urban policy table has become an almost expected way of conducting urban governance. Yet academic research provides few clues as to the exact roles the private sector plays in partnerships, their 'drafting in', or their reasons for taking part. This paper will address this lacuna by examining the introduction of Town Centre Management (TCM) and Business Improvement District (BID) partnerships in three English urban centres. In so doing, three issues will be focused on. First, it will highlight the multiple positions and powers businesses and business elites take up in these institutions. Second, it will explain how and why businesses and business elites are welcomed into the partnerships and why they provide their time, effort and money to the partnerships. Third, it will demonstrate the selectivity of private sector involvement and the mixed views of the private sector towards BIDs and TCM.

David Grover

The role of environmental goods and services firms in the diffusion of air pollution control technology: evidence from the upgrading of London's black cab fleet

Environmental technologies for controlling air pollution emissions from automobiles are already technologically mature and financially viable in many instances, yet their diffusion throughout populations of potential users remains slow and unsatisfactorily explained by 'barriers to diffusion' approaches. One possible diffusion/adoption factor is the role private sector 'proponent' firms play in repeatedly installing the technologies on behalf of polluters over time, building up a knowledge base from learning by doing and compressing installation costs in the process. We investigate the role of 'environmental goods and services firms' using evidence from the Mayor of London's ongoing program to convert London's taxi fleet to an engine technology standard that brings emissions in line with the PM10 and NOx limits set out by the Euro III Air Quality Standards. The findings could help explain the proliferation of public policies in the UK and Europe in the last 5 years aiming to strengthen the economic foundations of the 'Environmental goods and services' sector.

Allison Wylde

Lock in or locked out? The effects of public sector contracts on a small to medium sized enterprise

This paper aims to test if path dependency and "lock in" can be identified in a security-guarding firm and, if so, to identify impacts on the firm, in particular its ability to win new business.

The theoretical imperative for this study was provided by Martin and Sunley (2006, p395), who say that there has been little "proper examination" of path dependency. A case study approach included informal observations, interviews and analysis of documents, communications media, organisational structures and networks.

It was found that the firm is extensively networked with government agencies, mentors and the security industry. It is suggested these networks give the firm the competitive advantage of timely access to key knowledge and industry expertise. It is argued that path dependency effects were present, and that the firm was “locked in” to a relationship with the local authority and other funding agencies. It is cautioned that this relationship may not be beneficial for the firm in the short term, since scarce resources are directed to fulfilling complex compliancy and contractual commitments while incurring the opportunity costs of not winning new business. Further, it is proposed, that the networks may compound “lock in” effects. Recommendations are proposed to help win new business. By capitalising on the firm's competitive advantages, marketing communications could be developed that highlight the customer benefits and added value of the firm's expertise, networks and industry knowledge. Future work will use statistical and financial analysis to investigate the specific impacts of path dependency and lock in.

SESSION TWO

Sejeong Ha

The role of local real estate market information in determining residential tenure

This paper aims to explore a causal relationship running from a distance moved for new home to type of housing tenure. An increase in the distance moved may prevent the collection of housing market information at the destination as the search for satisfying accommodation is expected to become increasingly expensive. A lack of information due to a costly search may increase the probability of failure to choose suitable accommodation to reside in for long. Combined with a fact that homeownership involves greater transaction costs, an increase in the distance moved, therefore, may discourage homeownership. For the empirical analysis, this paper finds that the probability of choosing homeownership decreases with a distance moved. When a sample is confined to those who moved for job-related reasons to avoid a case of reverse causality, the result is still the same supporting the main hypothesis.

Katherine Jones

Recruiting workers from the New Europe: the role of temporary staffing agencies in facilitating migration into the UK

[Abstract forthcoming]

Piotr Niewiadomski

Interactions between spatial expansion and different trajectories of corporate growth of international hotel groups and the processes of regional growth in various institutional contexts of Central and Eastern Europe

If one takes a look at the Warsaw city centre and compares the view to, let us say, 20 years ago, one will easily notice that something serious is definitely going on out there - that globalisation has embraced the region and the transformation from state

socialism to capitalism is certainly progressing. As some of the Warsaw skyscrapers dominating the panorama of the city are internationally-branded hotels belonging to biggest hotel groups in the world, it is not difficult to conclude that the hotel industry plays its own important role in this complex set of processes. Through focusing on the expansion of international hotel groups into Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as well as investigating their relations with different forms of post-communist capitalisms (Swain and Hardy 1998) and their influence on the processes of uneven regional development, the project is designed to start to tackle two distinct research lacunae - sectoral and geographical. The first one can be regarded at three different levels. Not only is it the manufacturing sector that economic geographers have been traditionally preoccupied with at the expense of services, but also within services, it is producer services rather than consumer services that have received the bulk of attention. Also within consumer services, the tourism and the hotel industry have been largely neglected. The second lacunae pertains to Central and Eastern Europe as neither its role in the globalisation of services nor the role of services in the economic transition to capitalism in CEE have been so far sufficiently explored. Approaching these two lacunae from the Global Production Networks perspective (Henderson et al 2002) the project is hoped to address different dimensions of globalisation - 'horizontal', understood in terms of the worldwide corporate development of different sectors, and 'vertical', defined more as different companies' embeddedness in their networks and various socio-political environments.

SESSION THREE

David McCollum

Investigating employment instability: characteristics, causes and countermeasures

The drive to shift welfare claimants into work has been the mainstay of conventional employment policies for some time now. However the almost exclusive emphasis on the transition into work *per se* could be regarded as somewhat myopic since a sizeable minority of those who successfully move from welfare into employment return to benefits after a relatively short time period. Instability can therefore lead to a detrimental 'churning' or 'cycling' effect as some individuals make frequent and repeated transitions between work and welfare. Paradoxically it is only recently that policy makers and academics have begun to acknowledge, and respond to, the importance of striving to keep ex-welfare claimants in work. This thesis aims to go some way towards redressing the dearth of understanding on this issue by shedding light on; who is most susceptible to this form of labour market disadvantage; why these groups find it difficult to retain employment and; what is being done policy-wise to help them stay in work. The findings described are based on the findings of interviews with welfare service providers, employers and work-welfare 'cyclers' as well as the analysis of longitudinal datasets (the British Household Panel Survey and the Longitudinal Labour Force Survey).

Ebru Thwaites

[Abstract forthcoming]

Robin de la Motte

[Abstract forthcoming]