

Meric Gertler

Meric Gertler, CM FRSC MCIP FAcSS is a Canadian academic and President of the University of Toronto,^[1] He was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at the same university until October 31, 2013. Gertler is an urban theorist and received his PhD from Harvard.

1 Life and career

Gertler completed his undergraduate education at McMaster University, where he graduated summa cum laude in 1977. He completed a master of City Planning degree at the University of California, Berkeley in 1979 and received a PhD from Harvard University in 1983. His doctoral thesis was entitled, Capital Dynamics and Regional Development.^[2]

Gertler joined the University of Toronto Department of Geography and Planning as a lecturer in 1983. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1988 and Full Professor in 1993.^[3] Gertler's work focuses on the geography of innovative activity and the economies of city-regions. His work also examines the local nature of a globalized economy, focusing on manufacturing as embedded within local cultural norms, practice, and assumptions. Gertler's work examines the role of tacit knowledge and interactive learning in explaining local agglomeration economies and innovation.^[4] Gertler is the author, co-author or co-editor of more than 80 scholarly publications and seven books.^[5] These have had significant impact in his field and have led him to be one of Canada's most highly cited geographers.^[2]

Gertler has served as an advisor to local, regional and national governments in Canada, the United States and Europe, as well as to international agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Paris) and the European Union. He was the founding co-director of the Program on Globalization and Regional Innovation Systems (PROGRIS) at the Munk School of Global Affairs, served as director of the Department of Geography's Program in Planning, and holds the Goldring Chair in Canadian Studies.^[5]

Gertler has held visiting appointments at institutions including Oxford University, University College London, the University of Oslo and the University of California, Los Angeles.^[2]

2 Awards and Honours

Gertler has also been a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada since 2003.

He received the 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of California, Berkeley and the 2014 Distinguished Scholarship Honor from the Association of American Geographers (AAG).^[5]

In May 2012, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree from Sweden's Lund University, for his exceptional contributions to the fields of economic geography and regional development. In the same year, he was made an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences (UK), becoming the first University of Toronto scholar inducted and one of only two Canadian members of the Academy.^[6]

He has been a Senior Fellow of the University of Toronto's Massey College since 2000.

A textbook co-edited by Gertler, the Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography received the Choice Magazine's "Outstanding Academic Book" award.

He won the 2007 Award for Scholarly Distinction from the Canadian Association of Geographers.

In December 2015, Gertler was awarded the Order of Canada with the grade of member.^[7]

3 Fossil Fuel Divestment

In March 2016, Gertler made the controversial decision to not divest the University of Toronto from fossil fuels. This decision was widely criticized by students and faculty members who believe Gertler ignored the implications of climate science.^[8]

Gertler's decision contradicted a report from an advisory committee on fossil fuel divestment and climate change that was released in December 2015. This 11 member committee included a wide range of academics in fields such as political science, environmental science, and economics, in addition to one student representative and one alumni representative.

The Advisory Committee's report found that the social injury committed by "fossil fuels companies whose actions blatantly disregard the 1.5-degree threshold is clear, egregious, and inordinate" and thus merit divestment.^[9] This finding mostly agreed with the student campaign's

submission that instead called on the President to divest from the 200 fossil fuel companies with the largest proven reserves.^[10]

President Gertler's decision was issued in a document called "Beyond Divestment". This report asserted that divestment would be inappropriate.^[11] The Advisory Committee members publicly criticized Gertler's decision in an open letter that stated his decision ignored their finding that the fossil fuel industry's very business model perpetuates social injury by worsening climate change. Their letter stated that investing in fossil fuel companies who ignore a 1.5 Celsius carbon budget is "irreconcilable with achieving internationally agreed goals, inordinately contributing to social injury and greatly increasing the likelihood of catastrophic global consequences."^[12] While Gertler has made a now-final decision, the student campaign to make Gertler divest is ongoing and has refused to accept his decision.^[13]

4 References

- [1] Lavender, Terry (November 1, 2013). "Meric Gertler takes office as U of T's 16th president". *U of T News*. Retrieved November 30, 2014.
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- [4] Gertler, Meric S. (2004). *Manufacturing Culture: The Institutional Geography of Industrial Practice*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-823382-4. LCCN 2004042545.
- [5] "Office of the President Biography". *president.utoronto.ca*. June 2014. Retrieved November 30, 2014.
- [6] "Meric Gertler". *utm.utoronto.ca*. Retrieved November 30, 2014.
- [7] "Order of Canada Appointments". *The Governor General of Canada His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston*. Governor General of Canada. Retrieved 31 December 2015.
- [8] "U of T rejects fossil-fuel divestment recommendations". *The Varsity*. 2016-03-30. Retrieved 2016-06-01.
- [9] Karney, Brian; et al. (2015). "Report of the Advisory Committee on Divestment from Fossil Fuels" (PDF). Retrieved June 1, 2016.
- [10] Ilnyckyj, Milan; et al. (2015). "The Fossil Fuel Industry and the Case for Divestment" (PDF).
- [11] Gertler, Meric (2016). "Beyond Divestment" (PDF).
- [12] "Op-ed: An open letter to the University of Toronto on fossil fuel divestment". *The Varsity*. 2016-04-04. Retrieved 2016-06-01.
- [13] "Updates After Divestment Rejection by President of UofT". *Toronto350*. Retrieved 2016-06-01.

5 External links

- <http://www.cjnews.com/campus/new-u-t-president-son-holocaust-survivor>
- <http://www.president.utoronto.ca/>

5.1 Selected Publications

- Gertler, M. S. 2004. *Manufacturing Culture: the Institutional Geography of Industrial Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gertler, M. S. 2003. A cultural economic geography of production: are we learning by doing? In *The Handbook of Cultural Geography*, eds. K. Anderson, M. Domosh, S. Pile and N. Thrift, 131-146. London: Sage.
- Gertler, M. S. and D.A. Wolfe, eds. 2002. *Innovation and Social Learning: Institutional Adaptation in an Era of Technological Change*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan/Palgrave.
- Rutherford, T. D. and M. S. Gertler. 2002. Labour in 'lean' times: geography, scale and the national trajectories of workplace change. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers NS27*: 1-18.

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6.1 Text

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