

Conference Abstracts

Rethinking the local development mechanism discourse--what are the missing actors and missing analysis of learning policy-networking?

Shiuh-Shen Chein (Crison)

Department of Geography, London School of Economics

The emerging performance of global city-regions has been vigorously researched in the academic society of human geography. There could be concluded at least two different approaches, one “political economy strand” and the other “institutional turn”. Each of them, of course, has had some contributions for understanding the complicated phenomena of global city-regions. However, because both of them have been developed in the special context of the prosperous areas in America and Western Europe, where most of scholars of these two approaches are interested in, it makes that some limitations are inevitable as applying these approaches to different context. In this paper I will point out what are the weaknesses of these two approaches, and furthermore, provide some supplementary viewpoints of the further analytical framework for regional development studies.

Three sections will be divided in this paper. Firstly, it will start with some briefings of political economy strand and institutional turn. The former is the concept from regime and machine to territorial competition, and the latter is the concept from untraded interdependence to learning region. Secondly, two missing points will be identified to criticize these approaches. First, with focusing on the importance of local public-private coalition, they neglect the roles of central state, foreign states or supranational organizations and foreign investors, which are the key actors in the contexts of different cases of regional development. On top of that, under the basic analyses of learning interaction for innovation at firm and technology level, they ignore the learning interaction for innovation at policy level, which are key factors to keep upgrading the regulatory regional environment for continuing development. Thirdly, a modified temporarily analytical framework will be provided to complement these weaknesses of mainstream urban and regional studies.

Transnationalisation of European Governance: The role of TeleCities

Andrew Hewitson

Department of Geography, University of Hull

Societal and economic change over the last thirty years has led to a sea change in the role of local government. The transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, the (supposed) declining influence of the nation state and the emergence of a new localism has witnessed the transition away from *local government* as the dominant singular authoritative voice of the region to *local governance*, a mode now dependent on a multitude of actors and partnerships at a variety of scales. Aided by the rapid proliferation of information and communication technologies, local governments are now able to formulate a wide range of partnerships overcoming the constraints traditionally associated with geographical distance.

In line with the growing internationalisation of the economy, local governments are now engaging in a wide variety of partnerships that transcend the remit of their locality. To enable this shift from the local to the European scale, local governments are establishing transnational networks that aim to harness and aggregate isolated political pockets of power into a powerful cohesive institutional identity that allow them a collective voice and a degree of influence at a European level. Whilst there are claims that such networks are a viable platform for a more cohesive and responsive form of European governance, to what extent this is a two process with the local actually contributing to the European agenda remains unclear.

This paper examines the role of one such network, TeleCities, and aims to review a series of theoretical models that will form the basis of an analytical framework. Moreover it also aims to question what TeleCities actually is and to what extent it provides a suitable intermediatory platform for multi-level European governance.

Key words

Institutionalism, Regionalism, Governance, TeleCities, Transnational Networks

Ireland's love affair with the Information Society: The Celtic-Cyber-Tiger and the rise of regional divergence

Patrick Collins

Department of Geography, University of Hull

Ireland's economic boom of the 1990s was meteoric by any standards. In terms of the main economic indicators what was happening to the Irish economy was termed by many as a miracle (Sweeney, 2000). There is little doubt that high-technology companies were one of the main pillars of the Irish success story. From an economy which was passed by by industrialisation, Ireland took well to informationalisation and the 'cyber traits' of the Celtic Tiger were evident.

From cyberspace to physical space the impact on the country of Ireland as a whole was quite varied. Over the decade of the boom, Ireland saw regional divergence on a scale never before seen in the State. In cyberspace physical space become more real to Irish regions as they fell further behind that of the Dublin city-region. The Celtic-Cyber-Tiger is by its nature an urban animal. With its den located in Dublin, only rare sights of it were caught of it in Ireland's second tier cities, while many of its rural areas still refuse to believe it ever existed.

I wish to explore further the spatial development of Ireland in the Information Society, while also questioning what kind of Information Society was adopted in Ireland, asking if indeed it was more social than economic. The term information society is abundant in EU literature and it has trickled to the national level and been readily accepted. In Ireland, we have used it flagrantly to describe the growth of the 1990s, whether or not the 1990s boom was one for Society as a whole can easily be questioned. I will use the Irish software sector and the 'Information Age Town' of Ennis as two vehicles of analysis in looking at regional divergence in Ireland.

Keywords: Regional Divergence; Information Society/Economy; Ireland's Software sector

Inside a Charity Bank: an ethnographic account of risk, ordering and performing a socio-financial narrative

Martin Buttle

Department of Geography, University of Birmingham

The Charity Bank (UK), formerly Investors in Society, was launched in October 2002, it is the first ever charity to be granted a banking license, making it unique as the only not for profit bank in the world. With deposits capped at 2% interest, made primarily by supportive individuals, the bank provide loan finance to charities and social enterprises that cannot find support from high-street banks. The emphasis of these investments is to support and create social capital in communities rather than to maximise financial return.

Based upon extended participant observation within the bank, the paper analyses how the issues of being simultaneously a charity and a bank are being negotiated on a day-to-day basis. It explores how loan managers assess the risks of lending to charitable organisations that have unconventional funding, minimal reserves and complicated legal structures. Central to the argument is the identification of a narrative that the bank is constructing concerning the social benefits of a loan which is of equal status as financial information. The role of ordering and performance in the construction of a socio-financial narrative is fundamental to the way in which this bank articulates the relationship between its clients and spaces of financial lending.

Key words

Charity, Banking, Alternative Capitalisms

What are the critical determinants of successful investor-investee relationships in UK private equity?

Paul Search

Birkbeck College, University of London

The aim of the research is to investigate the traditionally ‘unquantifiable’ elements of the investment appraisal process. This is the unknown component that cannot be measured within the net present value of the discounted (future) cash flow of an investee company. This is the uncertainty around people, particularly management teams, who hold the key to success or failure and the fortunes of the investors and follows some research on publicly quoted companies that suggests this may account for between 20-60% of the market value of a company. In particular, the research will focus on one type of corporate finance investor in the UK- private equity firms (venture capital). The empirical study will concentrate on two key actors: the investor e.g. the venture capitalist; and the management team (investee). The body of the research will investigate how socio-economic relationships between these two actors are played-out at the epistemological level and how social factors such as trust impact upon the investment decisions and post-investment relationships between the two actors. By linking existing theoretical and empirical research within economic sociology to investment appraisal theory within the management literature, my first aim is to develop a framework to guide private equity investors and their portfolio management teams through the subjective

elements of the investment appraisal process. My second aim is to determine what social factors govern the success of post-investment relations.

Key words

Private equity, Trust, Power, Social embeddedness, Risk

Geographies of knowledge production in producer service firms: the role of world cities

James R Faulconbridge

Department of Geography, Loughborough University

It is increasingly acknowledged that knowledge drives competitive advantage in firms in facilitating innovation and responsiveness. One of the most important forms of knowledge in an increasingly globalised economy is tacit knowledge which lacks the ubiquitous qualities of explicit knowledge and is therefore much more difficult to harness and develop, but ultimately essential. No where is this more true than for globalised/globalising producer service firms such as advertising and law that require tacit knowledge of their professional fields to succeed. However, the very nature of tacit knowledge, that being its personal nature and 'social' development, poses challenges to such firms. This paper firstly unpacks the nature of tacit knowledge and the processes related to its development and transfer. As a result of this analysis it then suggests two areas for investigation. First, the role of the intense clustering exhibited by such firms in world cities such as London is questioned, specifically in relation to how this may facilitate the development of tacit knowledge within employees. The role of social interaction and how this is facilitated by this spatial proximity is given special attention. Second, the implications of the need for proximity in tacit knowledge development is analysed in relation to how such firms manage their global (tacit) knowledge base in their employees. Specific focus is placed upon whether tacit knowledge really is 'sticky' and embedded, whether it can be globalised easily and the implications this has for economic geographies of knowledge.

Key words

Tacit knowledge, Producer Services, World cities, Globalization, Interaction

An ethnographic account of contact/call centre training programme in Nottingham

Julian Clarke

Department of Geography, University of Nottingham

This presentation provides an account of my ethnographic experiences on a part-time contact/call centre training scheme run at the People's College in Nottingham between the winter and summer of 2002. The scheme was aimed particularly at unemployed people within the local labour market and those who were employed but wished to gain an 'entry qualification' to the contact/call centre industry.

The presentation is informed by an exploration of the training aims of the course. I highlight the main ‘skills’, personal attributes, and competencies which the tutor on the training scheme aimed to provide people wishing to gain employment on the ‘front line’ of a contact/call centre.

Further, I explicitly place my arguments in opposition to those scholars who argue that contemporary workplace training aims to provide workers’ with ‘entrepreneurial’ skills and ‘creative’ capabilities (see Hinchcliffe, 2000, for example). I make the case that rather than fostering attributes such as entrepreneurialism the foundation course I attended promoted characteristics/attributes found within the ‘traditional’ work place, such as limited task discretion, minimal decision making capacities and knowing your place.

I conclude my argument by discussing the possibility that this form of training prepares people for work which is highly routine and repetitive in nature which resembles ‘mass production’ systems for provision of interactive service employment.

Key Words

Training, Contact/call centre, Mass production, Service sector, Taylorism

The contribution of the community co-operatives of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to the development of the social economy

Mike Gordon

Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

This paper considers the “pragmatic reform” versus “radical utopia” duality within the social economy and, in that context, evaluates the contribution of the community co-operatives of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to the development of the modern UK social economy. The assessment is based on MA dissertation research undertaken in 2001, including interviews with representatives of several co-operatives and others involved in the initiative launched in 1977 by the former Highlands and Islands Development Board, or in related activities. The origins of the Scottish social economy lie in the “Highland Problem”, arising from the processes of depopulation of the Highlands and Islands as a result of the clearances, the need for local employment opportunities, the exploitation of Scotland as a British colony, the cultural dimension, and the profound importance of the land question. The initiative has been very successful, on a number of different levels: it created new jobs, services and enterprises; very importantly, it built asset bases and revenue income to underpin development; it changed people’s lives, was genuinely bottom-up, raised consciousness, reinforced the mutual co-operation tradition of the area, and inspired people elsewhere to do similar things. It can claim a degree of radicalism and the achievement of some significant social change.

Key words

Social Economy, Community co-operative, Highlands and Islands, Radicalism, Assets

European Environmental Governance: ‘Partnerships’ for ‘Participation’ the English regions’ changing relationship with the European Union

Liza Griffin

School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford University

I am exploring the developing relationships between the European regions and the EU and examining some of the imperatives underlying them. I am doing this through an investigation of how attempts to protect the environment under increasingly complex and internationalised modes of governance have given rise to new (often contested) landscapes of power and modes of regulation. I want to find out how regions are able to participate in the EU decision making process, and to ask whether regions can inform EU policy, and what role the nation state plays in all this.

Research of this nature is needed in order to address a lacuna in the environmental governance literature. Very little existing work examines simultaneously the recent restructuring of the global political economy and socio-political relationships forged in pursuing sustainable development. The aims of this research are:

- To contribute to current academic debate on environmental governance in Europe and to an analysis of the roles and impacts of English regions and their Regional Development Agencies in decision making at the European Union
- To investigate, using regional case studies, whether the apparent fortification of regional-European Union relationships has resulted in any real power shift toward the regions and to ask what is the likelihood of a *radical* turn toward less hierarchical forms of governance
- To inform policy discussion on enhancing the region’s role in the EU, on improving decision making procedures, on widening participation and ultimately, to contribute to a more efficient environmental policy implementation at ‘ground level’

My methods will include 1) talking to the appropriate actors at these levels and 2) comparing and analysing the relevant policy and public texts (discourses) produced.

Integrating economy and environment: the potential role of eco-industrial development

Amy Proctor

Department of Geography, University of Hull

Over the last decade, concepts such as sustainable development and ecological modernisation have become commonplace in policy documents at all levels attempting to integrate economic and environmental goals. The local and regional scale has emerged, albeit subject to criticism as an important level at which to interpret the often vague and ambiguous ideas surrounding these concepts and translate them into practical initiatives. Enthusiasm for sustainability within the public sector is more significant at this level than it is within the private sector, where there has been a more cautious response from the business community in driving the sustainable development agenda. Although many firms have recognised the value of improving their environmental performance, this process has been criticised for producing largely slow and incremental change. It therefore becomes apparent

that the shift towards more sustainable forms of industrial development on a wider scale requires significant changes in the way the private sector operates.

This paper will explore an emerging approach which has become the subject of increasing debate and analysis amongst policy-makers and academics searching for new ways to organise production activity in order to meet the elusive goals of sustainable development at a local and regional level. Eco-industrial development (EID) proposes that economic and environmental goals can be reconciled through the creation of more integrated industrial systems. This approach re-examines the way firms operate within industrial estates and business parks in particular by moving the focus for action beyond the level of the firm in areas such as resource efficiency and waste management. It is the emphasis on connectedness and collaboration between firms which distinguishes eco-industrial sites from other forms of environmentally-themed industrial activity. Such behaviour is argued to contribute to enhanced environmental performance and improved business competitiveness at both a firm and site level. Given that existing literature on this approach has been identified as lacking detailed critical or empirical analysis, this paper will examine the shift towards eco-industrial forms of development in one region of the UK, drawing upon interview data related to several planned projects in Yorkshire. This regional case study will be used to critically examine the extent to which the defining features of EID can be developed as a practical policy tool for progressing towards more sustainable forms of industrial development at a local and regional level.

Key words

Sustainable Development, Eco-Industrial Development, Yorkshire

List of Participants

Name	Institution	E-mail address
Martin Buttle	University of Birmingham	Mdb820@bham.ac.uk
Shiuh-Shen Chien (Crison)	London School of Economics	S.CHIEN@lse.ac.uk
Julian Clarke	University of Nottingham	lgxjac@nottingham.ac.uk
Patrick Collins	University of Hull	p.collins@hull.ac.uk
James Faulconbridge	Loughborough University	j.r.faulconbridge@lboro.ac.uk
David Gibbs	University of Hull	d.c.gibbs@hull.ac.uk
Mike Gordon	University of Sheffield	M.J.Gordon@sheffield.ac.uk
Liza Griffin	Oxford University	Liza.griffin@geog.ox.ac.uk
Graham Haughton	University of Hull	g.f.haughton@hull.ac.uk
Andrew Hewitson	University of Hull	a.hewitson@lmu.ac.uk
Bea Jefferson	University of Sheffield	B.A.Jefferson@sheffield.ac.uk
Andy Jonas	University of Hull	a.e.jonas@hull.ac.uk
Jane Midgley	University of Newcastle	J.L.Midgley@newcastle.ac.uk
Anthony Potter	University of Sheffield	A.Potter@Sheffield.ac.uk
Amy Proctor	University of Hull	a.l.proctor@geo.hull.ac.uk
Dominique Puthod	London School of Economics	d.puthold@lse.ac.uk
Paul Search	University of London	Paul.search@talk21.com
Derek Spooner	University of Hull	d.j.spooner@hull.ac.uk