

RSAI NEWSLETTER

THE REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

new series 25 - May 2026

CONTENTS

From the Editors	1
From the President	2
RSAI membership information	2
Young Scholar Interview: Inessa Tregubova	3
Center of Regional Science: Colombian Central Bank	4
Obituary: Plinio Esteban Ramirez Alvarez	5
RSAI New Fellows	5
Call for Papers: The Annals of Regional Science	6
Recent publications in Papers in Regional Science	6
News from Regional Science Policy and Practice	7
Report from the 2025 Annual Conference of the Regional Science Association of China	7

FROM THE EDITORS

The newsletter of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) appears two times a year and contains information about upcoming conferences and meetings, recent events and publications, and short contributions on current themes.

Mina Akhavan (University of Amsterdam) and Martijn Smit (Utrecht University) form the editorial team. Text contributions for the newsletter are always welcome, and can be submitted directly to Martijn (m.j.smit@uu.nl) or to Mina (m.akhavan@uva.nl). The deadline for the next issue is 15 September.

In particular, short contributions on your current research are most welcome; these can be extracts from articles or reports, or opinion pieces. We also welcome proposals for a piece in the *Center of Regional Science* series, announcements for conferences, workshops, and special issues, and reports from past events.

Martijn Smit
Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Mina Akhavan
University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands



RSAI NEWSLETTER

THE REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

new series 25 - May 2026

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Regional Scientists around the world,

I HOPE THIS MESSAGE FINDS you well. The 15th World Congress of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) will be held from June 9 to 12, 2026, at the Escuela Politécnica Nacional in Quito, Ecuador. Those planning to attend may already be preparing for the congress.



The theme of this year's congress is "Wellbeing and Sustainability: Regional Science Discussions at the Earth's Core." Under this theme, we look forward to fruitful discussions on wellbeing and sustainability from a regional science perspective.

Since its inaugural meeting in 1980, the World Congress has played a vital role in advancing regional science. This year's congress will again provide a platform for leading theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions while fostering exchange, collaboration, and new research networks.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Local Organizing Committee and its Chair, Carolina Guevara, as well as all those involved in organizing this congress. I also extend my gratitude to the RSAI Executive Director, Ana Viñuela, and the RSAI Secretariat, Elisabete Martins, for their continued support. I hope all participants enjoy a productive and rewarding congress and a pleasant stay in Quito.

I would also like to welcome Professor Janet Kohlhase from the Department of Economics at the University of Houston; she will serve as the new Vice President of RSAI and is scheduled to become its next President. Professor Kohlhase is widely recognized in the regional science community and highly respected for her contributions.

For all of us engaged in regional science, "region" is a shared perspective. Regions differ in size, networks, history, and culture, each presenting diverse challenges and opportunities across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. These challenges are often interconnected and increasingly complex, requiring comprehensive approaches grounded in local contexts.

Regional scientists play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by applying theoretical and empirical insights and working with various stakeholders (including policymakers, industry, and local communities) to understand problems and develop and implement effective solutions. Integrating knowledge across disciplines and regions is also essential.

Sharing knowledge and experiences and learning from one another enhance the quality of regional initiatives. Disseminating locally grounded insights and connecting them with practices in other regions advances the global regional science community.

Recently, regional science activities have been developing in Serbia and Southern Africa, further expanding the RSAI community. These developments are expected to contribute significantly to RSAI's continued growth and vitality.

Through these efforts, regional scientists advance sustainable development and regional resilience.

I look forward to meeting many of you at upcoming RSAI local and supra-regional meetings around the world.

Hiroyuki Shibusawa
President of the Regional Science Association International

RSAI MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

All RSAI members have online access to Papers in Regional Science (PiRS) and Regional Science Policy and Practice (RSPP), the journals of the Regional Science Association International. Some recent articles from both journals are highlighted in this newsletter.

Members can log in and access full text articles online. In addition to the RSAI publications, members are offered an opportunity to purchase other regional science journals at reduced rates and participate in the national and international conferences at reduced rates.

To become a member and for details on your membership, contact the Executive Director, Ana Viñuela, at rsai@apdr.pt, or visit www.regionalscience.org.



YOUNG SCHOLAR INTERVIEW

Inessa Tregubova won the Epainos Award at the 2025 ERSA conference. She was interviewed by Mina Akhavan.

First of all, could you tell us a bit about yourself, your academic background, and your current position?

MY NAME IS INESSA, and originally, I am from Russia. Since 2022, I have been living in Israel, where I am currently doing my PhD. My academic journey started in Moscow, where I obtained a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Economics, quite far from regional science. Honestly, I did not initially plan to pursue an academic career. I started working in a bank as a data scientist. It was interesting and well-paid.

However, at the same time, I was always interested in using data for social impact, so when one day I learned that data analysis can be used to improve residents' quality of life in cities, I thought: this is what I want to do—this is where I want to apply my skills.

For this purpose, I decided to pursue a master's in Urban Analytics, supported by a Chevening Scholarship, which allowed me to study in the UK. I graduated from the University of Glasgow, where I gained the background, I am now using for my PhD, including understanding how cities function and how to conduct spatial analysis. This is how I transitioned into social science and regional science.

Currently, I am doing my PhD at the Geography Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the supervision of Professor Daniel Felsenstein. Honestly, I couldn't be happier with the place and the people.



I found there is an excellent combination of deep expertise and supportive environment – an essential balance for the PhD student.

My research focuses on the changes in urban economics that emerged after COVID-19 due to remote work. I first touched on this topic in my Master's thesis, where I studied how museums influenced neighbourhoods' street recovery after the lockdowns. The topic felt so relevant and engaging that I decided to continue working on it for my PhD.

Congratulations on receiving the Epainos Award. Could you briefly introduce the research that led to this recognition and its contribution to regional science?

Thank you. As I mentioned, my PhD focuses on the economic impacts of remote work, and I examine different aspects of this topic.

The research I presented at the ERSA conference specifically looked at the impact of working from home—more precisely, the opportunity to work from home—on rental prices. While many papers study similar topics, our approach was different because we analysed the effects at the neighbourhood level.

We examined how factors such as distance to the city centre and accessibility to local services influence this relationship and ultimately affect rental prices. This neighbourhood-level perspective is, I believe, an important contribution.

In your view, what are the key implications of your work for policy or practice, particularly in regional or urban contexts?

We discussed this a lot with my supervisor, and I think the main implications are policy-related.

When you understand why some neighbourhoods benefit more from

Prof. Roberta Capello handed out the Epainos Award to Inessa at the ERSA conference in Athens



remote work while others do not, this becomes very important for policy. It helps identify how to support and improve less advantaged areas and how to foster more balanced development.

In my case, I study the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, where there are significant differences in urban amenities between central areas and the periphery. These disparities are very visible, and the findings of my research are particularly relevant in this context.

The Epainos Award recognises outstanding work by young scholars. What does this recognition mean to you at this stage of your academic career?

This is a very important question for me. I should start by saying how important it was for me to attend the conference itself, as it was my first international conference. It was also my first time meeting other academics as a PhD student.

For the first time, I felt that this is a place where I belong. I felt comfortable discussing research, and I was inspired by the motivation and knowledge of others.

Receiving the prize in this environment was completely unexpected. It meant a lot to me. Like many PhD students, I sometimes have doubts about whether I want to continue in academia, especially since I had a professional career before. This recognition gave me strong encouragement—it reassured me that I am on the right path and motivated me to continue.

Looking ahead, what research directions or emerging topics in regional science are you most interested in exploring in the coming years?

There are two directions I would like to explore. The first is continuing research on neighbourhood development, particularly through the role of urban amenities. The second is more technical. During the conference, I noticed that many regional scientists are not yet fully using big data. For example, I work with GPS data, which requires strong programming skills—skills I developed during my Bachelor's. I would like to contribute to bridging this gap and help strengthen data-related skills within the social sciences.

Finally, what advice would you give to early-career researchers or PhD students working in regional science today?

Since I have not yet graduated, my advice is based on my current experience during the PhD. The most important thing is choosing the right topic. Before starting, you should imagine yourself working on it even during weekends, when everyone else is outside and you are still working. If that feels acceptable—or even enjoyable—then the topic is right for you. If not, it will be very difficult to stay motivated.

The topic should be a strong source of inspiration. In my opinion, this is what sustains you throughout the PhD and gives you the energy to continue for several years.

CENTER OF REGIONAL SCIENCE

In this section, we visit Centers of Regional Science across the world. Suggestions for destinations are most welcome! This time, the contribution is from the Central Bank of Colombia, by Jaime Bonet.

THE CENTER FOR REGIONAL Economic Studies (CEER) of the Banco de la República (Colombian Central Bank) was established in 1997 in Cartagena, becoming the institution's first research center outside

the Colombian capital, Bogotá. Its creation was motivated by the reforms introduced by the 1991 Colombian Constitution, which redefined the Central Bank's roles and explicitly recognized the generation of economic knowledge as one of its core functions. In response to these new mandates, the Central Bank created the CEER as its first move to extend its research activities beyond Bogotá and into the country's regions.

The center was initially conceived to study the economic development of the Colombian Caribbean region, where, at the time, per capita GDP was half of what was observed in the rest of the country, more than a third of the population lived in conditions of unsatisfied basic needs, and illiteracy rates doubled national figures. Three decades after its foundation, research has expanded to all 32 Colombian departments (states), with a mission that goes beyond diagnosis. It aims to generate high-quality research that can inform public debate and guide policy decisions.

One of the strengths of the center resides in the multidisciplinary character of its research team. Starting with just three researchers, the team has grown to eight researchers with doctoral degrees from leading universities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, in disciplines that reflect the complexity of Colombia's regional challenges: agricultural and applied economics, geography, regional planning, economic history, regional science, and economics.

The center's research agenda has also expanded in response to Colombia's shifting development challenges and advances in research methodological tools. Today, the center's work is structured around six core research areas: demography, climate change, public finance, regional development, urban economics, and economic history. Within each of these areas, researchers tackle a wide range of specific issues, such as population dynamics, environmental vulnerability, subnational fiscal policy, regional inequality, housing markets, and the long-run roots of divergent development trajectories in Colombian regions.

For nearly thirty years, the center has built a strong record of academic output and scholarly recognition. It has published over 400 papers across its two main working paper series: Working papers on Regional and Urban Economics (DTSERU, by its Spanish acronym) and Notebooks on Economic History (CHE, by its Spanish acronym), along with more than



RSAI NEWSLETTER

THE REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

new series 25 - May 2026



25 books in its Regional Economics Collection (Colección de Economía Regional) and several co-publications with national and international institutions. According to Research Papers in Economics (RePEc), the leading international platform for ranking economic research institutions, the center has been consistently ranked among the top 10 research centers in Colombia, a position that reflects the sustained quality and visibility of its work. Similarly, different members of our team have been recognized by leading academic associations and institutions, including the Western Regional Science Association, the European Regional Science Association, the North American Regional Science Council, the National Academy of Economic Sciences and Economic History, and Charles University.

Finally, the center's influence on public policy has been appreciable. Working papers usually offer policy recommendations, and researchers actively engage with government agencies at the national and subnational levels, multilateral organizations, and civil society across Colombia's regions. Equally impactful, the center has served as a training ground for the next generation of regional economists, hosting dozens of interns from universities throughout the country, many of whom have pursued academic or policy careers. Overall, this dual commitment to rigorous research and policy engagement has defined the center's identity for nearly three decades, enabling it to respond and adapt to the unfolding challenges of a rapidly evolving world.

OBITUARY: PLINIO ESTEBAN RAMIREZ ALVAREZ

IN THE FIRST WEEK of January, we received tragic news. On 14 December 2025, Dr. Plinio Esteban Ramirez Alvarez sadly passed away, aged just 44.

Plinio worked at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción (UNA), Paraguay, as Docente Investigador de la Carrera de Licenciatura en Administración Agropecuaria. Eduardo met Plinio years ago, as his career path brought him to Brazil, where he earned a BA in Agricultural Economics from the Universidade Federal do Ceará and a Ph.D. in Agribusiness from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Plinio has played a very active role in connecting the RSAI to the Paraguay institute, where he worked. The main technical channel connecting his university with regional science was through the use of Input-Output models. In March 2023, the RSAI organized a summer school entitled

“Regional Analysis of Input-output: Applications for Paraguay”, where local students and scholars attended classes that eventually led to the generation of the first regional IO table for the Country of Paraguay. Local staff were incredibly hospitable laughs and talks were not missed. One of the highlights of the summer school was a soccer game played between the home team and a mix of RSAI instructors. In the picture below, Plinio is the tenth player from the left, standing up. The RSAI team wears a black-and-green shirt, kindly provided by Eduardo Haddad, in the colors of his favorite Brazilian team (América Futebol Clube from Minas Gerais). The game was fair and hard-fought, and ended with a sumptuous barbecue offered by UNA colleagues.

We stand shocked by the sudden news. Plinio fought bravely and with a smile on his face, the same we will remember him for, against a kidney disease. He sure will be missed and remembered by all who had the luck to know him.

*Eduardo Haddad
University of Sao Paulo, Brasil
Past President of the RSAI*

*Andrea Caragliu
Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Previous Executive Director of the RSAI*



NEW FELLOWS

THE RSAI PRESIDENT, PROF Shibusawa, and the RSAI Executive Director, Ana Vinuela, have the pleasure to announce the new elected RSAI Fellow for 2026.

But first, we would like to thank the members of the RSAI Fellows Selection Committee, made up of Prof. Jouke van Dijk (chair), Amit Batabyal and Sarah Low, who received and evaluated the candidatures for this year's RSAI Fellows election; and also thank all the RSAI Fellows that participated in the ballot.

According to the votes received from the RSAI Fellows, three new Fellows have been elected this year (ordered in alphabetical order):

- Simona Iammarino (Gran Sasso Science Institute in L'Aquila, Italy)
- Julie Le Gallo (L'Institut Agro Dijon, France)
- Bruce Newbold (McMaster University, Canada)

Congratulations to all for this outstanding achievement!

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Annals of Regional Science* have opened a call for papers for a collection on **Addressing inequalities in digital transformation: policies and impacts**, edited by *Valentina Cattivelli and Benedetta Coluccia*. The submission deadline is 31 December 2026.

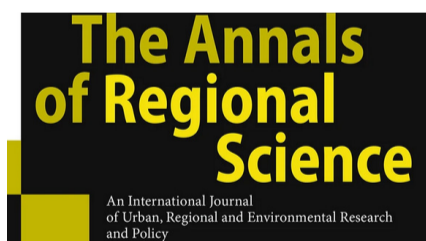
Digital transformation is reshaping societies, offering opportunities for growth and innovation while simultaneously exacerbating existing inequalities and creating new forms of exclusion (Li et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024). Urban areas, with advanced infrastructures, tend to benefit disproportionately from digital transformation compared to rural and remote regions, where inadequate broadband access, lower digital literacy, and weaker policy implementation hinder progress (Suh, 2025; Garashchuk et al., 2025). This divide reflects broader socio-economic inequalities, with marginalized groups – such as low-income households and the elderly – facing barriers to accessing digital tools, which perpetuate disparities in education, employment, and participation in the digital economy (Tewathia et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2024). Gender inequality also exacerbates these challenges, particularly for women in rural and low-income settings (Mariscal et al., 2019). Digital transformation intersects with economic policy, influencing fiscal strategies and public investments, such as subsidies for digital infrastructure and digital literacy programs, which are essential to reducing territorial disparities (European Commission, 2022; Reggi and Gil-Garcia, 2023). However, poorly targeted measures risk increasing inequalities by benefiting technologically advanced regions and large firms, while SMEs and peripheral areas struggle (Morris et al., 2022; Cristofolletti et al., 2024). While digital transformation enhances access and fosters innovation, it can negatively impact well-being by deepening inequalities (Barbero and Rodríguez-Crespo, 2022). Smart city projects often prioritize urban areas, leaving rural regions underserved (Manjon et al., 2022; Wuth, 2023).

This collection explores the impact of digitalization on inequality, focusing on socio-economic, territorial, and gender dimensions, and examines policies to address these disparities.

We encourage submissions including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Digital transformation and social inequalities
- Digital policies and territorial disparities
- Digitalization and the gender gap
- Urban-rural digital divide
- Digital literacy and inclusion
- Fiscal policies and regional digital gaps
- Marginalized communities and digital access
- E-governance and accessibility
- Smart cities and territorial inequalities
- Broadband access and regional development.
- Digital sustainable development
- ESG and digital inclusion

Submissions to this Collection will undergo the same strict peer-reviewing process like regular submissions to the journal.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN PAPERS IN REGIONAL SCIENCE

When the social dimension meets spatial analysis

LAST MARCH, *PAPERS IN Regional Science* granted the 2026 Martin Beckmann Annual Award to a very relevant contribution: [Adolescence socioeconomic segregation and high-skilled jobs in adulthood](#), authored by Sofia Wixe, Charlotta Mellander and José Lobo and published in August 2025. This contribution addresses a highly interesting topic by linking social and geographical mobility as strategies for upward mobility. The authors present an innovative analysis on the influence of neighborhood environments on children's future outcomes. Specifically, the study examines the extent to which neighborhood segregation during adolescence affects the likelihood of securing a high-skill occupation in adulthood. Using Swedish microdata, the authors find that growing up in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty and low levels of educational attainment reduces the probability of pursuing occupations that require advanced higher education. The study also shows that relocating to metropolitan areas can help mitigate neighborhood disadvantages. The research strategy relies on multinomial logit estimations and is methodologically sound. The findings also have important policy implications. Tailored intervention programs are recommended, focusing on improving educational opportunities and job prospects. In addition, policies should promote spatial mobility—particularly toward metropolitan areas—to increase the likelihood of obtaining high-skill occupations in adulthood. Similarly, policy initiatives that support parents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are encouraged, as they can foster children's cognitive development and, consequently, improve their future career prospects.



Another interesting contribution along these lines is the article by Yang Cheng, Tessa Conroy, and Steven C. Deller published in the February issue. They propose an original contribution titled [Multidimensional Measures of Quality of Life: A Comparison of Methods Using U.S. County-Level Data](#). Their study aims to overcome the aspatial dimension of subjectively weighted combinations of different place-based measures of quality of life. They focus their analysis on U.S. county-level quality-of-life rankings across methods and levels of rurality. They conclude that, while quality-of-life measures are generally highly correlated across methods, the choice of spatial method affects the rankings of individual counties. They identify that the most urban and the most rural counties exhibit the greatest sensitivity to methodological choice. These findings underscore the importance of properly conducting sensitivity analyses, particularly in urban and rural contexts, to better understand the spatial factors shaping quality of life.

Finally, another important stream of research related to the social dimension—and one in which PIRS is among the leading contributors—is culture and local development. In the April issue, the journal published a very original article by Romain Lerouge and Michela Arnaboldi titled [Raising Cultural Participation: Limits and Pitfalls of Cultural Spending in Cities](#). Their study emphasizes the role of cultural participation as a catalyst for urban vitality and transformation within a spatial framework. The authors begin from the observation that cities invest heavily in supporting cultural initiatives

within their territories. However, the impact of these investments is linked to citizens' propensity to participate in cultural initiatives, which in turn depends on several socioeconomic factors that may either limit or encourage engagement with cultural offerings, themselves strongly dependent on public spending in cities. Focusing on Lombardy, a NUTS 2 region in Italy, the authors conclude that the relationship between cultural spending and cultural participation is significant only in wealthier cities with lower levels of economic deprivation. At the same time, the study highlights that local administrators can play an important role in fostering such participation by integrating cultural policies into their broader public policy portfolios.

These are just a few examples of the rich range of contributions that can emerge from linking spatial analysis with the social dimension in order to improve our understanding of citizens' preferences, aspirations, and concerns and, consequently, to provide a better tailoring of place-based policies.

Rosella Nicolini, editor-in-chief

NEWS FROM REGIONAL SCIENCE POLICY AND PRACTICE

The 2026 RSPP Best Paper Award was awarded in April 2026. The jury, made up of Alessandra Faggian (RSAI Fellow), Terciane Sabadini-Carvalho (RSPP Editor), Andrea Caragliu (RSPP EiC), Dan Rickman (RSAI Fellow), and Yoshiro Higano (RSAI Fellow), selected the following paper published by Regional Science, Policy & Practice as recipient of the 2026 RSPP best paper award:

Teixeira, D. N., Santos, G. F., & Carmo, T. O. (2025). Gender gap and local economic diversity in microfinance: Evidence from the microcredit program in Brazil. *Regional Science Policy & Practice*, 17(9), 100217. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rspp.2025.100217>

The jury provided the following motivation:

The paper by Diego Teixeira, Gervásio Santos, and Tyago Carmo enters the literature tackling the financial aspects of the gender gap. With the application of sophisticated econometric techniques, including PSM, Instrumental Variables, and logistic regressions, the authors document the existence of a substantial and statistically significant gender gap in the CrediBahia program in the State of Bahia, Brazil. Their findings suggest a lower probability of default and higher chances of profits for women engaged in the microcredit program with respect to males. The paper perfectly fits the scope of the journal, and highlights the spatial aspects in the assessment of the impact of a local policy. Congratulations to the authors!

Congratulations to the prize winners on their achievement!

REPORT FROM THE 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION OF CHINA

FROM NOVEMBER 21 TO 23, the 2025 annual conference of the Regional Science Association of China (RSAC) was held at the China University of Geosciences in Beijing. This year's conference was jointly hosted by the Regional Science Association of China and the China University of Geosciences (Beijing). The conference, themed "Regional Science Development in the Era of Digital Intelligence," featured 13 keynote speeches and 10 parallel forums on topics such as the integration of digital intelligence technology and regional economy, theoretical innovation and



practice of coordinated regional development, new paths for high-quality regional development, and the development of spatial economy and regional economic theories.

At the opening ceremony, Lei Yalin, the Party Secretary of the China University of Geosciences (Beijing), delivered a welcoming speech. She pointed out that the advent of the digital intelligence era is profoundly reshaping the connotation and pattern of regional development, expecting scholars to engage in in-depth discussion of new theories, methods, and paths to inject strong momentum into coordinated regional development. Following this, Liu Binglian, the President of RSAC and Dean of the Institute of Economic and Social Development at Nankai University, delivered a speech emphasizing the revolutionary opportunities brought by artificial intelligence to regional and urban development. He called for the use of AI to empower the digital upgrade of regional economic research, break through core pain points in regional development, and expand the research boundaries of regional economics.



This annual conference focused on "Regional Science Development in the Era of Digital Intelligence," aiming to address the significant practical demands posed by the digital transformation for regional science scholars in China. Alongside the main speeches and parallel forums, the event also successfully organized a journal forum and high-end dialogues. The participating experts and scholars engaged in in-depth discussions, achieving a mutual resonance between theoretical innovation and practical exploration, and condensing a new consensus on regional science development in the context of Chinese-style modernization.

At the closing ceremony, representatives from the parallel forums introduced their discussions, and Wu Sanmang, Dean of the School of Economics and Management at the China University of Geosciences (Beijing), made a summary of the conference. Following the official handover of the conference flag to Luo Zhi, Associate Dean of the Economics and Management School at Wuhan University, it was announced that the 2026 Annual Conference of the Regional Science Association of China will be hosted by Wuhan University.

Tieshan Sun and Paul Snow