



Call for Papers

CURRENTS AND THEORIES IN ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

13 and 14 JUNE 2013
UNIVERSITY OF PARIS 1-PANTHÉON SORBONNE

Conference organised by the Department of Geography at the University of Paris 1 –Panthéon-Sorbonne, the CRIA Unit of the Géographie-Cités Research Centre and the French National Geography Committee (the Industry and Employment Commission), member of the International Geography Union

The 8th Conference of the Industry and Employment Commission of the French National Committee of Geography will take place at the University of Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne.

The conference will be held on the 13 and 14 June 2013, and is organised in four, half-day sessions (a plenary session, workshops and a half-day round table with public actors).

This call for papers closes on **30th September 2012**. The programme of the conference will be finalised by the Scientific Committee before the end of autumn of 2012. Papers should be sent by **1st May 2013**.

Scientific Committee

Marina Bertoncin (*University of Padoue*), François Bost (*University of Paris-Ouest-Nanterre-La Défense*), Laurent Carroué (*University of Paris 8*), Alia Gana (*CNRS-Ladyss*), Vincent Géronimi (*University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines*), Robert Kloosterman (*University of Amsterdam*), Ricardo Méndez (*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid*), Bernadette Mérenne-Schoumaker (*University of Liège*), Kris Olds (*University of Wisconsin-Madison*), Bernard Pecqueur (*University Joseph Fourier, Grenoble 1*), Christian Schulz (*University of Luxembourg*), Michael Storper (*Institut de Sciences Politiques de Paris, London School of Economics, UCLA University*), Jean-Marc Zuliani (*University of Toulouse 2*).

Organisation Committee

Sylvie Daviet (*University of Provence*), Jacques Fache (*University of Nantes*), Isabelle Généau de Lamarière (*University of Paris 1*), Alexandre Grondeau (*University of Provence*), Frédéric Leriche (*University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin en Yvelines*).

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SCIENTIFIC ISSUES

In 2010, Economic Geography sponsored a workshop to address the concerns of the discipline and to stimulate a whole set of theoretical and topical debates about firm networks, environmental mutations, the geography of finance, digital property and broader economic geography¹ We are seeking to look at changes in our discipline from a similar perspective, challenging our conceptual and theoretical references within economic geography, as well as in the inter-disciplinary debates that cut cross economic and social sciences. The “Industry and Employment” Commission of the French National Committee of Geography is thus dedicating its next conference² to currents and theories presently stimulating “economic geography” or “socio-economic geography”, to use the expression coined by Benko and Lipietz, who have called for an approach that is less economic and based more on social sciences.³ This involves questioning the concepts and theories at the heart of the subject and of specialty fields (in particular: theories about globalisation, regionalisation, innovation, etc.). At the same time, the aim is also to examine the evolution of currents cutting across economic geography, which relate to generational issues and time considerations such as the distribution of these currents. This is hard to do, given the great diversity in scientific output and cultures which drive this specialty throughout the world. Even if we are familiar with French-speaking and English-speaking output, this must not prevent full awareness and recognition of the substantial international diversity in the field.

Proliferation, fragmentation and recomposition

Economic geography was for long characterised by a succession of momentarily dominant approaches (spatial analysis in the 1950s to 1970s, the radical current of the 1970s and 1980s, the regulationist approach in the 1980s and 1990s, and then the

cultural and territorial movements beginning in the 1990s). As a result, the discipline is today often presented as being very fragmented in its approaches, by the currents and theoretical communities which drive it, as well as by the methods used which run from highly abstract modelling through to ethnographic participant observation⁴. The field is notably marked by the split between followers of the New Economic Geography, which has been considerably developed and structured since the first works by Paul Krugman, and so-called heterodox currents working within economic geography. The proliferation of approaches found among these heterodox currents – including conventionalists, neo-institutionalists, evolutionists, the relational current, feminist theory, etc. – have led in the eyes of many to intense fragmentation. This in turn challenges our capacity to identify a text corpus that may provide a common basis for the discipline.

How can this proliferation of currents and approaches be viewed from the perspective of spatial economics? The proliferation is probably a sign of vitality, of inventiveness concerning economics stemming from new disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. But is the lack of dialogue to be regretted, as various authors have suggested? Should a break up of currents found within the various specialties of social sciences be feared, which may lead to specific approaches that cannot be drawn into a community? If the answer to these questions is affirmative, what are the solutions? A. Jones and J. Murphy propose identifying a common base around a particular dimension, such as an interest in the practices of economic actors which cuts across currents⁵. The debate which was launched in France in the wake of the “Founding a Science of Territories” conference is another possibility⁶, extending theories about complexity (E. Morin).

1. 2011, “Emerging themes in economic geography: outcomes of the economic geography 2010 workshop”, *Economic Geography*, 87, 2, pp.111-126.

2. It may be recalled that previous scientific events examined the following issues: a conference on “Cultural economies and their territories”, at the University of Toulouse in 2006; a conference on “Firms and their environment: what issues for sustainable development?” at the University of Nanterre in 2008; a conference on “Firms, geopolitics and territories” at the University of Nancy in 2010; a young-researchers’ study day on “Cities and industries: crises, recompositions and new dynamics”, in Dunkirk in 2011.

3. G. Benko et A. Lipietz, 2000, *La Richesse des régions. La nouvelle géographie socio-économique*, PUF.

4. Barnes T., 2009, « Economic geography », in *The International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, edited by R. Kitching and N. Thrift, Volume 3, pp. 315-327, (Oxford: Elsevier); Duranton G., Rodriguez-Pose A., 2005, « Guest Editorial: when economists and geographers collide, or the tale of the lions and the butterflies », *Environment and Planning A*, 37, pp. 1695-1705; Brakman S., Garretsen H., van Marrewijk, 2011, “References across the fence : measuring the dialogue between economists and geographers”, *Journal of Economic Geography*, 11, pp. 371-385.

5. Jones A., Murphy J. T., 2010, “Theorizing practice in economic geography: foundations, challenges, and possibilities”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 35, 3, pp. 366-392.

6. See the “debate paper” drafted by Chloé Didelon, Timothée Giraud, Pierre Beckouche, Claude Grasland, France Guérin, Jean-Yves Moissoner, and Marta Severo. <http://www.gis-cist.fr/index.php/main-sections/colloque-sciences-du-territoire/>

This approach demonstrates that modifications in space and time, the victory of market forces, the widening and deepening of the information “ocean”, etc. which at first sight do not promote territories, in fact all provide an excellent framework of analysis of the transformations which these paradigms reflect. Territories and territorialisation fit in with the work by P. Aydalot and the GREMI on innovative milieus¹, by H. Gumuchian and B. Pecqueur on territorial resources², by the Italian school led by A. Turco on complexity³ and by R. Camagni on territorial capital⁴. It may therefore be asked whether the importance of this territorial dimension is sufficient to stimulate the emergence of an interdisciplinary field or even a new scientific discipline which would then be “the” science of territories.

Today’s active currents in economic geography cut across all social sciences. They have even led to new transversalities (or refound transversalities) with environmental and hard sciences. Their development may be a sign of profound recompositions which do not correspond to the present organisation of disciplines. It is possible that for young researchers, the idea of belonging to a particular discipline is no longer an essential issue and analysis should focus more on those areas of research that need to be explored and those approaches which should be mobilised in the field of spatial economics. This conference is also open to work relating to such new areas.

The diversity of economic geographies

This type of overview of the state of currents and approaches in economic geography is put forward by English-speaking authors who describe the discipline essentially as it exists in the United Kingdom and the United States. Economic geography, which continues to be a fundamental field of human geography in English-speaking countries, is quite marginal in France. There are few researchers who are trained as geographers and who are interested in economics.

This fact may seem to contradict the importance of spatial upheavals which are today linked to the processes that are of an economic nature, and it is worth studying.

Economic geography in France has also been less subject to overall upheavals in approaches, which tend more to coexist rather than oppose each other. French geographers specialise rapidly due to their training and are less familiar with other currents developed in some social sciences. The approaches which economic geographers use in the English-speaking countries are therefore less explored in France by colleagues belonging to other disciplines. Most of the neo-institutionalist approaches developed in economic geography in English-speaking countries have tended rather to flourish in territorial economics in France, where they are a source of a certain creativity (the Proximity School). Feminist approaches, research into the differentiation of certain spaces in economic activity as a function of gender (the conception of highly masculine spaces in financial or technological centres, the constitution of geographic networks by women from specific ethnic groups as a means of economic involvement, etc.) all stem more from sociologists and anthropologists in France. In contrast, French geographers probably develop specific approaches whose originality must be stressed, stemming from their earlier geographical specialisation, a likely greater diversity in the geographic horizons which are taken into account, as well as the contact which many of them have with the humanities. More generally, the conference may provide an opportunity to examine the consequences of different types of training in economic geography. With what disciplines or sub-fields within a discipline can links be forged? How do these links favour the development of original approaches and currents? The elaboration of currents and approaches in economic geography by English-speaking authors are not of much help in characterising the situation of economic geography in France. But they are also silent about what may take place in any other non-English-speaking area. It would be very useful to have an insight into the state of economic geography in other regions of the world, into other approaches, theoretical sources, disciplinary combinations and fields of study.

1. P. Aydalot, (1986), *Milieus innovateurs en Europe*, Paris, GREMI, 361p.

2. H. Gumuchian B. Pecqueur, 2007, *La ressource territoriale*, Economica.

3. A. Turco, 1988, *Verso una teoria geografica della complessità*, Milano: Unicopoli.

4. Camagni R., 2008, “Regional Competitiveness: Towards a Concept of Territorial Capital”, in Camagni R., Capello R., Chizzolini B., Fratesi U., *Modelling Regional Scenarios for the Enlarged Europe*, Springer, Berlin, pp. 33-48.

In a recent publication, R.C. Kloosterman showed that different institutional contexts in the Netherlands and the United States made it possible to re-consider the ways in which urban economies are re-emerging along the lines of cognitive-cultural activities, as put forward by American authors¹. Given the large variety of forms taken by capitalist economies today, some researchers working on the spatial dimensions of economies may revisit theories which had been presented as universal and hence develop new approaches.

Theories and outside the academic field

In France, and perhaps other countries, economic geography remains very much alive in the post-high school, preparatory classes for Grandes Ecoles, as well as in these Ecoles themselves, especially the Business Schools. The present situation is similar to that found at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, in which the economic dimension of geography, which is neglected at university, flourishes in so-called applied training. Little work has been done on this economic geography. Yet, in practice it is quite far removed from the image which is all-too-readily given to it, namely of being purely descriptive and touching little on existing theoretical debates. This type of economic geography actually generates a lot of publication, in which academics participate. The volumes of hours taught are also higher than at university, while students are often brilliant and set to hold influential jobs. However, it has received little attention.

1. Kloosterman R. C., 2010, "This is not America: embedding the cognitive-cultural urban economy", *Geografiska Annaler: series B, Human Geography*, 92, 2, pp. 131-143

This raises questions about the approaches used by authors of such applied training, the theories and currents they draw on or leave aside, and the possible ideologies they may promote.

Public and private actors interested in works on economic territoriality have adopted several approaches (the notion of clusters developed by Paul Krugman is an obvious example, as is the idea of "in-place economies" formulated by Laurent Davezies). What are the factors and processes which explain the success or failure of the spread of certain ideas among such actors? Similarly, are such concepts and theories adopted and transformed by these same actors, especially those belonging to organisations and institutions which may act upon an economic territory?

This conference is thus open to all forms of study undertaken by geographers, sociologists, economists, epistemologists, practitioners, etc. which relates to economic territoriality and which looks at the currents and approaches used in economic geography (the evolution and analysis of approaches on a certain subject; comparisons; imports, exports and transformations of concepts from one discipline to another, etc.). The participation of young researchers, PhD students and post-docs is much appreciated as more recent generations are often more familiar with interdisciplinary research.

Proposals for contributions (in French or English) should be sent to Isabelle Généau (Isabelle.geneau@univ-paris1.fr) before 30th September 2012. They should include a title, and a summary of 3000 characters, along with 5 keywords as well as the full contact details of the author.

Proposals should also indicate, as far as is possible, which of the following axes they come under:

- 1st axis: Emerging and revisited theories and concepts at the heart of economic geography.
- 2nd axis: The evolution of currents cutting across economic geography.
- 3rd axis: The impact of various ways of training in economic geography.
- 4th axis: The dissemination of concepts and theories of economic geography among actors.
publics