

Reviews / Comptes rendus

Economic geography: An institutional approach

by Roger Hayter and Jerry Patchell, Oxford University Press, Don Mills, 2011, 464 pp., \$85.95 (ISBN 9780195433791). Companion website: <http://www.oupcanada.com/higher.education/companion/geography/9780195433791.html>.

Economic geography encompasses a diverse range of real world phenomena and dynamic theory that is constantly shaped by new scholarship and lively debate. Synthesizing this material into a single text is a daunting task but this is what Hayter and Patchell set out to do. The book is designed as an introductory text for first and second year university students and aims to provide a solid foundation for more advanced studies. Unlike other economic geography textbooks, Hayter and Patchell offer a distinctive Canadian perspective and systematic institutional interpretation of economic geography. The introduction sets the tone with an excellent explanation of how an institutional framework understands economic geography by considering the interaction between institutions, markets, technology, and space. The chapters in Part One cover fundamental concepts such as markets in space, globalization, and economies of scale and scope, while Part Two hones in on specific actors including business, labour, government, and NGOs. Part Three engages with key sectors and activities along the value chain with chapters on energy, agriculture, manufacturing, services, transportation, consumption, and cities. The sheer volume of topics is impressive, but I found the sections on the flexibilisation of the labour market; the importance of trust and social relations within markets; and the interplay between advertising, consumption, and space to be particularly effective.

Like any good textbook, this book endeavours to give students a solid foundation while making the material accessible and stimulating enough to keep them interested in the subject. Hayter and Patchell succeed by blending core concepts such as bid rent theory, central place theory, Fordism, and innovation systems with contemporary issues including greenbelts, place branding, and agritourism. Real world examples from Canadian and global contexts are also used to effectively highlight these concepts. In Chapter Two, the authors use General Motors' recent bankruptcy and Toyota's recall crisis to illustrate the diseconomies of scale and scope. Later, Walmart's failure to succeed in Germany is used to underscore the importance of spatial entry barriers. One exhibit that really stood out was where the authors compare and contrast labour movements across time and space.

To further improve the accessibility of the material, the margins include a detailed glossary that should

allow students to quickly enhance and confirm their understanding of key concepts and terms. Each chapter begins with a clear set of topics and objectives to be covered and ends with a useful set of practice questions. Oxford also provides a companion website where Hayter and Patchell have added resources for students and educators, including a wide range of additional exhibits that can be used to foster in-class discussions or develop assignments. Each chapter is also equipped with annotated references that are helpful for the most part. In some chapters there is a good mix of seminal and recent references while in others, such as Chapter Four on business, the references struck me as outdated. In my experience, time-strapped students are more likely to access and read online journal articles than older books that require expeditions to the library, so a higher ratio of recent journal articles would have been nice.

Although impressed with the bulk and diversity of material covered, I found myself wondering why certain themes were underplayed or left out. Throughout the otherwise detailed discussion of labour in Chapter Five, there was little mention of activities outside of firms or the growing prevalence and importance of entrepreneurship. This is unfortunate given the recent attention these activities have received by economic geographers. Similarly, I was surprised that the authors made a clear effort to include cutting-edge developments in Chapter Eight on energy and mineral resources and Chapter Nine on agriculture, but felt less compelled to highlight the current and potential impact of digital technologies on many aspects of economic geography. After all, the ability of technology to reconfigure and decentralize traditional economic structures, institutions, and other market actors is a central theme within the discipline. More problematic, however, is the lack of attention paid to the cultural industries and creativity more broadly. Outside of a few paragraphs, the authors focus on manufacturing and producer services, such as accounting, without acknowledging how prominently cultural industries and creative workers factor into government policy and the economic and social fortunes of contemporary cities. By not engaging with art, fashion, film, video games, or music the authors miss an opportunity to use examples that clearly resonate with young students.

Despite these caveats, Hayter and Patchell have produced a well written, detailed, and accessible introductory text to economic geography that will be popular with students and educators alike. Given its quality, size, and online companion, it is well worth its price tag and I look forward to using it in the classroom soon.

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