



Smart Specialisation for Research and Practice

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2018 was a good year for Regions eZine, a fact that was kindly reported in RSA Chairman Mark Tewdwr Jones' annual message to the membership. Over the first year of its existence, Regions eZine has moved from strength to strength - publishing 46 articles and receiving over 10,000 page-views since the launch of the first issue in June 2018.

[Regions eZine](#) has also gone mobile, with over 40% of readers now accessing Regions eZine content through their smartphones (incidentally, most regional researchers prefer iPhone). Regardless of ones' choice of phone, we feel that this means that Regions eZine is well on the way to fulfilling the

vision we set out in June: to become a dynamic digital platform that allows regional researchers to share and communicate their research in new ways.

Looking forward, 2019 is set to be another exciting year for the RSA, with conferences and events taking place across [Australasia](#), [North America](#) and [Europe](#). Not to mention Brexit, which will be the subject of the next edition of Regions eZine. For a full account, please check out the RSA's events calendar [here](#). Many themes will be discussed at these events and conferences, but one topic that cannot be avoided is Smart Specialisation. Smart Specialisation has become a key paradigm for regional studies and has been central to debates on place based strategies and cohesion policy for over a decade ([Uyarra this issue](#)). However, despite the longevity of Smart Specialisation, as a topic, it remains evergreen and in this issue's [Regional Insights](#) section, we present a selection of new developments and practical applications of the concept.

In her article Katerina Ciampi Stancova ([European Commission, Joint Research Centre](#)) outlines the objectives of the [Thematic Smart Specialisation Platform on Agri-Food](#), emphasizing its potential to accelerate the development of joint co-investment projects in thematic areas based on Smart Specialisation priorities linked to agriculture and food. John Edwards and Maria Palladino explore the contribution of [higher education institutions to implementing](#) and critically reflecting on Smart Specialisation policy, discussing results from the 'Higher Education for Smart Specialisation' project, a collaboration between the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and the [Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture](#). Bernard Musyck [examines market failures](#) and the challenges of applying Smart Specialisation strategies in the Turkish Cypriot community. Anastasiia Konstantynova, Kristin Dallinger and Heike Fischer reflect on the theoretical basis of [Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation](#) (RIS3) and provide an inspiring example of how RIS3 strategies can be implemented without localities having to constantly reinvent this policy wheel. Finally, Elvira Uyarra [provides a timely reminder that Smart Specialisation](#) is not about making EU territories more specialised, but rather about leveraging existing strengths to identify new opportunity areas for investment. Reconsidering the implementation of Smart Specialisation strategies in the past 10 years, she highlights the need for future Smart Specialisation strategies to have a stronger focus on implementation and interregional collaboration.

The **Regional Insights** section also includes a special report from Alex de Ruyter, David Hearne, and Vangelis Tsiligiris from the Centre for Brexit Studies at Birmingham City University, [showing results from a survey of RSA members with regards to their views on Brexit](#).

This issue's **Research Frontline** section features new research by Max Woodworth on the rise of [new-town projects in China](#) and from Mia Bennett. Max Woodworth argues that China's municipalities have expanded physically at a rate that outpaces the urbanization of population. This growth of the urban footprint raises urgent questions about the creation of so-called "extrastructure," or a surfeit of infrastructure and built space. Mia Bennett introduces [China's Polar Silk Road part of the Belt and Road Initiative](#) and how it has been manifested in [Kirkenes](#), a small town in far northeastern Norway, close to the Finnish and Russian borders. In this issue's **Spotlight** article, Stefania Fiorentino, examines how the growing number of co-working spaces (CWSs) in Rome reflect new patterns of local economic activity and development.

This third issue continues presenting senior academic reflections on day-to-day life within academia. In the section **Research Hacks**, Staci M. Zavattaro shares her experiences in [dealing with rejection](#) in academia.

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 interviews with [Philip McCann](#) and [Rob Kitchin](#). This issue also reports on various events in **RSA Highlights**.

We would like to welcome [Katharina Bürger](#) as the new Conference and Events Officer of the RSA. You will certainly have a chance to interact with Katharina during one of the various forthcoming [RSA events](#).

Finally, we wish you all a successful and productive year 2019. It is our hope that you find in each issue of Regions eZine inspiration and ideas relevant to your work. We would also be very happy in working with you towards a contribution.

Enjoy reading

The Editorial team

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