

Inclusive Growth for Cities: Global Lessons for Local Action

Summary proceedings from a conference hosted by the **Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit (IGAU)** held at the **University of Manchester** – 19th-20th Nov 2019



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This first major UK academic conference on inclusive growth brought together scholars both domestic and international from disciplines as diverse as economics, geography, social policy, politics, sociology and urban planning, with policy-makers, practitioners and thought leaders – totalling around 120 delegates. The key objective was understanding **what can be learned for action at the city region scale**, and to find new solutions to social and spatial inequalities in the face of increasing social divisions, rising populism and the growing welfare costs of unequal societies.

Keynote presentations were given by **Torsten Bell**, Chief Executive of the Resolution Foundation, **Professor Chris Benner**, Director of the Everett Program for Technology and Social Change at University of California, Santa Cruz, and **Professor Ruth Lupton**, Head of IGAU, as well as the Greater Manchester (GM) Mayor, **Andy Burnham**. Two back-to-back breakout sessions offered a diverse body of presentations of research from around the world, discussed by delegates across four key themes: *Actors & institutions*; *Place, community & organising*; *Labour market, work & skills*; and *Theory, frameworks & measurement*. The day closed out with a panel discussion where **Paula Black** (Nottingham Civic Exchange), **Lynn Collins** (Liverpool City Region), **Professor Danny McKinnon** (Newcastle University) and **Issy Taylor** (One Manchester) joined earlier speakers.

The second day offered keynote speeches by the Chair of the UK2070 Commission, **Sir Bob Kerslake** and **Professor Teresa Córdova**, Director of the Great Cities Institute at University of Illinois, Chicago. Study visits around GM then gave delegates the opportunity to meet representatives of inclusive growth-related initiatives in Rochdale, Wigan, and Manchester, and learn about the strategic approaches of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Delegates pooled their insights from these visits in workshop sessions on *Building Inclusive Economies*; *Linking People to Opportunities*; *Strategic Approaches*; and on *What's Missing from Inclusive Growth*. An informative day was finished up with lively debate in a final panel discussion with **Linda Christie** (University of Glasgow), **Ed Cox** (RSA), **Mike Hawking** (JRF), **Ben Lucas** (Metrodynamics), and **Liz Richardson** (University of Manchester).

What did we learn about inclusive growth?

- Inclusive growth is interpreted differently by different stakeholders.
- We have historically high employment in recent years, but this is accompanied by pay stagnation at its worst for over 200 years. Child poverty is very high due to increasing housing costs and benefits cuts. The state is redistributing away from poorest families.
- UK is the worst large-scale developed country in terms of spatial inequalities, and gaps will continue to grow even though successes in some cities.
- There has been limited capacity to deal with these challenges until recently. Devolution has been necessary for inclusive growth, and has provided a space for progressive policy.
- We can learn a lot from the initiatives already being rolled out in UK cities as well as from international examples (see also IGAU's recent report on progress and next steps in GM).
- Information and knowledge are collectively produced, and key assets in meeting inclusive growth aims.

What needs to happen to promote inclusive growth in UK cities?

- Conceptual clarity on what inclusive growth is – currently a 'fuzzy term'.
- Inclusive growth needs 'hard-wiring' into policy making – not as an add-on. Long-term 'vision' thinking and commitment required.
- A need for collective, collaborative leadership, with shared budgets and responsibility. Repair/replace 'broken institutions', and bring together 'fragmented knowledge'.
- Need for a 'theory of change' focused on outcomes that are specific and measurable.
- Issues of empowerment: inclusive growth should be done *with* communities, not *to* communities. Important who is involved in making policy, and how it is produced.
- A need to focus on the 'whole individual' and building their capacities, as well as thinking of 'whole places', and unifying public services.
- A framework for further devolution.
- Funding has largely been on 'hard' interventions. Shift towards supporting 'soft' enablers (such as on business support) needed in the next round of funding.
- Focusing on the 'inclusive' aspect is important, but we must not forget growth aspect.

Full conference proceedings will be available soon from our website: <https://www.mui.manchester.ac.uk/igau/>

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