



Spatial Economics Research Centre

Monday, 4 February 2013

Strange Bedfellows - Neighbourhood Effects

In a [post last week](#) I mentioned Tony Travers' Evening Standard piece on the [implausible alliances emerging on either side of the green belt debate](#).

Seems the same may be true of the arguments around neighbourhood effects. One of [SERC's first policy papers](#) challenged "the belief that mixed community policies can effectively tackle poverty or reduce income inequality, on the basis that residential segregation is essentially a consequence not a cause of income inequality".

Now, Max Nathan directs me to a recently published piece making similar arguments, but from a (rather) different political perspective: "This article advances a critique of the 'neighbourhood effects' genre in urban studies, by arguing that an acceptance of the 'where you live affects your life chance' thesis, however well-intentioned, misses the key structural question of why people live where they do in cities. By examining the structural factors that give rise to differential life chances and the inequalities they produce, and by inverting the neighbourhood effects thesis to: your life chances affect where you live, the problem becomes one of understanding life chances via a theory of capital accumulation and class struggle in cities. Such a theory provides an understanding of the injustices inherent in letting the market (buttressed by the state) be the force that determines the cost of housing and therefore being the major determinant of where people live. The article draws on Marxist urban theory to contend that the residential mobility programs advocated by neighbourhood effects proponents stand on shaky ground, for if it is true that 'neighbourhood effects' exceed what would be predicted by poverty alone, moving the poor to a richer place would only eliminate that incremental difference, without addressing the capitalist institutional arrangements that create poverty."

Full reference for anyone interested:

Slater, T. (2013), Your Life Chances Affect Where You Live: A Critique of the 'Cottage Industry' of Neighbourhood Effects Research. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2013.01215.x. Abstract:

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Monday, February 04, 2013](#)

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2 comments:



Jonathan Haskel said...

The strange bedfellows effect is in fact a rather well known effect on public choice theory, under the heading of "bootleggers and baptists". The Travers piece is yet another great example of what a rich and powerful metaphor it is. I think its interesting for teaching, here is a link if helpful.

<http://haskelecon.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/is-justin-king-bootlegger-or-baptist.html>

4 February 2013 at 16:05

Jim said...

An arguably more interesting take on neighbourhood effects is the recent article by Hedman and Galster in *Urban Studies*, arguing that neighbourhood effects on income are significant when both selection and endogeneity are controlled for. It would be interesting to hear your thoughts on the article if you have the opportunity.

10 February 2013 at 20:50

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