Mobile Construction Workforces in the Transforming Political Economy of BC’s Resource-Based Regions

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Outline

- Political economy in resource regions
  - Transforming mobile workforce practices
- Study
  - BC Hydro’s Site C project
- Results
  - Stakeholder behaviours affecting labour practice
  - Dis-orienting mobile work environments
  - Externalities of mobile work transferred to workers / home communities
Political Economy in Resource Regions

- Post-war period, labour ‘rooted in place’
- Since 1980s, shift away from building resource towns
- Industry operations
  - Adoption of labour shedding technology
  - Search for larger labour supply
- New labour arrangements
  - Mobile workforces to address construction / fluctuating market conditions
  - Greater use of contractors / sub-contractors
- Evolving mobile workforce practices
Research Study
Results
Impact of Mobility on Labour Practices

- Communication
- Training & Hiring
- Shift Rotation
- Operations
- Evaluation
- Worker Development
- Health & Safety
Dis-orienting Mobile Work Environments

- Underdeveloped structures to support new labour practices
- Delayed communication of travel support policies / reimbursement processes
  - Ex. extra baggage fees (i.e. tools)
- Not permitted additional travel expenses
  - Due to flight delays / repairs to chartered flights
  - Impacts additional travel logistics from staging areas
- HR departments changing mechanisms for paystubs / travel stipends
  - Confusing / difficult to track with smart phones
Externalities of Mobile Work I

Commuting
- Commuting on days off
- Multiple transportation methods
- Unfavourable flight connections

Travel supports
- Varied coverage of travel / accommodations
- Delays obtaining repayment of mileage
  - Mileage doesn’t address all costs incurred
- Increased flight costs during summer
Externalities of Mobile Work II

Work environments

- Transition to night / day shifts
- Compounded fatigue from travel / long rotations
- Work / life balance
Discussion

- Policy and program approaches designed to reflect labour practices that are rooted in place
- Needs to be updated to reflect mobile labour landscapes
  - Training about mobile lifestyles
  - Regulation for commuting activities
  - Industry structures to support mobile labour practices
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