

Book Reviews

Sustainable Innovation and Regional Development. Rethinking Innovative Milieus,

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Over the last three decades contributions in regional economics, evolutionary economic geography and innovation studies have advanced a variety of systemic multi-scalar frameworks addressing the most fundamental processes of value creation in local systems of production and innovation. The ideas of national, sectoral and regional innovation systems, industrial districts and innovative milieus and, more recently, industrial ecosystems, are among the most prominent contributions (Weber and Truffer, 2017). Building on the innovative milieu research programme, this book proposes an evolutionary socio-economic approach for the study of regional development and its relationship with sustainable innovation. It does so in two main ways. First, and foremost, it offers a rich set of detailed case studies spanning across mature industrial economies in Western Europe and Japan. Each country case is approached from a multi-disciplinary perspective to emphasise various dimensions, processes and dynamics of sustainable innovation, including the role played by symbolic, institutional, relational and cultural factors. Second, the volume sketches some important theoretical reflections aimed at interpreting the comparative empirical evidence (Introductory chapter) and re-launching the research programme on innovative milieus (Concluding chapter). The introductory characterisation of four different dimensions of sustainable innovation - i.e. product-oriented, institution-oriented, flagship-oriented and territory-oriented - presents some elements of originality, in particular its emphasis on three aspects: (i) the heterogeneous set of agents involved in sustainable innovation processes, including demand-side, public and civil society agents (e.g. chapter 3 on the role of KIBS in Germany); (ii) the consideration of different coordination mechanisms (markets, public institutions and business models) whereby innovations are developed and even "mediatized" (e.g. chapter 9 on the Basque region in Spain); (iii) the problematisation of territo-

rial anchoring (and re-anchoring) as well as path-dependent industrial renewal in relation to sustainable innovations (e.g. chapters 10 and 11 on the Atlantic Nautical Network and the Suwa region in Japan respectively). The concluding section by Camagni stresses the distinctive ways in which these critical aspects are addressed within an innovative milieu approach, as well as how today's environmental and sustainability challenges call for a direct engagement with changes in the society - its values, "relationality" and identities. While the book offers interesting cases and points to a number of potentially innovative issues, the lack of a fully-fledged theoretical framework contrasting the empirical cases and linking the evidence to the broader literature remains a major weakness (the concluding chapter is an exception to the extent that it juxtaposes the industrial district and innovative milieu frameworks). For example, a more in-depth theoretical discussion of the multi-local "modes" and "processes" of anchorage triggered by sustainable innovations in different contexts is a promising venue for further research. Indeed, the case studies collection is a valuable starting point for such investigation. The same concept of sustainability is largely declined in terms of environmental sustainability and, when broader social and economic sustainability dimensions are considered, critical trade-offs are not fully captured (Andreoni and Chang, 2017). Indeed the inclusion of one (or more) non-developed countries case(s) would have potentially enriched the comparative analysis and induced the authors to engage with more critical views around the political economy of sustainable innovation, as well as the articulation of "environmental" and "social" values. Moreover, while the book shall be praised for its original emphasis on society, symbolic functions and cultural aspects, the polity dimension and political economy factors affecting sustainable innovations in regional development are largely unexplored. Despite some of these shortcomings, the book is a valuable collection of in-depth case studies and a rich source of original ideas around socio-cultural factors driving sustainable innovations which are often underestimated in parallel research programmes.

References

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- Weber, K. and Truffer, B. 2017. 'Moving innovation systems research to the next level: towards an integrative agenda', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 33, 1, 101-121.