

A large, solid green circle that serves as the background for the main text.

in view
spring 2006

- 04 ippr publishing
- 06 event highlights
- 08 India: old and new
- 10 Centre for Cities:
one year on
- 12 reform in the Middle
East
- 14 ippr trustees and staff
- 16 friends of ippr

Ian Kearns, Deputy Director

The new empowerment agenda

The concepts of power and empowerment are taking centre stage in British politics in 2006. This is evident in the policies and statements of both government and opposition. For Labour, talk of a double devolution from the centre to the local level and from local authorities to neighbourhoods leads the way. This is backed up with a wider presentation of some public service reform initiatives, such as the introduction of direct payments, cast in the language of empowerment. On the Conservative side, the message is less explicit but is implied in the statement that government should 'get off the backs' of local communities.

This 'new empowerment agenda' is the main political parties' response to a growing sense of powerlessness among the general public and to the crisis of participation being faced by our political and governing institutions. It is also a response to a cultural climate in which citizens and consumers demand more control over decisions that affect their everyday lives.

This is all to be welcomed and there is much that is of merit in the emerging debate. If, however, empowerment is to become both a big idea, pulling together disparate policy initiatives in government, and an animating force in opposition policy reviews, then all this talk needs to be given much clearer focus.

First, we need more conceptual clarity and analytical rigour than has been on show to date. Empowerment is an idea, not a policy. Although the idea has most value when it informs policy, we need clarity on what we mean by the term itself lest it becomes devalued as a catch-all justification for every policy under the sun. Furthermore, since empowerment also implies the giving of power to those who do not currently have it, we need a thought-through position on the nature of power and clear views on where we believe it to be over-concentrated. Effective strategies to empower could then be built on these foundations, though it is important to be clear that they would not automatically emerge from them.

Important questions would remain: does empowerment principally involve the removal of economic barriers and the creation of a more equal society, as Roy Hattersley argued in a recent piece in the *New Statesman*? Or is a wider frame of reference, incorporating extra provision of opportunities to participate, improved capacity to participate, and stimulation of a culture of civic engagement, all part of the required mix?

Second, and against the backdrop of our answers to these questions, we need to be clear as to the breadth of the policy terrain to be covered by the new empowerment agenda. Is a focus on formal political power enough or do we need to go much wider to consider economic empowerment, empowerment through citizen use of new media, empowerment in the workplace and the notion of the empowered consumer?

Third, we need to come back to the sharp end of policy and apply our improved understanding of the underlying ideas to a number of specific policy questions. What would genuinely empowering public services look like and how do we guide reform to ensure it achieves that outcome? What would be the characteristics of the empowering state, the distribution of power within it, and the nature of relationships between it and the private and voluntary sectors? Finally, what would an empowering constitutional settlement look like?

ippr has several programmes of research that overlap with this agenda. This year, we have a flagship project on the cross-cutting issues of public service transformation and will soon launch a major project on constitutional reform. Many of our policy recommendations, from work on asset based welfare, to greater devolution of power to Britain's cities, and political reform in the Middle East, are also characterised by an empowerment message.

In 2006, therefore, we will pull together some of the conceptual thinking called for here and combine it with these and many other areas of our programme of research to ensure that the institute is at the forefront of debates on the new empowerment agenda.

To stay close to developments, keep an eye on our website or subscribe to our updates at www.ippr.org/keepintouch.

new books

Population Politics

Mike Dixon and Julia Margo

19 February 2006 ISBN: 1860302955

Mike Dixon and Julia Margo argue that we should act now to safeguard Britain's demographic future or risk rising levels of inequality and poverty and damage to the economy. Using international evidence of which population policies work, they outline a political strategy that would enable the Government to take an effective lead in responding to demographic change.

Going Places

Neighbourhood, ethnicity and social mobility

Edited by Simone Delorenzi

29 March 2006 ISBN: 1860302920

Drawing from the latest international research and following the agenda set at the 2005 Social Mobility and Life Chances Forum, leading authors from Europe and North America address issues including how physical surroundings and ethnic background affect life chances.

City Leadership

Giving city-regions the power to grow

Adam Marshall and Dermot Finch with Chris Urwin

22 February 2006 ISBN: 0955232716

This second report from ippr's Centre for Cities examines the economic case for financial devolution, using original research from Birmingham, Liverpool and Barnsley. It argues that government must devolve substantial spending and revenue-raising powers to our biggest city-regions, starting with Greater Manchester and Birmingham.

From Access to Participation

Cultural policy and civil renewal

Emily Keaney

27 March 2006 ISBN: 1860302815

This book explores patterns of civic and cultural participation in the UK, and presents new evidence that cultural participation does indeed foster social networks and active citizenship. It also argues that arts and heritage bodies need to do more to promote active engagement in culture and the governance of cultural organisations – focusing particularly on excluded groups – and identifies ways this can be done.

*ippr books can be ordered from Central Books,
99 Wallis Road, London E5 7LN,
T: 0845 458 9910*

*For more information, contact Nicholas
Thorner, ippr (T: 0207 470 6123)*

forthcoming books

First Timers, Old Timers Government and housing wealth

Dominic Maxwell

May 2006

At the start of adult life, the benefits of homeownership increasingly depend on parents' wealth or location, with damaging consequences for social and geographical mobility. For older people, much housing wealth is dormant and under-used, even as retired homeowners struggle to cope with low incomes. This book provides policy solutions to both these problems.

A New Rural Agenda

Jane Midgley

This book investigates how rural areas fit into the social justice agenda, exploring key policy issues including housing, social exclusion, rural politics, governance, economic development and public services, and presenting well-developed policy proposals.

research papers

Irregular Migration: an ippr FactFile
31 March 2006

Strengthening Global Civil Society
10 April 2006

Road User Charging: Interim report
14 April 2006

CrimeShare: The unequal impact of crime
17 April 2006

Locality Matters: Making participation count in local politics
21 April 2006

Tackling Unequal Voter Turnout
24 April 2006

Romanian and Bulgarian Accession: an ippr FactFile
25 April 2006

public policy research journal

The spring 2006 edition of *Public Policy Research* will address themes around childhood. Contributors confirmed so far include Lisa Harker, Sami Timini, Sonia Livingstone, David Archard and Jonathan Grant, writing on a range of themes including the UK's child poverty targets, boys and mental health, population and fertility in Europe, and early years child care.

For issues of ppr, individual articles and subscriptions, contact Blackwell Publishing on 01865 778315 or visit www.blackwellpublishing.com. A discounted ppr subscription rate is available to Friends of ippr.

event highlights

available recordings

After the neocons: America at the crossroads, with Professor Francis Fukuyama

24 March 2006

Professor Fukuyama's presentation and the question and answer session that followed are available as MP3 files in the 2006 events pages of the ippr website.

The state of faith: politics, religion and the state

21 March 2006

The keynote speech given by Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP is available as an MP3 file in the 2006 events pages of the ippr website, as is the panel discussion with David Blunkett, Tariq Ramadan and Kenan Malik, chaired by David Aaronovitch. Pippa Norris's powerpoint presentation is also available.

april event highlights

2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: a vision for the future of London

25 April 2006

Mayor of London Ken Livingstone was a pivotal figure in the team that secured the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for London. In this keynote speech he will explain the powerful alignment between the Games and his overall vision for the future of London.

EU enlargement 2004–2007

25 April 2006

This event in partnership with the Romanian and Bulgarian Embassies will look at the impact of the accession of Romania and Bulgaria on the EU and will feature a keynote speech by Tony McNulty MP, Minister of State for Immigration and Citizenship.

economics and business exchange

The exchange continues its programme of events involving business economists, leading academics and key government officials.

March's meeting included two presentations: Katinka Barysch, Chief Economist of the Centre for European Reform talked on Europe's economic and social model(s) and the impact of the new members, and Ray Barrell, Senior Research Fellow of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research outlined his work on the future of economic and monetary union in the EU. For more information go to www.ippr.org.uk/supportingippr and click on economics and business exchange.

The next session, in June, will look at taxation.

ippr friday exchange

Friday lunchtimes continue to be a hive of intellectual debate, thanks to the exciting Friday exchange programme at ippr's London office. Guests who will be sharing their intellect over a sandwich over the next few months include:

7 April

Peter Singer, DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, will discuss the ethics of what we eat.

21 April

Helena Kennedy and Pam Giddy, Chair and Director respectively of the POWER Inquiry, will ask what should be done in view of the inquiry's findings.

5 May

Michael Barber, former head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, will be speaking on 'the challenge of getting things done'.

12 May

Richard Gott, Celia Szusterman and Francisco Panizza, specialists in Latin American politics, will discuss recent developments in the region.

19 May

Ian Shapiro, Professor of Political Science at Yale University, will talk on 'selling justice': the psychology of redistribution.

9 June

Dr Julian Stallabras of the Courtauld Institute of Art will discuss whether contemporary art is radical or reactionary.

16 June

Andrew Dilnot, Principal of St Hughs College, Oxford, will talk on numbers and public policy.

30 June

Alan Powers and Peter Stewart will be asking: whatever happened to progressive architecture?

7 July

Haleh Afshar, Katerina Dalacoura and Houzan Mahmoud will discuss prospects for women in the Middle East.

Friday Exchange events are open to ippr staff and alumni, and Friends of ippr. For more information about the events, contact r.muir@ippr.org. To become a Friend of ippr, contact n.thorner@ippr.org

India: old and new

Nick Pearce, Director of ippr

In March 2006 a delegation from ippr travelled to India, led by Director Nick Pearce and accompanied by Stephen Byers MP, to develop a programme of research as part of ippr's India Year.

India is one of the most modern and ancient nations on earth. Its essence and thrall are captured in that duality of identity. Today it hums with a modernity that draws culture, vitality and wisdom from its long civilisation. Its economy is growing at a rate of eight per cent a year, propelling its massive population up the global league tables of economic might and geopolitical clout. Yet at the same time, more than half of its people still live off a land barely changed over the centuries.

Ethnic and religious pluralism is constitutive of the 'Idea of India', as the title of Sunil Khilnani's fine book registers. There are 140 million Muslims in India – the third largest Muslim population in the world. And it is home to millions of Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and other minorities. There are 23 officially recognised languages. And its majority religion, Hinduism, is polytheistic. Diversity – political, religious, ethnic and geographic – is at the core of India.

As Khilnani notes, 'history has not anaesthetized the original crisis of Partition'. The violence of that rupture lives on in the Indian body politic today. Yet India's very diversity keeps alive the promise of a secular democracy. And it is India's democracy – the largest in the world – that has sustained it through the traumas of religious and political conflict since the Republic was founded. Corruption is rife in Indian politics and public administration. But its democracy has depth, maturity and popular support that lifts the country above the quagmires of authoritarianism and civil war from which so many of its neighbours have struggled to emerge.

India's democracy is a proud source of comparative economic advantage as well as a unifying ideal. There is little doubt that the US has chosen India as its key strategic ally in the region – witness the recent nuclear deal signed between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and George Bush. India's history of non-alignment and its current Congress-led coalition could never tolerate client status. But its democratic credentials, tarnished but once for a two year period since 1947, have endowed it with responsibility, respect and competitive edge.

Britain's ties with India are still shaped, for good and ill, by the experience of colonisation. But the Oxbridge education that once united the political elites of our two countries is no longer enough to sustain a deep relationship. More Indians now study in Australia than in Britain. The US has over four times the number of either. And big hitters from US companies accompanied the Bush caravan to India. British capital and industry now have to play catch-up, the historic lead having slipped away.

There are huge opportunities. India's infrastructure is desperately in need of modernisation. In the next ten years, it will upgrade its ports, transport systems, airports and power grids, and it will need foreign capital and business partnerships. Similarly, despite all the talk of millions of graduates, its basic and higher education systems require urgent expansion and reform. Britain can play its part in this transformation.

India still faces huge challenges. That old Marxist category of ‘uneven and combined development’ comes to life in contemporary India. It is a country vaulting into the front rank of global economies, with the shining cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad at the cutting edge of its IT revolution. Its global conglomerates, like TATA, excel in high-value-added manufacturing and corporate services. But at the same time, hundreds of millions of its people live in abject poverty, eking out an existence in the daily grind of subsistence farming. If India’s poverty line, fixed in 1971, was updated to today’s living standards, some 60 per cent of the population would fall below it. That is the measure of the task the country faces.

The mega-city metropolitan area of Mumbai encapsulates this New India. It throbs with a frenetic urbanism: gateway to India, the Bollywood home to its media and finance industries, Mumbai polishes diamonds, makes phones, sells IT and belches the fumes of its ceaseless energy out over the Arabian Sea. It has over 20 million inhabitants. But nearly half of them live in shanty towns and on the streets. Children flood into Mumbai every day to beg a living.

Climate change also looms as a major threat to India. Its booming economy is power hungry and dangerously dependent on energy imports, and its determination to grow its way out of poverty presages exploitation of all of its massive coal reserves. While technology deals to clean up emissions are important to Indian analysts, renewable energy registers as a blip – not a mainstream post-carbon concern – in Indian policymaking. Yet the effects of climate change on India’s agriculture and coastal regions will be severe and probably catastrophic. At some point very soon, India’s energy supply policies will have to change.

On the eve of independence in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru famously opened his speech to the Indian Constituent Assembly with the words: ‘Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge ... at the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.’

For nearly half a century after Nehru uttered those magical words, India remains a closed, planned economy. For the last fifteen years, it has steadily opened up to the outside world. The fruits are abundantly clear, as are the depth of the challenges ahead.

2006 is India Year at ippr. Join us for debates, lectures and research seminars throughout the year. Or visit: www.ippr.org.uk/latestnews/

Centre for Cities: one year on

Dermot Finch, Director of Centre for Cities

The Centre for Cities has just celebrated its first birthday. So what have we been up to so far, and what's coming up next?

We have recently completed two major research projects. In January we launched *City People: City centre living in the UK*, by Max Nathan and Chris Urwin. This report looks at the size and nature of the city centre living phenomenon in Dundee, Liverpool and Manchester.

There has been considerable growth in the UK's city centre populations in the last 10 years. Manchester's central population grew by 300 per cent between 1991 and 2001. But city centre residents are mostly students and young professionals that plan to move out to suburban areas for the next stage of their lives.

Our key policy recommendation is that policy should now focus on improving the inner ring neighbourhoods that surround city centres. These areas have the potential to be good places for families, but need improved safety, public space and services before more people will consider moving there.

City Leadership: Giving city-regions the power to grow followed in February, authored by Adam Marshall, myself and Chris Urwin. Focusing on case studies in Barnsley, Birmingham and Liverpool it argues that our cities need more financial powers in order to achieve their economic potential.

The report examines the economic case for financial devolution, and concludes that government must devolve spending and revenue-raising powers to our biggest city-regions, starting with Greater Manchester and Greater Birmingham. We're also recommending greater lines of accountability, with directly elected city-regional mayors who are able to take strategic and tough decisions. In smaller urban areas like Barnsley, we're suggesting more modest financial flexibilities: economic development contracts, with more flexibility over regeneration spending.

In addition to these large-scale projects, we've also been publishing a series of discussion papers on our website. For example, Max has looked at 'creative class' approaches to urban performance, Chris has focused on city competitiveness, Liz Troni and Tracy Kornblatt have set out the findings of our City Markets business enterprise surveys, and Adam has given our views on the extended Lyons Inquiry into Local Government.

Our next discussion papers will focus on EU structural funding for urban regeneration, property investment, planning and clusters.

What else is coming up? In June we will launch *City Markets*, our third major report, by Liz and Tracy. This is looking at business location and growth in deprived areas, and the connections between boosting enterprise and reducing deprivation. We are looking at the effectiveness of the Government's area-based enterprise policies, including the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) and business support programmes. And we will highlight the need for an employment focus to enterprise in deprived areas.

We are also currently working on our own City Monitor, which will enable us to compare and contrast the economic performance of different UK cities.

Our new steering group is helping us choose our next round of research projects for 2006-07. The group is chaired by Tom Bloxham of developer Urban Splash with other members include Mersey TV's Phil Redmond and Joanna Averley of CABE.

We are also working with a number of external partners including the British Property Federation on an all-party parliamentary group on property and urban development. And with the Northwest Regional Development Agency we are producing a booklet on how our *City Leadership* recommendations would affect the North West. With Brookings and the LSE we will be writing a US/UK urban policy paper.

Finally, it's clear that cities are now back on the political agenda, with strong interest from John Prescott, David Miliband and Gordon Brown. The ODPM's recent *State of the English Cities* report shows that England's biggest cities have done better over the last decade, but real challenges remain – for example, the uneven growth between and within cities. And we are looking forward to several major policy milestones during 2006: the outcome of the GLA review, the Local Government White Paper and the Lyons Inquiry. Meanwhile, David Cameron's Conservatives have just set up their own Cities Task Force.

The Centre for Cities will keep pushing for a stronger focus on city-regions, and real financial devolution. We will also be examining more closely the reasons behind our cities' uneven growth, and other key issues such as transport and skills. Our cities are critical to our overall economic performance. We think they can do better. That's what we will focus on in the year ahead.

To find out more see www.ippr.org/centreforcities. And to receive our regular email-out, contact Meghan Benton at m.benton@ippr.org

reform in the Middle East

David Mepham and Leni Wild

Later this year ippr plans to establish a new Middle East programme. This will build on our existing Middle East work, including our recent paper *Changing states – A progressive agenda for political reform in the Middle East* (January 2006).

The new programme is particularly timely. There are growing demands for reform coming out of the region itself. Western governments, particularly the US, are also pushing this issue to a greater extent than ever before. Following the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration has argued that the region's lack of liberty is a primary cause of Islamic extremism and that addressing the region's democracy deficit is essential to stem the growth of global terrorism and to enhance the security of the US and its allies.

By far the most controversial aspect of recent US policy towards the Middle East has been the war with Iraq. While there were many motivations for US action, and while the despotic nature of the Iraqi regime was certainly not the decisive one, the administration sought to justify its intervention, at least in part, on the grounds that a democratic Iraq would help to spread democracy across the region as a whole. Nearly three years on, that argument lacks credibility. With the country still desperately unstable, and with horrific acts of violence and terror occurring almost daily, there is little immediate prospect of Iraq triggering democratic change across the region as a whole.

The failings of US policy in Iraq are matched by wider flaws in US policy towards the region. To highlight these is not to engage in cheap anti-Americanism. The US administration is right to be calling for political change in the region. And to make progress on reform, the world needs the US to play a more constructive role in the Middle East.

Progressives – those for whom democracy, human rights, gender equality and social justice are supposed to be defining values – should have much more to say about the issue of political reform in the Middle East. The ippr's proposed Middle East programme aims to set out a distinctively progressive position on some of the key policy challenges facing the region, particularly the role that external actors can play in supporting reform processes. In this task we will work closely with research organisations and non-government organisations from the region.

Our programme will focus on four areas, discussed below.

1. Engaging with political Islamists

European and North American governments are unclear about how to deal with the phenomenon of political Islamism in the Middle East. For a long time, they have given the impression of simply wishing that the problem would go away. That is clearly not going to happen and ignoring political Islamists is no longer a tenable position. But what should be the 'rules of engagement' for western governments' dealings with political Islamists in the Middle East? And how do we deal with the difficult issues – the attitudes of some political Islamists towards gender equality and free expression and censorship?

2. Economic reform

While some countries in the region have made economic progress in recent years, overall the Middle East is increasingly marginalised within the new global economy and it is doing much less well than previously comparable regions like Latin America and South East Asia. While high oil prices encourage higher

levels of economic growth, they also reduce the incentive for Middle Eastern leaders to implement structural reforms and promote economic diversification. What steps can be taken by western governments to encourage economic reform and diversification in the Middle East? And what is the role of international business in encouraging economic development in the region, through inward investment, employment generation and the sharing of skills and knowledge?

3. Media reform

In few other regions of the world is information more tightly controlled than in the Middle East. Just 53 newspapers are published per 1000 people across the Middle East, compared to a global average of 285 per thousand. And most of these papers are heavily censored. Are there ways in which western governments can use their influence to encourage more media freedom and diversity across the Middle East, through initiatives like the BBC World Service's new Arabic Television Channel?

4. The role of parliaments and consultative councils

While the Middle East is enormously diverse, and some of its countries are making important progress, as a region it performs poorly on many international indicators of democracy, governance and human rights, and it suffers from widespread authoritarianism. Traditionally, parliaments have been very weak in the region, with key decisions taken by monarchs and strongman rulers. But this is beginning to change. In a number of countries across the region, there is now a recognition that governments need to be more inclusive and consultative, and that parliaments or 'consultative councils' have an important role to play. How can Middle Eastern parliaments and consultative councils be supported and strengthened from the outside?

These are just some of the issues that the ippr's new Middle East programme will address. It will also involve a seminar series, focused initially on the Israeli/Palestinian situation and on Iran.

For further information on this new research area, please contact Leni Wild at l.wild@ippr.org

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ippr is the UK's leading progressive think tank. Through our well-researched and clearly argued policy analysis, reports and publications, our strong networks in government, academia and the corporate and voluntary sectors and our high media profile, we play a vital role in maintaining the momentum of progressive thought.

ippr was founded by Lord Hollick who developed the idea for an independent progressive think tank in 1986. With Lord Eatwell, Clive Hollick worked for two years setting up the charity. ippr was publicly launched in 1988 with Tessa Blackstone as its first chair and James Cornford as its first director.

Since its inception, ippr has built up a well deserved reputation for generating new and imaginative ideas. Our aim is to continue to be a force for change by delivering far-reaching and realistic policy solutions that we hope will produce a fairer, more inclusive and more environmentally sustainable world.

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