

Sessions, Papers and Abstracts

13.15 to 14.20 Session 1:

Information and Communication Technologies and Regional Development

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The Rise of the Information Society and the Consequences for Regions in Europe.

It is frequently argued that we are entering the age of the Information Society (IS) based upon a radical series of innovations in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the rise of a knowledge-based economy. Since the advent of the IS the European Union has attempted to promote the adoption of these technologies in the hope of ameliorating regional cohesion problems. My project will combine three areas of theory to assess both the problem of regional adaptation to the IS and the EU's implementation process. The three themes I aim to critically explore are:

- Technology, determinism and space-time compression
- Regions: the vital sites with which to convene and capitalise on knowledge flows
- The EU approach to the IS: the panacea for regional ills?

These three theoretical strands are examined through a focus upon the EU's Regional Information Society Initiative (RISI), established under article 10 of the ERDF and article 6 of the ESF which aimed to encourage not only the take-up of technology, but also the growth of regional institutional capacity and interchange of experience in a number of peripheral EU regions.

I highlight technological determinism because I feel it is responsible for the neglect of regional policy in ICT debates. This determinism operates to deny the very concept that local agency can shape technological innovation in diverse and contingent ways. My focus on regional theory and especially regional learning economies is necessary for my work on less favoured regions, and to point out that unless transformation of institutional structures and processes can be achieved, the questions concerning telecommunications networks and the uses to which they are put will remain largely irrelevant.

Finally, looking at the EU's approach to the IS I will critique past initiatives and assess whether or not RISI will prove to be the panacea for regional ills.

Keywords: Technological determinism ICTs Regional
Competitiveness EU Information Society Policy RISI

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Telephone Call Centres and the Financial Services Industry

The Telephone Call Centre is one of the fastest growing industries in the UK. Since the opening of the first telephone call centre in Leeds in 1989 the number has risen to 2150 within a ten year period (Call Centre Association, 1999). This growth is predicted to continue, to 5050 by 2002 (TUC, 2001). However, the pace of growth in employment may soon slow; new information technologies such as Interactive Voice Recognition Systems (IVR) are predicted to have a significant impact on labour requirements (TUC, 2001).

The Financial Service industry is argued to be a leader in the use of call centres, introduced by corporations to fulfil a variety of functions within the labour process. The impetus for organisational change is argued to be a consequence of changes in the UK and international financial markets and developments in particular information and communication technologies. Significantly, there is a growing recognition of an emerging geography of the location of telephone call centres by industry within the UK (Bristow et al, 2000).

Labour processes within call centres vary significantly within and between work environments. Work tasks can be simple, routine and repetitive, requiring little skill or interactive capability on the part of the 'operator'. Conversely, work can be complex requiring the 'operator' to have a good working knowledge of the labour process, the organisations products, competitors products, excellent communication skills. Thus, the skill content of work within call centres can best be understood in terms of a 'continuum of quality' (Taylor and Bain, 2000).

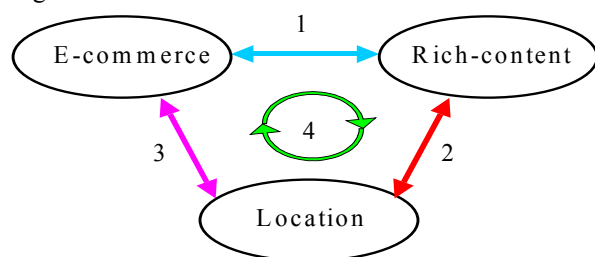
This paper explains how labour process theory applies to call centre employment. It evaluates how current areas of geographical interest are relevant to both labour process theory and call centres. Consequently, issues of performativity, gendered identities and surveillance are highlighted as being relevant to the call centre work process.

Thomas Adelaar, Telematica Institut Netherlands,
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‘Guidelines for integrating e-commerce with multimedia content and physical environments.’

The ongoing penetration of e-commerce applications and multimedia content in retailing environments, such as in-store networked kiosks, mobile devices, and screen promotions, creates new business opportunities. Within an electronic mediated retail environment four interactions can be observed, namely between e-commerce, multimedia content and location (see figure1). The effects of these interactions may enhance customer value¹ and extent geographical market reach.

Figure 1: Interactions



1. **E-commerce enabled multimedia content.** The rising opportunity to blend rich-content with e-commerce can prompt consumers and businesses to transactions (e.g. Adelaar and van Vliet, 2000). We focus on e-commerce enabled multimedia services, such as enhanced TV, where transactions are tightly integrated with multimedia content.
2. **Multimedia content and location.** The integration of rich-content and location creates more possibilities for value added services, for example in-store CD burners which allow customers to compile a customised CD.
3. **Click and mortar approaches.** The integration of e-commerce activities with a physical market presence (e.g. Steinfield, Bouwman and Adelaar, 2001) makes it possible to aim for functional specialisation of channels, such as shifting standard transactions from physical stores to the Internet. In effect, store employees have more time to sell higher-value products and services.
4. **E-commerce, rich-content and location.** An example of this interaction is an in-store video-wall showing dynamic advertising, which depends on the time of day or the amount of sales occurring in the individual store.

From the previous section we formulated the following **research questions**:

1. What are the conditions influencing the interactions between e-commerce, rich-content and location?
2. Which interactions are most likely to occur?
3. What is the influence on geographical market reach and customer value?

Research methodology

We have performed a set of case studies in the Netherlands and U.S. The analysis would result in a set of management guidelines, which will be tested by a quantitative research and end-user experiments.

References

Steinfield, C., Bouwman, H., Adelaar, T. (2001) *Combining Physical and Virtual Channels: Opportunities, Imperatives and Challenges*. 14th Bled Electronic Commerce Conference Bled, Slovenia, June 25 - 26, 2001

Adelaar, T. and Vliet, van H. (2000). *Emerging rich-content business models*. Proceedings of the Seventh Research Symposium on Emerging Electronic Markets, St.Gallen, Switzerland.

¹ Customer value is the ratio between price and quality.

14.40 to 16.00 Session 2: *Institutions, Governance and Local and Regional Development*

**Lorna Dargan, Dept of Geography, University of Newcastle,
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A New Approach to Regeneration? Reflections on the New Deal for Communities in Newcastle.

The launch of the Urban Programme in 1969 heralded a new approach to urban regeneration in Britain. It signalled a shift away from a reliance on mainstream welfare funding to alleviate poverty, towards the use of spatially targeted programmes which have become known as area-based initiatives (ABIs). ABIs have become the principal policy instrument through which government intervenes to deliver urban regeneration.

Although ABIs now have a history spanning four decades, they have attracted much criticism from academic commentators and practitioners for failing to achieve their goals. This failure has been attributed to a number of causes, including the futility of local action in the face of global economic forces, lack of funding, short-termism, and a mismanagement of resources. One of the most widely cited criticisms, however, has been the failure of regeneration programmes to engage and involve the local people at whom policies are targeted. In spite of the increasing emphasis on resident participation in City Challenge and the SRB, the process of resident involvement is still regarded as flawed. The Labour government has founded its approach to regeneration policy upon this critique. Their 'new' approach to regeneration, with its emphasis on localised, holistic, and bottom-up regeneration, is embodied in their flagship programme, the New Deal for Communities (NDFC).

The paper will examine the extent to which NDFC signals a new phase in regeneration and the way that urban problems are approached. The focus of discussion will be the nature of community participation within the NDFC process in Newcastle upon Tyne. The paper will argue that because of the complexity of the process, and the naïve assumptions upon which NDFC is founded, New Labour's approach to regeneration will not be able to surmount the problems of working in fragmented and disaffected neighbourhoods, and that ultimately, NDFC will replicate the mistakes that have dogged regeneration policies over the last forty years.

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**Liz Dixon, CURDS, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne,
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'Business Associations: Representation and Regional Governance.'

As I only started my PhD in January this year I am still at the stage where I feel I know nothing. The presentation I intend to give is based on where I have got to so far (not very).

The title of my thesis is "The role of the private sector in urban and regional development and governance: the case of the EEF (Engineering Employers' Federation) Northern Association".

One of the first conclusions I came to when looking at this title was that it would be impossible, for a number of very obvious reasons, to look at the whole of the private sector. As the EEF Northern Association is to be the main case study it therefore seemed logical to restrict my research to business associations.

Before starting this PhD my knowledge of the EEF was nil so I thought it might be a good idea to say a little about the EEF, who they are, what they do, their structure and how they operate. The EEF offer many services, most of which can be classed as specific goods. However, the area I am most interested in, as being most pertinent to the subject of my thesis, is that concerning their representational activities, which would be most appropriately classed as collective goods.

This immediately throws up a number of questions, including the well worn arguments concerning the provision of collective goods and the attendant 'free rider' problem discussed on numerous occasions by R.J. Bennett.

I will then outline my proposed research agenda to explore the issues surrounding the representational role of the EEF with a brief discussion regarding the methodology.

Peter O'Brien, CURDS, University of Newcastle,
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'Organised labour at the regional level: analysis of the opportunities and challenges'

Little analysis has traditionally been conducted on the activities of trade unions at the regional level. Economic geographers have, in the past, paid scant attention to the social and politics dimensions that shape the labour process, instead tending to view labour merely as a location factor for capital. Set in this context, labour is seen as a passive agent with little influence. Industrial relations scholars have themselves ignored some of the spatial aspects of trade unionism, choosing instead to concentrate upon the national level and workplace as the foci of empirical studies.

Set in the context of constitutional change and a growing emphasis upon regional policy-making and governance, the role of trade unions at the regional level is gaining growing interest in academic and policy-making circles. Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, coupled with the emergence of new institutions of regional governance in England, and a broad emphasis upon consensus politics and partnership working, have presented new opportunities for trade unions to engage in public policy-making.

However, on the back of two decades of significant decline, trade unions in the UK are finding that their participation in the emerging forms of governance at the sub-national level are contingent upon the *institutional space* 'regional' trade unions find themselves operating within. The challenge for trade unions, both individually and collectively, via the TUC, is to adjust and come to terms with the UK's evolving political economy.

This paper examines some of the practical issues arising from the invitation to trade unions to participate in the construction and delivery of policy at the regional level. The paper claims that trade unions need to think and act more *regionally*, for positive engagement at this spatial scale could very well support broader initiatives seeking to renew trade unionism after a long period of decline.

**Martin Bickl, Dept of Geography, University of Durham,
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‘Image, representations and governance in inward investment promotion’

Due to a dissatisfaction with traditional instruments of place marketing such as infrastructure improvements and financial incentives, an increasing number of places are turning towards creating a more positive image of their locality in an attempt to attract more inward investment. This applies in particular to old-industrialised regions that suffer from a negative, stereotyped image, but at the same time are desperate to attract inward investment.

Building on theories of (place) marketing, regulation and governance, as well as learning I want to gain an understanding of how the process of image management works in place marketing. Research has hitherto concentrated on cities, while most place marketing efforts, such as those by British Regional Development Agencies, are undertaken on a regional level. Also, most of the case studies have dealt with English-speaking countries. Both reasons make a case for an international comparative study, to examine the influence of different national regulatory regimes on the place imagery process. The three regions selected are the North-East of England, Ruhr (Germany), and Campania (Italy).

Following the concept of the ‘image cycle’, the place imagery process as the object of analysis is broken down into the stages of construction, dissemination, consumption, and feedback, looking at how government and public agencies of different scales, private sector companies and citizen groups interact in this process. The main data sources are interviews with senior staff of these key actors of place promotion, as well as a semiotic analysis of the promotional material produced.

I hope that based on a better understanding of the process I will be able to make suggestions as to how regional economic development stakeholders could improve their image creation and dissemination process.

16.15 - 18.00 Session 4: Panel Discussion

‘Economic Geography: a purely academic pursuit?’

- Panellists: Dr David Charles, Dr Nick Henry and Dr John Tomaney
- *‘See handout and readings’*

Thursday 5th July

09.30- 10.30 Session 5: *Knowledge, Universities and Innovation in Regional Development*

Kati- Jasmin Kosonen, University of Tampere Finland/ CURDS, University of Newcastle, E-mail: Kati-Jasmin Kosonen <Kati-Jasmin.Kosonen@uta.fi>

‘ Institutional Capacity in the Less Favoured Regions.’

There is a major change from the world characterised by mass-production and strong nation-states to the world of flexible multi-dimensional networks taking place between the regions through global flows. In order to compete both enterprises and other single actors and regions must be capable to innovate and learn. Know-how, innovations and learning have become key issues in a new regional development logic. There has emerged a need for implementing new kinds of academic institutions creating and applying new knowledge.

Regional innovation capability and institutional thickness (or thinness) could be seen as a frame to region's capacity to support actors (enterprises etc.) and their capacity to innovate. If there in a certain region are not a lot of formal and informal development institutions and interaction between them, actors find it more difficult to transform information to new knowledge and innovations. This kind of regions can often be seen as “less favoured regions” or “institutionally thin” regions. One possible path to create the institutional thickness in the less favoured regions is to strengthen the resources of institutional capacity (knowledge resources, interaction resources and mobilisation capacity) and the interactions between different types of resources. It can also be seen that the most often institutional capacity is worked through local development networks (general, specialised).

The focus of the presentation is to study what kind of role the institutional capacity has in improving regional/ local innovation capability and – as an expanded view - regional competitiveness in the less favoured regions? Main objectives in the presentation are to show what kind of role the institutional capacity has in the competitiveness in the institutionally thin regions and also to analyse how capable development actors in the less favoured (or institutionally thin) regions are activating local innovation capacities. The task is also identify how institutionally thin urban regions which do not have universities or other locally based research bodies can improve the competitiveness of different actors through innovation networks and institutional capacity.

In detail, I will look at the regional/ local innovation networks from the regional /local view. That is, how at the regional level decision-makers, local authorities and development agencies could activate the innovation processes on the one hand through *local* and on the other hand through *national and international networks*. To create new knowledge and innovations the actors seek the most valuable partners even they are located far away.

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‘Challenge for the Role of Universities in Regional Development.’

The research project will try to answer the following two complementary questions:

1. What broader economic and social factors are causing universities to change as they seek to accommodate the demands of the knowledge-driven economy/society?
2. What impacts /contributions, if any, are universities making to the process of regional economic change within the context of an evolving knowledge driven economy?

To answer these questions, the research project examines the changing roles of universities in the processes of regional development in the U.K. today; and will look also at how relationships between universities and industry, and society are being influenced by the changing policy initiatives at different levels.

The following are the set of key specific questions to be investigated throughout the empirical study:

- What are the consequences of the emergence of the knowledge economy for knowledge production (i.e. learning, research, teaching, training, and skill formation) processes involving the higher educational institutions?
- To what extent do universities play a role in regional economic growth, and in what way do they contribute to the creation of ‘the learning region’ or/and ‘innovative region’?
- In what way does public policy facilitate the roles of HE in the knowledge economy at regional level?

Institutional landscape of HEIs in the West Midlands region will be illustrated as a case study:

- *HEROBC* (Higher Education Reach Out to Business and the Community Fund) scheme at universities in the West Midlands region;
- *Science Enterprise Challenge*--Collaboration schemes among universities in the region e.g. Mercia Institute of Enterprise;
- University-Industry collaborative schemes: such as TCS (Teaching Company Scheme); roles of science parks, innovation centres;
- New links emerging between HE and other local educational forms i.e. secondary education, continuing education will be explored. e.x. Excellence in Cities; Universities of First Age;
- European links.

Key analytical concepts such as ‘knowledge’ ‘learning’ ‘innovation’ and ‘region’ will be examined. Methodological issues concerning qualitative research will be discussed. It is hoped that institutional learning and networking strategies of the universities in the regional context will be identified.

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‘Sequences of innovation: novel approaches to new regionalism in the periphery.’

Although much of what we currently understand as new regionalism is highly problematic, it remains a foundation for much of what is being produced in economic geography (Storper, 1995; Storper & Salais, 1997). However, as a range of critiques have indicated, new regional approaches remain unable to ascribe causality to the processes by which poorly performing regions are able to improve their economic position (e.g. Lovering 1998, Markusen, 2000). In particular, structuralist critiques emphasise that the models which new regionalists propose for such improvements, networks, trust or learning activities, do not overcome those fundamental structural barriers which systematically bias investment (and consequently development) decisions and outcomes against those weaker regions.

However, such structural models are not themselves free from criticism, and still remain unable to provide a concrete causality for the dynamism of uneven development, particularly those processes which regional economies are able to significantly improve their own position within the global capitalist space. Thus, there remains conceptual space between poor regions endogenously generating their learning activities, and poor regions structurally unable to catch up with more advanced regions.

Those explanations which have bridged the two have tended to use historical modes to explain the lengthy and inter-related processes of the development of particular knowledge assets, institutional and structural outcomes. This paper takes such an approach and applies it to one such industry in a peripheral industrial region, in the North East of England. Successive rounds of from a predominantly inward-investment based industry bear out the structural thesis. However, in the paper I argue that focusing on titular changes and the correspondence between corporate and spatial cores have led to the overlooking of important activities sufficient to give rise to sustain the economic performance of the region far beyond permitted by the structural thesis.

The paper then turns to look at one particular sequence of innovation in electronic instrumentation, the firm Joyce-Loebl, which has survived for over fifty years, and through spin-off and start-up given rise to an important network of regional activity. From this I am then able to contextualise what a new regionalist knowledge network might look like in a peripheral region.

I argue that the idea of a sequence of innovation is a valid heuristic to highlight, interpret and to theorise development processes in non-exemplar regions. The notion provides clear causality avoids the necessity of explaining peripheral regional success in terms of catching up to the core regions, and thus is dependent upon their own unique territorial development assets.

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11.00- 11.45 Session 6: *Researching Networks*

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‘The Geographies of UK High Tech Sector Investment’.

In recent years there have been great changes in the high technology sector in the UK, including the rapid rise in profile of computer hardware, software, telecommunications and Internet firms and increasing volatility in the value of their stocks. New forms of investment have also developed, both institutional and individual. As a result, new networks of financial knowledge have developed between high tech companies, investment professionals, individual and institutional investors, with new and unique geographies. This paper will outline the development of research being conducted to identify and understand the nature of these networks and future directions the research may take.

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‘Networking Methodologies: Media Industries in Manchester’

Placed within the growing literature on networks and ‘networking’, this paper will examine the practical benefits and problems associated with conducting research within this field. It will draw on research conducted into media industries in Manchester and address issues such as gaining access, conducting interviews and snowballing. Using participant qualitative research methods offers many opportunities, but also raises a number of practical and moral dilemmas. In particular, the conflict between observing a network whilst being actively embedded within it, and other related networks, will be discussed.

Media industries in Manchester are a neglected field of study, resulting in little information about the number or type of company being available. This has required a particularly flexible and rigorous methodology to be developed. A key role is played by ‘gatekeepers’, resulting in access being a significant problem as only a handful of opportunities are available to ‘tap into’ the industry. When access to gatekeepers is gained, the process of snowballing is the only feasible method of identifying and speaking to media companies. This raises issues surrounding how to achieve a representative sample.

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A number of national and local government and organisational initiatives have recently begun in Manchester which aim to develop business and social networks within the cultural industries. This research has involved observing these networks as they are formed and developed, with particularly strong involvement in the television industry. The role of observer has quickly evolved into that of a participant and a deeply embedded role in the industry. There are a number of moral and ethical issues surrounding this type of research, which will be examined in detail.