

**Space(s) of innovation – regional knowledge economies** – *Martina Fromhold-Eisebith (Geography), University of Aachen (Germany)*

Innovativeness, regarded as a major manifestation of creativity in the realm of (regional) economic development and revitalization, is considered an essential factor of continued competitiveness especially of industrially ‘mature’ countries and their sub national regions, challenged by a globalized economy. Yet, newly industrialized countries increasingly strive for becoming innovative and creating new products, processes, or firms as well. Accordingly, much research effort has been invested into investigating the conditions under which innovation-oriented creativity emerges and produces economically applicable and useful outcomes. Which types of knowledge, actors, and kinds of interaction should be stimulated in order to support the evolution of viable knowledge economies? The discipline of geography, notably human and economic geography, has substantially contributed to that debate by identifying the role of space, spatially determined assets and proximity-dependent processes in enabling and fostering innovativeness. This draws on the basic assumption that industrial innovations emerge from collective rather than individual action, are the outcome of interacting organizations (which may depart from interpretations of creativity by other disciplines). Geographical reasoning on these issues has only started to incorporate realisations provided by other scientific fields, like sociology and psychology, and needs to further gain inspiration from interdisciplinary discourse.

Against this backdrop, the conference presentation discusses the state-of-the-art of geographical research on spatial issues of innovativeness and knowledge economies, relating both to conceptual approaches and to empirical work investigating relevant interdependencies. The objective is to indicate, on the one hand, which insights have been gained, while, on the other hand, also remaining knowledge gaps and shortcomings must be named. From a conceptual perspective, different ideal type models have been coined that try to explain why and in which ways knowledge creation and transfer, and innovativeness, respectively, appear to be bound to certain places and spaces. Drawing a genealogy from the ‘creative-innovative milieu’ over ‘territorial innovation systems’ to the ‘knowledge region’, as

one of the latest conceptual inventions on the horizon, the evolution of ideas will be depicted. Concerning empirical work, methods applied by economic geographers for capturing regional knowledge economies and spatial implications of innovativeness will be critically reviewed, putting into question whether we have really learned much about relevant processes so far.

In conclusion, the presentation aims at providing a showcase to the conference participants (most of them not working in the heuristic tradition of geography) who will be informed about models, methods and mindsets of economic geographers towards conditions of creativity. By exposing some 'weak points' of geographical research and revealing our need to learn from other views, avenues for more interdisciplinary collaboration on the issue shall be opened.