

T13P06 / Innovation Districts as complex, multi-level policy spaces: the governance and implementation of a fuzzy concept

Topic : T13 / SCIENCE, INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Chair : Kieron Flanagan (University of Manchester)

Second Chair : Elvira Uyarra (University of Manchester)

Third Chair : Alina Kadyrova (University of Manchester)

Fourth Chair : Debapriya Chakrabarti (University of Manchester)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Place-based innovation strategies are taking centre stage in urban policy and governance, and 'Innovation Districts' and similar initiatives are an increasingly popular strategic instrument for promoting the economic revitalisation of 'left-behind' places. Such initiatives represent a shift in spatiality and terminology: earlier 'science park' and 'business park' type campus developments tended to be more exurban or suburban, but the Innovation Districts (ID) concept isare typically embedded within the urban, sometimes around university campuses or conceived as means to complement inner-city redevelopment strategies.

These IDs are a new kind of policy space (Uyarra & Flanagan, 2010) where the interests and resources of science and innovation policy, business development and entrepreneurship policy, urban development policy and planning, amongst other domains of public policy, come collide together at the neighbourhood level. However IDs remain a fuzzy concept (Markusen, 1999) and there has been limited research on ID-type initiatives (Kayanan, 2022), and very few studies of the governance questions posed by them.

We can trace the origin of the planned urban ID to the Barcelona@22 initiative (see Morisson, 2020), although university 'science cities' and education precincts have a longer history. The Barcelona project was itself influenced by the long-term development of the Kendall Square area of Boston, Massachusetts, often seen as the exemplar of an urban innovation district anchored by a world class research university (see e.g. Ruder, 2022). The concept has since been popularised as an urban regeneration and innovation policy tool by the Brookings Institution (Katz and Wagner, 2014), and has gone on to influence initiatives in cities in the US, Canada, Netherlands, UK, Germany, Australia and elsewhere.

ID proponents tends to focus on high-tech entrepreneurship (in a mixed-use, 'creative class' type context) as an engine of urban revitalisation and of innovation (Kayanan, 2022), but IDs risk becoming gentrified urban enclaves that heighten social and economic inequalities (Morrison & Bevilacqua, 2019). The ID concept, even where universities are involved, may also neglect the role of students, and student creativity and entrepreneurship, which may be considerable (Breznitz et al, 2022). And at the same time other scholars have argued for a broader concept of 'urban laboratories' for societal change (see e.g. Evans and Karvonen, 2014).

We need a more nuanced understanding of how and for whom IDs are beneficial (Kadyrova et al., 2022), about the spatial and relational dimensions of these initiatives and their policy and governance implications, and about the potential for knowledge exchange and engagements between communities, government, and businesses to enhance inclusivity (Pancholi et al., 2020; Esmailpoorarabi et al., 2020).

This panel aims to unpack the ambitions and implications of Innovation Districts in transforming urban spaces and bringing about addressing broader societal changes, with a particular focus on governance, inclusion and sustainability implications. We are also particularly interested in the roles universities play as powerful actors in the governance of these initiatives, whether as land or property owners in their own right, as anchor institutions, or otherwise as boosters of the ID idea. How can IDs be the drivers of collaborative partnerships and community-led decision making within urban creative and knowledge economies? What would a successful inclusive ID look like, and how would we measure this success? Who benefits, and how?

References

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CALL FOR PAPERS

This onsite panel seeks contributions on the broad theme of Innovation Districts as a policy, planning and development construct, and IDs as spaces where policies and goals from many areas of public policy and multiple levels of governance may collide. We welcome contributions on - but not limited to - the following themes:

- The multi-level, multi-actor governance of IDs
- IDs as spaces where policies collide (policy mix complexity)
- IDs as physical, relational and conceptual spaces and brands
- The roles of universities as actors in ID initiatives
- Anchor institutions and IDs
- The role of students in IDs
- Policy transfer/policy mobility of the ID concept
- Case studies on university-led Innovation Districts/IDs, including the impacts of the pandemic on ID initiatives
- Measurement and evaluation approaches for ID initiatives
- Potential of, and barriers to, ID initiatives to provide social, cultural, and economic benefits for communities
- Good practices in Innovation District ID policy to address challenges of inclusivity, sustainability and/or social responsibility.
- Wider policy implications of ID initiatives
- Relationship of IDs to contemporary concepts such as ‘urban laboratories’ and ‘living labs’ and to older concepts such as science parks.

We invite submissions for onsite or online presentations from all fields and traditions of policy studies, urban planning, innovation studies and beyond. We welcome case studies and findings which reflect on local specificities from different countries as well as broader theoretical and conceptual underpinnings drawing on global implications, and recommendations. We hope to build a cross-disciplinary network within which to continue the discussion beyond this session.

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Session 1 INNOVATION DISTRICTS AS COMPLEX, MULTI-LEVEL POLICY SPACES: THE GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A FUZZY CONCEPT

Thursday, June 29th 10:20 to 12:20 (JOR730)

Discussants

Elvira Uyarra (university of manchester)

Kieron Flanagan (University of Manchester)

Changing vocabularies in university-led spaces of innovation – a systematic review

Debapriya Chakrabarti (University of Manchester)

Alina Kadyrova (University of Manchester)

Elvira Uyarra (university of manchester)

Kieron Flanagan (University of Manchester)

The emergence and evolution of a volumetric innovation districts in Taipei City

Cheng-Yi Lin

(Virtual) Science and Technology Parks as evolving policy spaces: challenges and opportunities when embracing the Innovation District model

Jesus Valdaliso (University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU, Spain)

Manifestations of Urban Innovation District to reality: Case of Amravati, India

Vibhore Bakshi (School of Planning and Architecture)