Diversity of Workplaces and Spaces in Cities Seminar

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Abstracts

Alan Felstead and Golo Henseke

Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University and UCL Institute of Education, University College London

Changing Places of Work: Examining the Growth of Remote Working and the Job Quality Trade-Off

This paper critically assesses the assumption that more and more work is being detached from place and that it is a 'win-win' for both employers and employees. Based on analysis of official labour market data taken from over the last twenty years, it finds that around two-thirds of the increase in remote working cannot be explained by compositional factors such as movement to the knowledge economy, the growth in flexible employment and organisational responses to the changing demographic make-up of the employed labour force. Drawing on data provided by around 15,000 workers to surveys carried out in Britain in 2001, 2006 and 2012 the paper also shows that remote working is positive for job quality in some respects and negative in others. It is associated with higher organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job-related well-being, but at the cost of greater levels of work intensification and a heightened inability to switch off.

Adam Badger and Jamie Woodcock
Royal Holloway, University of London and London School of Economics

Deliveroo and the City: work, digital technology, and the urban environment

In recent years, the 'gig economy' has grown rapidly in prominence and scale, particularly in large urban centres like London. This kind of work is often presented as digitally seamless and flexible, however, its exploitative realities are becoming increasingly apparent. Worker testimonies, undercover exposes, and initial research are highlighting how the work is becoming transformed, shifting the balance of power from labour to capital. In order to investigate the impact of this on the workers' experience, further research is needed to understand the labour process, class composition, and the role of new technology and

management techniques. Furthermore, as this kind of work is necessarily mediated both online and through the assemblages of the urban environment, the implications of these demand greater attention. In this paper, the authors present new empirical research on Deliveroo in London, including interviews, ethnographic data, and spatial mapping. Through these methods, the paper will unpack the tensions that emerge at the interfaces between workers and technologies, mediated through the contested space of the city. The analysis will focus on the geographic dimensions of gig work, exploring how the privatisation of public space plays a key role in this new mode of organisation. The findings highlight the complex interplay between urban and digital ecologies in this mode of work, particularly as companies drive for efficiencies that further embed the worker as part of an organisational machine. However, as these strategies play out in the city, so do emergent spaces of rupture and resistance. This approach is important for understanding not only how work is being transformed, but also the possibilities for workers' organisation, particularly against the backdrop of digitalisation and automation.

Daniel Wheatley
Department of Business and Labour Economics, University of Birmingham

Workplace location and the quality of work

In advanced economies growth in paid work since the 2007-9 economic crisis has centred on non-standard highly flexible work which is detached from traditional urban work spaces including homeworking, mobile working, and forms of self-employment including gig work. These changes have pushed the quality of work to the policy forefront including its relationship with well-being. Using UK panel data from Understanding Society, this study finds important differences in job quality between workers in traditional (employer/business premises) and non-standard (homeworking, driving/travelling, mobile workers) workplace locations. Homeworking enables work to take place outside of urban centres, consistent with the location-independent nature of many homeworking occupations. Homeworking employees report good jobs, while self-employed homeworkers, more often women, report lower job quality but leisure satisfaction benefits. Mobile working jobs offer greater flexibility and job satisfaction, but also exhibit a number of lower quality characteristics, evident of the division between highly skilled and low skilled forms of mobile work. Driving/travelling jobs involve low quality (low autonomy, low incomes, preferences for alternative jobs), lower-skilled, task-based work, especially among the self-employed.

Simon Blainey

Faculty of Engineering and the Environment, University of Southampton

Changing Commutes and the Changing Future of Urban Transport

Changing urban working patterns mean that the traditional daily journey to and from a single workplace is becoming a progressively less typical part of people's lives. Growth in home, flexible, mobile, itinerant and peripatetic working is leading to increasingly complex and heterogenous commuting and work-related travel behaviour. At the same time, a number of potentially transformative changes are taking place in the way that urban transport systems operate and function, such as the development of autonomous vehicles, the growth in 'on demand' transport services, and the introduction of measures to reduce transport-related air pollutant emissions. The interactions between these two processes of change are likely to have fundamental implications for the way in which urban land use and transport systems are planned and designed. However, while it is generally accepted that significant changes are taking place, there is still a high degree of uncertainty as to how the processes of change will play out in the future. It is also not clear that the implications of these changes have been fully appreciated by urban transport and infrastructure planners, which is unfortunate given the capital intensity and long lifetime of urban transport assets and the key role they play in facilitating the activities of urban residents and workers. This paper brings together data from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and from modelling work carried out by the Infrastructure Transitions Research Consortium (ITRC) to examine the interactions between changing working patterns and the changing nature of urban transport, and to consider their implications for urban residents and workers. EWCS data is used to assess the rate of growth in 'atypical' working patterns across different sectors, which sectors such working patterns are compatible with, and the potential travel impacts of these working patterns. These findings are then combined with ITRC forecasts of future employment (disaggregated by sector) and transport developments to investigate how a shift away from traditional working patterns might influence urban transport demand.

Kaveh Jahanshahi
Martin Centre of Research on Urban Studies, University of Cambridge

How do workplaces influence commuting? Evidence from the UK 2002-2015

The past decade has seen dramatic changes in workplaces. News and anecdotes abound on how different commuting has become, as increased self-employment, part time work, flexi-time and supply chain configurations reshape accessibility to jobs. However, very few studies exist to examine how the evolution of workplaces affect commuting, or vice versa. This paper aims to fill some of this gap through novel uses of structural equation models (SEMs) which help to disentangle the complex interactions among changes in personal and household characteristics of the commuters, the built environment of the workplaces and homeplaces, and travel for work and other purposes. The theoretical models are supported by the recent UK's national travel survey (NTS), which is the most comprehensive annual travel survey in the world. In our recent publications, we have shown that novel extensions to SEMs can

overcome persistent methodological barriers arising from the highly interactive nature of the built environment variables. We have developed a granular investigation through latent cluster analysis to identify typologies of residential areas which respond distinctly to land use and transport planning interventions. In this paper we aim to complete the analyses on the changes in interactions between the built environment and commuting through identifying the typologies for workplaces. The workplaces are densifying in the urban cores and new, nomad working hubs are also emerging. Our hypothesis is that, after appropriate statistical controls at the residential end, such recent changes would impact on commuting behaviour. The results provide a robust assessment on current initiatives to reshape the workplaces in cities.

MariaLaura Di Domenico, University of Surrey
Daniel Nunan, Birkbeck, University of London
Elizabeth Daniel, The Open University

Symbolic Action and the Virtual Spatiality of Home-Based Online Businesses

As communication technology disrupts the spatial norms of the workplace, the physical location of entrepreneurial activity is increasingly moving from office to home. This provides financial benefits but can risk the loss of legitimacy due to stigma associated with home-based work. This paper explores how entrepreneurs seek to subvert the geographical limitations of the home by creating online personas imbued by particular spatial and geographical symbolism. Whilst prior research has considered tensions at the home/work boundary, we propose a symbolic action framework for theorising how tensions manifest themselves at the boundaries between physical and virtual work. This qualitative study is based on thirty entrepreneurs running online home-based businesses. The findings suggest that these technology/digital entrepreneurs, operating in a virtual space, leverage associations with varying spatial contexts including entrepreneurial clusters, neighbourhoods or even specific landmarks to signal legitimacy to stakeholders and, in turn, increase their chances of survival. Home-based online businesses can thus subvert the geographical limitations of the home through the creation of online personas and a dynamic virtual symbolism. The use of virtual symbolism becomes unbounded, enabling firms to project a dynamic spatial feel regardless of their actual physical (home/ domestic) context of operation. However, this unbounding may lead to physical and virtual spaces drifting apart, creating spatial dissonance. This paper develops a rich understanding of the way that the management of this spatial symbolism is used by home-based businesses, particularly those operating online.

Cornelia Tippel
ILS Dortmund
The interconnectedness of the residential environment and home-based self-employment

Home-based self-employment is a striking feature in Europe. While housing is associated with the social and domestic dimensions of people's life, self-employment is considered in the existing literature from a business and entrepreneurship perspective. However, in home-based self-employment the personal and residential domain overlaps with business and entrepreneurship issues. This is the first paper that connects these domains through focussing on the interrelationship between the decisions people and households make in relation to where and how they live with the motivations and practices of running a business from the own home. In particular, this paper asks how this interrelationship is shaped by the residential environment. Are people encouraged to start a business from home in certain locations or do certain residential environments shape particular business behaviours? The empirical analysis is based upon qualitative fieldwork in the Dortmund region (Germany) in a centrally located dense urban neighbourhood with a good amenity infrastructure.

Elena Sischarenco
Department of Social Anthropology, University of St. Andrews
Businessmen Mobile Workspaces

How should we think of workplaces? Are they always the fixed and formal spaces of offices, or is this image sometimes deceiving us? How should we rethink the theoretical division between formal and informal workspaces, and between private and public space in the urban context? With my fieldwork among small-medium entrepreneurs of the construction business in Lombardy, North of Italy, I discovered how the company is in fact, almost never their space of work. In my year-long fieldwork, I closely observed around fifteen businessmen in their daily routines. My informants' work is multi-located; they constantly move from one place to another, one village to another; from the headquarters of their company to a construction site, from a bank to a business consultant office. Sometimes their workplace becomes the car, where they often coordinate other people's activities while they drive from a place to another. At other times, business meetings happen in informal places like a bar or a restaurant. Observing my informants' movements and spaces of work is fundamental if we want to understand the company's identity, productivity, and networks. If we consider the workplace as a community (Aguilera 1996), my informants' workplace is extended as extended are their networks. Businessmen seem to particularly cross the borders of the virtual community of their company, and instead, the city becomes their space of work. Their movements are wide and their interactions often happen in informal spaces outside the office. If we restrict this community to the physical space of a company, as much literature assumes, we would never understand the construction business and the work of my informants.

Lizzie Richardson
Department of Geography, University of Durham

Digital work and urban public space

Digital technologies extend and intensify working practices beyond fixed location, producing changes to the form and substance of urban working space. This paper considers what it might mean to call these urban practices of digital work 'public'. 'Digital work' is understood as the (urban) cultures/practices of how work takes place with and through digital technologies, rather than confimed to a specific technical task or occupation. It draws on ongoing ethnographic research involving observation of and participation in a co-working office in Newcastle (UK). It therefore seeks to advance two areas of literature. The first considers the formal distinction between urban public and private space through a focus on the workplace. I examine co-working offices as digital workplaces that concentrate diverse workers – those who are self-employed or are employed by different companies - in a single location. These office spaces formally combine elements of the private – such as defined access – with the public – exposure to the presence of others in the form of workers from different companies. The second examines the substantive blurring of work and life that has been exacerbated by digital technologies. To show how work takes place in these offices, I outline three activities that can be work/nonwork and public/private: making a phone call as an act of exposure and decency; taking a coffee as a familiar and formal ritual; and watching 'Slack' channels as an act as information exchange and surveillance. Understanding if and when distinctions between work and nonwork become important requires an examination of the substantive practices constituting working space. Overall I argue that the extensions and intensifications of 'digital work' both produce and occur through changing definitions of urban public space.

Alessandro Gandini and Alberto Cossu
King's College London and Università degli Studi di Milano

The second wave of coworking: neo-corporate movement vs resilient practice?

The exponential growth of coworking spaces has been described in the existing literature as the epiphenomenon of a new model of work in the urban knowledge economy. However, a multiplicity of coworking spaces do not adhere to the entrepreneurial narrative that characterises knowledge work in the digital scenario. Through the juxtaposition of thick qualitative descriptions of two cases of 'alternative' coworking spaces – an urban one, located in the global context of central London, and a non-urban one in the Southern Italian countryside – the paper aims to question whether a distinction between 'neo-corporate' and resilient coworking spaces can be made, and to what extent this may be seen as the next phase of growth of the coworking movement. We argue that 'resilient' coworking spaces emerge in contrast to 'neo-corporate' coworking franchises as important organizational actors that operate within a heterogeneous cultural ecosystem made of practices that blend

entreprenurial activity and innovative economic ventures with forms of political and social activism. We evidence how activity unfolds around key events and is shaped by the territorial specificities within which the space intervenes – be it urban or non-urban – thus affecting thequality of social relations within the space, the relations with other spaces (both in diachronic and synchronic perspective) and the degree of reflexivity, the ideas and values that characterise the space.

Alexandrina Vanke, Elizaveta Polukhina, Anna Strelnikova
Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Social Sciences

Working-class Identity in Industrial Neighbourhoods in Post-Soviet Russia

In Soviet times, industrial neighbourhoods had significant symbolic and economic meanings. They were considered to contribute to the formation of working-class consciousness and to 'regulate' the daily life of workers. Their residents shared a common feeling of pride because they were working for the leading Soviet plants. These neighbourhoods have experienced dramatic changes connected to deindustrialization and societal changes in Post-Soviet Russia. This paper investigates the link between economic and societal transformation and changes of workers' life and identities in Russian neighbourhoods. The study builds on cultural class analysis (Savage, 2005, 2015) according to which culture is embedded into social relations (Bourdieu, 1996). The industrial neighbourhood is understood as urban space constructed around an enterprise and intended to organize collective being of workers through specific practices (Carmon, Eizenberg, 2015). The paper is based on an ethnographic case-study of two industrial neighbourhoods created in early Soviet period with still functioning enterprises. The first neighbourhood is Uralmash in Yekaterinburg – an enterprise of heavy machine building surrounded by a neighbourhood – of the same name – that houses its workers. Uralmash experienced a reduction of production capacity and job losses after 1991. This case demonstrates blurred working-class identity affected by fragmentation of the plant and, therefore, the reuse of functions of the neighbourhood. In Tushino – a neighbourhood built for serving the *Tushino machine-building plant* in suburban Moscow, it was residential change that influenced working-class identity. Annexed to Moscow in the 1960s, the neighbourhood lost its working-class identity leading to the invisibility of workers in new social environment.

Maria Tsampra

School of Business Administration, University of Patras, Greece

Post-Crisis Patterns of Business and Work in Greece

Self-employment has been a path-dependent and common form of resilient micro-entrepreneurship in the Greek economy. But since 2009 it has also expanded as a crisis-triggered form of work in all European economies in conditions of economic downturn. New

patterns emerge and diverge: from work done with or without employees, at home or external premises, of low or high innovativeness, addressing final or intermediate markets/customers locally or internationally, etc. According to research, diversity depends upon various territorial and industrial factors - i.e. regional production specialisation, entrepreneurial specificities and employment patterns, work-place rents and ownership, structural changes in services, developments in ICTs and digitalisation, qualifications and skills, regulatory framework - that entail new forms of work and business organization.

The outburst of sovereign-debt-crisis in Greece since 2010 and the ensuing prolonged recession also provoked changes in long-established entrepreneurial and employment patterns, with dramatic socioeconomic implications: massive business closures and layoffs, skyrocketed unemployment (particularly for the young), work deterioration, drastic income loss and poverty rise, abandonment of professional/working areas and plunge of the real estate (buildings and properties) market. The shock has exposed the structural weaknesses of the Greek economy and shaken profoundly social convergence, for many to a degree that undermines recovery prospects. Yet, in the last three years, the balance of business closures and entries has recorded positive trends, as has the flow of employee dismissals and hires. On this ground, our research focuses on surviving and emergent self-employed business with or without employees in order to examine post-crisis work patterns. To this purpose, a field-survey was conducted across Greek regions of different structures: metropolitan/urban or provincial; and diverse specialisation: tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, or services. We primarily focus on differences between new self-employment forms and established patterns of micro-entrepreneurship in cities. Our research addressed: business motivation and industrial specialisation, informal/hidden forms of economic activity, new forms of work and their organization, ICT integration and business innovation, new tasks/skills requirements, and the changing role of work-place in self-employment resilience. The results illustrate a complex picture of work location and organization, defined by the nature of business, the regional context and mode of operation.

Paula Rodríguez-Modroño
Pablo de Olavide University

Women go back home. The resurgence of female home-based business in the post-crisis recovery

Following the economic and financial crisis, job creation in European countries is slow and precarious. In Spain, the recovery of employment is being faster for men than for women. For many women who lost their jobs and are finding it to be quite a challenge to find a non-precarious job, starting their own business is the best viable option. Indeed, the only employment status which has reached pre-crisis levels is female entrepreneurs without employees. Many of these new female entrepreneurs have started their businesses from home. This article focuses on this emerging and under-researched group of workers: self-

employed women who have started their businesses or freelance activities from home or coworking spaces and start-up hubs in urban areas. Through in-depth interviews in an urban area of Southern Spain, the empirical study examines the economic and social rationalities of these female entrepreneurs, motives for being self-employed, working hours, job satisfaction, work-life balance, their financial situation and future prospects. Main findings confirm previous studies that home-based businesses (HBBs) are great during recessions because of little to no overhead costs. Though all interviewees started their HBB due to the unavailability of suitable jobs, they report a better work-life balance. Finally, female entrepreneurs that use also the new urban innovative working spaces, such as incubators, start-up spaces or coworking spaces, show a higher level of satisfaction than those only in HBB because of the possibility of interacting with other entrepreneurs and exchanging information and clients with them.

Julie Brown
Southampton Solent University

A location of choice? Creative entrepreneurs, in 'non-creative' places, the case of Southampton

Missing from contributions on 'creative cities' and creative economy development is an explicit exploration of the reconfiguration of creative work/labour and the implications for urban structures. This paper seeks to address this absence by expanding understanding of why and how 'place matters' to creative entrepreneurs (freelancers, micro-SME and SME) and why and how space and locality can (or could) help entrepreneurs become more flexible and adaptable within this highly dynamic sector. Adopting a qualitative, in-depth approach (45 interviews), the paper explores on a micro-level scale, evolving work and entrepreneurial practices in creative industries and the resultant relationships creative entrepreneurs construct with 'space' and 'place'. Taking as its focus the city of Southampton, SE England, the paper explores these issues in a 'regional' city context. Findings indicate the importance of moving beyond simplistic notions of 'quality of place', to consider the wider ecology of the city, including the significance of neighbourhoods as key site of creative production. The role of universities in 'locality mentoring'; and the diversity (of type and location) of workspace provision needs are also highlighted as key findings.

Carol Ekinsmyth
University of Portsmouth

Making Do? Creative enterprise in domestic settings.

This paper, drawing upon interviews and survey responses from small business owners explores experiences of creative enterprise within domestic and neighbourhood spaces. It speaks to the creative industry literature that places emphasis on the importance of collaborative working spaces, in particular the role of face-to-face interaction that enables innovation, 'creative buzz' and stimulation. The rise in co-working spaces in cities and increasingly smaller towns, and the literature these have spurned (Merkel 2015; Capdevila 2013, 2014; Spinuzzi 2012) also speak to a narrative of the importance of spaces of interaction for creative enterprise. But flying in the face of this evidence and wisdom are the many individuals who undertake all or most of their creative practice alone in their homes. Are these homes and the neighbourhoods that surround them therefore less than optimal spaces for creative business? The paper explores this question and asks what it is like to practice creative business in the potentially sub-optimal space of the home, neighbourhood, suburb and small town/city. How is collaborative working achieved? And what is the role of technology when face-to-face collaboration is difficult? It explores the resources necessary to enable enterprise in domestic urban settings.