

RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2011

The Geographical Imagination

Session proposal form

Please fill in all the details below and return to AC2011@rgs.org by **25 February 2011**.

Session summary	
Session Title:	New Welfare Geographies: The remaking of the British welfare state?
Research Group sponsor (if applicable):	Urban Geography Research Group Geographies of Justice Working Group
Session Convenor(s):	Geoff DeVerteuil, School of Geography, University of Southampton Jon May, School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London
Session Convenor(s) Email:	g.p.deverteuil@soton.ac.uk j.may@qmul.ac.uk
Session Abstract:	The British welfare state has always been open to both American and Continental European influences: on the one hand, reflecting Americanized entrepreneurialism and individualization, while on the other hand, reflecting more Continentalist urges towards social welfare, redistribution and community solidarity. However, the unprecedented October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review threatens to fundamentally remake the British welfare state. With the introduction of significant cuts to benefits and eligibility, growing conditionality, increased emphasis upon both individual responsibility and the role of charity in welfare provision, and the (re) introduction of a much more explicitly moral dimension to the welfare debate, the balance is perhaps tipping towards the American model. Such developments potentially represent a sea change in how the British government relates to its vulnerable populations and places. This double session draws together conceptual and empirical research - both current and future-oriented - that may help us better grasp the profound geographical impacts of this restructuring.
Keywords (max 5):	Welfare State, Welfare Restructuring, Benefits, Comprehensive Spending Review, Uneven Geographies

Session Requirements		
Number of timeslots required in the conference programme	2	Session slots will be approximately 1hr 40minutes long, which accommodates 5 papers of 20min each including questions, or 7-10 shorter papers depending on format.
Type of session proposed e.g. papers, papers with discussant, posters, panel discussion, workshop...	Papers	The session organisers welcome innovative session formats. If you'd like to discuss a session format, please contact the organisers at AC2011@rgs.org .
Special audio visual requirements	None	Laptop with audio speakers, data projector and screen will be provided in each room. Most rooms should also have internet access (either wired or wireless). Speakers should bring their own laser pointers etc.
Any other special requests to be considered	None	e.g. mobility requirements, room request, timetabling request.

Session details	
Session 1	New Welfare Geographies: The remaking of the British welfare state? (1)

Session 1 Chair	Geoff DeVerteuil, School of Geography, University of Southampton
Session 1 Chair email	g.p.deverteuil@soton.ac.uk
Paper 1 Title:	Assessing the Geographical Impact of Government Welfare cuts on Britain
Paper 1 Abstract:	<p>The paper begins by examining the rationale for the government welfare cuts in Britain. It stresses the importance of the new welfare to work approach which is designed to reduce substantially the number of people on benefits by tightening up on benefit eligibility and reducing benefits in some cases. It also notes the introduction of an overall benefit cap equal to median post tax household income. It briefly discusses the notion of 'fairness' which underpins much of current government thinking on benefits.</p> <p>This paper will attempt to assess the potential geographical impact of government welfare cuts on Britain, primarily at a regional level, but also looking at local authority level where the data permit. Its approach is simple, looking at the percentage of households in each region receiving various types of welfare benefit. It shows that the proportion of households who receive welfare benefits is much greater in some regions and local authorities than others, and that the proportions are much greater in the old industrial regions of the NE, NW, Scotland and Wales, than in the prosperous SE although there are a number of deprived inner London boroughs which are also likely to be badly affected.</p>
Paper 1 Author(s):	Chris Hamnett, Kings College, University of London
Paper 1 Presenter(s):	Chris Hamnett, Kings College, University of London
Paper 1 Author(s) email address:	chris.hamnett@kcl.ac.uk
Paper 2 Title:	Fit for Purpose? Welfare reform and challenges for health and labour market policy in the UK
Paper 2 Abstract:	<p>In the UK, as in some other EU states, the focus of recent welfare reforms has switched from those on unemployment benefits to those receiving sickness/incapacity benefits (IBs), reflecting concerns around the large numbers falling into the latter group. The Labour government elected in 1997 introduced a range of measures to activate those on IBs, setting a target of a one million reduction in the number of claimants by the end of 2015 to be achieved principally through the requirement on most claimants to prepare for employment and a tougher medical test. The Conservative Party similarly came to acknowledge that high levels of IB claiming represented a problem of 'unemployment hidden as sickness', and in coalition now proposes even more aggressive supply-side strategies plus means-testing and time-limits on entitlement. This article provides an extensive review of the most recent evidence to identify factors driving the rise in the number of people claiming IBs, and in light of this analysis assesses whether current policy is fit for purpose. An important conclusion is that any national 'one-size fits all' supply-side policy response is blind to the distinctive geography of receipt of IBs and the complex combination of factors that leave some people trapped on these benefits.</p>
Paper 2 Author(s):	Donald Houston, School of Geography and Geosciences, University of St Andrews Colin Lindsay, School of Management, University of York
Paper 2 Presenter(s):	Donald Houston, School of Geography and Geosciences, University of St Andrews Colin Lindsay, School of Management, University of York

Paper 2 Author(s) email address:	dsh7@st-andrews.ac.uk colin.lindsay@york.ac.uk
Paper 3 Title:	New Cornerstones of Care: The Emergence of Individual Choice and Family Leadership in the British welfare state
Paper 3 Abstract:	The UK welfare state has seen an increased emphasis upon both individual responsibility and choice in welfare provision, particularly in the areas of welfare traditionally associated with 'vulnerable' populations, such as persons with disabilities and mental health challenges. The current trend towards an 'individualisation' of support delivery, and the ideology of 'supported citizenship', emerged out of New Labour's choice agenda. However, the original emphasis on individualisation has arguably been remodelled as 'individual responsibility' and a reliance on the 'natural support' of families, neighbours and community members, particularly with the new coalition government repositioning of civic engagement as a central guiding principle of welfare. A new breed of programmes and 'family leadership' groups are emerging in response to the individualised, person-driven agenda, which seek to fill the vacuum left from the closure of traditional service arrangements. This paper examines the experiences of a number of these support providers in order to understand the local contextualized implications of this change. It critically reflects on the rapid pursuit for change, being driven by government, arguing that this process will and should take time.
Paper 3 Author(s):	Andrew Power, School of Geography, University of Southampton_
Paper 3 Presenter(s):	Andrew Power, School of Geography, University of Southampton
Paper 3 Author(s) email address:	andy_j_power@yahoo.ie
Paper 4 Title:	The 'Broken Society' and the Uneven Geographies of Anti-Welfarism
Paper 4 Abstract:	The idea of Britain as a 'Broken' society has in recent years been advanced by Conservative politicians as symptomatic of a decline in the social and moral well being of the UK. This narrative offers a complex, class fragmented anxiety centred on concerns about behaviours and social practices. The notion of a Broken Society, seemingly rooted in a pseudo-sociological understanding of social processes and relations, is able to bundle together a disparate number of social problems which are taken as a sign of a society in crisis. Notable here are concerns about family and community breakdown, (the Karen Matthews episode being one of the most common examples mobilised in popular and political discourses); a decline of civility, civicness, social bonds and a rise of violent, deviant and 'anti-social behaviour' more generally. There is a recurring and deeply pervasive moralism at the heart of the Broken Society storyline: a story of societal breakdown reflecting a worry about the absence of moral standards, deference, respect and independence. The primary causes of such breakdown in the dominant versions of the Broken Society approach are identified as welfare state dependency and cultural deficit models which pathologise and individualise particular populations. Through all of this a number of particular geographies are at work: the Broken Society mobilises a particular representation of social housing estates (or areas in which these dominate) and social housing estate populations as not only vulnerable – but as problematic on a number of different levels. There is a developing and unfolding moral geography of responsabilisation, imbued with invocations of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor – and of an 'underclass'.
Paper 4 Author(s):	Gerry Mooney, The Open University Sarah Neal, The Open University Lynn Hancock, University of Liverpool

Paper 4 Presenter(s):	Gerry Mooney, The Open University Sarah Neal, The Open University Lynn Hancock, University of Liverpool
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Please copy and paste the "Session details" table below if your session requires more than one timeslot (e.g. it has more than 5 papers and you need more time). If you are proposing another session on a different topic, please use a new form.

Session details	
Session 1	New Welfare Geographies: The remaking of the British welfare state? (2)
Session 1 Chair	Jon May, School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London
Session 1 Chair email	j.may@qmul.ac.uk
Paper 1 Title:	Anticipating American Style Welfarism in the UK?
Paper 1 Abstract:	<p>The unprecedented October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review threatens to shift the UK welfare state towards a more American model of residual welfarism, voluntarism, individualization and blaming the poor for their predicament.</p> <p>In order to anticipate the impacts of this potential Americanization of the UK welfare state, I rely on a retrospective, comparative case study of how the non-profit sector of the London Bangladeshi and Los Angeles Central-American community related to the local and national welfare states. Results suggested that while each community experienced similar grassroots beginnings that absorbed an unaccommodating welfare state, since the 1980s the trajectories have diverged considerably. For London Bangladeshis, the non-profit sector is smaller because of much stronger national and local welfare state settlements, while for Central-Americans, the sector has been forced, due to a residualized and punitive welfare state, to shoulder much greater burdens. The case study results serve not only to inform comparative welfare studies, exploding the myth of US-UK welfare state convergence within what Esping-Andersen called 'liberal welfare state regimes', but also to clarify the potential disadvantages and distortions upon vulnerable groups if the UK were to adopt American-style welfarism in the near future.</p>
Paper 1 Author(s):	Geoff DeVerteuil, School of Geography, University of Southampton
Paper 1 Presenter(s):	Geoff DeVerteuil, School of Geography, University of Southampton
Paper 1 Author(s) email address:	g.p.deverteuil@soton.ac.uk

Paper 2 Title:	Workfare transnationalism: The case of a multinational employment services provider
Paper 2 Abstract:	<p>Over the past decade, the task of ‘activating’ the unemployed has been increasingly handed over to for-profit multinational firms such as Maximus, Work Directions, and A4e. While these providers have been covered extensively in the media and received billions of dollars from governments, they remain under-researched in critical social science. Why are these firms becoming multinationals, why are their services attractive to policy makers, and what are the broader implications for the functioning of workfare?</p> <p>This paper traces the history of a multinational provider of employment services, from its origins as a local contractor, to its growth as a provider of national programmes, and its current attempt to enter overseas markets. This case study is based on interviews with the firm’s staff and managers in its home market and one of its expansion markets, with policymakers and activists, as well as newsmedia coverage and policy documents.</p> <p>Our argument is that workfare transnationalism is a product of the inherent riskiness of national public-sector contracting markets. Large organizations establish themselves in a national market by lobbying for larger contracts, running loss-making pilot projects, and wooing the media. Attempts by large players to create predictability by asserting control over contracting markets may succeed at the national level. However, in a context of public-sector budget cuts and fluctuating ‘customer flows’, such strategies are insufficient for sustained profits, making it difficult to attract private capital. Hence, nationally organized privatized workfare provision is unsustainable without a way for providers to hedge risks, and the largest firms are increasingly responding by upscaling their activities to the transnational level.</p>
Paper 2 Author(s):	Ian Greer, Leeds University Business School Mark Stuart, Leeds University Business School John Ward, Leeds University Business School
Paper 2 Presenter(s):	Ian Greer, Leeds University Business School Mark Stuart, Leeds University Business School John Ward, Leeds University Business School
Paper 2 Author(s) email address:	I.C.Greer@leeds.ac.uk ms@lubs.leeds.ac.uk
Paper 3 Title:	Towards (un)sustainable employment? Exploring policy responses to work-welfare cycling
Paper 3 Abstract:	<p>Employment policies have conventionally focused on the transition from welfare to work. However many of those who leave benefits for employment return to them again relatively quickly, meaning that some people perpetually cycle between work and welfare for much of their working lives. This paper considers policy responses to labour market disadvantage and the extent to which they can help and hinder individuals’ efforts to sustain employment. Evidence based on 130 semi-structured interviews with work-welfare ‘cyclers’, service providers and employers in Glasgow and Dundee is presented and an argument developed which contends that policy responses to employment instability are currently limited in scope and promote only an unambitious conception of sustainable employment (i.e. still being in some form of employment shortly after the transition into work). This research is of relevance to debates surrounding welfare reform and the priorities of employment policies in the face of rising levels of worklessness and the drive towards the non-state provision of welfare services.</p>
Paper 3 Author(s):	David McCollum, Geography, School of the Environment, University of Dundee

Paper 3 Presenter(s):	David McCollum, Geography, School of the Environment, University of Dundee
Paper 3 Author(s) email address:	d.j.mccollum@dundee.ac.uk
Paper 4 Title:	Researching 'behaviourism' in policy, practice and welfare systems; reflections on a social worlds analysis
Paper 4 Abstract:	<p>This paper offers insights into connections between social research methods, processes of analysis and routes to substantive findings. Arguments are derived from the author's study into disciplining and therapeutic elements in housing and homelessness practices. With some notable exceptions there is a dearth of empirical research into how conditional strategies, which seek to challenge or change client behaviour, operate in practice. There is also limited guidance for carrying out data analysis. In the past, housing researchers have tended to focus on the role of 'top-down' policies and institutional cultures for the shaping of practice discourses, and a social constructionist approach has dominated. Alternatively, there can be a focus on 'micro-processes' alone, such as interactions and language at the grassroots. In response to these issues, the author developed an alternative approach. I argue that a 'social worlds' analysis identifies the multiple factors that influence practices and perspectives at the front-line. This approach has potential to generate an appropriately complex reflection of housing and homelessness practitioners, and it also offers a set of practical options for qualitative data analysis. I conclude that an empirically grounded review of practitioners' social worlds is vital to move towards a critical set of ideas about conditional techniques and the relationship between 'discipline' and 'therapy' at the front-line.</p>
Paper 4 Author(s):	Rachael Dobson, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds
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