Smart Specialisation for Research and Practice



DOI reference: 10.1080/13673882.2018.00001020

By *Eduardo Oliveira (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium), Michael Taster (University of Sheffield, UK) and Julie Tian Miao (University of Melborne, Australia)*

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 issues' **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

Follow Regions on Twitter // #RSAeZine