

Report on the Regions in Recovery e-Festival 2022: Reimagining Regions



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The second edition of Regions in Recovery (RinR22) began with a plenary on the topic of *The Russian-China Interface: One Border, Two Regions* with Franck Billé of the University of California Berkeley, USA, and Caroline Humphrey of the University of Cambridge, UK as the speakers and ended with a plenary on the topic of *A New State Capitalism? Debates and Directions* with Adam Dixon of Maastricht University, Linda Lobao of Ohio State University and Kean Fan Lim of Newcastle University as the speakers. The plenaries and discussions were insightful and timely considering the so-called return of the nation-state considering the recent happenings in the world.

I was particularly interested in the sessions on SMEs/family firms. The session aimed to deepen the discussions on the cross-fertilization of research on family firms and regional studies by exploring how SMEs/family and non-family firms are differently affected and influenced by their regional context and vice versa. There were two empirical presentations by Stefano Amato and Jacopo Canello, one presentation about the cross-fertilization of SMEs/family firms and regional studies research by Lech Suwala. Amato found managers' home attachment as a threat to micro-manufacturing firms but, the effect is moderated by localization

economies. Canello also found that SMEs' offshore outsourcing of production positively affects the survival chances and negatively affects the upgrading chances of local subcontractors. He argues that SMEs do not break ties locally even when they move production abroad for reasons like the fear of the unknown on the international market and place attachment but only add new tiers of production when they move abroad. In effect, SMEs do not generate displacement even when they move production abroad.

Similarly, I enjoyed the presentations by Maryame Amarouche, Vincent Beal, and Max Rousseau on left-behind-places from the global south. They presented stylized literature on left-behind-places from the global north by arguing that left-behind-places in the global south cannot be discussed in isolation from postcolonial and neoliberal policies by the state. I enjoyed the debate and suggestions around defining left-behind-places in the south since the framing of the term emanated from the north, describing regions and cities that reached a certain level of industrial growth and are now deindustrializing.

Now, where do we go with these research findings? I believe that academia and policy can benefit from these areas of research. The call for a union between SMEs/family business research and regional studies perfectly fits the research and policy quest to return to the glorious days of left-behind-places. From regional policy development, while exploring the role of the central and local governments, researchers and policymakers can study the role of SMEs/family businesses in left-behind places because they are predominantly found and embedded in and overrepresented in smaller regions and urban fringes that are often the left-behind-places. It has become important since SMEs/family business studies hardly get enough space in mainstream regional studies and sciences.

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