EDITORIAL

Reflecting on a dynamic biennium: The Annals of Regional Science 2022–2023

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Abstract

The 2024 editorial update of The Annals of Regional Science reaffirms the journal's dedication to transparency and scholarly excellence in the field of regional science. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the journal has demonstrated resilience and continued to serve as a pivotal platform for scholarly discourse. This update highlights the journal's recent milestones, including changes to the editorial board with new members bringing fresh perspectives to drive the journal's mission forward. The editorial discusses the journal's performance, encompassing its impact factor and the diverse range of topics covered, emphasizing its role in advancing research aligned with Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 8. The ARSC continues to evolve, embracing changes that reflect current trends and maintaining its influence in the academic community.

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1 Introduction

In our unwavering dedication to transparency and open dialogue with our contributors and readers, we are pleased to present the 2024 editorial of The Annals of Regional Science (ARS). Continuing a tradition established in 2020, this third editorial not only provides an account of recent advancements but also commemorates our collective journey and accomplishments. As we deliver biennial updates on our journal's progress, Martin Andersson, Brian H.S. Kim, and Janet Kohlhase remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering a platform for impactful and influential research in regional science. Our mission persists in elevating the journal's legacy by endorsing scholarly work that advances understanding in our field.

Despite the enduring challenges posed by the aftermath of the pandemic, the years 2022 and 2023 were defined by our shared dedication to resilience and advancement. Our journal has not only sustained but also strengthened its role as a hub of scholarly communication in regional science during this period of recovery.

This editorial charts our journey through these transformative years, documenting significant milestones and key developments such as our progress in impact factor, submission rates, geographical diversity of our contributors, and editorial members. We also highlight our special issues and articles that align with Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 8, which advocates for sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. These issues underscore our commitment to research that has tangible real-world impact and aligns with global priorities.

2 Recent development in the editorial board members

The ARS is led by three main editors (editors-in-chief) representing distinct regions across the globe: Martin Andersson from Sweden, Brian H.S. Kim from Korea, and Janet Kohlhase from the USA. The supporting board consists of editorial members hailing from countries in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. The Board comprises both junior (associate professor level) and senior scholars engaged in research within regional science and related fields.

Recently, a major rotation of the editorial board has been initiated to reflect changes and trends in the field and support its continued future development. Members who supported the journal over many years concluded their services, including David Audretsch, Henk Folmer, Masahisa Fujita, Charlie Karlsson, James LeSage, Mark Partridge, David Plane, Robert Stimson, and Brigitte Waldorf. The Annals thank all of them for their long service and support. In their place, we welcome Yao-Yu Chih from Texas State University, Haifeng Qian from the University of Iowa, Carlianne Patrick from Georgia State University, Roberto Patuelli from University of Bologna, Pablo Mejía Reyes from Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Amanda Ross from University of Alabama, Soomi Lee from the University of La Verne, Dusan Paredes from Universidad Catolica del Norte, and Heather Stephens from West Virginia University, as committed editorial board members.

3 Progress in impact factor of ARC

While mindful of the criticisms surrounding IF calculations, it remains a significant metric for many scholars. In recent years, the ARS has witnessed a notable fluctuation in its impact factor (IF), reflecting the dynamic nature of academic publishing and citation practices. In 2020, the editorial team reported a commendable increase in the journal's IF, highlighting its positive trajectory from 0.571 in 2015 to 1.075 in 2018, and further to 1.750 in 2019 (Andersson et al. 2020). This upward trend was a testament to the journal's growing prestige and the high-quality research it attracted. By 2020, the IF had reached an impressive peak of 2.646, positioning the Annals firmly within the second quartile for economics and geography and the third quartile for regional and urban planning and environmental studies, as per the editorial in 2022 (Andersson et al. 2020). However, the most recent data (in 2022) indicates a decrease in the journal's annual IF to 1.7, while its five-year IF stands at 2.4, suggesting that while the journal's influence remains strong over a longer period, it has experienced some recent volatility in its annual citation metrics. This underscores the competitive and ever-changing landscape of scholarly research dissemination, where journals must continually adapt and innovate to maintain and enhance their impact within the academic community.

The recent shifts in our IF have prompted us to reflect on our journal practices. We are committed to enhancing our editorial standards and engaging with the latest research trends to ensure that we serve as a platform for significant contributions to regional science. This includes expanding our outreach to emerging research communities, investing in tools that support our authors and reviewers, and exploring new formats for scholarly communication.

4 Broad range of topics, downloads, and citations: indicators of influence

In 2020, the editorial reported a "term analysis" of papers published in ARS, showcasing the journal's breadth in regional science topics. Building on this, the most downloaded and cited papers from 2017 to 2021 were highlighted in the 2020 and 2022 editorials to further demonstrate the journal's extensive coverage and scholarly impact. This tradition continues for the 2022–2023 period.

The recent volumes covering 2022–2023 presented a collection of 170 papers, each enriching the diverse fabric of regional science. Some works have stood out with significant download and citation figures, as shown in Table 1.

These papers collectively address key themes at the intersection of regional science. Downloads and citations serve as quantitative indicators of their qualitative impact. It is noteworthy that three of the most downloaded papers and one of the most cited originate from our special issues, highlighting the substantial influence that these focused collections have in steering scholarly discourse and contributing to the ARS.

Table 1 The five most downloaded and cited papers in The Annals of Regional Science, 2022–2023

Most downloaded		Most cited	
Title	Authors	Title	Authors
Spatial machine learning: new opportunities for regional science	Kopczewska (2022)	The role of Chinese fiscal decentralization in the governance of carbon emissions: perspectives from spatial effects decomposition and its heterogeneity	Lv et al. (2022)
Entrepreneurship and geography—some thoughts about a complex relationship (special issue)	Sternberg (2022)	Viability of compact cities in the post-COVID-19 era: subway ridership variations in Seoul Korea (special issue)	Kwon et al. (2023)
The dark side of social capital: a contextual perspective (special issue)	Baycan and Öner (2023)	The spatial employment effect of high-speed railway: quasi-natural experimental evidence from China	Liu et al. (2022)
The relationship between patriotism and regional identification: a cross-country analysis	Dirksmeier (2023)	Does social capital influence small business entrepreneurship? Differences between urban and rural China	Sun et al. (2023)
Will the economic growth benefit public health? Health vulnerability, urbanization and COVID-19 in the USA (special issue)	Fan et al. (2023)	Urban density and COVID-19: understanding the US experience	Carozzi et al. (2022)

Kopczewska's (2022) paper reflects a trend toward data-centric methods in regional science by exploring spatial machine learning. Sternberg's (2022) examination of the interplay between entrepreneurship and geography underscores the need for region-specific policy-making. Baycan and Öner (2023) offer a thought-provoking take on social capital's role in regional development. Dirksmeier's (2023) analysis differentiates patriotism from nationalism and examines its relation to regional identity. Fan et al.'s (2023) work elucidates the complex ties between economic growth, urbanization, and public health.

On the citation front, Lv et al.'s (2022) research on environmental governance within the framework of Chinese fiscal decentralization reflects a growing focus on spatially aware environmental policies. Kwon et al.'s (2023) insights into urban planning post-COVID-19 highlight shifts in urban space utilization and transportation in response to public health needs. Liu et al. (2022) demonstrate how infrastructure development like high-speed railways can transform economic landscapes. Sun et al.'s (2023) study on social capital's influence on entrepreneurship across urban and rural China emphasizes the importance of regional nuances in policy development.

5 A panoramic view of contributions in 2022–2023: global distribution of authors

In the dynamic realm of regional science, the ARS serves as a testament to scholarly contributions on a global scale. Our previous editorials have delved into the comprehensive analysis of scholarly publications in Annals from 1967 to 2021, revealing the predominant origins of submissions from the USA, China, and Europe. Our latest data, spanning the years 2022–2023, continue to mirror this geographical trend in contributions to the Annals. Table 2 provides an updated breakdown of the top 10 countries in publications and citations, accounting for an impressive 79% of total publication and 90% of total citations during this period.

Table 2 Global distribution of publications and citations (2022–2023), top 10 countries

Country	Publications (fraction in %)	Citations (fraction in %)
USA	17	13
China	11	26
France	10	5
Spain	9	7
Italy	8	7
South Korea	7	10
Netherlands	5	3
UK	4	13
Sweden	4	5
Japan	4	1

The USA remains a significant contributor with 17% of total publications, although its citation share has experienced a relative decline to 13%. China has made a remarkable stride in citation impact, commanding 26% of citations against 11% of publications, signifying the burgeoning influence of Chinese scholarship in our field. France and Spain have maintained a steadfast presence, collectively contributing 10% and 9% of publications, with their citation impact at 5% and 7%. Italy's scholarly output closely aligns with its citation share, representing 8% in publication and 7% in citation, reflecting a harmonious balance between quantity and influence that underscores the enduring relevance of these countries' research within our pages.

South Korea presents an intriguing profile, with 7% of publications coupled with a citation share of 10%, emphasizing the quality and relevance of research originating from the region. The Netherlands, with a publication share of 5%, exemplifies the effective scholarly communication. The UK, while accounting for 4% of publications, boasts an impressive citation share matching that of the USA at 13%, underscoring the substantive impact of UK-based research. Both Sweden and Japan present balanced contributions, with Sweden's publications and citations at 4% and 5%, and Japan's figures at 4% and 1%, respectively.

6 Spotlight on special issues

The Annals has a rich history and a longstanding commitment to publishing high-quality special issues on crucial topics in regional science. Over the past two years, we have successfully curated and released seven special issues that have garnered significant interest within our academic community. These editions, each curated by distinguished guest editors in their respective fields, include:

2023 Special issues:

- Spotlight on the Region (Peter Nijkamp, Karima Kourtit, and Mehmet Güney Celbis)
- Entrepreneurial Territories: Measures, Determinants, and Outcomes (Marcus Dejardin and Nadine Levratto)
- Conceptualizations of Development Research in Rural Areas (Mikaël Akimowicz, S. Ashleigh Weeden, and Ryan Gibson)
- COVID-19: Shock, Recovery, and Sustainability—Asian Perspective (Tae-Hyoung Tommy Gim)
- Social Capital and Rural Development: Challenges and Perspectives (Ellen Fitzpatrick, Tüzin Baycan, and Sedef Akgüngör)

2022 Special issues:

- Unlocking the potential of regions through entrepreneurship and innovation (Gloria Cicerone, Alessandra Faggian, Charlie Karlsson)
- Policies for supporting the regional circular economy and sustainability (Josep-Maria Arauzo-Carod, Ioannis Kostakis, and Konstantinos P. Tsagarakis)

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce forthcoming issues that will delve into critical topics such as "Climate Change, Carbon Neutrality: The Role of Spatial Economics" "Supporting Regional Circular Economy and Sustainability", "Sustainable Development Challenges in Ecosystems and Learning Regions", "Regional Disparities in the 21st Century: Evolution, Causes and Perspectives", and a commemorative issue honoring the work of Charles M. Tiebout.

In line with Springer's objectives and the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8), The Annals continues to highlight articles dedicated to the SDGs. From 2022 to 2023, we have published 66 articles spanning various SDGs, including Decent Work and Economic Growth; Good Health and Well-being; Life on Land; Reduced Inequalities; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Sustainable Cities and Communities; Climate Action; Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; Affordable and Clean Energy; Quality Education; Responsible Consumption and Production; and Zero Hunger. The Annals remains steadfast in its focus on sustainable growth, contributing scholarly discourse to the United Nations' SDGs through dedicated research articles.

Overall, these special issues not only showcase the journal's responsiveness to global and regional trends but also its role in fostering scholarly discourse on sustainable development and resilience in an era marked by uncertainty and change.

7 Supporting emerging junior scholars

The founding association of ARS, WRSA has a rich tradition of showcasing the work of early scholars, particularly those who have been recognized at the annual meetings. The Tiebout prize is bestowed upon the best paper submitted by a full-time PhD student to a competition held by WRSA each year, with awards announced at the WRSA annual meetings. For further details, please visit the WRSA website (https://www.wrsaonline.org/newsite/call-for-tiebout-submissions/).

Additionally, the Stough-Johansson Springer Award is presented annually for the best paper delivered by an early-career scholar (no more than five years post-PhD) at the annual meeting of the WRSA. Further information can be found on the Annals website (https://www.springer.com/journal/168/updates/18927090). Winners of both awards are encouraged to submit their papers to Annals, where they will undergo the normal review process.

8 Concluding remarks

As we reflect on the journey of ARS, we are heartened by the strides we have made and the resilience we have shown in the face of global challenges. The past years have been a testament to the unwavering spirit of our community, and as we present this 2024 editorial, our pride in our collective achievements is matched only by our commitment to the future.

The Annals has navigated the post-pandemic landscape with a focus on recovery and advancement, reinforcing its position as a cornerstone of scholarly exchange in

the realm of regional science. Our progress is not just a measure of academic metrics but a narrative of our dedication to fostering research that resonates with real-world issues and contributes to global priorities, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

We bid farewell to our esteemed colleagues who have left the editorial board and welcome new voices to our editorial board, anticipating the fresh perspectives they will bring. Our impact factor remains a beacon of our journal's influence, and the geographical diversity of our contributors and editorial members underscores our international scope and relevance.

As we look forward, we are filled with optimism. The Annals will continue to champion innovative research, support emerging scholars, and uphold the highest standards of ethical publishing. We invite submissions that reflect the dynamism of regional science and address the complexities of our interconnected world.

In this spirit, we extend our gratitude to all who have journeyed with us and invite new contributors to join us in shaping the future of regional science. Together, let us continue to push the boundaries of knowledge and make a tangible impact on regions, cities, and societies worldwide.

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