

combinations of chapters (e.g. the globalization of trade and investment, corporate strategies on time and space, or changes in labour markets).

For the remainder of this review I will adopt the perspective of an informed outsider committed neither to economics nor to geography but recognizing the importance of both to his intellectual project. My comments are divided into two sets: commonalities and missing issues. Regarding commonalities, first, both volumes provide interesting histories of economic geography, although the Sheppard and Barnes volume is more explicit on the linkages between the early history of economic geography and the economic and political interests of capital and national states. Second, contributors to both volumes recognize the current status of economic geography as an exciting but 'unsettled discipline' (Peck in Clark et al., 2000, p. 61). Third, contributors tend to agree that institutions matter – this holds not only for the geographers in both volumes but also for most of the economists in the Clark et al. volume. Fourth, from quite different perspectives in and across the two volumes, there is a strong emphasis on the marked discontinuities between the golden years of postwar expansion in advanced capitalist economies and the successive rounds of restructuring from the mid-1970s onwards. This leads to a relative neglect of the continuities in economic and political organization and the significance of conservation–dissolution effects during the current transformation. Fifth, there is broad agreement that the recent rescaling of economic activities has challenged the postwar form of the primacy of the national scale and is associated with the resurgence of the local, urban, and regional as well as the emergence of new forms of supra-national, triadic trade and investment blocs. Nonetheless, sixth, it is also widely recognized that this has not prompted the demise of the national state because of its increased significance in addressing the changing and widening forms of competitiveness, the growing recognition and reflexive reorganization of national innovation systems, the significance of new information infrastructures and the new information and communications technologies, the restructuring and rescaling of labour market regulation, the management of international labour migration, and the rearticulation of spatio-temporal horizons. And, seventh, as one would expect from encyclopaedic

surveys of the state of the art in economic geography, contributions in both works provide far more theoretically sophisticated, more empirically detailed, and more nuanced interpretations of issues such as globalization, post-Fordism, economic governance, and localities.

Given the multi-perspectival nature of these works, it would be certainly wrong to criticize them for having failed to pursue one approach (e.g. Marxism, feminism, institutionalism, or the cultural turn) in more detail. Likewise, given that there are other *Blackwell Companions* and, perhaps, other *Oxford Handbooks*, it may be unfair to identify missing themes. Nonetheless it does seem odd that neither volume contains a chapter focused on world cities, global cities, or urban hierarchies; on the political economy of the state, state crisis, and state restructuring in relation to economic transformation; to theories of economic governance and international regimes; to the periodization of the capitalist economy, including the significance, if any, of the new economy; to the economic geography of state socialism, its crisis, and post-socialist transformation; to the changing forms and struggles around US hegemony; to transnational class formation and the changing relationship between productive and financial capital; or to the body and consumption. These are also important issues for an evolving research agenda in economic geography and taking them seriously might well modify some of the arguments in both volumes.

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Doing what kind of economic geography?

The year 2000 was truly remarkable for economic geography as a sub-discipline in human geography. We not only had the first-ever Global Conference on Economic Geography held in Singapore (see Olds, 2001), but more importantly we also witnessed vibrant introspection and debates about the sub-discipline among economic geographers (see Amin and Thrift, 2000 and response papers in *Antipode*, 33:2, 2001). In this exciting intellectual context, the publication of both collected volumes in 2000 marked another high point in

the development of economic geography as a core sub-discipline in Geography. Interestingly, these events were not independent of each other. One editor of each volume and most contributors to the *Antipode* debate attended the Singapore conference. It appears therefore that economic geography has really entered into a very dynamic phase of its intellectual development and we, as economic geographers, are entering into an excitingly new millennium.

My optimistic introduction above, of course, has a lot to do with my direct involvement in organizing the Singapore conference and my close readings of both volumes. In fact, I can't help but notice that *A Companion to Economic Geography* (henceforth *Companion*) is an excellent collection of mostly easy-to-read and state-of-the-art papers addressing different, but integral, topics within economic geography. It provides a very helpful introduction to students wishing to take up the challenge of becoming an economic geographer. It also offers researchers unfamiliar with the work of economic geographers a great deal of materials for further understanding of what we are indeed doing all these years (since 1889 according to Trevor Barnes). Most chapters are well written and the editors must be commended for shaping most chapters into comparable standards and content (it is nice to know at least ten contributors acknowledged great 'whipping' efforts of the editors!).

The Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography (henceforth *Handbook*), on the other hand, purports to serve as a forum for exchange of ideas and research work between economic geographers and economists (who have a strong interest in space and location). In the words of its editors, *Handbook* has a noble objective: 'Rather than ask for a conventional survey of names and themes within each topic, we asked contributors to make the intellectual case for their own view of the matter, recognizing the existence of a paired contributor on the same topic' (p. 6). My first comment on the collection is that there are some remarkable *differences* between geographers and economists in their understanding of the term 'economic geography'. Virtually all contributing economic geographers refer to 'economic geography' as both a material reality *and* a sub-discipline within human geography that has significant intellectual kinship with economics. In writing

their chapters, economic geographers not only discussed the role of space and place in shaping patterns and processes of economic activities, but also actively engaged the work of economists to demonstrate comparative perspectives. Most economic geographers (e.g. Jamie Peck, Eric Sheppard, Michael Watts, Erica Schoenberger, and Ron Martin) did argue for their distinctive ways to understand particular economic-geographical phenomenon, with a full recognition of parallel works by leading economists (see their references). What makes these chapters highly relevant and interesting to the current state of economic geography is that they offer a *full* evaluation of all possible worlds of explaining the same economic-geographical reality.

The same 'intellectual consciousness' and generosity displayed by economic geographers, however, was hardly reciprocated by their economics colleagues. I dare say few chapters by economists engaged the work of economic geographers. I suppose these economists, though highly prominent in their own fields of study in mainstream economics, were perhaps only interested in 'economic geography' as a material reality. They seemed to believe that they could understand the world of economic geography independently of the work by economic geographers. It's sad to observe that most chapters by economists were concerned exclusively with their own research interests, e.g. Glaeser on urban growth, Shatz and Venables on foreign direct investment, Mellinger et al. on economic development, Porter on clusters, Feldman on innovation, Kain on racial segregation in the US, and Abo on Japanese foreign direct investments. There was indeed little effort to engage alternative works by economic geographers on such important topics as urban and regional development, firms and investments, innovation systems, and the social impact of economic activities. I don't think most contributors from economics have made an attempt to recognize the existence of one or more geographers in the same subject matter. One needs only to glance at the references of most chapters by economists to confirm what I say.

One plausible explanation of this state of ignorance among economists follows closely the succinct observation by Nigel Thrift in his coda: 'The core of the discipline – neo-classical economics – remains tightly policed, bound into place by a tight publishing hierarchy unknown

elsewhere in the social sciences' (p.691). I wonder what makes it so difficult for some of our economics colleagues to read beyond such journals as *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, and *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and to engage work published in leading journals in other disciplines? In this sense, *Handbook* and its companion initiative *Journal of Economic Geography* should be congratulated at least for marking the beginning of a genuine dialogue between economists and geographers. As Barnes and Sheppard noted in *Companion* (p.3), 'at least it is a start' when some economists have begun to notice space and move away from the economic 'wonderland of no dimensions'.

My second concern is with the *geography* of producing both definitive volumes. While they are supposed to represent universal cutting-edge work on economic geography (as a material reality), both volumes are indeed largely about Anglo-American-centric economic geography in terms of both authorship and substantive topics. This no doubt reflects the domination of the Anglo-American world in the English-speaking branch of the social sciences (see Yeung, 2001). The global production of *Handbook* was conceived in Oxford, England, edited in England, the USA, and Canada, typeset in Hong Kong, printed in England, and published by Oxford University Press in New York. But then, virtually all authors in *Handbook* are from North America and Western Europe, except a slightly out-of-place chapter by a Japanese economist. In fact, there seems to be an excessively large share of chapters by Harvard-based economists (Chapters 5, 7, 9, 13, and 26). The substantive topics of most chapters in the *Handbook* are also biased towards the US and western Europe, with the exception of chapters by Mellinger et al. and Watts. While the *Companion* suffers from similar bias, the reviewer – John Agnew – was very fair in his praises for the book as contributing to 'the major debates and issues of the day in *Anglo-American* economic geography' (p. i; my emphasis). In their introduction, the two North American editors also noted the relatively short history of economic

geography as 'a formal university-based discipline in Anglo-America' (p. 2).

To sum up my review of both volumes and the state of economic geography, we really have to ask ourselves some fundamental questions: what kind of economic geography are we doing and talking about? Who are our audiences – economists or geographers or both? While the two volumes have each made an initial effort (albeit an important one) to define the field of economic geography, there continues to be significant differences between geographers and economists in their views on the kind of economic geography they are doing and would like to do in future. In a way, such differences can be useful because they might contribute to increasing self-awareness in each group of actors and subsequently disciplinary shifts under conditions of fruitful cross-fertilization. For the moment, I can see growing self-awareness, particularly among economic geographers contributing to *Handbook*. But I fail to observe fruitful cross-fertilization and reciprocal exchanges. It will be nice if our economics colleagues are able to spare a few days to read the *Companion* and tell us what they feel about it. But then, we all seem to be too held up with our narrow disciplinary preoccupation that we fail to look beyond the tunnel for new lights.

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