Advancing regional science in the Asia-Pacific: new journal to play a key role

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Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Pacific Regional Science Conference Organisation (PRSCO) as the third supra-regional organisation of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI). PRSCO, like the earlier-established North American and European supra-regional RSAI bodies, created a platform for communication between regional science scholars spread across many countries in a major area of the globe: the Asia-Pacific. The main PRSCO communication instruments have been biennial PRSCO conferences, alternated with summer institutes, the journals of six PRSCO sections, and the other journals of the RSAI. The advent of the new Asia-Pacific Journal of Regional Science (APJRS), in providing a scholarly journal focussed on the Asia-Pacific, significantly extends the platform for knowledge exchange on the many regional issues facing Asian-Pacific countries.

High rates of economic growth in much of Asia have seen the Asia-Pacific region become one of the drivers of the global economy. However, growth has not been even, both between countries and between sub-national regions. Key challenges facing Asian-Pacific countries include: adjustment to globalisation and the rapid introduction of new technologies; income disparities; increasing urbanisation and the rise of mega cities; population pressures, migration and other demographic changes such as population ageing in certain countries; demands for large infrastructure expenditure and consequential stress on government budgets; pressures on energy and other resources, and on the environment; and cultural disharmonies and potential for conflicts. There is a spatial dimension involved in all of these issues, which regional scientists are well equipped to research. Regional science encompasses a wide range of methods and techniques, drawn principally from economics, geography, demography, sociology and political science that have

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been developed for regional analysis. Economic methodologies, for instance, include: (spatial) econometrics, inter-industry economics, regional and multiregional economic modeling, location theory, environmental economics, urban economics, etc. A key element in regional science's inter-disciplinary nature is the capability of analysing issues which cut across its component disciplines.

APJRS provides a focal point for regional scientists from around the world studying issues of the Asia-Pacific. Their development of new theory and methods, and the applied research they undertake on regional issues facing countries on both sides of the Pacific, should enhance the knowledge base that is so important for the formation of evidence-based policy. Another major role that the new journal can be expected to play is to enhance the visibility of the results of the excellent regional science research being undertaken by scholars throughout the Asia-Pacific. In particular, the new journal offers an opportunity for young scholars. They are the key for the new journal to continue to flourish over many years. Of particular importance is participation by young regional scientists from the newer sections of PRSCO, so that these sections and the new journal can grow together. From observing the many high quality papers presented at PRSCO meetings by young scholars, and those submitted to the recently established PRSCO Best Paper Award for Young Regional Scientists, I feel confident that this will eventuate.

In launching APJRS the Japan section of the RSAI continues its fine record of advancing regional science in the Asia-Pacific. Ever since joining with the Western (USA) Section to form PRSCO in 1968, the Japan Section has continued to play a key role in the organisation and expansion of PRSCO to its now 14 sections, spread right around both sides of the Pacific. The APJRS' Editor-in-Chief, Professor Yoshiro Higano, and his editorial colleagues are to be highly commended on their efforts in bringing about this new journal that promises to fill such an important role in progressing regional science in the Asia-Pacific. Since I first joined PRSCO Council almost two decades ago, I have been constantly impressed by Professor Higano's continual endeavours to develop PRSCO and bring new sections into the fold. In that time the number of member sections of PRSCO has doubled.

I am very pleased to offer my congratulations to all involved in the establishment of the new journal. In filling such an important role in regional science research, and with the support of such a strong group of editors, assistant editors, and an editorial board drawn from leading regional scholars from many countries, APJRS is bound to enjoy a successful future and gain a prominent place in the regional science literature.