

The Spatial Organization of Cities: Transport

Comments from

Leah Brooks

Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration

George Washington University

September 2018

Big Infrastructure May Generate Big Returns

- Belt and Road Initiative
 - Return concentrated near the road
 - Near borders
 - Near initially large places
- Kampala's Northern Bypass and proposed Bus Rapid Transit

Big Infrastructure May Generate Big Returns

- Belt and Road Initiative
 - Return concentrated near the road
 - Near borders
 - Near initially large places
- Kampala's Northern Bypass and proposed Bus Rapid Transit

→ We care about the geographic distribution of returns

Questions are Relevant in Any State of Development

- Container port investments in US, 1950-1980 (Brooks, Gendron-Carrier, Rua, 2018)
 - Returns concentrate near containerized ports
 - Initially smaller places benefit more
- Railroads in India redistribute wealth (Donaldson, 2018)
- Transportation networks determine city shape and size (Brooks and Lutz, forthcoming; Heblich, Redding and Sturm, 2018)

Linking Matt's Political Frame to Julia's and Mathilde's Investments

- General equilibrium analysis is critical for transportation
- A complete general equilibrium analysis should also include political support

If You Build It, They Will Come

And Change Their Voting and Lobbying Behavior



If You Build It, They Will Come

And Change Their Voting and Lobbying Behavior

- Infrastructure creates and redistributes wealth
- Et voila! A new vested interest



If You Build It, They Will Come

And Change Their Voting and Lobbying Behavior



- Infrastructure creates and redistributes wealth
- Et voila! A new vested interest
- For example
 - Current volume of US-China is predicated on container ports
 - Regions that lose from trade are less supportive of trade in general and less receptive to immigration (Autor, Dorn, Hanson, Majlesi, 2017)

If You Build It, They Will Come

And Change Their Voting and Lobbying Behavior



- Infrastructure creates and redistributes wealth
- Et voila! A new vested interest
- For example
 - Current volume of US-China is predicated on container ports
 - Regions that lose from trade are less supportive of trade in general and less receptive to immigration (Autor, Dorn, Hanson, Majlesi, 2017)
- Or at local airports
 - Airlines who want more flights
 - Residents who lobby for less noise

If You Build It, They Will Come

And Change Their Voting and Lobbying Behavior



- Infrastructure creates and redistributes wealth
- Et voila! A new vested interest
- For example
 - Current volume of US-China is predicated on container ports
 - Regions that lose from trade are less supportive of trade in general and less receptive to immigration (Autor, Dorn, Hanson, Majlesi, 2017)
- Or at local airports
 - Airlines who want more flights
 - Residents who lobby for less noise

Where does this go in a fancy general equilibrium model?

More Clearly

Can Infrastructure Change the “Rules of the Game”?

- Can it create support for trade?
- Can it shift power from one region to another?
- Can it create a constituency for one kind of land use?

More Clearly

Can Infrastructure Change the “Rules of the Game”?

- Can it create support for trade?
- Can it shift power from one region to another?
- Can it create a constituency for one kind of land use?

In the long run, these changes may be larger and more impactful than the immediate economic impact

