

Note from the Editors

This volume is testimony to the increasing diversity of Australian regional science and Australia's interest in, and engagement with, our Asian neighbours. From a domestic perspective the articles in this volume range across regional economic and social diversity in Victoria, the economic transformation of coastal communities as traditional fishing activities decline in importance for a variety of reasons, and small business innovation in farming communities during a period of intense drought. Our overseas contributors are equally diverse and fascinating. Here the focus is on three issues, all of which are likely in various ways to impact on Australia's regional wellbeing. They serially concern economic reform in China, reproductive health in Bangladesh, and income growth in highly heterogeneous Indonesia.

If the focus of analysis is highly diverse, so are the techniques of data collection and analysis. The articles on Victoria's regional diversity and Indonesia's regional income growth most closely resemble regional science's origins in the application of spatial econometrics to large data sets. On the other hand, the studies of coastal communities, small business innovation, and the health of Bangladeshi mothers all use primary data collection as the basis of their analysis. Use of such primary data raises a range of quality and interpretive issues whose treatment often provides useful clues for improving future social science investigation. And, finally, the analysis of China's current development strategy falls more into realm of political economy, but is in no way deficient for that. China keeps its policy cards close its chest and it is often debatable about what is going on behind the scenes. Interpretations of policy shifts are welcome for wider debate on the dynamics of the country now influencing Australia's well-being the most.

More deeply, Andrew Butt's article is fascinating because it detects a variety of processes underpinning the counter-urbanisation rewriting aspects of rural Australia's economy and society: gentrification, retirement, exurbanisation, and pursuit of welfare among low income households. These tend to operate in distinct geographical locations to produce a myriad of different functional spaces such that the term 'rural' no longer carries a distinctive meaning. Rolf Gerritsen and his colleagues provide a fascinating glimpse of China's remarkable dual economy in which some sectors have been privatised, while many parts of the commanding heights remain under state ownership. This model not only differs significantly from most other countries, but appears to me to give the Chinese considerable macro-economic management agility when it

comes avoiding some of the hazards of a market economy – particularly financial and investment cycles. Ingrid van Putten and her colleagues focus on the potential hazards facing many fishing communities as a result of climate change, excessive exploitation of fish stocks, and their own ageing demographics – among other things. These are collectively interacting to drive some coastal communities in a variety of directions.

Bernice Kotey, meanwhile, looks at how a sample of small service enterprises in cotton producing communities engaged in innovations of various kinds to confront their often risky operating environments. Since SMEs are the life-blood of their communities in sparsely settled regions, their adaptive capacity through innovation could be crucial for the survival of many a small country town. On the other hand, the small scale of many individual innovations could presage future stress should extended drought, low commodity prices, or competition from other centres or on-line retailing ramp up. Tasmiha Tarafder and Parves Sultan introduce us to the problems surrounding the delivery of high quality health services to rural women in Bangladesh. Their glimpse provides an insight into the kinds of development problems pervasive in traditional societies and the need for, and difficulties in, replacing the past with modern and science-based management techniques. The final contribution, by Yogi Vidyattama, is perhaps the most technical of the six contributions to this issue. It develops a regression model of the factors contributing to provincial variations in income growth in Indonesia, and attempts to improve its explanatory power by introducing a spatial (distance) component into the analysis. Interestingly, however, the inclusion of spatial considerations does little to improve the model.

So, please look at these contrasting articles and let us, the editors, have your opinions on them. Such feedback could be useful to us in improving the journal.

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