

Industry Clusters and Transnational Networks: Japan's New Directions in Regional Policy

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Abstract: This talk surveys Japan's "industry cluster" policy, the nation's most ambitious regional development program since the 1960s, and presents a case study of a medical-welfare cluster, a Japanese-Finnish joint venture, in Sendai city. It is argued that the main alternative interpretations of Japan's current trajectory of political economic change -- neoliberalism and neodevelopmentalism -- do not adequately capture key features of the Sendai case. The Sendai medical-welfare cluster is a network type of foreign direct investment. Transnational collaboration occurs among clusters of actors in Finland and in Japan, not just among private companies. Collaboration among clusters was initiated and continues to be facilitated by quasi-governmental "networking" organizations in both countries. Government and non-profits participate in the project along with business enterprises. Decision-making, divisions of labor and funding are organized across transnational, national, regional and local scales and among multiple institutional arenas. These features suggest new, "post-developmental" directions in Japan's political economy.

Richard Child Hill is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Michigan State University. He has also held visiting positions at the University of California, Santa Cruz; the Royal Danish Institute of Fine Arts in Copenhagen; Osaka City and Hiroshima Universities in Japan; the University of Hong Kong; and the National University of Singapore. He has served as North American Editor of *Urban Studies*, and on the Editorial Advisory Boards of *Urban Affairs Review*, and *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research*. He has taught and published widely in the fields of urban and industrial sociology, international political economy and East Asian development. Recent writings include *Innovative Tokyo* (World Bank, 2005) with Kuniko Fujita; and *Locating Neoliberalism in East Asia* (Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming), co-edited with Bae-Gyoon Park and Asato Saito.

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All are welcome!