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Abstract

This paper reviews the spread-backwash concept from its classical antecedents through contemporary work. The contemporary works are analyzed for their theoretical and methodological approaches and according to a selection of attributes. A synoptic analysis of the concept argues that the role of diffusion in the concept has been overstated and that the spread-backwash dichotomy has led to confusion. It is argued that spread-backwash processes are non-dichotomous, but that this set of processes leads to differential spatial development impacts. The concept is restated.