

Inclusive Growth seminar – 16th October, 2019

Oxford Strategic Partnership and Oxfordshire LEP held their first seminar, in a series of four, to discuss and consider challenges and potential interventions associated with economic and social inequalities. The first seminar focused on research and data. There were 4 presentations from,

- Ed Cox, Director of Public Services and Communications at the RSA
- Mark Fransham, a researcher at the LSE from the International Inequalities Institute, also formerly an economist at Oxford City Council
- Brian Nolan, a Professor of Social Policy in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford
- Will Hutton, a political economist and journalist, now Principal of Hertfordshire College, University of Oxford.

The session was chaired by Baroness Jan Royall, Chair of the Oxford Strategic Partnership and Principal of Somerville College, Oxford.

This note is a summary of the seminar, written by Sarah Haywood, Managing Director of Advanced Oxford.

Gordon Mitchell, CEO of Oxford City Council opened the seminar by setting out the challenges of inclusive growth. He set out a series of questions that need to be answered through the seminar series:

- How to spread the benefits of growth?
- How to connect people to opportunities that are created by growth?
- How do individuals contribute and have a sense of responsibility at the individual level, how do they give something back?

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- How do you create a sense of connection to place and community for businesses and the people they employ?
- How do you create an environment where people within communities welcome growth and accept it as something that helps and benefits them?
- Where does money flow, so that local infrastructure is supported?

He noted that schools across Oxfordshire underperform and that there are fewer apprenticeships than we would expect. Participation in the workforce is high, but there is still a need to ensure broader representation and that people across the county benefit from good quality jobs.

Ed Cox gave the first presentation. He outlined work by the RSA, The Inclusive Growth Commission <https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/public-services-and-communities-folder/inclusive-growth-commission>

Inclusive growth is associated both with people and places, where there is equity in opportunity and outcome. Social infrastructure is key – education and skills, health, employment support/welfare. He called for the need to measure human experience, not just the rate of growth. An interesting perspective from his presentation was procurement as a tool to spread the opportunities created from growth. He gave the example of Preston, UK, where there had been a deliberate policy to let contracts to local companies, with 75% of business flowing to local firms.

Prof. Brian Nolan reflected that the OECD has defined inclusive growth as the fair distribution of growth and opportunities for all. He proposed that looking at what was happening to people in the middle of the income distribution was an effective way to determine whether people were benefitting from growth. Drawing on research, he stated that there was no evidence to support an impact on earnings from globalisation and offshoring, but that technological change does have an impact on earnings. He reflected that efforts to improve income levels and opportunities for the lower paid can serve to promote higher levels of economic growth and that it was important to see both employment and wage growth. He also supported the use of procurement as a tool to drive broader benefits for local employees and businesses.

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Mark Fransham presented data on population change in Oxford City. The population is growing and had grown by 15,000 in the first decade of the century. He also presented data showing the diminishing share of employment that is associated with manufacturing and the significant growth in service industry jobs within the City. He reflected that there are significant differences in life expectancy, educational outcome and opportunity, social deprivation and child poverty between the south and the north of the City. He also noted that 25% of children in Oxford are educated in fee-paying schools. There is huge divergence across the City in housing asset wealth between the most and least affluent. Data that he presented can be found in a recently published paper of a 4-town comparison of social polarisation.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-inequalities/working-papers>

Will Hutton concluded with a call for 'private actors' in the economy to be involved. He called for inclusive firms, where there was a commitment to public benefit and the development of mechanisms to deliver benefits. Will Hutton was co-chair of the Purposeful Company <https://www.biginnovationcentre-purposeful-company.com/> and called for purposeful companies committed to creating long-term value through serving the needs of society. (A purposeful company is defined as one for which profit is not the purpose of the company, profit is one outcome of identifying and pursuing a purpose that benefits society.)

This first session was very much used to frame the debate and to look at some of the data, the opportunities and the challenges. Baroness Royall was clear in stating that the work needed to look at solutions and actions, not just presentations. There was little discussion on actions within this first session. However, strong themes emerged around procurement as a tool to drive change, educational attainment levels and aspiration, workforce participation and a call for players in the economy to think about how they can contribute to place and community.

The next seminar in the series will take place on Monday 28th October, 6.30 – 8.30pm at Kellogg College and will focus on 'place-based strategies'.

Any queries please contact inclusivegrowth@oxford.gov.uk

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