
The Brightest of Dawns: 50 Years of Regional Science

Golden Anniversary Issue of “Papers in Regional Science”

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all households lumped together) is maximised. The spatial outcome is shown to be equivalent to maximising social welfare (i.e., combining consumers' plus site-owners' rents) under the model's assumptions. Spillover effects and misallocations are briefly discussed. The chapter closes with the consideration of a continuous space-economy focussed on some central region. Unidirectional commodity flow lines are identified that necessarily intersect isoprize lines at right angles. Commodities always flow in that direction where the change in price just equals the change in transportation cost. Although extensions and parallels of this work exist (e.g., Tobler), the material still seems ripe for fuller application.

Beckmann concludes his "essay" by considering how economic growth induces locational changes. Historically, transportation costs have been reduced relatively more than the prices of goods and services, so the reach of low-cost suppliers has been enhanced, relatively speaking, compared to the reach of high-cost suppliers. Interregional price differences accordingly have been reduced, in some cases dramatically so. Population and income increases can lead to establishment duplication before the emergence of these same types of establishments farther down the central place hierarchy (recall Berry and Garrison's work on central place thresholds). And, as production processes in the post-industrial economy become more roundabout, industries initially tied to resource deposits increasingly shift away to intermediate and final markets as the interdependent forces of Christaller and Lösch more and more dominate the simpler forces of von Thünen and Weber.

This volume remains a remarkable achievement. A careful reread shows that it is simply bursting at the seams with interesting and relevant ideas, some of which still have not been adequately explored. Throughout its hundred-plus pages, Beckmann actually anticipates many of the important location theory issues of the next few decades. And I, for one, can fully attest that it was a great success in bringing the main tenets of location theory to an entire generation of graduate students (from different disciplines) in the 1970s. Surely those are the two highest compliments that an academic book can receive.

3.4.2 Peter V. Schaeffer on Richardson's *Regional Economics* (1969)

During the 1960s regional science emerged as a recognised sub-discipline, as signalled by the publication of a comprehensive review by Meyer (1963) in the *American Economic Review*. Any lingering doubts about its acceptance in the profession were removed by the first-time inclusion of abstracts from the *Journal of Regional Science* in the *Journal of Economic Abstracts* in 1968. This was followed by the inclusion of a new sub-category "900: Welfare programs; Consumer Economics; Urban and Regional Economics" in the classification system for articles when it was published for the first time as the *Journal of Economic Literature* in 1969.

Similar recognition was forthcoming in other disciplines, most notably geography, and from the National Science Foundation in the form of the programme area in Geography and Regional Science. While such recognition is important, it does not ensure survival. A sub-discipline that does not become part of the profession's – or, in the case of regional science, the professions' – curriculum, will not attract students. And without students the field cannot survive. Textbooks address this

challenge through two critical contributions. Firstly, they determine the “region” within the larger discipline(s) to be occupied by the sub-discipline since issues and topics they leave out are unlikely to be widely taught. Secondly, textbooks pull together and synthesise materials and results from a wide variety of publications, particularly in an interdisciplinary field such as regional science. This facilitates teaching, making it more likely that courses will be included in the larger disciplines’ curricula. Richardson was motivated by such considerations when he wrote his 1969 book: “When I began my Regional Economics special subject course in Aberdeen in 1966 I found it very difficult to direct my students to a single volume introduction to the subject, particularly on its theoretical aspects” (p. xi).

Teaching regional science is particularly important at the undergraduate level, as students who enrol in graduate studies seem motivated by and pursue interests they discovered as undergraduates. If we do not expose students to regional science during their baccalaureate studies, we may not be able to attract them into our future teacher and researcher graduate programmes.

Although his was not the first regional economics text available, Richardson’s (1969) book was widely adopted, as demonstrated by a second printing in 1972. Organised into three parts, Richardson (1969) covers location theory and spatial pricing (Part A), the urban economy (Part B), and regional economics and policy (Part C). With the exception of Chapter 1, which includes a useful discussion of how regional economics differs from the rest of economics, the basic outline is still used, for example in McCann (2001). The coverage in Richardson is also reflected in the updated and expanded category “R: Urban, Rural, and Regional Economics” in the classification system currently used by the *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL). All of the 31 subheadings in JEL category “R” are mentioned in Richardson’s text, an indication that his delineation of the disciplinary “region” comprising regional science was successful.

What sets Richardson’s (1969) book apart from others published around the same time is its focus on theories and models and their critical evaluation. While there are many references to empirical studies, the book contains no “real world” examples drawn from the empirical literature, in contrast to, for example, Hoover’s (1971) textbook. Richardson’s emphasis is particularly useful for training more advanced, usually graduate, students who have had time to develop a greater capacity and appreciation for abstraction. Such students also benefit from Richardson’s critical perspective because “It does require maturity to realise that models are to be used but not to be believed” (Theil 1971, p. vi).

There are two topics discussed in Richardson (1969) that have received relatively scant attention since the publication of his *Regional Economics*. The first is regional business cycles. Legislation that made nation wide banking possible may have changed how the effects of monetary policy responses to business cycles filter down to the regions. But despite important changes in the country’s financial institutions, few papers have studied their regional impacts. The second relatively neglected topic is the consistency of regional policy goals – a topic to which Richardson devotes almost 15 pages – to explore the relationships between national and regional interests, aggregate efficiency and inter-regional equity, and the compatibility of inter-regional goals. If regional scientists want to be looked to