

Global challenges



By Sergio Palomeque (Personal webpage & Contacts).

During the RSA Annual Conference 2023, sessions were dedicated to analysing the global challenges of climate change, energy consumption needs and sustainability from different perspectives, always focusing on the contributions that can be made from the point of view of regional studies.

In the first of these sessions, the discussion focused on the conflicts and dilemmas generated by the search for a transition to renewable energies. In this sense, it was noted that research at different territorial levels is critical for policymakers to have the tools to deal with trade-offs and conflicts that the transition generates. These conflicts and dilemmas are mainly expressed at the European level, where the post-COVID situation has been combined with an armed conflict that puts pressure on energy transition decisions.

Another group of presentations discussed global environmental governance. In this area, papers were presented showing how the characteristics of border regions, in terms of political discourse, energy transition strategies and resource

availability, require levels of supra-regional coordination that can be difficult to achieve in different contexts.

A central element within this theme is the role of agriculture and food production, and the session included exciting presentations in this respect. Among the factors to be highlighted was the relevance of considering the challenges of inclusion in the agri-food sector and the role of social innovation in addressing the limitations of public policy.

The discussion on the contributions of the circular economy has a central place in this topic. In this line, it was possible to attend the presentation of interesting research papers that addressed, from this approach, the need to look beyond the levels of exploitation of natural resources and think about how this exploitation is carried out, the relevance of sharing material resources to reduce waste, or the role of education in the development of this way of organising production.

In the discussion in this area, concern for water resources' sustainability and economic activity's impact on them has been present. In this sense, work from the perspective of the blue economy provided elements to enrich the discussion. During the sessions, the possibilities offered by this approach were analysed. These included the design of public policies that can support the improvement of the living conditions, of populations that depend on these resources, while at the same time pursuing objectives linked to the preservation of these resources.

Finally, some of the hazards associated with urban development were discussed during the sessions. In particular, papers were presented analysing factors affecting the growth of settlements and transport structure, focusing on the environmental degradation that this could generate. At the same time, how specific natural hazards can affect market conditions in urban areas, with their consequent effect on the population's living conditions, was also analysed.

The topics analysed in these sessions are highly relevant to regional studies, as they affect the relationship between geography, society and politics. The impact of climate change on different regions varies significantly, affecting ecosystems, resources, and communities differently.

Regional studies provide a framework to understand these variations, allowing policymakers to develop context-specific strategies to mitigate climate change and promote environmental sustainability. Energy systems also differ regionally,

with varying levels of reliance on fossil fuels, renewable energy potentials, and energy security concerns. Regional studies help identify region-specific energy challenges, opportunities, and sustainable solutions, crucial for achieving a global transition towards a low-carbon future and ensuring the resilience of regional communities and ecosystems.

Conference photos, plenary recordings and a short conference video of the 2023 Annual Conference in Ljubljana are available at [2023 RSA Annual Conference](#).

The next RSA Annual Conference #RSA24 will be held 11th -14th June 2024 at the University of Florence, Italy. For more details, please go to [2024 RSA Annual Conference](#).

We hope you can join us in Florence for the #RSA24.

Author

Sergio Palomeque is a PhD candidate at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina and Researcher at the Institute of Economics - Universidad de la República, Uruguay. His research areas are economic geography, economics of innovation and economic complexity.