Moving forward together with the *Journal of Geographical Systems*

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Published online: 19 December 2019
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Since its inception in 1999, the *Journal of Geographical Systems (JGS)* has carved a strong reputation for itself as one of the leading—if not the leading—academic journals in both spatial analysis and GIScience, on the one hand, and spatial statistics and econometrics, on the other. Many of the most prominent authors in these fields seek publication in JGS as a means to diffuse and obtain greater visibility for their most prized research. Some of the articles that have appeared in the journal have made considerable waves in their respective fields of scholarship. It is a tribute to the work of the original Editors-in-Chief, Professors Manfred Fischer and Arthur Getis, of Associate Editor Dr. Petra Staufer-Steinnocher, and, since 2008, of Editor-in-Chief Dr. Antonio Páez, that the journal has reached its 20th anniversary in such great health.

So, why the need for a new Editor-in-Chief? In principle, given the state of the journal is in, it could be argued that there is no need for change. JGS can go from success to success for another 20 years without moving an iota from its present course. Hence, I must confess that when I was first approached by Manfred Fischer to join the editorial team I was somewhat confused and bemused. Confused, because the journal is hugely successful and is very well positioned and recognisable within its academic niche. Bemused, because I am neither a GIS scientist nor a spatial econometrician. Nor have I ever before published, or even sought to publish, in the journal—which, for as prolific a writer as myself can be considered somewhat of a feat. But I was also tempted for a number of reasons. First, I am an avid user of econometric methods in my research and understand the importance of GIS, spatial analysis and spatial econometrics for the social sciences, in general and for regional science and geography, in particular. Second, I also have a huge respect for the achievements of JGS, for the research being published in it, and for the importance of using advanced methods and, especially, methods that put space and place at the centre of research. And last but not least, I am not afraid of challenges.

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Manfred Fischer and the current editorial team were thus shrewd in framing their initial approach to me as a series of challenges: a challenge to bring new blood into the journal; a challenge to open the journal to a new type of audience; a challenge to branch the journal into the world of policy-making. They firmly believe that the journal can move further forward by embracing these challenges, and I agree that there is considerable scope for expansion in this respect. Many of the past contributions of the journal have pushed the theoretical and empirical frontiers of spatial analysis. They have also made a profound impact in the fields of regional science, economic geography, spatial economics, and regional and urban economics. But there is still a gap to be filled in linking the massive amount of progress that has been made in recent decades in the use of econometrics at a regional and urban level and of spatial analysis to finding solutions to real-world problems. This is an area where I feel that improvements in spatial analysis can make an important contribution to society and where I can add something to what already is a very strong team at JGS.

This will imply opening the journal to new themes and new authors, while maintaining the well-earned reputation for scholarly rigour that JGS now boasts. It will, in other words, entail branching rigorous spatial analysis and the use of econometrics for the study of urban and regional problems to the study, design and implementation of better public policies. All within the JGS mission of promoting “high-quality scholarship on new theoretical or empirical results, models and methods in the social sciences”, by soliciting “original papers with a spatial dimension that can be of interest to social scientists” and to society as a whole.

It is frequently said that if you stand still you die. JGS needs to keep on moving in order to remain successful and to increase its contribution to science and society. By joining the editorial team, I hope to help make strides towards this important task and to partake in this collective endeavour of using science to improve the lives of individuals and the prosperity, sustainability and resilience of places.

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