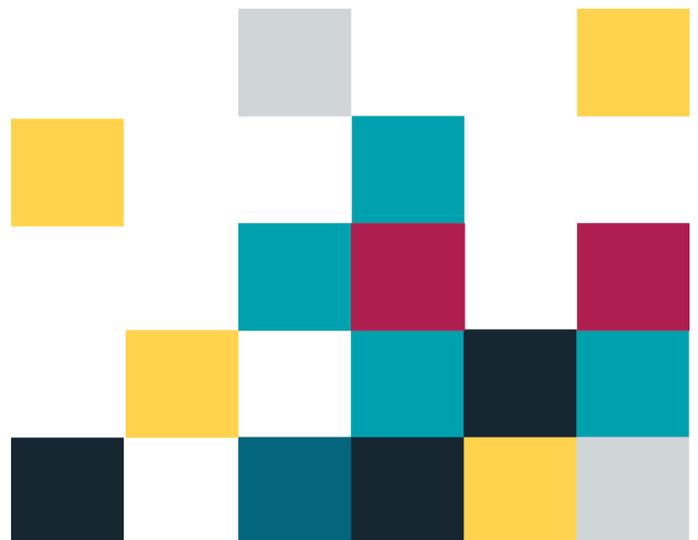


Tackling Spatial Inequalities: *The Prospects for Economic Development and Regeneration*

Abstracts



Opening Plenary

All in this together? City performance over the last 100 years

Andrew Carter, Centre for Cities

A trend over the last 30 years, and in some instances 100 years, has been the divergence in the economic performance of cities across the UK. This presentation will provide an overview of the economic performance of the UK's cities, the similarities and differences, and the issues facing cities resulting from this pattern of diverging performance. It will also explore how urban policy has tried to respond to these differences and the extent to which current urban policies focused on devolution and economic rebalancing will address these.

The anatomy of economic development and governance in England

Andy Pike, Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS), Newcastle University

Economic governance at the sub-national level in the UK presents an uneven and changeable picture. Geographical disparities in economic and social conditions persist, sharpened in the wake of the crisis and faltering and uneven recovery. The new government has accelerated its particular decentralisation agenda and is seeking to encourage further reform and momentum towards its favoured institutional, policy and political forms. Drawing upon empirical research including national studies of the LEPs (BIS/CLG/ESRC/WAG) and the City Deals (EPSRC/ESRC), the talk examines the emergent landscape of economic governance unfolding across England and the UK, reflects upon its enduring issues and wonders whether it is time for a new 'spatial political economy'.

Session One - Stream One

Disconnected Neighbourhoods?

Alasdair Rae, University of Sheffield
Ruth Hamilton, University of Sheffield

In this paper we report on the findings of a new study into residential mobility in poor neighbourhoods in England. Previous research has shown that deprived areas exhibit significant differences in terms of their level of connection - and disconnection - with their wider labour and housing markets (Robson et al., 2011) yet we still know too little about the nature of such relationships. Using migration data from the 2011 Census, plus the Indices of Deprivation, we provide an update to a neighbourhood classification typology for England's most deprived areas. We identify four types of neighbourhood: i) those that are gentrifying; ii) those which serve as a kind of stepping stone up and through the housing market; iii) those that serve as a temporary place of residence for people from more affluent areas; and iv) those neighbourhoods which predominantly have household moves with other very deprived areas. The implications of this typology are that we might be able to better tailor policy interventions in deprived areas, though of course the retrenchment of urban policy in England in recent years has made this more problematic. We provide a series of maps and data to help contextualise our work and finish by considering the implications where neighbourhoods exhibit a high degree of disconnection.

Income Inequality in English Localities: Trends and Implications

Dr Matthew Cocks, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham

The past 80 years has seen significant variations in the commitment of national government administrations to supporting economic development in English local places - from the demand-side regional policy of the pre and post war era, to the supply-side urban policies of the late 20th century. The present austerity-focused strategy of the Conservative government has seen the significant scaling back of regional and local economic development funds of all kinds. In such a context, questions arise as to the extent to which local authorities across the country have the capacity and potential to create equity in their area of jurisdiction. Can local leadership develop equitable outcomes if the will is present to do so? Set within Susan Fainstein's concept of the 'just city', this paper presents initial findings from an ongoing research project which takes a long-term perspective investigating the relationship between local leadership and equity outcomes across English local places. The paper focuses on the analysis of income data across district and county authorities in England and seeks to identify equity-related trends. The analytical approach taken makes use of Gini coefficients and income percentiles and mirrors closely that of Thomas Piketty in his recent influential book *Capital in the 21st Century*. Following the analysis, a number of implications of the findings are considered which relate to the overall aims of the project.

A New Sound in the Suburbs: Is Poverty Decentralising in Scottish Cities?

Gwilym Pryce, Sheffield Methods Institute, University of Sheffield

The traditional view of poverty as an inner city phenomenon is being challenged. Recent analysis of American cities finds that suburbia is now “home to the largest and fastest-growing poor population in the country and more than half of the metropolitan poor” (Economist 17/1/2002). As a result, the rise of suburban poverty is being highlighted as one of the most significant trends that may come to characterise twenty-first century cities. Suburbanisation of poverty may pose particular challenges for welfare policy and regeneration frameworks which have historically been geared towards inner cities. Our research investigates whether there is any evidence of this trend emerging in the UK, particularly in Scottish cities. We have also sought to improve research methods in this field by developing a way of quantifying the uncertainty associated with decentralisation measurement. Our approach will help policy makers and researchers know whether or not an apparent change in the pattern of poverty is a real phenomenon and not just due to random variation in the data. Initial findings suggest that poverty has indeed become noticeably less centralised in Scottish Cities over the 2001 to 2011 period, both in terms of the location of Incapacity Benefits and Job Seekers Allowance claimants.

Session One - Stream Two

Are cities really the motor of UK regional economic growth?

Steve Fothergill, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University
Donald Houston, Urban Studies, University of Glasgow

The increasingly dominant assumption is that cities are the motor of regional economic growth. But in the UK context this city-centric view of regional economies rings only partially true and stands in marked contrast to the pre-2000 assumption that Britain’s largest cities were actually the main focus of declining employment and population.

This paper will challenge the view that cities are the key drivers of regional growth. It recognises that there have been important changes in trends, notably in London, but argues that the geography of recent economic change in the UK is far more complex and variegated than simply cities ‘good’, other places ‘bad’. In particular, the paper will argue that the relationship between cities and their hinterlands is one of interdependence. It will also argue that the performance of cities is deeply intertwined with the structure of national economic growth and that urban trends in the UK over the last twenty years are to a significant extent a reflection of a model of growth based on consumer spending and debt that looks hard to sustain.

The paper will draw on a range of theoretical ideas and evidence, rather than a single new research study.

Powerhouse of cards? A critical review of the “Northern Powerhouse” strategy

Neil Lee, London School of Economics & Political Science

The “Northern Powerhouse” strategy represents the latest attempt by the UK government to rebalance the economy. The strategy is based on the idea that the cluster of Northern cities in the UK are not large enough to compete in a global economy, and suggests a series of policies around transport, decentralisation, science and innovation, and culture in an attempt to create a ‘powerhouse’ to rival London. It clearly draws from work such as the New Economic Geography with its focus on agglomeration, but has also referenced authors such as Richard Florida on the importance of culture to regional development. This paper summarises and critically reviews this strategy. While broadly sympathetic with the need to target investment to achieve economic growth, it argues that the ‘newness’ of the powerhouse concept has been overstated and that little additional finance is actually available. Given current resources, it is unlikely that the strategy will significantly reduce regional disparities and is likely to increase inequality between places in the North.

Linking jobs and poverty in cities: opportunities and constraints

Anne Green, University of Warwick
Paul Sissons, Coventry University

In recent years there has been growing concern about the prevalence of in-work poverty in the UK. There are also wider concerns about the fragmentation of working hours, the incidence of non-standard work, and the limited opportunities for progression from low-paid employment. Spatial patterns of worklessness also remain deeply entrenched. New policy directions are increasingly focusing on devolution to cities in areas such as transport, economic development, housing and skills which have the potential to impact labour market outcomes locally. This raises the question of how policymakers in cities can best seek to utilise new (and existing) opportunities to tackle poverty through improving access to ‘better jobs’.

This paper explores the potential for local action in cities and the evidence base on different approaches to addressing poverty through employment and skills interventions. A number of areas where local action can be developed are detailed. However the paper also outlines the constraints to local action in generating improved outcomes. These include the different conditions of local labour markets which frame the opportunities for action, the limited local evidence base on what works, and the inability to influence core employment, tax and benefit policies.

Session Two - Stream One

Unintended Consequences? The impact of welfare reform on spatial inequalities

Christina Beatty, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

Many policy decisions are likely to result in more pronounced impacts in some areas than others, reflecting differences in the underlying social and economic characteristics of local areas. However, at times, policy is seemingly developed with little consideration of the potentially uneven impacts which may emerge. The incoming Coalition government in 2010 demonstrated this tendency to great effect, by seemingly ignoring geography when compiling an evidence base for the effects which were likely to emerge from the fundamental overhaul of the welfare system which they promptly instigated. Whilst the national impacts of particular benefit changes were often subsequently debated, the distinct geography which underpins the impacts of the reforms was frequently ignored. However, when the totality of the reforms is considered, it can be seen that the scale of the impact differs radically depending on which part of the country you live in. Stark spatial differences in the impacts exist between and within local authority districts. Unless the spatial aspects of the welfare reform are systematically measured, then the consequences, unintended or otherwise, cannot be fully understood. The need to consider the underpinning geography is even more pressing given a new round of welfare reforms will shortly be announced by the new Conservative government. This paper will therefore consider the relationship between the impacts of welfare reform and place; the extent to which this is rooted in past economic trends; and whether the reforms are likely to lead to a widening of the gap between poorer and wealthier parts of the country.

Exploring the worst life expectancy gap in England: A longitudinal Study of Health Inequalities in Stockton on Tees

Jon Warren, Durham University
Kate Mattheys, Durham University
Clare Bamba, Durham University

Stockton on Tees has the worst life expectancy inequality in England with men in the most deprived parts of the Borough living on average 16 years less than those in the least deprived parts.

In 2014 between April and June we spoke to 836 households from the 20 most and the 20 least deprived areas of Stockton. Our survey identified individual members of those households who will be interviewed at regular intervals over the next four years. We will gather information to evaluate competing theories, enhance understanding of the causal factors involved and assess the impact of austerity and welfare reform upon health inequalities within the area.

This presentation will outline the methodological and practical challenges that designing, launching and maintaining a large scale survey of this kind has presented, and how we have attempted to address those challenges. It will also present some initial findings. This research is part of a 5 year project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

Housing Benefit reform and the private rented sector in the UK: On the deleterious consequences of short-term, ideological knowledge

Ryan Powell, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

Blanket reforms to Local Housing Allowance (the way that Housing Benefit is administered in the private rented sector in the UK) instigated by the previous Coalition Government have had uneven spatial impacts across the country. While the impacts in some localities have been relatively marginal, in others they are profound, likely to be long lasting, and impinge on the already marginalised i.e. the least powerful groups within the PRS figuration. These claims are made with reference to empirical evidence from the DWP evaluation of the LHA reforms. The paper focuses on two case studies at opposite ends of the housing market spectrum: Westminster in London; and Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) in South Wales. The analysis exposes the unintended and deleterious consequences that emerge from short-term housing policies based on static, over-simplified assumptions and applied to an ever-increasingly complex housing figuration, which is constantly in flux. It shows how the neglect of wider social processes and interdependencies on the part of housing policy, which vary significantly by place, contributes to long-term detrimental effects on marginalised households and groups; and the accentuation of existing spatial inequalities. The result is a dual process of the containment of marginality in “spaces of relegation” (RCT) and its dispersal in spaces of relative affluence (Westminster).

Session Two - Stream Two

Aligning economic and planning strategies in a devolved England: scalar mismatches, irreconcilable tensions, and spatial inequalities

Ed Ferrari, University of Sheffield

In England, the formation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) has introduced an important new subregional layer to questions of the spatial governance of city regions. At the same time, there are nascent steps to devolve powers and budgets to the local level. This has occurred within the context of, and at the same time, as ongoing reforms to the English planning system. These have removed statutory planning at the regional level and have replaced it with a set of more fuzzy relations through the Duty to Cooperate and also with non-prescribed bodies such as LEPs. A key issue that has arisen is the question of how plans for housing growth align with, and can support, aspirations for economic growth. Throughout the country, LEPs have been charged with formulating and delivering ambitious plans for economic growth, while their partner local authorities remain responsible for planning for new housing. Based on a period of embedded practice this paper reflects on these issues as they have been played out in a major city region in northern England and concludes that there are significant scalar mismatches and ruptures in the strategic fabric for decision-making which are leading to potentially irreconcilable tensions between economic ambitions and meeting social needs. Left unchecked, the outcomes may do little to reduce spatial inequalities within city regions.

Passing the Buck without the Bucks: Some Reflections on Fiscal Decentralisation and the Consequent Prospects for Local Economic Development and Urban Regeneration in England

Kevin Muldoon-Smith, Northumbria University
Paul Greenhalgh, Northumbria University

Local government in England is increasingly reliant upon decentralised methods of urban finance (typically based on 'new economic growth' extracted from non-residential property development) to fund public services, economic development and urban regeneration. Opportunities for greater territorial governance and economic development often frame fiscal decentralisation, yet, critical appraisals of this agenda are less common. Reflecting upon this issue, this paper critically appraises the underlying method of 'localist' urban finance in England, the Business Rate Retention Strategy (BRRS). In doing so, it describes a picture of geographical variation in England, one that suggests that the BRRS could lead to splintered urban development, based on the necessity (and underlying viability) for new development. The paper concludes that a minority of 'premium locations,' which, defined by their buoyant property market characteristics, could outperform more numerous 'stranded' and 'redundant locations.' The result is that those areas most in need of economic development and regeneration, that exhibit some kind of market failure and geographical disadvantage, could be less able to generate new development in order to fund the BRSS. Under these conditions, rather than correcting incidences of spatial inequality, fiscal decentralisation could further polarise uneven development.

Extracting community benefits from growth: what is the potential for a 'politics of leverage' to tackle spatial disadvantage?

Aidan While, University of Sheffield
Richard Crisp, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University
Will Eadson, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University
Tony Gore, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

Under neoliberalism the capital-state relation has been reworked in favour of capital. At the same time, there is evidence of a growing confidence in local government in exacting local employment and skills benefits from major development projects in pursuit of 'social value'. This paper explores the potential for this 'politics of leverage' to benefit disadvantaged groups and areas. Drawing on research undertaken for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation we show how contractors and local authorities have worked together on community benefits agreements through procurement and planning. The research shows contractors are often willing to engage with this agenda but there is room to further maximise benefits. This includes more ambitious and better targeted employment and skills agreements with the private sector and longer-term and more targeted employability support. Yet the paper concludes that the scope for such interventions to benefit places and people most in need is relatively modest. There are serious challenges in extracting community benefits from infrastructure development which highlight the limits of the politics of leverage.

Session Three - Stream One

SURF's Alliance for Action

Andy Milne, SURF

In recent years, the Scottish Government has placed an increased policy emphasis on community led regeneration. This significant departure from the previous property-led model of regeneration was generally welcomed by Scotland's regeneration community.

SURF, however, expressed concern regarding the inadequacy of resources to sufficiently enhance historically underfunded community capacity. As part of its broader community empowerment policy development, the Scottish Government subsequently agreed to invest in a SURF initiative aimed at testing the viability of a new approach to collaborative community-based regeneration.

SURF's cross sector 'Alliance for Action' brings together practitioners, funders, policy-makers and academics to invest in and support collaborative regeneration in two contrasting urban case study communities in Glasgow and Fife.

In conceiving and delivering this initiative, SURF drew on its experience, networks and respected independent status to identify and support practical options for achieving more participative and sustainable community regeneration.

The Alliance for Action programme, initiated in 2013, aims to enhance resilience and practical outcomes locally, and to identify and promote constructive debate on wider policy and resource considerations. Among other aspects, the learning outcomes to date highlight shared challenges of trust, leadership and the impact of the constrained and competitive funding context for community regeneration.

Destitute in Dublin: How Ireland's Economic Recovery Engendered and Exacerbated a Housing and Homelessness Crisis

Lee Binns, Dublin Institute of Technology

Ireland's recent economic fortunes are inextricably linked with property. During the 'Celtic Tiger' boom, the construction sector came to play a commanding role in the national economy: powering employment and incomes, sucking in investment, and providing a rationale for the exponential growth of finance-providing institutions. The outsized nature and influence of that property-finance alliance, however, meant that when construction boom turned to bust, it would have a disproportionate impact on society and the wider economy. Flowing from the post-2007 credit crunch, Ireland was faced with property developers unable to repay their debts, ghost estates nobody wanted to live in, zombie banks unable to lend, and massive numbers of ex-construction workers without employment: as the state veered on insolvency, it was forced to solicit a bailout from the EU/IMF. And yet, incongruous though it might sound, at the height of that recession residential rents began rise- indicating scarcity. How could the nation be grappling with excessive demand and insufficient supply amid a multitude of vacant buildings and seemingly unending wave of unemployment and emigration? Moreover, when economic recovery began to kick in, employment to rise, and money to flow a little more freely, residential rents rose further causing the access to housing issue to intensify. Soon there would be record numbers on social housing waiting lists, record numbers in emergency accommodation, and record numbers of people sleeping rough on the capital city streets. This paper discusses how Dublin's current housing and homeless crisis arose, why differential access to housing caused the least advantaged citizens to suffer most from economic recovery, and in what ways public policy has served to exacerbate rather than address the problem. The cautionary tale within this presentation questions the assumption that a rising sea lifts all boats and raises uncomfortable, as yet unanswered questions for the urban policy community: in Dublin, economic recovery is shown to amplify rather than resolve social and spatial inequalities.

Enterprising activism and entrepreneurial behaviours in inner urban low-income communities

Alan Southern, University of Liverpool

Regeneration as we once knew it is finished. In place of this worn out metaphor for paternalistic intervention is a drive for enterprise-led city growth, a localism to invite forms of neighbourhood participation and an encouragement for the social economy to pick up any welfare 'slack'. Some may call this replacement Red Tory or social conservatism; a marginal academic debate will ensue. After the largest financial (ergo political-economic) crisis seen, there is little doubt that the ideologues of the Right have reinforced neoliberal hegemony and that the consequences from this will impact disproportionately on those living in distressed communities.

This is the context for attempts to stimulate entrepreneurship in inner urban low-income communities. This paper firstly offers a critique of the ideology that underpins policy and practice to get more people from such communities to start up a business. This field is theoretically contradictory, with calls for more from people with less resource. It offers an egalitarian inclusion while entrepreneurs are revered in some exclusionary and fetishised manner. You 'lack entrepreneurial spirit' one former Prime Minister told local people, yet in the second part of this paper attention is given to a 'manifesto' for enterprising activism and entrepreneurial behaviours in low-income communities. Here we can identify how this theme can provide a basis from which to capture both political and economic development in a period of intense inequality.

Session Three - Stream Two

The possibilities and limits of political contestation in times of 'urban austerity'

Crispian Fuller, Cardiff University
Karen West, Aston University

This paper seeks to provide a conceptual framework in which to examine the social practices of contemporary austerity programmes in urban areas, including how these relate to different conceptions of crisis. Of current theoretical interest is the apparent ease with which these austerity measures have been accepted by urban governing agents and the general public in many societies. In order to advance these understandings we follow the recent post-Marxist 'logics' approach of Glynos and Howarth (2007), focusing on the Lacanian lacking subject whose identificatory practices are key to understanding the form, nature and stability of discursive settlements. In such thinking it is not only the formation of discourses and the mobilisation of rhetoric that are of interest, but also the manner in which the subjects of austerity identify with these. Through such an approach, and using the example of Birmingham (UK), we explore how it can be deployed in the analysis of urban austerity and crisis. In conclusion, we argue that the logics approach is a useful framework through which to examine how critique arises and why austerity has been largely uncontested.

IMD as WMD: spatial justice and social injustice in the regeneration of London's council estates

Paul Watt, Birkbeck, University of London

This paper provides a critical analysis of the aims and impacts of regeneration area-based initiatives in relation to tackling spatial inequalities in London. It is based on documentary research and fieldwork undertaken at various council-built housing estates. Key common governmental rationales can be identified. Estates are often identified for regeneration via low area-based deprivation scores, notably the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The notion of 'neighbourhood effects' is typically invoked as a rationale whereby the spatial concentration of council tenants on estates is said to operate as a self-reinforcing mechanism which locks tenants and their children into poverty and social exclusion. 'Curing' such neighbourhood effects is via promoting 'mixed communities' through demolishing part or all of existing council-owned dwellings, plus building new private flats which enable high-income homeowners to live in the estates. The paper argues that the promotion of spatial justice via estate regeneration has had profoundly negative social justice impacts. Dozens of council estates in London have experienced the demolition of homes, shattered communities, spatial dispersion of residential populations, and a net loss of social housing. The spatial logic of the IMD has thus become a WMD – Weapon of Mass Destruction – which has contributed towards reducing the capacity of low-income Londoners to stay in a rapidly gentrifying city.

Going for growth during austere times: an analysis of growth plans

Nick Gray, Northumbria University
Lee Pugalis, Northumbria University
Alan Townsend, Durham University

A discourse of growth saturates UK policy and political outlooks, whilst central government is simultaneously exacting deep cuts to the funding of most public services, including the retrenchment of regeneration and regional development programmes. Set within this climate of austerity, restless searches for strategies pursuing economic growth have resulted in perennial experimentations. In many countries, greater cooperation between the state, industry and civic society is promoted; often through multi-actor partnerships, which tend to privilege business interests. This paper investigates the nature, content and role of growth strategies during times of austerity, and considers the capacity of non-statutory bodies to deliver. Some key theoretical propositions pertaining to economic development during times of austerity, crises and cutbacks are applied to fieldwork conducted in England – a country that has often been at the forefront of neoliberal trends. The research project involved a comparative analysis of English growth strategies; based on a content analysis of all 38 Strategic Economic Plans produced and associated documentation, complemented by a programme of interviews. We find no discernible correlation between growth ambitions and Growth Deal funding packages, yet this does not appear to have quelled the enthusiasm of public-private-partnerships going for growth.

Closing Plenary

Localism - increasing opportunities for neighbourhood participation and action

Maria O'Beirne, Matthew West, Jenny Harland, Department for Communities and Local Government

Since the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011, the opportunities for communities to be more involved in influencing decisions affecting their local areas have increased. We are seeing increasing appetite from communities right across the country to coalesce around the management and ownership of a local asset and to collaborate with local authorities and other local service commissioners to co-produce a public service. The initial insights from recent and current government funded programmes (including Our Place, Delivering Differently) show how communities can use these new opportunities to make a difference to decisions affecting their neighbourhoods, in ways that build on and add value to the existing capacity within those communities. The emerging examples of local action offer both inspiration as well as practical advice for other communities on how to get started, how to move forward and how to further boost capacity among other neighbourhoods who want to do something similar.

Local : Place and People

**Debbie Matthews - Manor and Castle Development
Janet Skirrow - Zest**

Janet Skirrow, CEO of Zest and Debbie Matthews, CEO at Manor & Castle Development Trust will talk about the development and current role of these two Sheffield based development trusts. Both trusts operate at a neighbourhood level to address social and economic deprivation. Janet and Debbie will talk about their experience community led regeneration over the last 20 years and the impact today of austerity, welfare reform and the current policy agenda.