NEWS AND REVIEWS
I have just returned from the Regional Studies Association conference at Leuven, where we were lucky enough to be able to launch the new format Regions. It was extremely pleasing to see so many people carrying round the newsletter, and we do seem to be getting over the message to people that Regions is a membership publication! We do want to hear what you are up to, within your branches and sections, or in your organisations, departments or through your own research. I am pleased to say that an increasing number of members are therefore submitting their own news reports, a trend which we wish to further encourage. There is nothing mysterious about getting involved – just send us something which you think will interest others!

So whenever you have anything new to report or would like to review a book or write an event report, please contact us at g.j.hospers@utwente.nl. The deadline for the next issue is until August 2006. Many thanks in advance – we look forward to hearing from you!

Gert-Jan Hospers – University of Twente

CONGRATULATIONS TO PROF. HENRIK HALKIER
Former Chair of the RSA’s International Committee and local organiser for the Aalborg conference in 2005, Professor Henrik Halkier successfully defended his senior thesis (habilitation) on 19th May at Aalborg University, against formal opponents, Michael Keating and John Bachtler, and ex-auditorio questions. Congratulations to Henrik on this marvellous achievement!

The typical Danish habilitation ceremony lasted 5½ hours and followed work that has taken more than ten years to bring to publication. Indeed, what a labour of love and scholarly commitment… rather naughtily, at the celebratory dinner in the evening, one wit commented that by his calculations Henrik’s writing productivity over the past ten years on this piece of work was some seven words per cup of tea drunk!

A large crowd gathered to witness Henrik in the dock and all stayed at Norland Castle to celebrate his achievement.

Peter Lang Publishers has published Henrik’s book, entitled Institutions, Discourse and Regional Development – The Scottish Development Agency and the Politics of Regional Policy. The book deals with the intriguing question why some regional development strategies are adopted and why others are rejected. Only limited systematic attention has been paid to the politics of regional policy, including the role of institutions, discourse, and political debate in shaping this major area of public policy.

The book develops an institutionalist approach to the study of regional policy, capable of spanning major European development paradigms and accounting for the dynamic relationship between organisations, policies and political discourse. This conceptual framework is then applied to the Scottish Development Agency, a development body famed across Europe for its innovative policies but surrounded by political controversy in Scotland.

A detailed study of corporate strategies, policy implementation, and the wider British environment questions existing interpretations of the organisation which have tended to vilify anti-interventionist Thatcherites or glorify shrewd development professionals. Instead, Henrik proposes an alternative synthesis which highlights the interplay between institutions, discourse and regional development in the politics of regional policy.

IN MEMORIAM
URBAN GURU, JANE JACOBS, PASSES AWAY
On 25th April 2006, world-famous American-Canadian, urban guru, Jane Jacobs passed away in Toronto, only a few days before her 90th birthday. Her death is an enormous loss for regional and urban studies.


Let us sincerely hope that Jacobs’ ideas live on and continue to inspire researchers in our discipline.

EVENT REPORT
THE ROLE OF ‘INDUSTRIAL KNOWLEDGES’ IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF POST-INDUSTRIAL REGIONS
University of Gdańsk, Gdańsk/Gdynia, Poland
19th-21st February 2006
Frank Siedlok, Durham University
This event was a follow-up to the workshop of the same name, held in Newcastle upon Tyne in February 2005. This year’s seminar again attracted a good selection of academics interested in the role of industrial knowledges, re-industrialisation and regional development in Old Industrial Regions (OIR).

Hosted by the University of Gdańsk, the workshop was preceded by a study excursion around the post-industrial landscape of the Tri-City (Gdańsk city network including the three cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot). The first of the two days of presentations and discussions started with a tour around the
BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by Paul Benneworth, Institute for Policy and Practice, Newcastle University (UK)

In his memoir of 30 years as a well-known sports journalist, Retro (Nieuw Amsterdam, 2006), Dutchman Maart Smeets is greatly exercised by how such a retrospective should comport itself. After searching a number of reference books, he comes to a definition with which he wholeheartedly agrees, namely ‘providing an orientation towards the point of exit’. Mr Smeets’ compatriot Professor of Economic Geography Jan Lamboooy, formerly based at Utrecht University, is therefore fortunate that his erstwhile colleagues have arranged and published such a backward look into his career.

The book under review, Learning from Clusters: a Critical Assessment from an Economic-Geographical Perspective, obliquely addresses Professor Lamboooy’s personal contribution through considering the scientific state of the art at his retirement. The editors, Ron Boschma and Robert Kloosterman, begin with Professor Lamboooy’s lifelong wholehearted commitment to promoting multi-disciplinary theoretical approaches.

This is indisputably achieved in the book, although also highlighting the difficulties, which exist with multi-disciplinarity, particularly in reconciling conflicting visions of reality without producing an overly complex theoretical model. Seventeen rather eclectic chapters nevertheless cohere to illustrate both the complexities and insights emerging from an intuitive and stylised conversation between disciplines.

The book focuses on recent geographical approaches on learning and knowledge capital in economic development, particularly, as the title suggests, the ‘cluster’. Complexity recurs