

CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography

Dr Meric S. Gertler

Meric Gertler is an exceptional scholar. He has earned a substantial international reputation for his original contributions to research in economic geography and in the associated fields of economics, management studies, and political science. The breadth and scope of his work is impressive. His early research on capital markets and regional development, summarized in a book on *Regional Dynamics*, contributed to setting the research agenda in regional analysis at that time. Since then he has made path-setting contributions in numerous areas of the discipline, including contributions to the study of flexible production, the innovation process in manufacturing, the social foundations of the spatial clustering of firms and the evolution of learning regions, and more broadly to our understanding of the changing geographical foundations of the new urban economy. Several of his articles are now among the most highly cited references in economic geography in the international academic literature.

His latest work, initially outlined in a book on *Manufacturing Culture: The Governance of Industrial Practice*, examines the social and cultural norms, attitudes and institutional behaviour that form the core process of learning and knowledge accumulation. These factors both underpin and direct the production process and the ability of firms, sectors and regions to innovate and to compete in the global economy. One current project involves the comparative analysis of Canadian industrial systems and clusters, and documents the importance for economic success of the social networking and interactions that take place within these clusters.

Parallel research by Dr. Gertler and his students has also played a leading role in documenting the emergence of creative economies in city-regions across Ontario and Canada, and the benchmarking of these developments in comparison to city-regions in the U.S., U.K. and other European countries. This latter research has demonstrated that cultural industries as a group have become one of the prime engines of growth in urban economies and a leading indicator of the revitalization of older city neighbourhoods and employment districts. In particular, his work has illustrated the key role that quality of life and diversity play in attracting talent to a region.

This new approach, emphasizing the production, use and transfer of knowledge through innovation and learning, set in the context that recognizes the crucial role of cultural norms and institutional practices in the application of that knowledge, is certain to be one of the original contributions to our understanding of urban economic geography in the 21st century. His research has also made significant contributions to public policy debates on innovation, creativity and the changing economies of city regions in Canada and abroad.

The outstanding quality of Dr. Gertler's scholarly research and writing, and his varied contributions to both theory and practice, has already been recognized by other institutions. He currently holds the Goldring Chair in Canadian Studies in University College at the University of Toronto, and in 2005 was elected as a fellow of Academy II of the Royal Society of Canada. He is frequently called upon to give visiting lectures and to provide policy advice to universities, research institutes and governments in other countries. He is fully deserving of the CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction.