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## **Book Review**

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**Inventive City-Regions: Path Dependence and Creative Knowledge Strategies**

**by: Marco Bontje, Sako Musterd and Peter Pelzer**

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**by Urban and Regional Planning and Development Series,  
Ashgate, 140-142 St John Street, London EC1V 4UB, UK, xi, 266pp, \$105  
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*Knowledge-based development of city-regions*

Throughout the history, knowledge has always been a vital resource for creating and sustaining a strong economy, society and culture. Cities originally emerged as places of exchange of goods; nevertheless, production of these goods and the establishment of these cities relied heavily on knowledge. Today, many of our modern cities are specialised havens for the production and exchange of knowledge and networks, as well as material goods. Furthermore, during the last few decades, cities have become critical platforms for shaping and leveraging human capital into collective intellectual capital, which is one of the main triggers of knowledge production and innovation. During the last couple of decades of the 20th century, especially after the radical shift from Fordist to post-Fordist economy and society, the new economy – knowledge economy – has become central for creating employment and wealth and sustaining economic growth mainly through knowledge-related activities, including creativity as a tacit knowledge form.

The knowledge economy – that has been about 400 years in the making since the age of enlightenment – creates, distributes and uses knowledge to generate value and gives rise to a network society, where the opportunity and capability to access and join knowledge, and learning intensive relations determine the socio-economic position of individuals and firms. The main novel characteristic of the knowledge economy is the need to manage an intangible asset that, in contrast to material resources, does not depreciate through use but rather becomes more valuable the more it is used. During this period of the era of knowledge economy the academic, political and societal discourse about urban and regional development changed radically, and an urban development shift is witnessed around the turn of the 21st century. This shift has also brought the emergence of a new urban development paradigm into life in the new millennium.

The rapidly emerging development paradigm suggests that the economic future of city-regions increasingly depends on the capacity to attract, generate, retain and foster creativity, knowledge and innovation. This new paradigm, namely ‘knowledge-based

urban development' is the transformation of knowledge resources into local development, which could provide a basis for sustainable development of our cities and regions. Specifically, knowledge-based urban development is the new development paradigm of the knowledge era that aims to bring economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, a just socio-spatial order and good governance to cities. Along with this, knowledge-based urban development produces a city purposefully designed to encourage the production and circulation of knowledge in an environmentally conserved, economically secure, socially just and well-governed human setting, a knowledge city – or as interchangeably used in this book 'an inventive city'.

### *Inventive city-regions*

This book on 'inventive city-regions' aims to scrutinise the knowledge-based urban development achievements of Western European city-regions with a new perspective of considering the connections between their past and present – i.e., mainly based on their trends, paths, strategies and strengths. With this aim in mind, the book focuses on and attempts to address the following four key questions:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of European city-regions as locations for creative and knowledge-intensive industries?
- What are the economic development strategies of European city-regions and what is the role of creativity, innovation and knowledge in them?
- How do the economic development strategies relate to the strengths and weaknesses of European city-regions as locations for creative and knowledge-intensive industries?
- How does the historic development path of a city-region influence these strengths and weaknesses and what are the implications for these economic development strategies?

After providing the theoretical framework, research design and methodology, and presenting the approach for framing the case studies, the chapters of the book search for the answers of the above mentioned research questions in the selected Western European city-regions of:

- 1 Amsterdam
- 2 Munich
- 3 Helsinki
- 4 Barcelona
- 5 Manchester
- 6 Birmingham
- 7 Leipzig.

These case study chapters of the book, particularly, provide useful insights and shed light on the development processes and success factors of these inventive city-regions. The

final chapter of the book summarises and discusses the findings of this cross-country city-region comparison.

*Lessons from a cross-country city-region comparative study*

The research reported in this book facilitates comparisons for abovementioned seven European city-regions. This comparison is undertaken by first, introducing each city-region's socio-economic situation in the early 21st century. This is followed by an account of the city-regional historic development path analyses of the case study city-regions. Then authors' impressions on the city-regions are expressed based on expert interviews, policy documents and other policy-relevant publications. Lastly, the assessment of these city-regions' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are presented and discussed in order to provide useful learnings.

Specific themes that are used for the cross city-region comparison include:

- 1 recent development trends
- 2 what makes the city-regions stand out in international competition
- 3 recent relevant economic, spatial, social and cultural policies and strategies
- 4 regional component of these policies and strategies
- 5 the role of creativity, knowledge and innovation in these policies and strategies.

The results of the research are discussed at the conclusion section of the book. The findings are presented under the following subheadings by providing the reflections of the research from each case study city-region:

- key elements of city-regions' pathways
- key strengths
- key strategies for creative knowledge city-regions
- pathways, strengths and strategies
- overall conclusions and reflections.

The book, reporting and revealing a European Union Sixth Framework Project findings, is an important reading and an invaluable contribution to the rapidly expanding knowledge-based urban development and planning literature. I particularly believe that the learnings from these seven successful and prosperous knowledge or inventive city-regions of Europe are useful for policy-making, planning, development and academic circles across the globe. Therefore, I highly recommend the book for the readers of the *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development*.