

# RSAI NEWSLETTER

THE REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

*new series 23 -April/May 2024*

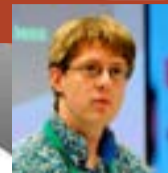
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## FROM THE EDITORS

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 (TU Delft) 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](mailto:m.j.smit@uu.nl)) or to Mina ([m.a.akhavan@tudelft.nl](mailto:m.a.akhavan@tudelft.nl)). The deadline for the next issue is 15 October. 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 Excellence* series.



*Martijn Smit*  
*Utrecht University, the Netherlands*

*Mina Akhavan*  
*TU Delft, the Netherlands*

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## WELCOME

DEAR REGIONAL SCIENTISTS across the world,

I am writing these lines a few days before RSAI's World Congress in Kecskemet, Hungary, starting April 8-11, 2024. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and all the uncertainties it led to, this is our first congress in six years – but now, finally, regional scientists from all continents are meeting again to present and discuss new findings in theories and empirics. We look forward to having outstanding keynote speakers from four continents, three policy sessions on state-of-the-art issues, lots of presentations, planned and spontaneous meetings, and exchanges of knowledge and ideas.

I am very grateful to the Local Organizing Committee, co-chaired by Dr Balázs Forman and Dr József Kárpáti, together with Mr. Imre Vegvari. Besides all their regular tasks and commissions, they have done an incredible job with the preparations for the congress. Moreover, the RSAI Executive Director, Dr. Andrea Caragliu and the secretariat, Ms Elisabete Martins, have been completely indispensable in organizing the congress.

I also would like to take the opportunity to say welcome to the new Vice President and upcoming President of the RSAI, Professor Hiroyuki Shibusawa, at the Toyohashi University of Technology in Japan. As a former Executive Director of PRSCO, Professor Shibusawa is well-known in the regional science community.

In various parts of the world, initiatives are taken that we hope will manifest in new sections of the RSAI. This is great and a sign that there is a need for regional science, both in the academy and in “the real world”. Life would be easy if the task of RSAI were only to organize conferences in new countries. However, there are also sections that do not work so well and that need new energy. To solve these problems, RSAI and the supranational associations need to collaborate better in order to support these sections.

Another issue that the regional science community at all levels needs to be better at is gender equality and representation of minorities – in the organizations as such but even more in leading positions. This is not a quick fix. Power structures and uneven allocation of resources are not changed during a coffee break – but the worst we can do is to pretend that they don't exist. Therefore, my call to the regional science community at all levels is to put these issues as standing items on the agenda for our associations.

## 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, Andrea Caragliu at [andrea.caragliu@polimi.it](mailto:andrea.caragliu@polimi.it), or visit [www.regionalscience.org](http://www.regionalscience.org).



The world congress and the yearly meetings of the supranational and national sections are fantastic events where we share and learn knowledge, meet old and new friends, and feel the spirit of regional science. I hope to see you at some of these events.

And don't forget: Keep on rocking'!

*Hans Westlund  
President of the RSAI*



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## YOUNG SCHOLAR INTERVIEW: EVAN CUNNINGHAM

*Evan Cunningham won the 2023 Student paper competition at that year's NARSC conference in San Diego. He is a PhD student in Minnesota (USA). Mina Akhavan interviewed him for this newsletter.*

*Tell us a little bit about yourself (career-wise), your relationship with the Regional Science community and the importance of receiving awards and prizes, in general, for early career researchers.*

**M**Y NAME IS Evan Cunningham, and I am an economist and PhD candidate in the Economics Department at the University of Minnesota, focusing on labor economics, urban economics, and public policy. I also work part-time in the Opportunity and Inclusive Growth Institute at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis\*. Prior to my PhD, I worked at the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the Current Population Survey (CPS) Office, on the team responsible for the monthly jobs report. My current research studies the labor market effects of the expansion of Amazon's fulfillment center network across the U.S.

I've only recently become involved with the regional science community. I discovered the North American Regional Science Council (NARSC) last year when I was looking for graduate student-friendly conferences to present my research. I was drawn to the interdisciplinary nature of the group – researchers from different regional science disciplines often have unique ways of thinking about economic questions, and especially as a younger scholar, I think being exposed to those different perspectives is valuable.

I was incredibly grateful to win the Best Graduate Student-Authored Paper Award at the 2023 NARSC Conference in San Diego, especially considering how many high-quality student papers there were. I think early career recognition, even if it's just being invited to present at a conference, is important because it provides external validation that we are on the right track. Writing my first paper as a PhD student, I often doubted whether I would find any interesting results, and whether anyone would care. The recognition I have gotten from the regional science community has given me the confidence to keep pushing forward and to believe in the value of my research.

*As a young scholar, how do you make a balance between research, teaching and activities outside academia (if any)? In this regard, did the pandemic and the shift towards hybrid working affect your work, and how did you recover?*

I am most productive and focused when I take care of myself physically and emotionally. To me, this means working hard on my research, but also spending time on non-economics activities I enjoy. For instance, I enjoy running, so I prioritize weekly meetups with a running club in the Twin Cities, even if I'm behind on work. I think it's also helpful to make friends outside of the academic world. Spending time with them can help keep the challenges of graduate school and research in perspective.

For me, the pandemic reinforced the importance of spending time with your colleagues, sharing ideas, and asking for help when you need it. In the early stages of your career, producing good research is difficult. It is even harder to do it alone!

*Lastly, do you have general advice for PhD students and early career researchers in*



*regional science? how would you advise young scholars to build a successful career in academia or outside (in the industry?)*

It's worth noting that I am only just getting started in my research career, but from my own experience so far, I have three recommendations:

First, I strongly recommend choosing a research topic that you are passionate about. Writing a dissertation or job market paper is a multi-year slog, and it can be difficult to stay motivated if you aren't really interested in the topic. If you don't truly believe your research is important, how can you expect to convince others of its importance?

Second, seek feedback from a wide range of people, and choose advisors who believe in you and your research. PhD students sometimes take their advisors' comments as gospel. While advisors are often subject matter experts, and their advice should be given proper weight, soliciting feedback from a diverse set of colleagues will provide greater perspective when making key decisions in your research. I would be skeptical of advisors who expect students to always follow their advice (and ignore all others). Instead, I would seek out advisors who believe in the value of your work, and who can provide feedback in a style that works for you.

Third, connect with your colleagues and lift them up! I highly recommend presenting and attending conferences as often as you can. When you attend, be generous with your time and attention. Ask questions, discuss related work, and offer to read drafts. These conversations are how joint projects get started, and how friendships are formed. The connections you build will make being a member of the regional science community more fulfilling and may help you find a job someday!

\*Views expressed here are my own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.



## RSAI MEDALS: THE FOUNDER'S MEDAL

AS YOU MAY know, the single most important award bestowed by the RSAI is called 'Founder's medal'. In 1978, the Association honored its founder, Professor Walter Isard, by establishing the Founder's Medal. The prize is awarded every four years, and is assigned in view of extraordinary scientific contributions to the discipline. As such, it is the single most important prize awarded by the RSAI. You may find a list of eminent previous winners at <https://regionalscience.org/index.php/awards/rsai-founder-s-medal.html>.

*The 2024 Founder's medal goes to Prof. Jacques Thisse, University of Louvain.*

To come to this decision, the RSAI Honors committee appointed a five-members committee, comprising past presidents and Fellows of the RSAI, to select nominees. The committee comprised Hans Westlund (RSAI president); Isabelle Nillson (Charlotte, Council member); Kara Kocklemann (UTexas, Fellow); Carlos Azzoni (University of Sao Paulo, Fellow); Budy Resosudarmo (past President and Fellow, Australian National University). The three nominees were ranked by all previous winners of the prize as jury in charge.

Congratulations to Jacques!

*Andrea Caragliu, RSAI executive director*



## RSAI MEDALS: THE MARTIN BECKMANN AWARD

THE COMMITTEE IN charge of selecting the winner of the 2024 Martin Beckmann award completed the selection of the papers published in PIRS in 2023. The committee was made up of Carlos Azzoni (LARSA), Janet Kohlhase (NARSC), Frank van Oort (ERSA) and Rosella Nicolini (ERSA, PiRS EiC). The winner of the 2024 edition of the Martin Beckmann is the paper:

*Vicente Rios, Mercedes Beltrán-Esteve, Lisa Gianmoena, Jesús Peiró-Palomino, Andrés J Picazo-Tadeo: Quality of government and women's political empowerment: Evidence from European Regions, Papers in Regional Science vol. 102, issue 6, pp. 1067-1097.*

The motivation from the Jury is as follows: "This study proposes a novel contribution that shifts the research frontier of the literature on the quality of government, from a regional perspective, by emphasizing the relevance of the gender dimension. Referring to European regions, the authors produce valuable insights endorsed by precise quantitative evidence on the extent women's political empowerment rises the quality of the government that, in turn, boosts female empowerment. From a technical viewpoint, this contribution implements a solid research methodology that addresses endogeneity with a tailored identification strategy by exploiting GS3SLS-RF method and dealing with spatial analysis in a causal framework."

I extended the congratulations to all winners on behalf of the Council.

*Andrea Caragliu, RSAI executive director*

## IN MEMORIAM: GORDON MULLIGAN

THE WESTERN REGIONAL Science Association is deeply saddened by the loss of Professor Gordon F. Mulligan, who passed away at home in British Columbia on November 12, 2023, after a short period of hospice care. Gordon lived a week and day past his 76th birthday, having been born on November 4, 1947.

Growing up in the company-owned mill town of Woodfibre, British Columbia, accessible to the outside world only by boat, Gordon's wide-ranging polymath attributes and mathematical acumen became apparent at an early age. He attended Howe Sound Secondary in the nearby central place of Squamish, B.C., where he excelled in both academics and sports.

As an undergraduate at the University of British Columbia (UBC) beginning in the mid-1960s, Gordon discovered the focus of his scholarly interests, economic geography and mathematical models, as well as a passion for academia. He loved UBC so much that he spent a full decade there. He produced a 1972 M.A. thesis, City Size Distributions: Foundations of Analysis, and a 1976 Ph.D. dissertation, Structure and Processes in the Christallerian System, that set the stage for a distinguished and prolific career in regional science. Following a pair of visiting positions at the University of Washington and Queens University, Gordon joined the faculty of the Department of Geography and Regional Development at the University of Arizona, Tucson, in 1978, where he taught until he retired in 2006.

Throughout his time in Arizona, Gordon remained personally connected to small-town British Columbia, returning each summer to visit his parents. The Woodfibre pulp mill, where his father had worked until shortly before his death and Gordon had held summer jobs, was closed by its owner, Western Forest

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### FULL ARTICLE

## Quality of government and women's political empowerment: Evidence from European regions

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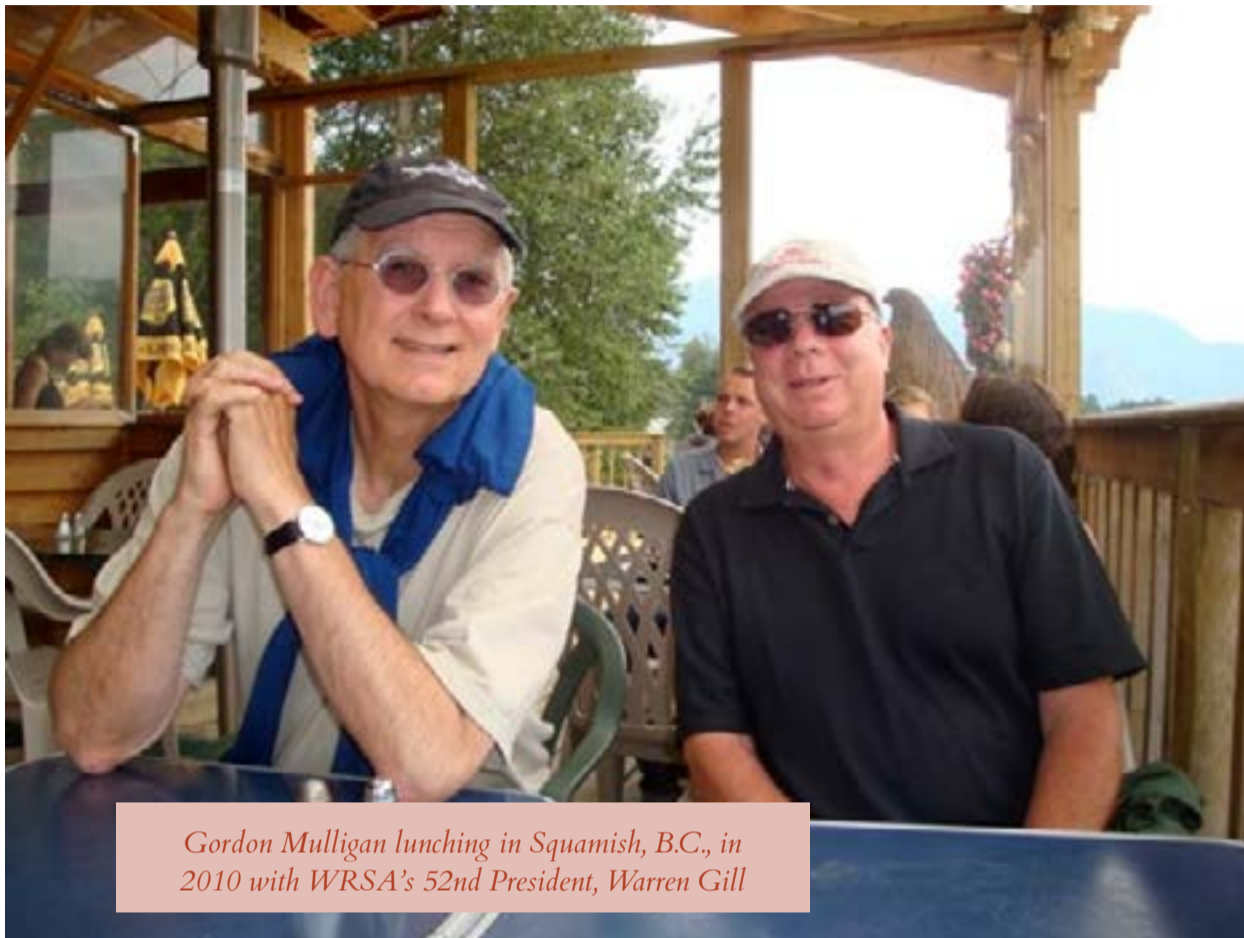
### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between women's political empowerment (WPE) and the quality of government (QoG) in European regions. The analysis considers both the endogeneity of the QoG and female empowerment, and their spatial interdependence. We use exogenous variation in preindustrial societal traits, legal origins, and geographic and climatic characteristics to construct instruments using ran-

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*Gordon Mulligan lunching in Squamish, B.C., in 2010 with WRSA's 52nd President, Warren Gill*

Products, in 2006. The mill and townsite were razed and put up for sale. Today it is the location of Woodfibre Liquid Natural Gas, a large hydroelectric-powered facility. Its parent company plans to open it in 2027 to supply growing markets in Asia, touting the environmental benefits of displacing coal and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Post-retirement, Gordon moved back up to Squamish, where he kept up an active agenda as an independent scholar and continued on as Book Review editor of the WRSA's official journal, *The Annals of Regional Science*. An avid movie buff, he was also extremely well-read in fiction and literature. He segued from his long-time University of Arizona faculty-staff bowling career into throwing the rock on a senior curling team, and, as part of providing care for his aging mother, he no doubt raised the level of play of her bridge group.

Gordon's theoretical and empirical research contributions to regional science directly reflected the locational circumstances of his upbringing. He listed his disciplines on ResearchGate as Transport Economics, Real Estate Economics, and Economic Geography, and among his skills and expertise, Regional Development, Regional Science, Regional and Urban Economics, Cities, and Place. The faculty group he joined in 1978 at Arizona was the last geography department at a major U.S. university to be housed within a business college. Gordon's research interests in the economic base of communities, settlement-size distributions, central place theory, transportation, regional development (in particular, the "chicken-and-egg" connections between economic and population growth), and the structure of small-town and micropolitan area economies, which were kindled in his childhood and in grad school, would be further enflamed and greatly expanded thanks to his career-long academic home base.

As part of both its unique and highly popular business school undergraduate major in regional development (originally area development) and its geography master's degree, the University of Arizona's department offered a six-week summer traveling field camp course. Co-directed by Professors Richard Reeves (Gordon's closest Tucson personal friend) and Lay Gibson, the camp's unique curriculum featured and integrated projects in both physical and economic

geography. Student teams each year carried out studies in Arizona's diverse ecosystems and in small, often remote, small-town communities. These student teams would census and then interview and assemble micro transaction and trade figures from all local businesses. Gordon was fascinated by the potential of these nearly comprehensive data to expose the workings of functionally specialized economies and to benchmark models. Together with student and colleague collaborators, he deployed this unique Arizona community data base in a series of papers evaluating the accuracy and proposing extensions to traditional economic base multiplier methods.

In 1980–81, the Arizona department would add its third active regional scientist, David Plane from the regional science department at Penn, and in the subsequent year, under the tenure of Lay Gibson as Department Head, the geography department would leave the College of Business and Public Administration to join a fledgling College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Gibson at this time was also assuming the leadership position (replacing Robert Monahan of Western Washington University) of the Western Regional Science Association, with

Mulligan and Plane beginning what would become lifetime involvements with the Association.

In 1985, the departmental headship passed to Gordon. During his five-year term he would lay substantial groundwork for, and touch off the upcoming rise in prominence of Arizona as one of the U.S.'s top-20 geography doctoral programs and as a world-renowned center of regional science. (Gordon would later come back to serve one-year stint as Acting Head). Gordon increased the visibility of geography and regional development on campus and externally by extending courtesy joint and adjunct faculty appointments to geographers and faculty with geographic expertise who had been hired in other units across the university.

During the 1990s, the core group of internationally active regional scientist scholars at Arizona was expanded with the hirings of University of Illinois Ph.D.'s, Adrian Esparza and Brigitte Waldorf in Geography and Regional Development, and University of Washington Ph.D., John Carruthers in the M.S. program in Planning, a group whose faculty also included Penn Regional Science Ph.D., Arthur Silvers.

The department's regional development undergraduate major numbers rose dramatically during Gordon's administration after the degree program was moved from Business and Public Administration to Social and Behavioral Sciences, and then during Plane's subsequent headships when it peaked at more than 300. Gibson, Mulligan, and Plane served as student faculty advisors and taught the majority the core curriculum. Gordon's staple, highly enrolled undergraduate courses were titled, Economic Geography, Urban Geography, Locational Analysis, and Regional Analysis. The 1980s and 1990s would also see Gordon mentoring and carrying out collaborative research with increasing numbers of graduate students.

After stepping down as Head in 1990, Gordon's extramural professional service commitments increased in 1994 when Plane was asked by longtime *Journal of Regional Science* Managing Editor, Ronald Miller, to move the journal's office from Philadelphia to Tucson. Plane agreed, on the condition that Mulligan

join him as Co-editor. Their efficient working arrangement and happy tenure guiding the JRS would extend through 2002, when the editorial team reins were passed to Marlon Boarnet and Andy Haughwout. Marlon recalls that, during the transition, Gordon told him that he and Dave had worked hard to maintain the JRS as a “classy” operation.

Though Gordon formally retired in 2006, he did not stop his work in regional science or his devotion to it: he remained a prolific author and a stalwart mentor to junior members of the field. In February, 2010, a celebratory dinner and a series of special sessions were held in his honor at the WRSA’s annual meeting in Sedona, Arizona, yielding a special (2012) issue of *The Annals of Regional Science*.

The year 2010 also saw Gordon’s election as a Fellow of the Regional Science Association International. Although this honor is usually conveyed at a major international conference, he chose to receive his plaque, presented by David Boyce, while hiking in Glacier National Park. The “Meet the Fellows” autobiographical article that Gordon wrote in 2015 for the RSAI Newsletter is a lively and interesting read, with the piece beginning: Imagine if you can an Allan Stilltoe novel set on a Norwegian fjord and you might have some idea about my childhood years!

In recognition of Gordon’s corpus of intellectual accomplishments and his four decades of contributions to WRSA, he was named a WRSA Fellow at the 2014 Annual Meeting in San Diego.

Up through last summer, Gordon continued to travel the globe and to present and participate at regional science conferences, in particular those of the WRSA and the British and Irish Section (BIS). At the July, 2023 BIS meeting in Newcastle, he gave a talk on the legacy and central place research contributions of John Parr in the Regional Science Academy’s Great Minds session.

At the upcoming February 11–14, 2024, WRSA Annual Meeting in Monterey, California, Professor Neil Reid, University of Toledo, will present a Regional Science Academy, Great Minds in Regional Science talk on Gordon Mulligan’s scholarship.

While Gordon gave talks and tended to various duties at academic meetings, he played another, very special role: he was a hub of activity, both socially and professionally. Whether it was the (late) morning, afternoon, evening, or wee hours of the night, he was with friends and colleagues, launching new projects and revisiting past explorations. His generosity with ideas was infectious, fun, and inspiring, particularly to junior colleagues. A man of tall stature, Gordon was informed and passionate about big concepts in all realms, not just those of geographic location and economic theory about which he was especially expert.

Like so many members of our field, Gordon loved models—especially gravity models and models of spatial equilibrium. It seems fitting, then, to end this description of his life and career with an analogy to a model. In the mid-1500s, the great mathematician Copernicus advanced a model of heliocentrism, placing, for the first time, the Earth and other celestial objects in orbit around the sun. A Copernican model of WRSA might well place Gordon at a central (albeit far from stationary!) location, with those of us lucky enough to be in his orbit drawn close by his gravity and warmed by the bright light of his intellect, humor, and enduring smile.

*John Carruthers and David Plane*

## GEOGRAPHY OF INNOVATION WINTER SCHOOL 2024

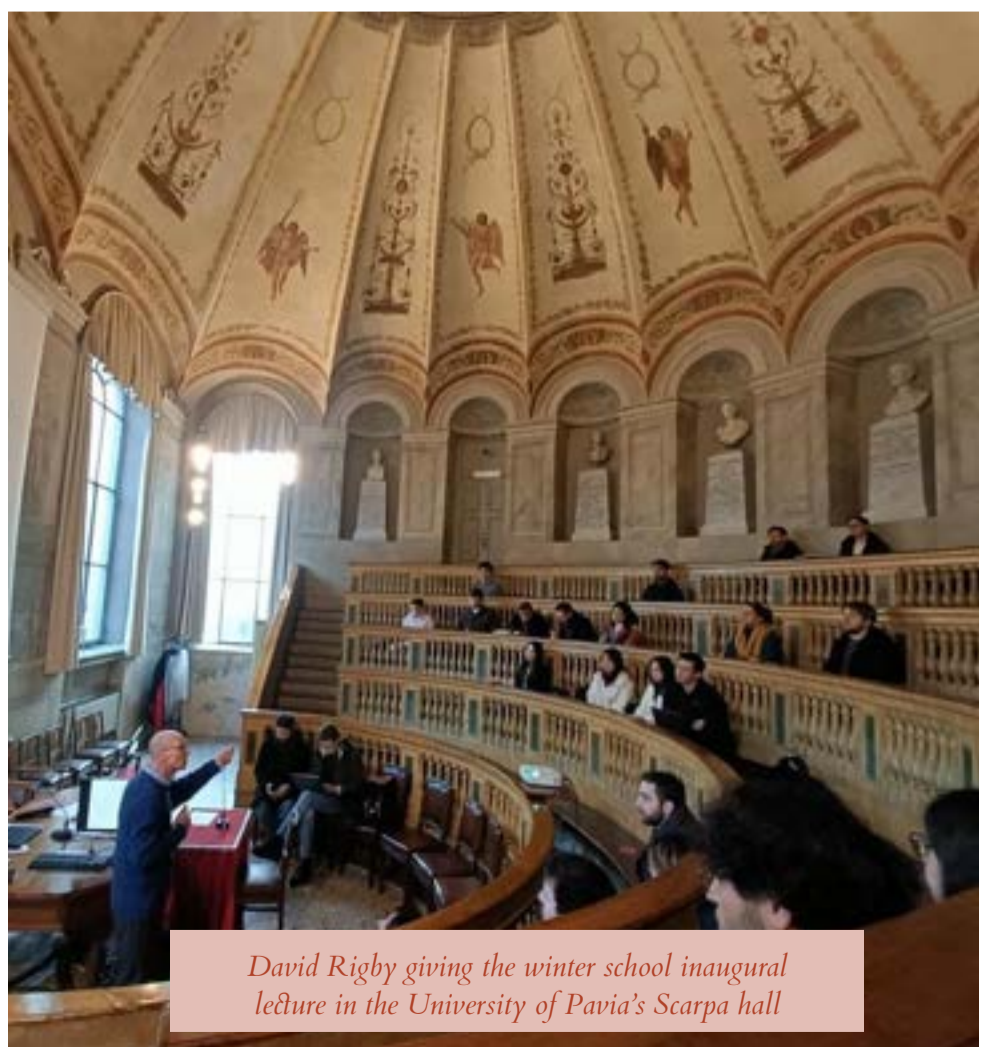
**I**N THE WEEK following the consolidated Geography of Innovation conference, a new levy of doctoral students and young researchers gathered in Pavia for the Geography of Innovation Winter School – co-organized by the University of Pavia and Bocconi University (Stefano Breschi, Andrea Morrison, Roberta Rabelotti).

Against the outstanding neoclassical background of 18th Century Scarpa hall, I had the pleasure to teach at a school that featured a high-profile lineup of guest lecturers, including Michela Bello (JRC, European Commission), Ron Boschma (Utrecht University), Nicoletta Corrocher (Bocconi University), Evgeni Evgeniev (DG RTD, European Commission), Balazs Lengyel (Hungarian Research Network), Rasmus Lema (Maastricht University), David Rigby (UCLA), Gianluca Tarasconi (IpQuant AG), and Jerome Vicente (University of Toulouse).

The intensive 5-day program covered many of the field’s workhorses – clusters, relatedness, knowledge space and recombination, diversification, complexity, and networks, to mention a few –but also newly emerging themes, such as green and digital innovation. It also included practical training in the form of data labs and meet-the-editor sessions, as well as student presentations receiving feedback from the winter school lecturers.

Enduring a late January chill, dozens of students proved that the interest in the geographical aspects of innovation is anything but waning. Very vibrant in-class discussions, often spilling over to the breaks, suggest that the field’s most productive days may still lie ahead.

*Dario Diodato  
Joint Research Centre, European Commission*



*David Rigby giving the winter school inaugural lecture in the University of Pavia’s Scarpa hall*