Spatial Economics Research Centre

Friday, 15 May 2009

Catching up (with the Regeneration Framework)

It was SERC's annual conference last week (see what you missed here) and I have been tied up with organising that as well as pushing forward some our long term research. As a result I haven't been keeping up with the policy debate as much as usual lately (nor with this blog).

Taking the opportunity of late Friday afternoon to catch up, I read through "Taking forward the regeneration framework" published earlier this week.

Let's start with a definition: "the Government's view is that regeneration is a set of activities that reverse economic, social and physical decline in areas where market forces will not do this without support from government". Then an ambition: "Regeneration is central to our ambition to create sustainable places where people want to live, work, and raise a family". So far, so good. Government has an important role to play in urban development. It should help correct for market failures and provide public goods, and some regeneration projects may play this role.

But here's the thorny issue: "[investment will be] targeted – not trying to transform everywhere – but investing where it will have most impact by supporting those communities where the most severe poverty and worklessness persists and where there is the opportunity to deliver long-term chang Despite the assertion that: "[The framework is] built on what we know works" the second part of this (long term change) sounds, at least to this reader, like wishful thinking.

To repeat: It is very unclear that regeneration policy (helping poor areas) makes for good social policy (helping poor people). As the recession means t we now have a lot more of the latter it is important to have a serious debate about whether spending £6.5bn on the former is the right policy response.

Posted by Prof Henry G. Overman on Friday, May 15, 2009   G+1 Recommend this on Google

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