



## BOOK REVIEW

Peter Batey, David Plane (Eds.)

*Great Minds in Regional Science* (Vol. 2)

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The subseries *Great Minds in Regional Science*, along with the subseries *The Voice of Regional Science*, comprise the book series titled *Footprints in Regional Science*, published under The Regional Science Academy. The authors within the *Great Minds in Regional Science* series, many of whom are considered contemporary thought leaders, present modern perspectives on the collected works of great thinkers in regional science. In volume 1, the editors and authors first focused on individuals that were involved in the formal establishment of regional science and the Regional Science Association and then provided vignettes of individuals whose academic contributions are considered antecedents to regional science and those that laid the foundations of regional science (Batey and Plane, 2020). A thorough review of this first volume by Alina Schoenberg was published in a previous edition of the *Romanian Journal of Regional Science* (Schoenberg, 2023). The second volume of *Great Minds in Regional Science* continues the focus on great thinkers that established theories, statistical methods, or modelling tools that are considered antecedents to or foundational to regional science as it exists today (Batey and Plane, 2023).

The first section, “Antecedents of Regional Science”, is comprised of insightful summaries on the complete works of several individuals that predated the formalization of regional science but nevertheless foreshadowed or inspired many of the fundamental underpinnings of the field. The

authors in this section successfully justify and/or defend the inclusion of Adam Smith, Johann Heinrich Von Thünen, Alfred Weber, and Corrado Gini as antecedents of regional science through a personal examination of their complete works as well as an analysis of biographical works or critiques written by others. First, Roberto Camagni justifies the inclusion of Adam Smith for his conceptualization of land use and land rents by deftly weaving together the content of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Smith, 1776/1976), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith, 1759-90/2009), and other writings. Next, Tomás Ponce Dentinho combines his knowledge of the writings of Von Thünen and others who have subsequently written about Von Thünen's *Isolated State* to explore the contributions that he made to the theories of land rents, the natural wage, and urban agglomeration economies. Richard Church explores Alfred Weber's work on industrial location and successfully defends his inclusion as an antecedent of regional science from critics who seem to have downplayed the complexities and insights present in his seminal works. Finally, Peter Rogerson expounds upon the theoretical contributions of Corrado Gini including the measure of inequality for which he is most well-known and additional measures of variability that have motivated advances in geography and regional science. Each of these authors have provided splendid examples of why students of regional science (or any discipline for that matter) should go beyond the simplified textbook summaries of seminal texts that they encounter in the classroom and find the time to explore these texts (as well as the contexts within which they were written) for themselves.

The second section, "Laying the Foundations of Regional Science", is comprised of seven chapters that each summarize the work of individuals that are contemporaneous to the founding of the Regional Science Association (1954). In many cases, these summaries have been authored by the subject's colleague or someone who has closely followed the subject's career out of personal or professional interest. First, Peter Nijkamp provides a thorough review of Jan Tinbergen's life and seminal works stemming from his interests in human and social inequity and his unyielding desire for creating a better world. Next, Abdul Shaban examines the unorthodox methodological approaches used by Albert Hirschman to draw connections between economic and social life, particularly through the perspective of collective action. Daniel Griffith then investigates the significant scholarly contributions of Leslie Curry to the fields of quantitative geography (before it was popularized) and his quest to expand and diversify the attendees of the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers. Amitrajeet Batabyal provides a systematic summary of Crawford Holling's work on the concept of resilience and its significance to social sciences, and in turn, regional science. Geoffrey Hewings highlights the life and pioneering work of Karen Polenske, the first female highlighted in the *Great Minds in Regional Science* subseries, whose significant academic contributions in the topic areas of regional and interregional modelling as well as extensions of such modelling approaches to

include environmental linkages were rivalled by her ceaseless commitment to mentorship of graduate students and young scholars both in the United States and China. Denise Pumain then provides a summary of the work of Wolfgang Weidlich, who is credited with helping to introduce systems dynamics to the field of regional science. Finally, Laurie Schintler examines the life and works of Alan Wilson, a mathematician/physicist turned renaissance man of regional science who used his background and training in physics to inform modelling approaches for studying and modelling people in cities.

What I found most interesting in this second section of the book is the common thread of a commitment to humanism throughout these chapters. In the same chapters focused on espousing the academic prowess and professional significance of these great thinkers, the authors use or quote phrases such as “...made an uninterrupted effort to create a better world...” (p. 138), “...wanted observation-driven social science, which can offer clues about how to get out of problems and traps...” (p. 161), “...visionary of change in nature and society...” (p. 208), “...devotion to mentoring...” (p. 228), “...a smiling, caring person...deeply imbued with humanism and culture...” (p. 232), and “...emphasizing the importance of convening different people and perspectives...” (p. 253). This spirit of insatiable curiosity and the sense of deep and abiding commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, collegiality, and intentional mentoring of the next generation that are themes in these chapters are exactly what I noticed when I first began attending regional science conferences in the late 2000s and are certainly what keeps me committed to regional science as a home discipline today.

As Cooper, Donaghy, and Hewings so aptly alluded to in the preface of their book *Globalization and Regional Economic Modelling*, the work of contemporary philosopher John Searle reminds us that “while economics is a systematic and formalized science, it is not independent of context or free of history” (Cooper, Donaghy, & Hewings, 2007). I was first introduced to the study of “history of thought” as an undergraduate student exploring the history of economic thought with Dr. E. Anthon Eff at Middle Tennessee State University. This course, and the importance of understanding the influence of personal, cultural, and historical contexts within which ideological, theoretical, and applied contributions were made have been greatly influential in my own life and career; indeed, I still find myself suggesting Henry Spiegel’s *Growth of Economic Thought* as a bit of light reading for my own doctoral students (Spiegel, 1991). The *Great Minds in Regional Science* subseries is recording the history of regional science, examining prior contributions to the field within the personal, cultural, and historical contexts they occurred in, and providing newcomers and seasoned regional scientists alike with a fresh perspective on our shared intellectual heritage.

Additional volumes of the *Great Minds in Regional Science* subseries are intended to be published annually. The editors have acknowledged the limited gender and geographical diversity of great thinkers highlighted in these first two volumes, which likely reflects the known gender imbalance as well as geographic concentration of thought and training in regional science in the centuries and decades representing antecedents to and foundations of regional science. Future volumes will certainly benefit from the planned, intentional inclusion of additional women who have made significant theoretical, applied, and service-oriented contributions to regional science as well as great thinkers spanning additional disciplines and regional science communities. I look forward to future volumes and to learning more about the lives, significant contributions, and contexts within which other notable regional scientists have worked and have had their work applied and interpreted over time.

## References

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