

same as it was in Kensington 100 years ago: we will set up creches, encourage mothers to breastfeed, but we will not forego the cheap products which their labour produces. Garrett et al. have done an important job in reminding us that, even as infant mortality rates go down, the questions and concerns raised by Newman 100 years ago remain pertinent: wherever infant mortality rises above the current minimum, it is indicative of preventable deaths. We have come far, we have far to go.

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**CLUSTERS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS AND EXPLORATIONS, Edited by Bjorn Asheim, Philip Cooke and Ron Martin. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.**

This book, edited by three authoritarian scholars on issues of local and regional development, brings together leading scholars involved in discussions regarding the concept of clusters in the context of regional development. The aim of the book, as stated by the editors, is to assist students and readers of economic geography and regional development to become more knowledgeable in the field of clusters. With this purpose in mind the editors' strategy is to provide effective and provocative illustrations of writings on strengths and attraction as well as on weaknesses and limitations regarding the theory of clusters. This is not the first time that some of the authors have done this. A number of them have joined together before by publishing a special issue of the journal "Industrial and Corporate Change" [Volume 10(4), 2001] on this topic. Nonetheless, this book is the cutting edge on various matters concerning clusters, making one step forward by introducing further critical views into the debate and re-evaluating theoretical and empirical issues concerning this notion.

Although the concept of a cluster has yielded a number of different definitions, as expressed by the authors in this book, there is enough in common for me to offer a tolerable definition. A cluster may be defined as a geographical concentration (spatial assemblage) of firms and institutions with similar or closely related complementary capabilities expressed by vertical and horizontal linkages with the objective of achieving fruitful synergy. Clusters can be made of industrial firms and their service providing firms. They can be based on the film industry (such as shown by Allen Scott's chapter in this volume) or the music industry and its suppliers (some attention is given to that in the book), or even tourism activities (not included in this volume). These firms may compete among themselves, but the emphasis within a cluster is on the development of direct and indirect cooperation among firms, specialized suppliers, service producers and associated institutions.

The introductory chapter provides a synoptic reflective review of the cluster concept and the theory that revolves around it, its links with other concepts in economic

geography, its advantages and disadvantages either on the local, regional, or global scales, and the role that it has played in discussions regarding regional development policies. The introductory guidance sets out to put the following chapters in context and facilitates their critical reading. The introduction, as well as other chapters in the book, supports the claim that the theoretical underpinning of the recent flood of cluster studies is often less than totally clear. The concluding section of the introduction also sets the critical view and the problematic issues related to the cluster concept and its role in regional development.

Although the basic idea of the cluster has already been debated in the 1970s, the notion, as well as its related ideas, has grown in strength during the 1990s and to a certain extent has been oversold since the turn of the century. The spread of the notion and its related theory is revealed by the chapter titled "What qualifies as a cluster theory?" offered by Peter Maskell, a veteran scholar in this field, and Leila Kebir. This chapter offers an interesting discussion of three possible major lines of inquiry and policy measures within the cluster field, with a focus on local spillovers, on competitiveness and on the region and its development.

Why the cluster concept has caused 'recurring headaches' for many scholars active in the field is the core of the paper by Malmberg and Power. They argue, as others in the book, that the concept has been elevated to a status of an ideal model with expectations that it enables to explain much of the current dynamics in the capitalist space. They suggest that there is a need to rethink the explanatory role of the concept in knowledge and innovation, and to allow more conceptual flexibility in the debate about its role in analysis and in practice. The semantic ambiguity between clusters and industrial districts is a major theme throughout a number of chapters, and its role in developing and diffusing innovations and knowledge stands at the core of others.

The book deals with a number of central notions that refer to the current (volatile) capitalist economic environment, which appear in a considerable number of papers in the book: agglomeration; location and proximity; competition and competitiveness; entrepreneurship; globalization; innovation; learning and knowledge; social capital; regional development and regional policies among others. But, and I might sound somewhat orthodox by stating that the book, as it becomes common in many recent books concerning economic geography, avoids a discussion on rural economies. The literature on industrial clusters (and others) and their roles in rural economies is growing steadily. Scholars may argue that there is a seeming paradox that the cluster concept presents for rural development, due to the fact that clusters may imply elements of both scale and critical mass. After all, the rural space is not so densely populated by definition, and therefore clusters are likely to be absent either on reasons of scale or critical mass in most economic branches aside from those that are heavily agricultural or natural resource-based. Yet, when it comes to local development a cluster orientated development policy could largely be beneficial for the rural space, which should be not perceived as a mere extension of the urban-based

capital, and its rural entrepreneurs and dwellers.

Trying to put the essence of the book into one sentence, I might follow Henry and Pollard's concluding chapter of the book, by saying that it makes a concrete attempt to put forward a theoretically informed assessment of the cluster notion. The book provides an assessment across a variety of domains in which this notion has been used while showing and criticizing, at the same time, its added value to the literature of spatial agglomeration and regional development. The book tries to put clusters in their place.

Altogether, scholars and students of economic geography, particularly on issues of local and regional development, will appreciate the appearance of this book. It is a well-knit package of papers dealing with an important spatial tool of the current development process in the capitalist economic space. The editors have done a spectacular job in putting together some of the best-known and widely read scholars into one scholarly basket, thus providing those interested in the subject an in-depth view of the definitions, concepts, phenomena, underlying processes and issues central to the current debates on cluster theory. It enables the readers to identify and reflect on the factors, relations and justifications that together constitute the core of the theory of clusters. My students and I are going to enjoy this book.

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**GEOGRAPHIES OF MUSLIM WOMEN, GENDER, RELIGION AND SPACE**, Edited by Ghazi-Walid Falah and Nagel, Caroline. New York, London: The Guilford Press, 2005.

In recent years, and mainly following the 9/11 attack and its political consequences, different themes and categories regarding "Muslims" have re-emerged in the Western academic and public discourse, such as "Muslim women", human rights, and democracy in Arab and Muslim countries. Interestingly, the general hypothesis of this discourse is the link between these issues and terror. It appears that the category of "Muslim Women" has received a great deal of attention, stemming from the belief that improving the status of Muslim women in these countries will decrease "terror". This book, *Geographies of Muslim Women, Gender, Religion and Space*, is an example of the flourishing literature on Muslim societies.

The aim of this edited book is "to bring issues of space and place to the forefront of accounts on Muslim Women's lived experience in a variety of regional contexts" (Nagel, p. 5). It examines the ways in which discourses and practices of religion, economics and politics shape the space of Muslim women.

Obviously, "Muslim women" is an epistemologically problematic category since it does not adequately represent the diversity and heterogeneity of Muslim women