

Note from the Editors

It is our pleasure to invite you to browse through the last of the three issues of the *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies* for 2011. In putting together this issue we have been stunned by two things. One is the diversity of subject matter now in the Regional Science domain and the second concerns the increasing qualitative rather than quantitative flavour of articles received. While theory construction and the statistical analysis of large data sets and resultant model building are still a core component of our work – and especially for the two co-editors of this journal, the precise detail of the structure and organisation of the space-economy owes much to the role of leading actors. Their personalities, psychology, drive, networking capacities, entrepreneurship and imaginations can be crucially important in charting local economic trajectories within the ambit of globalisation, capital flows, resource endowment, and infrastructure supply.

The articles in this issue testify to the roles played by key local actors in shaping regional and local economies, not just in the present, but also in the past. For example, the first item by Ted Watts and Ciorstan Smark examines the important role played in the development of Katoomba in the late nineteenth century by a local medical practitioner turned Mayor and community advocate. This work lies congruent with the many Australian studies of the role key leaders in engineering local development by feeling their way instinctively or by personal inclination through the political maze in which they operate. Arthur Grimes and Chris Young demonstrate the variability in place capacity to deal with major systemic shocks, this time in New Zealand. The closure of two meat works led to different outcomes for the localities concerned, much influenced by spatial proximity to a major urban centre. Such case studies can have an important role feeding into remedial public policy. Stuart Mounter, Bligh Grant, Euan Fleiming and Garry Griffith then develop these themes in connection with the development of New England's cold-climate wine industry. They demonstrate the importance of organisations and their leaders in forging regional strategic alliances, product branding and niche marketing, and improved networks designed to sustain cooperation in the industry's growth and technical competence. As the article reveals, these are often complex and difficult

tasks, especially in the spatially extensive environments characterising rural Australia.

Joy Chia's comparative study examines the important role of community networking and engagement in promoting both local development and the retention of residents in two small communities in South Australia (Roxby Downs and Mount Gambier) and one in Canada's British Columbia (Victoria). Once again, the article illustrates the crucial role played by leaders of often very different economic, social and knowledge backgrounds. What gives this article an interesting twist, however, is the increasing role of new social media such as Facebook, Twitter and BLOGS in bringing additional players into social engagement processes. Finally, Casali and Robertson's valuable contribution charts the successful creation of a valuable marine industry cluster on Queensland's Gold Coast. In this case, the industry's growth was propelled by a small number of entrepreneurs and such all-important dimensions of clusters like networking, small-scale entrepreneurial start-ups, and the growth of a range of service activities were retro-fitted. Once again the article demonstrates the crucial role of lead players in kick-starting development action.

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