

EDITORIAL

The 2006 ANZRSAI annual conference was held in Beechworth at La Trobe University's campus. As Beechworth is now seen as an iconic heritage town, with an innovative and equally iconic baker, we chose the theme of Heritage and Regional Development for this year's conference. Little did I know in choosing this theme how contested the field of heritage and development is. We were fortunate to have presentations by policy makers, academics and practitioners such that there was a high level of discussion, debate and consideration of the issues that surround this theme. In addition to presentations and papers on heritage and regional development, papers on other aspects of regional science were welcomed in the contributed paper sessions of the conference. Several of these more general papers are included in this issue of AJRS.

Yalmambirra and Spennemann outline the process of recognition of indigenous communities in NSW whereby local government has worked with Wiradjuri Elders to recognise the heritage of their people. They note that, too often, indigenous communities are treated as if they were a homogenous group, which does not reflect the many different cultural traditions that make up these communities.

Roberts and Fisher address the pressing issues of urbanization in Asian cities where population numbers continue to rise and population densities fall causing these megacities to spread well out into their surrounding regions. Their analysis highlights the need for these megacity regions to develop more effective approaches to planning and management as well as a proper means for valuation of the capital base for infrastructure investment purposes, to recognise the need for effective networking, building strategic alliances and partnerships as well as the importance of regional financial planning, and to focus systematically on facilitating best practice and learning among public institutions with these regions.

Dalziel, Matunga and Saunders' paper on cultural well-being and local government: Lessons from New Zealand was awarded the best paper of the conference accolade by the conference organisers. In New Zealand recent local government reforms include a legislative imperative that local government promotes 'cultural well-being' in addition to social, economic and environmental well-being. This key aspect of local government reform provides salient lessons for other nations as they grapple with the role, rights and responsibilities of their indigenous peoples. An important outcome observable from genuine attempts to give effect to this mandate is a more effective relationship for all people and traditions that make up the rich cultural diversity of New Zealand.

Johnston and Merdji outline and provide preliminary results on a comparative research project involving selected olive growing regions in Australia and Europe. Their focus is on growers with small holdings and the ways in which they can cooperate to compete with global food producers in the olive oil industry. They outline the key differences in small-scale cooperatives in each region highlighting the importance of land tenure and vertical integration in the growing, production and marketing of oil. This research has implications for a

wide range of other food items grown and produced by relatively small-scale operators across Australia's rural regions.

Ding and Haynes, two international conference participants, show how telecommunications infrastructure has great potential to facilitate "leapfrogging" development in developing countries. In particular, their analysis of the links between telecommunications infrastructure and regional economic growth in China show that telecommunications infrastructure endowment is a key factor in explaining regional economic growth in China. They also show that there are diminishing returns to investment in such technology and the best returns apply to regions at the first stages of economic development. This finding may seem counter intuitive to policy makers in this country where 'performance-based' investment policies often appear to be designed to reward those regions which are already relatively well developed and/or performing well economically.

Lade reports on her research focussing on tourism business clusters in four regions along the Murray River. She concludes that these clusters do contribute to regional economic success as suggested in the literature in this area. In the tourism clusters she investigated a strong tourism industry structure and well defined boundaries were seen to important determinant of industry success. Her final point, that human factors will play an important role in the clustering process, is found in much regional development research. That is, notwithstanding the best strategies and environmental opportunities, success ultimately depends on the people involved and the quality of their relationships.

Eversole draws on her rich anthropological training to challenge notions of heritage in regional development. Using as an example a constructed heritage community in the United States she presents a typology which explains processes of identification and implementation, and outcomes. This typology provides a framework for use by regional development practitioners interested in exploring how they can use heritage in the generation of economic development outcomes. Importantly she discusses opportunistic versus sustainable choices in the identification of heritage and how a shift from single to multi-dimensional outcomes might be affected.

McKenzie draws on her innovative work in the development of the Victorian Regional Atlas to show how rural areas in this state are undergoing significant social and economic change. Through visual overlays of multiple maps displaying various socio-economic characteristics, policy makers can develop a socio-economic picture of each Victorian region. This characteristics subject to mapping standard socio-economic factors, and include such things as the percentage of people in a particular region commuting elsewhere for employment and the degree of Internet usage. The aim of the Regional Atlas is to explore information in innovative ways in order to suggest new ways of looking at spatial trends and to set the agenda for emerging issues and challenges. Her paper shows how this may be done, by providing some examples of the Atlas's potential use. Others interested in spatial analysis can use data from other sources to analyse regional change within their area of particular interest.

These papers are a reflection of the high standard of papers presented each

year at ANZRSAI's annual conference. They reflect the diversity that is regional science as well as the phenomena of regional development. In addition, they demonstrate how innovation and scholarship can combine to provide interesting insights in this exciting area of research and practice.

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