

# Editorial Issue 15: Regional Development at a time of uncertainties - Global economic uncertainties and the challenges for structurally weak regions



## **Editorial**

*By Eduardo Oliveira, Stefania Fiorentino and Robert Bowen*

Issue 15 of Regions e-zine explores the impact of global economic uncertainties on structurally weak regions. The articles delve into the factors affecting regional economic disparities, including technology and automation, globalisation, climate change, government policies, social entrepreneurship, impact investing, financial inclusion, and geopolitical instability. Prepare to be enlightened as Issue 15 brings you an exclusive interview with André Torre, co-editor of 'Smart

Development for Rural Areas' and a leading figure in regional science and agricultural research.

Starting with the Regional Insights Section, one article by António Manuel Figueiredo focuses on the need for a return-based regional policy in structurally weak regions. The article proposes that the policy should prioritise increasing returns and promoting entrepreneurship, enabling these regions to leverage their unique assets and capabilities.

Another article by Samaneh Mohammadi Kalan highlights the importance of sustainable urban transportation design in Iran. The article proposes a renewable energy-based design for the West Terminal of Tabriz Bus Hub, which would reduce the carbon footprint of transportation and promote sustainable urban development.

In another article, Nora Hampl examines the role of energy in regional disparities and the impact of decentralised renewable energy on the livelihood security of Amazonian Indigenous communities.

Kazi Fattah and his co-authors discuss the challenges faced by South and Southeast Asian cities in building resilience to compounding urban crises in times of global uncertainties. The authors argue that it is crucial to adopt a holistic approach to urban planning that considers the complex interplay of social, economic, and environmental factors.

Anurika Ohalezim and Paul N. Ngang assess the impact of imported refined crude oil from the EU on Nigeria's economic growth and development. The authors argue that Nigeria needs to diversify its energy mix and reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels. Finally, Judith Akinyi Ogolla and Paul N. Ngang examine the duty-free and quota-free trade agreements between Kenya and the European Union. The authors argue that these agreements can promote economic growth and development in Kenya but also raise concerns about the potential for trade diversion and the need for complementary policies to support local industries.

Efthymios Georgiou offers a personal perspective on tourism flows in Venice and the challenges posed by overtourism.

In the final article of the Regional Insights Section, delve into the insightful investigation conducted by Thierry Molnar Prates and Coro Chasco, as they

analyze the profound influence of public policies on climate change disasters in the municipalities of Rio de Janeiro state from 2013-2022, providing crucial insights into the well-being of affected individuals encompassing casualties, injuries, displacements, and more.

In the Spotlight Section, Chilombo Musa and Gemma Burgess explore the potential of soil-stabilised blocks (SSB) as an alternative to concrete for housing construction in informal settlements in Zambia. Governments are seeking sustainable building materials because the built environment is responsible for a significant portion of global carbon emissions. While existing research mainly focuses on the formal sector, this study addresses the environmental implications of construction in informal settlements, home to over 1 billion people. The research reveals that SSB technology offers reduced cement usage and improved insulation. However, challenges such as limited manufacturing processes, lack of standardisation, and dependence on a single equipment manufacturer hinder the scalability of SSB adoption. The study emphasises the need for widespread availability and accessibility of alternative building materials to promote sustainable practices in housing construction. Ilaria Mariotti and Blanca Ella Monni highlighted the “Coworking for Ukraine” initiative. The initiative emerged as a comprehensive support system for those affected by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This article sheds light on the valuable work carried out by the initiative and its impact on the lives of displaced Ukrainians. This initiative goes beyond providing basic amenities like desks and Wi-Fi, offering comprehensive support services to assist Ukrainians in various aspects of their lives. From guidance on transportation options to information about finding suitable living spaces, the initiative aims to provide valuable resources and support to those in need.

Deborah Heinen reviews a book on climate governance and urban planning in the Highlights section. Next, Daniela Carl discusses policies and planning for transforming regions and highlights the RSA Annual Conference 2023 and the Regions and Cities Book Series. Additionally, Daniela Carl discusses the dissemination support available for authors publishing in the RSA’s book series. Finally, the issue includes an obituary for John (Jack) Parr, written by Leslie Budd and Mike Danson, who pay tribute to Parr’s contributions to regional studies.

In the Hacks section, Madeleine Hatfield offers practical advice on choosing the right journal for publishing high-impact articles.

Overall, the articles in Issue 15 provide valuable insights into the challenges facing structurally weak regions in the context of global economic uncertainties. In addition, the authors offer innovative solutions and policy recommendations that can help these regions build resilience and achieve sustainable economic growth and development.

We also invite submissions for our next issue, ***Issue 16, on “Regional Development in the Shadow of Political and Social Change: Charting Economic and Social Futures Amidst Uncertainty”***. The editorial, led by Robert, will explore regional development challenges in a rapidly changing world characterised by increasing political polarisation, demographic changes, technological disruption, and economic downturns. We encourage submissions that examine the impact of these uncertainties on regional development, as well as potential solutions and best practices. The submission deadline is Monday, August 21st, and the publication date is the first week of September. In addition, we welcome original research articles, case studies, and book reviews that address any of the subtopics listed in the editorial lead.

Take advantage of the chance to showcase your work to a broader audience! Regions, the elected publication of the Regional Studies Association Community, is the perfect platform for your research. Contact us now at [office@regionalstudies.org](mailto:office@regionalstudies.org) to get started!

Thank you for considering Regions e-zine.

*Editorial Team*

*Eduardo Oliveira | Stefania Fiorentino | Robert Bowen*