

Winners of the Ashby Prizes

The editors of *Environment and Planning A* would like to announce that the Ashby Prizes for the most innovative papers published in the journal in the year 2004 have been awarded to Dr. Julie Guthman for her paper “Back to the land: the paradox of organic food standards” and to Professor Andrés Rodríguez-Pose and Mr Nicholas Gill for their paper “Is there a global link between regional disparities and devolution?” The editors extend their congratulations to them.



Guthman: I am an Assistant Professor of Community Studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz where I teach primarily courses in global political economy and the politics of food and agriculture. I received my PhD in Geography from the University of California at Berkeley.

At its core, my research is about various efforts and social movements to change the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed. The majority of my research and publications have focused on organic agriculture, both as a form of agrarian change and as a regulatory phenomenon, which was arguably prototypical of neoliberal regulation. My book, *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California* (University of California Press, 2004), examines how organic agriculture articulated with California’s agricultural history and spatial development to make organic farming appear quite differently than it is usually imagined. The work published in *Environment and Planning A* was the more serious theoretical intervention. In it, I apply classical theories of economic and ground rent to organic and other newly created production standards to demonstrate how these standards and their verification undermine the ability for farmers to grow in a less intensive manner.

In my current research, I am looking at other ways in which neoliberalism is inflecting what are seemingly progressive alternative agriculture movements such as farm-to-school programs. This latter case is particularly interesting because school food programs, unlike other experiments in alternative food provision, still carry many of the vestiges of the Keynesian welfare state. I also have forthcoming work on the politics of obesity. In this work I, along with my coauthor Melanie DuPuis, theorize that the contemporary discursive war on obesity as well as the so-called epidemic itself have been produced by neoliberalism, both as a political economic project and as a form of governmentality.

Rodríguez-Pose: I am a Professor of Economic Geography at the London School of Economics and Political Science. My academic background covers geography, sociology, political science, and law, and I hold PhDs both in geography (Madrid Complutense) and social and political sciences (European University Institute, Florence). I also enjoy the company of and often collaborate with economists.

My research has always revolved around the causes behind territorial disparities in economic growth and development. In particular, much of my work has focused on how the complex interaction between social, political,



and institutional factors within a given territory affects economic performance. The geographical implications of the generation, diffusion, and assimilation of innovation, and of the availability and use of skills, especially in peripheral areas, together with those of the mobility of firms—through the analysis of mergers and acquisitions—have also attracted my attention. Finally, I have always been passionate about the study of the design, implementation, and impact of development policies. Although I started my academic life as a Europeanist, the challenges posed by my students at the LSE have broadened my horizons and my research now covers the Americas (Brazil, Mexico, and the USA) and Asia (China and India), as well as my old flame, Europe.

My joint paper with Nicholas Gill, “Is there a global link between regional disparities and devolution?”, is one of the outcomes of a research project generously funded by a Royal Society–Wolfson Research Merit Award and a Philip Leverhulme Prize on the economic impact of the global trend towards devolution. In this project I have tried to delve into the implications for economic growth and the evolution of territorial disparities of the increasing transfer of the powers and resources to devise and implement public policies to subnational tiers of government.

Gill: I am 25 and my academic background covers economics, geography, management, and industrial relations. Having completed my undergraduate degree in 2000 I have subsequently studied two masters courses, at LSE and Bristol, and I am currently writing my doctoral research in Bristol University’s geography department under the kind supervision of Adam Tickell and Wendy Larner.



Sandwiched somewhere between my first masters at LSE and a year living in Poland, I became interested in the issue of decentralisation and, with Andrés Rodríguez-Pose, I have written and published numerous articles on the subject of the international trend towards devolution, as well as more recent work on trade, corruption, and regional inequalities. This prize confirms the usefulness of the year that I spent writing with Andrés as a formative and insightful experience, and the process of writing to a high academic standard has proven invaluable as I embark upon my PhD. Moreover, it is quite clear to me that, alongside my own hard work, one of the reasons why I have gained so much from the experience is Andrés’ boundless patience and faith in my academic ability, which is, as always, much appreciated.

My current doctoral research concerns the predicament of asylum seekers globally and in particular within the United Kingdom. I am concerned to establish methodological rigour in this important and politically fraught subdiscipline that is too often charged with more passion than useful debate. I intend to systematically explore and establish the links between asylum-seeking trends and the political, social, and economic drivers behind them, as well as to reintroduce political conceptions of space to a geographically relevant area that has been relatively neglected by the discipline of geography. I expect to complete my PhD in 2007.