



NARSC NEWS



Welcome from the Executive Director



Hello everyone, I trust everybody had a wonderful academic year. I know many of us are once again traveling to conferences and reconnecting with our colleagues and meeting new ones. As you prepare for the summer, keep in mind that the deadline for submission of abstracts and organized sessions for the 70th North

American Meetings of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) sponsored by the North American Regional Science Council (NARSC) is July 3, 2023. We have the pleasure of our colleagues with the Spatial Econometrics Association returning to join us for a joint conference.

The general call for papers and details about the abstract submission process can be found [here](#). If you are interested in participating in an organized session, you can find the listings [here](#). (Check back often as new sessions are being added.) If you have a session you would like to organize, please contact Soomi Lee (slee4@laverne.edu) our returning Program Chair. As a reminder, we have two student paper competitions: the Graduate-Student-Author Paper Competition and the Graduate-Student-Led Paper Competition. If you are a graduate student, please consider submitting a paper to one of these two [competitions](#).

Come and join us in sunny San Diego at the Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter (910 Broadway Circle, San Diego, CA 92101). A special conference room rate of \$242 (plus taxes) has been negotiated with the hotel. You can book your room at the conference hotel using this [link](#).

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in the beautiful city of San Diego. The dates of the conference are November 14–18, so mark your calendars.

Have a fun and safe summer!

John Spring, NARSC Executive Director

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Words from the Editor



I am delighted to bring you the latest issue of the North American Regional Science (NARSC) newsletter. This June 2023 issue of the newsletter is my first as editor! I enjoyed assembling the content and look forward to many issues to come. I am still looking for a co-editor, so if you are interested (particularly in formatting and graphics), please contact me.

In this issue of the newsletter, there is a feature on the Regional Research Institute (RRI) at West Virginia University. The feature discusses the RRI's leadership change and the new director's vision for the Institute's future. This issue also contains member spotlights which showcase a few NARSC members and their excellent research. Thanks to all the featured members for taking time to respond to my questions. I really enjoyed reading their responses and believe that you will as well. The issue concludes with information on the annual NARSC meeting including special sessions, workshops, and deadlines.

If you have ideas or suggestions regarding content or would like to contribute to the newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me. I hope to see all of you this November at the meeting in San Diego!

[Liz Dobis](#)

Newsletter Editor

Regional Research Institute: Continuing and Growing Regional Research



The Regional Research Institute (RRI) at West Virginia University (WVU) has a long history as a leader in regional science. Founded in 1965, for more than 50 years the RRI has supported regional research and the training of the next generation of regional scholars. Following the retirement of long-time director, Randy Jackson, Heather Stephens began her tenure as RRI director in January of this year. In the almost six months since then, she has been busy, building on the RRI's past and developing a plan for the RRI's future.

Heather comes to regional science as a regional economist with broad policy-oriented research interests. She also has a background in public policy and regional economic development, having worked previously as a legislative assistant and legislative director for two U.S. Congressmen, as a local economic development director, and at a regional economic development institute. This experience has provided her with context for her research and an understanding of regional economic development and policymaking.

Building on her own expertise and the reputation and success of the RRI developed by her predecessors, Heather has made it a priority to develop new partnerships and research collaborations both within WVU and elsewhere. She believes that these collaborations will lead to better, more relevant research and the opportunity to get funding to support it. Recently, she secured two major collaborative grants to support research related to U.S. rural entrepreneurship and the impacts of the

energy transition on West Virginia. This summer, two new post-doctoral researchers will join the RRI to help with these projects and to expand the RRI's research capacity. The RRI is also fortunate to have three talented graduate research assistants (Caroline Welter, Daniel Centuriao, and David Nason) who will be working with the post docs on these and other projects.

Heather is also committed to training the next generation of scholars. The RRI graduate students presented at the spring Southern Regional Science Association (SRSA) conference in Savannah, and Heather has been a leader in the development of the SRSA undergraduate poster session. She is also providing the RRI graduate students with experience in writing grant proposals and seeking external funding. As further evidence of the commitment to supporting regional research and the training of the next generation of scholars, the RRI has also recently revamped its visiting researcher program and is looking forward to hosting scholars from around the U.S. and the world.

The development of the next phase of the RRI is still a work in progress, but the commitment by the RRI (and WVU) to regional research continues. Stay tuned!

Member Spotlight: Alexandra Tsvetkova



Please tell us about yourself!

I am a somewhat “non-traditional” regional scientist. I am currently taking a break professionally. (I am a Leadership Lab co-organizer at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, but this does not count as contributing to regional science.) In my most recent position, I led the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Spatial Productivity Lab (SPL), an initiative that seeks to bridge regional science research and policy making with a particular focus on productivity of places. Before joining the OECD, I was a post-doctoral researcher at the Ohio State University's (OSU) Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics working with Prof. Mark Partridge on issues of entrepreneurship and job creation in the U.S. as well as quantifying economic effects of the shale

[energy] boom.

How did you find NARSC and to what degree are you currently involved?

While a Ph.D. candidate in Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, I worked part-time as an administrative assistant to the[n] NARSC Executive Director Prof. Jean-Claude Thill, who was my graduate advisor. I attended my first two NARSC conferences (in Denver and Miami) as a part of the co-organizing team and enjoyed them tremendously. I was extremely happy to re-engage with the wonderful regional science community more regularly while at the OSU. More recently, I was involved with the European Regional Science Association (ERSA): co-organizing ERSA Winter School in Trento (Italy), special sessions at the ERSA Congress, etc. I am looking forward to new opportunities to be actively involved in NARSC activities, as I am back to this side of the Atlantic.

Please tell us about your research and how it contributes to the field of Regional Science.

I am an applied economist interested in understanding the causes and consequences of regional economic disparities. I hope my research can help devise practical policy solutions aimed at expanding inclusive economic opportunity and prosperity. I hope that my contribution to Regional Science is bringing it closer to policy. For example, recent work with Dylan Jong (University of Groningen, Netherlands) and OECD co-authors on how the interplay between quality, devolution (independence and spending power), and fragmentation of subnational governments is linked to labor productivity in European cities was considered in preparation of the Levelling Up white paper by the UK Government.

Work with Martin Andersson (Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden) and Johan Eklund (Jonkoping Business School, Sweden) shows that financial constraints faced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) increase with distance from agglomerated economies. In rural regions, SMEs' investments depend more on their own cash flow, but revenues in such places tend to be smaller. This makes it harder for [rural] SMEs to grow and increase productivity. The fact that such a consistent pattern of increasing investment-cash flow sensitivity is clearly observable in Sweden, one of the least regionally unequal countries, reinforces the importance of considering the spatial dimension in policies targeted at closing SME financing gaps.

Even closer to policymaking, a forthcoming OECD report I co-authored introduces a definition of productivity policy and offers guidance on how subnational governments can stimulate productivity growth, taking into account regional characteristics. Another area of interest is the role of skills and the occupational composition of a place in defining its economic performance. With my co-author Simone Grabner (Institute for SME Research, Austria) we show that U.S. Metropolitan Statistical Areas with a greater share of employment in teleworkable occupations before the COVID-19 crisis fared better in terms of keeping jobs during the first year of the pandemic. Ongoing work explores occupational relatedness based on shared skills – the idea is that this knowledge will be useful as places try to phase out environmentally-unfriendly industries and transition to a greener economy.

How do you see the field of Regional Science evolving going forward?

Many of the most pressing economic and social challenges—climate change and green transitions, growing inequality, migration, technological change (including job automation and proliferation of Artificial Intelligence), and ageing, among others—cannot be fully understood or successfully tackled by policy without a regional and local lens. Our understanding of economic and social processes increasingly moves away from linear (or equilibrium) reasoning to more complex settings involving networks, systems of systems, and other configurations which are often location-dependent and incorporate the “soft” dimensions such as culture, for example.

In terms of my expectations, first, I think regional science will play the leading role in documenting and explaining all these (and many other) processes but also taking a more active part in developing place-based tools and solutions for policy makers. Second, I think regional science will focus more on critical issues such as the environment (e.g., quantifying the impacts of climate change on agriculture and other economic activities, studying mitigation and adaptation strategies), water access, and resilience to economic shocks and natural disasters, among others. Last, but not least, the methods of regional science obviously will continue to evolve to incorporate big data, non-traditional data

sources, and new techniques such as machine learning even more. Hopefully these changes will allow for more accurate, detailed, and timely insights.

If you want to learn about Alexandra's research, please check out some of her publications:

OECD (2023/Forthcoming). Productivity Policy for Places. OECD Publishing. Paris.

Andersson, M., Eklund, J.E. & Tsvetkova, A. (2023). Spatial variations in financial constraints of SMEs – evidence from firm-level estimates of investment-cash flow sensitivities in Sweden. *Small Business Economics* 60(4), 1683–1698 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00673-y>

Grabner, S.M. & Tsvetkova, A. (2022). Urban labour market resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic: what is the promise of teleworking?, *Regional Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/00343404.2022.2042470](https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2022.2042470)

Jong, D., Tsvetkova, A., Lembcke, A. C., & Ahrend, R. (2021), "A comprehensive approach to understanding urban productivity effects of local governments: Local autonomy, government quality and fragmentation", *OECD Regional Development Papers*, No. 11, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5ebd25d3-en>.

Member Spotlight: Anil Rupasingha



Please tell us about yourself!

I am a senior research economist in the Rural Economy branch at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS). Prior to joining ERS, I was a research adviser and economist in the community and economic development department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Before joining the Atlanta Fed, I held a faculty position in research, teaching, and extension at New Mexico State University. My other prior positions include: faculty member at the American University of Sharjah in the U.A.E., senior research associate in the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development at Penn State University, and postdoctoral scholar in the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Rural Studies Program at the University of Kentucky. I have published my research in various journals, including the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, the Journal of Economic Geography, the Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, the Journal of Regional Science, Papers in Regional Science, Research Policy, and Small Business Economics. I am a native of Sri Lanka and earned my doctoral degree in Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University.

How did you find NARSC and to what degree are you currently involved?

I first attended NARSC just after my Ph.D. as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Kentucky on the advice of my postdoctoral advisor, David Freshwater. I have been a long-time member of the association and regularly attend NARSC annual conferences. I have also attended many Southern Regional Science Association (SRSA) annual conferences since I first joined NARSC and occasionally attended the Western Regional Science Association (WRS) annual meetings.

Please tell us about your research and how it contributes to the field of Regional Science.

At ERS, my research focuses on rural areas of the United States. My current research includes studying the impacts of federal programs on rural economic and social outcomes, effects of local financial structure on business relocations, and access to credit for minority and innovative businesses. In the past, I have studied regional issues related to poverty, employment growth, self-employment, internal migration, and social capital. I believe some of my research cuts across various disciplines that are integral part of regional science, and my research on the impacts of place-based policies and access to capital contributes to growing areas in regional science. These two areas are also at the forefront of regional research that helps inform policymakers, economic development programs, and development practitioners.

How do you see the field of Regional Science evolving going forward?

I really appreciate how multidisciplinary regional science is, and I hope to see more and more scholars from related disciplines like sociology, political science, and public policy participate over time. Additionally, I would like to see more research on the context of developing nations presented at our annual meetings and disseminated in our leading journals.

If you want to learn about Anil's published research, please visit his [Google Scholar](#) page.

Member Spotlight: Seohee Kim

***Please tell us about yourself!***

I am a 5th-year Ph.D. Candidate in Economics at Duke University specializing in Industrial Organizations and Urban Economics. Before joining the Ph.D. program, I studied mathematics and economics at Rice University.

How did you find NARSC and to what degree are you currently involved?

I learned about NARSC from the Economics Conference website and attended the annual conference last November in Montreal. I enjoyed presenting my work and getting helpful feedback from a diverse group of people studying Regional Science.

Please tell us about your research and how it contributes to the field of Regional Science.

My research tries to understand the competitive landscape of the housing industry by studying how national homebuilders' financial distress affects their own pricing decisions and local housing markets. Through the lens of housing demand and supply models, I quantify the aggregate and distributional impact of rising homebuilding industry concentration.

My research contributes to regional science by providing insights into how housing policies such as zoning and land use regulations that serve as a barrier to entry for smaller builders affect the affordability and demographic composition of the neighborhood.

How do you see the field of Regional Science evolving going forward?

I was amazed by the diversity of research in the regional science fields at the annual conference. It was a rare opportunity to witness economists, geographers, sociologists, and urban planners gathered in one place! I hope that this collaboration will contribute to a deeper understanding of pressing issues such as climate change and housing inequality. I am especially interested in seeing the collaboration in developing surveys or datasets that require expertise and insights from these diverse fields. The increasing availability of data and advancements in computational methods have allowed social scientists to quantify fundamental parameters that govern important patterns in regional science. However, there is still a lack of unified national-level data on zoning changes or building-level construction permits. I believe that efforts should be made to develop a carefully designed and comprehensive dataset that would greatly benefit many regional scientists in the field.

Seohee was awarded the 23rd Annual Benjamin H. Stevens Graduate Fellowship in Regional Science in support of her dissertation "National Homebuilders' Internal Capital Networks and Local Housing Outcomes." Congratulations, Seohee!

If you want to learn about Seohee's research, please visit her [website](#).

Call for Submissions: NARSC/SEA 2023

We invite you to join us for the 70th Annual North American Meetings of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) in San Diego, California. The conference is co-sponsored by the North American Regional Science Council (NARSC) and the Western Regional Science Association. This year we are excited to announce that the Spatial Econometrics Association (SEA) will be joining us! You may register for either the NARSC or SEA sessions or choose to have access to both.

The conference will take place at the Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego from November 14–18, 2023. We welcome submissions of individual paper abstracts and organized sessions relating to a wide variety of topics that are included within the diverse realm of regional science. **The submission deadline is July 3, 2023.**

As usual, there will be several organized special sessions and workshops. If you are interested in participating in one of the special sessions, please contact the session organizers. Information about the workshops will be posted in late July. Decisions concerning the acceptance of papers and sessions will be announced in late August. We are offering expedited abstract acceptance to overseas attendees from a country that requires a visa to enter the United States.

If you have questions, please contact either Soomi Lee (slee4@laverne.edu, Program Chair) or John Sporing (executivedirector@narsc.org, Overall Arrangements).

We look forward to seeing you in San Diego!

Special Sessions:

- [Machine Learning in Regional Science: Perspectives, Methods, and Applications](#)
- [35th Annual Regional/Rural Development Sessions](#)
- [Location and Spatial Analysis](#)

- [The Food and Beverage Industry](#)
- [Regional Economic Effects of Disasters](#)
- [Regional Science, Climate Change, Environmental Footprint](#)
- [Outreach in Regional Science](#)
- [Contextual Understanding of Places in Ageing and Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Transportation Accessibility](#)
- [Spatial Econometrics Software Round-Table \(SEA session\)](#)
- [Small Area Estimation \(SEA session\)](#)
- [Regional Science, Climate Change, Environmental Footprint](#)

Workshops

- [Spatial Data Analysis and Econometrics with PySAL](#)