Engaging, Exchanging and Impacting: Regional Research for All



DOI reference: 10.1080/13673882.2018.00001010

Engaging, Exchanging and Impacting: Regional Research for All

The launch in June of Regions eZine Issue 1, the first edition of Regions to be fully online and open access, has been a major success. Launched consecutively at the Regional Studies Association's (RSA) annual conference in Lugano and the global conference in Beijing, the new format has been warmly received by the RSA community. In our first editorial we set out our ambition to use Regions eZine as a platform to actively reach out to new audiences, whilst maintaining Regions' legacy of advancing debates in regional studies in a way that is rigorous and informative. So far, the response we have received to this call has been impressive, which makes us confident that Regions eZine will continue to develop

as a purposeful and vibrant publication. However, the show must go on, and since June we have been working hard to bring you Issue 2.

This issue is dedicated to the impacts of regional research and the difference that regional research can make across a variety of disciplines and geographies. In many ways, impact and engagement are a foundational aspect of the RSA's identity, which since the 1960s, has aspired to inform and influence regional policy. More generally, as James Hopkins describes in his history of the RSA, the core function of learned societies such as the RSA has been and continues to be, *"to make knowledge accessible through a network of communication".* For this reason, debates about research impact and engagement often highlight the importance of expanding these networks of communication to involve practitioners and policy makers beyond the academic community. For regional research this task has been complicated by ongoing waves of globalization, which have produced a relational world in which the organization of environmental, political, economic and social activities in one region are intimately tied to those happening in other regions. Regional phenomena thus become loci for inter and trans-disciplinary research that by necessity involve complex sets of actors operating across fuzzy regional geographies, producing flexible forms of regional governance.

In this second issue of Regions eZine, we have therefore brought together a selection of articles that highlight the range of contexts and stakeholders involved in regional research and the ways in which regional researchers have engaged with these groups to effect change. In this issue's **Spotlight** article, Xiangming Chen, Julie Tian Miao and Xue Li, debate the policy challenges of China's Belt and Road Initiative. By taking a trans-regional perspective on this international initiative, they provide new insights into President Xi Jinping's ambitious vision for China to help the world achieve shared growth through "collaboration in the common human community". They also lay out how, as part of an RSA policy expo, they intend to engage with this sprawling mega-project.

Keeping the geographical focus on Asia, the first of two **Frontline** articles presents new research by Leslie Mabon on how the social and cultural context of regions and localities, in this case Tomakomai City in Hokkaido Japan, can influence policy responses to borderless environmental issues, such as climate change. The second **Frontline** article shifts our focus to the UK, where Martin Quinn redeploys classical social contract theory to assess efforts in Leicestershire

to develop an inclusive growth coalition. Both articles reflect on how engagement with stakeholders involved with the research has been beneficial not only in simply relaying the results of research, but also in creating reciprocal relationships that have contributed to the overall development of their research projects.

In **Regional Insights** we present research from a cross section of early career and senior researchers, demonstrating the ways regional studies can contribute to issues as varied as environmental resilience, urbanization and knowledge exchange. To this end and continuing the theme of university links to regional development initiated in the last edition of Regions eZine; Liliana Fonseca discusses how effectively the university's third mission of engagement has been institutionalized within academia; In a similar vein, Hugo Pinto develops the concept of the "resilience of innovation", which links ideas about innovation dynamics and resilience to anticipate how regions might respond to external shocks or systemic failures in the economy and environment; and Carolyn Cartier and Hu De challenge ideas about urbanization in China through their investigation of patterns of urbanization in Chongqing. Moritz Breul and Thomas Neise also provide us with a reflexive approach to thinking about how events for early-career researchers can support knowledge development.

The second issue of Regions eZine sees the introduction of a new section, **Research Hacks.** This section aims to provide insights into the world of academia by providing a space for established researchers to reflect on their own experiences and practices. In this issue, John Harrison considers the culture or research publication and how to develop a research profile and Lisa De Propris describes how funding applications have become an essential part of academic life. Returning in this issue are the RSA **Editors' Pick** section, which profiles papers from each of the society's five journals and the **Must Read** section, which in this issue features an interview with Hans Westlund, co-editor of 'The Post-Urban World: Emergent Transformation of Cities and Regions in the Innovative Global Economy'. This issue also reports on the latest RSA news and events in **RSA Highlights**.

Finally, we remember Ray Thomas, an economist, statistician, pioneer of the Open University, and member of the research team that produced The Containment of Urban England, who died in April 2018. His extraordinary work and contributions to make regional research a truly open and engaging scholarship should be an

inspiration to us all.

Editorial team

Eduardo Oliveira, Michael Taster and Julie Tian Miao