

1 **The New Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography**. Edited by Gordon L. Clark, Maryann P.  
2 Feldman, Meric S. Gertler, and Dariusz Wojcik. Second Edition. Oxford University Press. 918pp.,  
3 £95.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780198755609.

4 *Reviewed by Dr. Bregje van Veelen, Department of Geography, Durham University.*

5 This, new, second edition of the Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography (NOHEG) has been  
6 published more than fifteen years after the first edition. Much has changed in these fifteen years,  
7 both in terms of the challenges that face the world economy, as well as the ways in which  
8 geographers approach these challenges.

9 While the first edition was structured as a conversation between economists and geographers,  
10 contributions to this second edition are primarily from economic geographers, an indication of how  
11 the field has matured in the last fifteen years. Perhaps the weight of this volume is also indirectly  
12 indicative of this growth of breadth and depth in economic geography: this new edition includes 45  
13 chapters organised into eight different sections, totalling over 900 pages. In keeping with this  
14 journal's focus, this review is mostly concerned with Parts VII (resources and the environment) and  
15 VIII (strategies for development).

16 As a geographer who is relatively new to the field of *economic* geography I approached this book the  
17 way many of its potential readers would: with a basic understanding of key concepts in economic  
18 geography obtained in undergraduate lectures, but with much more to learn. This review is  
19 therefore not written from the perspective of an expert, but rather from the perspective of a  
20 potential user, focussing on whether this book fulfils its intended purpose as a handbook.

21 The chapters reviewed varied in their quality, detail, and ease of reading. For example, I found that  
22 the opening chapter to the section on Resources and the Environment – by Sarah McGill on the  
23 'Financialisation Thesis Revisited' – represented a useful and important attempt at explaining a set  
24 of challenging debates on financialisation in concise form. However, the chapter packs in a lot of

25 information, and economic terms (equity markets, asset class) are not always fully explained, making  
26 the main argument sometimes difficult to follow. On the contrary, some of the following chapters –  
27 such as Robin Leichenko on climate vulnerability and Caitlin McElroy resource peripheries –  
28 appeared to be much more accessibly written. For example, Leichenko’s explanation of what  
29 economic *geographers* can contribute to the field of vulnerability studies (Chapter 35) will be  
30 particularly helpful to those new to this area of research, as her explanation helps situate the  
31 chapter both in the wider field of economic geography as well as in the field of interdisciplinary  
32 research on vulnerability.

33 While a single book – even one that comes in at over 900 pages – can never cover every aspect of  
34 economic geography, I was slightly disappointed to see that the chapters that deal with questions of  
35 resources, local resistance and alternatives, primarily focus on fossil fuels. While these clearly  
36 continue to be important resources for the immediate future, and thus relevant for academic  
37 analyses, a more forward-looking analysis of, for example, the capture of renewable resources  
38 would not have been amiss.

39 I also found the inclusion of critical perspectives somewhat lacking. As the editors say in the  
40 introduction, one of the main developments in economic geography has been the emergence of  
41 cultural economy. Nonetheless, while some earlier chapters in the NOHEG draw explicitly on cultural  
42 perspectives, they are largely absent in the sections on environment and development. Dieter  
43 Helm’s chapter on resource scarcity is (perhaps unsurprisingly) written from a rather mainstream  
44 economics-perspective, largely ignoring social, cultural or political explanations for resource use and  
45 depletion. Furthermore, as a geographer I have found some of the most exciting recent work to  
46 come out of economic sociology and STS approaches. While Knox-Hayes’ chapter on carbon engages  
47 with these approaches – and a helpful explanation of how geographical approaches have built on  
48 them - it would have been interesting to see how geographers engage with, and build on, these  
49 approaches more widely.

50 Many of the chapters were interesting to read and covered key aspects of economic geography, but  
51 when considered together, they did make me question who this book is aimed at? While the  
52 significant number, but narrow focus, of individual chapters helps highlight the diverse questions  
53 that economic geographers work on, I am to be convinced this is the best approach to providing an  
54 overview of the discipline. In particular, I think a short introduction and conclusion to each of the  
55 sections to bind the different chapters together would have been helpful.

56 The editors state the NOHEG is aimed at 'advanced-level undergraduate students, graduate  
57 students, researchers, strategists and policy-makers' (p.12). I would concur that the book is more  
58 suited to those with some background knowledge of key economic and/or geography concepts.  
59 Comparing this volume to, for example, the SAGE handbook of economic geography, it is clear that  
60 the individual chapters in this volume tend to have a narrower, more specific focus. I do also wonder  
61 whether some of the contributors also struggled with this question of who the book is aimed at, with  
62 some chapters noticeably more complex than others.

63 Nonetheless, the NOHEG can serve as a useful reference guide, particular for scholars who might be  
64 relatively new to specific aspects of economic geography, who will find individual chapters useful to  
65 obtain a quick overview of a specific topic, with generally plenty of sources cited to follow up for  
66 further consideration.