

Winter 2019 Newsletter

Welcome to the Winter 2019 Newsletter. Thanks to everyone for comments on the Autumn edition and for sending me relevant news stories and commentary - suggestions for future issues most welcome. Catherine

Themes

Economics: Trade Not mentioning trade as a big theme for 2020 would be like a forecaster omitting to mention an oncoming Tsunami. The opening of trade discussions between the UK and EU - and beyond - brings into focus some big economic questions.

That there are benefits to trade is mostly taken for granted. The question economists and policy makers increasingly ask is about the distribution of those benefits: Who wins? Who loses? If there are gains overall but people in some industries lose out can policy offset that? Looking specifically at the UK/EU talks, how are we going to consider trade-offs between making trade as frictionless as possible on the one hand and having the scope to deviate on rules and regulations on the other? Watch this space.

Economics: Flybe In the Autumn Newsletter I discussed the collapse of Thomas Cook and asked the question about what the appropriate role of government ought to be when a firm is failing. This week Flybe was in the news with a rescue deal. At least from the outside, it appears the question is being answered somewhat differently now!

Cost-benefit analysis: Green Book in the news! Never thought I'd see the day ... but yes, really the Green Book is making mainstream news. According to *The Times* it is going to be ripped up in order to solve the UK's significant regional disparities.¹

Stepping back from the headlines, UK regional disparities are an important issue. Understanding the causes of those disparities and encouraging creative, wide-ranging and potentially radical policy proposals to address them has got to be a good idea. This should be not just about regional spending but regional tax and regulation too. The Green Book provides technical guidance to support the appraisal of costs and benefits of different policy options transparently and consistently. It should certainly be subject to scrutiny and kept under review.² But in this debate, it is worth remembering that at the end of the day the Green Book doesn't make decisions - Ministers do.

¹ Treasury to rip up public spending rules in cash boost for north and Midlands, *The Times* (27th Dec 2019 - paywall). For a non-paywall discussion see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51012590>

² For further reading on this discussion see: Diane Coyle and Marianne Sensier (2018): <https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/imperial-treasury-appraisal-methodology-and-region/>

Analytical Careers: Mentoring I recently hosted an event where leading economists - Alison Cottrell, Janet Henry and Osama Rahman - discussed their careers. They were asked about whether they had had a mentor and their experiences were interesting. First, most had not had a 'formal' mentor as such – so don't feel you are missing out not having one as they all clearly did well. Second, their advice if you are getting a mentor was to get someone who thinks differently to you. They are more likely to challenge your thinking and give you insights into other perspectives. See a write-up and video here: <https://spe.org.uk/speakers/evening-talks/7240/careers-in-economics> (mentoring discussion 49 mins to 57 mins).

Analytical Careers: Communication Worth listening to Rachel Griffith on why economists need to talk to 12-year olds, why economists don't make an impact on twitter and the importance of two-way communication for all social scientists: <https://spe.org.uk/speakers/podcasts/7287/speaker-series-interview-with-professor-rachel-griffith>

Upcoming events and courses

Cost-benefit analysis for non-economists January 24th 2020: Ideal for government analysts (outside economics) and policy and finance professionals who are involved in preparing and reviewing business cases and impact assessments. The course will give participants the skills to critique CBA analysis quickly and effectively, and participate confidently in discussions on CBA. For booking: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cost-benefit-analysis-for-non-economists-tickets-74888913757>

Strategic Career Development for Analysts March / April 2020: This course is designed to support strategic career development for experienced analysts - suitable for professional economists, statisticians, social researchers, scientists and operational researchers with around 10-15 plus years of experience. In 2020 I am running two separate courses:

- **For G6 - E2 level: Friday 13th and 20th March 2020. See:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/strategic-career-development-for-analysts-g6e2-level-march-13th-and-20th-tickets-89490054161>
- **For G7 - E level: Friday 27th March and Friday April 3rd 2020. See:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/strategic-career-development-for-g7e-analysts-march-27th-and-april-3rd-tickets-89491131383>

Contact: info@economicsense.co.uk + 44 (0) 7910 384 755

www.economicsense.co.uk