

# Meric Gertler Conference

**Tuesday, May 27 — Wednesday, May 28**

## DATE AND TIME



**Day 1**  
**Tuesday, May 27**  
**9:00 AM - 6:00 PM**

## LOCATION



**Paul Cadario Conference Centre**  
**University College**  
**15 King's College Circle**

## DAY 1: CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**9:00 — 9:30**

### Opening Addresses

**Organizers:** Harald Bathelt and Gordon L. Clark  
**Presenters:** Amy Glasmeier and Erica Schoenberger

"That was then and this is now: Meric Gertler's intellectual contributions to the field of economic geography over forty years (or, What it takes to grow a field and a scholar)"

In this paper, we sketch out Meric's intellectual genealogy from his academic 'grandparents,' Leslie King and Michael Dear at McMaster through Gordon Clark at Harvard. We then explore Meric's own intellectual evolution through his writings over the decades. The two combined give us a distinctive view of how the discipline of economic geography has itself evolved since the time of the quantitative revolution.

**9:30 — 11:00**

### Session 1: Clusters and Innovation

**Chair:** Sali Tagliamonte  
**Presenters:** David Wolfe and Tara Vinodrai

"Intensive research hub or dynamic innovation cluster? Alternative pathways for Toronto's AI cluster"

Artificial intelligence, is often depicted as an emerging technology field in which Canada should excel. This derives from the critical role of Canadian researchers in breakthroughs in LLM technology over the past decade. With support from the federal government's Pan-Canadian AI strategy the Vector Institute in Toronto, jointly with the University of Toronto is one of the top AI research centres in the country. Despite this prominence, there is no academic study of Toronto's AI cluster. Our paper aims to remedy this by exploring whether Toronto's AI hub is limited to its underlying research strengths at Vector and UofT or has the potential to develop into a dynamic industry cluster. Building on previous research conducted with Meric Gertler, the paper will answer this question, drawing on the latest data on the dynamics of the cluster.

**Presenter:** Dieter F. Kogler

"Tacit knowledge spillovers in the science-technology-innovation nexus: An institutional perspective"

The continuous formation and diffusion of knowledge along with collective learning are at the heart of societal progress. While much of this is documented, and can be traced, in scientific writings and technical artifacts, significant aspects fundamental to knowledge production remain obscured due to the tacit nature surrounding these processes. For the first time in human history, novel methods provided by Artificial Intelligence offer the opportunity to unveil the role played by tacit knowledge spillovers for discovery, emergence and concept development and associated socio-economic outcomes. This has important implications for advancing Economic Geography theories and empirics.

# Meric Gertler Conference

## DAY 1: CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**11:00 — 11:30**

**Coffee Break**

**11:30 — 1:30**

**Session 2: Interaction and Being There**

**Chair: Janice Stein**

**Presenter: Rosie Findlay**

"From fashion blogger to media professional: Networked blogfriends, proximity privilege and making a media career from the North American fashion blogipelago"

Since fashion blogging first emerged, a generation of early bloggers have risen to prominence as writers and editors in the media despite not starting their blogs – as many later did – as a route to a fashion-related career. This presentation examines the themes one networked group identify as leading to their professional success. All participated in early fashion blogging and now work in media, mostly in New York and Toronto. I argue that these careers are not simply attributable to skill or the "visibility" of digital communications – rather, blogging's affordances interacted with emplaced relationships and proximity to one of North America's media centres. This study therefore resists narratives of decentred digital cultural production to demonstrate how geographically embedded the cultural industries continue to be.

**Presenters: Harald Bathelt and Pengfei Li**

"Connecting market and innovation dynamics: Trade fairs as temporary markets and clusters"

Trade fairs operate as temporary clusters and temporary markets that bring together representatives from an organizational field for the purpose of making business and exchanging knowledge. Intrinsic to these events and the global buzz they generate are innovation dynamics, wherein participants' desire to become more effective in finding transaction partners, leading to continuous product adjustments. Search processes for new products/technologies at these events often prioritize choices that fit the specific production context of searching firms and create a trend toward technological specialization within larger production systems, instead of automatically driving convergence. All of this suggests that market and production relations should not be viewed as being separated, as is common practice, but as fundamentally linked through such events.

**Presenters: William Bratton and Dariusz Wójcik**

"Being there" and the continued importance of place and location in finance"

Based on Gertler's seminal work on the geographies of tacit knowledge and role of spatial proximity in the production and transfer of knowledge, we revisit the importance of "being there" with reference to the production and transfer of specialised financial knowledge. We begin by reviewing the extant literature in economic geography to highlight how specialised knowledge remains unevenly distributed over time and space. New empirical evidence is presented which demonstrates that industry domain-specific expertise across financial ecosystems is frequently context- and spatially-bound. To illustrate, we focus upon Toronto's and Calgary's roles as specialised metals & mining and oil & gas research centres, respectively and close by discussing the factors which explain why specialised financial tacit knowledge remains spatially bound.

**1:30 — 2:30**

**Lunch Break**

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## DAY 1: CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**2:30 — 4:00**

### **Session 3: Knowledge and Energy Transition**

**Chair: Michael Widener**

**Presenter: Bjørn T. Asheim**

"The oil and gas industry – A key to a successful sustainable transition in Norway?"

Oil and gas have been the cornerstone in the Norwegian economy since the 1970s. The importance of the sector creates challenges in the transition to more sustainable industries such as offshore wind and offshore aquaculture. However, the oil and gas industry provide a huge amount of knowledge and competence that is potentially relevant for these industries. The main research question of the paper is how much of the competences of the oil and gas industry is relevant and useful for offshore wind and offshore aquaculture, how transferable this knowledge is, and which barriers that exists for an efficient knowledge transfer.

**Presenter: Janelle Knox-Hayes**

"Financing energy transition: Insights on space and time from Aristotle to Deloria"

This article examines the nature of space and time in Western and Indigenous thought, drawing on philosophical insights from scholars ranging from Aristotle to Vine Deloria Jr. to highlight contrasting paradigms. Through a case study of offshore wind energy development in the United States, the article illustrates how these differing worldviews shape understandings of finance, power, and environmental stewardship. Finance is inherently political and moral, necessitating explicit ethical frameworks that prioritize community input and social benefits over private gains. I argue for a grounded approach to climate finance that integrates externalities—both positive and negative. I emphasize relational responsibility in economic practices. By establishing core principles for financing energy transitions, scholars of economic geography can foster pathways to more equitable and sustainable financial practices that better align with ecological and social realities.

**4:00 — 4:30**

### **Coffee Break**

**4:30 — 6:00**

### **Session 4: Economic Restructuring and Communities**

**Chair: Maryann Feldman**

**Presenter: Gordon L. Clark**

"Mobilising knowledge for corporate environmental performance and innovation in the context of global warming and net zero"

Corporations are being held to account for their environmental performance given the climate crisis and global prospects. Recognising the challenges of mobilising knowledge to give effect to net-zero, this paper deploys Meric Gertler's classic papers on codified and tacit knowledge to better understand the nature and scope of corporate environmental management and innovation. Major corporations are beset by conflict over the allocation and use of resources. It is observed that mobilising knowledge for superior environmental performance is challenging given the disputed authority of corporate officers, the variable value of expertise, and the ambivalence of investors as to the costs and benefits of such commitments. Implications are drawn with respect to the future of large, multi-product and multi-jurisdictional corporations in the 'new' world of net-zero.

**Presenter: Ann Markusen**

"Arts, culture and city planning"

I will be presenting an overview of the research and teaching I engaged in during my professorships at University of Minnesota, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota; University of California, Berkeley, Rutgers University, as a UK and as the visiting Bousfield Distinguished Professor, Geography and Planning, University of Toronto, Spring Semester, 2015, with brief references to additional research and teaching responsibilities.

# Meric Gertler Conference

Tuesday, May 27 — Wednesday, May 28

## DATE AND TIME



**Day 2**  
**Wednesday, May 28**  
**9:00 AM - 2:30 PM**

## LOCATION



**Paul Cadario Conference Centre**  
**University College**  
**15 King's College Circle**

## DAY 2: CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**9:00 — 10:30**

### **Session 5: Knowledge and Place**

**Chair: Karen Chapple**

**Presenter: AnnaLee Saxenian**

*"Place still matters: Silicon Valley over five decades"*

Meric Gertler's attention to the importance of place in innovation is reflected in an impressive body of work on tacit knowledge, regional culture, communities of practice, and 'being there.' This talk explores these issues in the context of the ongoing transformation of Silicon Valley, including the initial creation of a technical community and regional culture, the globalization of the networks and creation of cross-regional collaborations, and the recent growth of global digital platforms. In spite of these structural changes, the region remains a center of innovation, in large part for reasons that Gertler theorized.

**Presenter: Peter Maskell**

*"The kitchen sink and other less heeded knowledge issues in economic geography"*

This paper considers in what manner new insights in the nature of (tacit) knowledge dispersion has influenced both actionable location theory and our perception of regional economic development since Gertler (2003) while hypothesizing how non-capitalist dynamics of population aging shape the economic behavior of spatial actors when socially constructed, embedded, and governed.

**10:30 — 11:00**

### **Coffee Break**

**11:00 — 12:30**

### **Session 6: Universities and Cities**

**Chair: Louis Paul**

**Presenters: Richard Florida and Patrick Adler**

*"The city as campus: How the university is an anchor and model for urban development"*

The recent urban development period has seen innovation complexes form in globally connected cities, marked by advanced knowledge services, specialized labor, and supportive infrastructures. This paper examines the university's role in shaping development—as a talent attractor, idea incubator, indirect real estate developer, and generator of spatial inequality. It maps dynamic university-urban complexes worldwide, using an index combining metrics on university and urban growth across 200+ regions. Finally, it discusses the Urban-University Growth Machine's reliance on factors like local leadership, regional politics, and national funding.

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## DAY 2: CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**11:00 — 12:30**

### **Session 6: Universities and Cities**

**Presenters: Betsy Donald, Shauna Brail, and Janice Stein**

*"Tacit leadership in the university sector: Inspiring an academy to strengthen the institution, community and society"*

The 21st Century has been a time of renewed questioning regarding the value of universities to society at large, suggesting in some instances that universities have become estranged from, or worse, irrelevant to society (Wells, 2024). In this article, we argue that to fully understand the value of universities in contemporary times requires attention to the long view (Gertler, 2018; Christopherson, Gertler, Gray, 2014; Wolfe & Gertler, 2003). Following a discussion of the complex university policy environment, this article draws on examples from the University of Toronto, to examine the institution's key roles in navigating geopolitical tensions, building regional collaborations, and engaging expertise on cities for the mutual benefit of the university and society.

**Wrap Up: Louis Pauly**

**Closing Remarks: Meric Gertler**

**12:30 — 2:30**

### **Lunch Reception and Final Remarks**



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## PRESENTERS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Patrick Adler** (adler@hku.hk) is Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of Hong Kong where he conducts research on regional economic development policy and urbanized creativity. He is also Key Advisor to The Otis College of Design in Los Angeles and Principal at Westwood Economics and Planning Consultants, also in Los Angeles.

**Bjørn T. Asheim** (bjorn.asheim@circle.lu.se) is professor of economic geography and innovation theory at University of Stavanger School of Business and Law. He was co-founder, deputy director and director of CIRCLE at Lund University, 2004–2013. He was professor of economic geography at the universities of Oslo and Lund and has been editor of *Economic Geography* and *Regional Studies*. In 2011 he became an Academician at the British Academy of Social Sciences. He is an internationally renowned scholar of economic geography and regional innovation studies.

**Harald Bathelt** (harald.bathelt@utoronto.ca) is Professor in the University of Toronto's Department of Geography & Planning and Zijiang Visiting Chair at East China Normal University in Shanghai. His research and teaching interests are in the areas of economic geography, political economy and methodology, specifically in the analysis of industrial clustering; knowledge generation and innovation over distance; regional impacts of national/international investment activity; and the socio-economic impacts of regional industrial and institutional change. He is Editor of *ZfW – Advances in Economic Geography*.

**William Bratton** (william.bratton@wolfson.ox.ac.uk) is completing a DPhil at the University of Oxford into the geographies of financial information and knowledge. He is based in Hong Kong as BNP Paribas's head of APAC equity research and regional equity strategist. Before that, he was the head of Asian equity research at HSBC and previously held various equity research roles at Deutsche Bank.

**Shauna Brail** (shauna.brail@utoronto.ca) is Associate Professor and Director at the Institute for Management & Innovation, University of Toronto Mississauga and is cross-appointed at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto. As an economic geographer and urban planner, her research focuses on the transformation of cities as a result of economic, social, and cultural change.

**Gordon L. Clark** (gordon.clark@smithschool.ox.ac.uk) is senior consultant and executive director emeritus of the Smith School at Oxford University. His research focuses on financial behaviour and the management of financial institutions in space and time. His books and papers on these topics are widely-cited in academic journals and in the buy-side and sell-side of the global financial services industry.

**Betsy Donald** (betsy.donald@queensu.ca) is Professor in Geography and Planning at Queen's University and Associate Vice Principal Research. Her research focusses on the spatial dimensions of social, economic, and political change.

**Richard Florida** (richard.florida@rotman.utoronto.ca) is a researcher and professor, currently Visiting Distinguished Professor at Vanderbilt University, as well as University Professor at the University of Toronto, and Kresge Foundation Visiting Senior Fellow. He previously taught at Carnegie Mellon University and has been a visiting professor at Harvard and MIT. He has penned several bestsellers, including *The Rise of the Creative Class* and *The New Urban Crisis*. He co-founded CityLab, the world's leading publication for cities and urbanism.

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## PRESENTERS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Rosie Findlay** ([rosie.findlay@city.ac.uk](mailto:rosie.findlay@city.ac.uk)) is Senior Lecturer in Media at City St George's, University of London. She researches how contemporary fashion media and communications surface social and political discourses about selfhood and culture, and how dress enfold with identity. Her publications include *Personal Style Blogs: Appearances that Fascinate* (2017) and *Insights on Fashion Journalism* (co-edited with Johannes Reponen, 2022). She is also co-editor of *International Journal of Fashion Studies*.

**Amy Glasmeier** ([amyglas@mit.edu](mailto:amyglas@mit.edu)) is Professor of Economic Geography and Regional Planning at the MIT. She is an economic geographer and regional planner and has been studying the effects of four decades of economic insecurity. She critiques the end of the "American Dream", laments its origins and presumes that unfettered opportunity undergirds the plight of America's poor. She is the designer of the 20 year old Living Wage Calculator ([www.livingwagecalculator.mit.edu](http://www.livingwagecalculator.mit.edu)), which analyzes the minimum level of income required to pay cover basic living expenses.

**Janelle Knox-Hayes** ([jankh@mit.edu](mailto:jankh@mit.edu)) is a Professor of Economic Geography and Planning in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, MIT and the director of the Resilient Communities Lab. Her research focuses on the governance of climate mitigation and adaptation and systems to build socio-economic, cultural and environmental resilience for communities.

**Dieter F. Kogler** ([dieter.kogler@ucd.ie](mailto:dieter.kogler@ucd.ie)) is a Professor in Economic Geography and the Director of the Spatial Dynamics Lab at University College Dublin. His research focus is on the geography of innovation and evolutionary economic geography, with particular emphasis on knowledge production and diffusion, and processes related to technological change, innovation, and economic growth. He recently completed a 5-year ERC project (Technology Evolution in Regional Economies) and currently serves as an Editor for *Regional Studies*, the *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, and is the managing Editor for Springer's Economic Geography book series.

**Pengfei Li** ([pengfei.li@ucalgary.ca](mailto:pengfei.li@ucalgary.ca)) is an Associate Professor in the Strategy and Global Management area at the Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary. His research explores topics such as industrial clusters, spatial knowledge creation, the location and innovation strategies of multinationals, and digital platforms. His work has been published in leading international journals, including *Journal of Economic Geography*, *Economic Geography*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, and *Research Policy*.

**Ann Markusen** ([markusen@umn.edu](mailto:markusen@umn.edu)) is Emerita Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota. She held professorships at the University of Minnesota, 2004–2009; University of California Los Angeles, 2005; Rutgers University, 1986–1999; Northwestern University, 1986–1989; University of California, Berkeley, 1977–1983; Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1983; University of Colorado, 1973–1977; and served for one academic year as the visiting UK Fulbright Professor at the Glasgow School of Art. She was also visiting professor in the US and worked as a research economist, economic policy fellow and senior fellow with multiple policy and governmental organizations.

**Peter Maskell** ([maskell@cbs.dk](mailto:maskell@cbs.dk)) is a geographer and professor at Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Department of Innovation and Strategy researching the organization of economic activities across firms and space. He chaired the EU's Network of Excellence on the Dynamics of Institutions and Markets in Europe and co-founded DRUID – now hosting one of the world's premier academic conferences on innovation and the dynamics of structural, institutional and geographical change. He was knighted by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark in 2019.

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## PRESENTERS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Annalee Saxenian** (anno@berkeley.edu) is a professor of technology and economic development at the University of California, Berkeley, with appointments in the School of Information and the Department City and Regional Planning. She served as dean of the School of Information from 2004–2019. She is author of *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128* (Harvard, 1994) and *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in a Global Economy* (Harvard, 2006) and has published widely on the geography and dynamics of innovation.

**Erica Schoenberger** (ericas@jhu.edu) is Professor Emerita of Geography and Anthropology at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Her forthcoming book is entitled *Money, Monks and Monarchs: The Feudal Origins of the Market Economy*. She is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship.

**Janice Gross Stein** (j.steineutoronto.ca) is the Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management in the Department of Political Science and the Founding Director of the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her current research focuses on technology and public policy amidst great power competition.

**Tara Vinodrai** (tara.vinodraieutoronto.ca) is Professor in the Institute for Management and Innovation, University of Toronto, where she directs the Master of Urban Innovation program. Her current research explores clusters, innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems; mechanisms for achieving inclusive innovation and economic development; and the cultural economy of cities. Her work is recognized by the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Association of American Geographers, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning and the Academy of Management. She provides advice to local, regional and national governments on economic development and regional competitiveness.

**David Wolfe** (david.wolfe@utoronto.ca) is Acting Associate Vice-President for International Partnerships, University of Toronto, and Co-Director of the Innovation Policy Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. He has been a Research Associate of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and was Royal Bank Chair in Public and Economic Policy from 2009 to 2014. He is the founder and inaugural Director of the Master of Urban Innovation program. He has led three SSHRC-funded national research projects on Canada's response to the rapidly changing digital landscape.

**Dariusz Wójcik** (dwojck@nus.edu.sg) is Professor of Financial Geography at the National University of Singapore, and Honorary Research Associate at the University of Oxford. He is editor in chief of *Finance & Space* journal and chairs the Global Network on Financial Geography. His research spans human geography, finance, and political economy.