



NARSC NEWS



Welcome from the Executive Director



Hello everyone, and welcome to the September NARSC Newsletter.

As you know, the 71st North American Meetings of the Regional Science Association International sponsored by the North American Regional Science Council (NARSC) are just around the corner now (November 13-16, 2024).

Be sure and join us in the historic and fun city of New Orleans to attend some wonderful sessions and reconnect with colleagues and friends. The host hotel is the New Orleans Marriott, right on Canal Street and steps from the French Quarter.

For those of you attending, be sure to seriously consider staying at the host hotel. NARSC contracts with the hotel for a set number of rooms. If we do not meet that number, the organization is liable for the difference. Besides, staying at the host hotel provides you with more opportunities to meet your next co-author!

The draft program is currently on the website. Be sure and take a look at all the great sessions and begin planning which ones you will be attending.

As always, a big thanks to our newsletter editors...Liz Dobis (Economic Research Service) and Bonnie Bounds (Auburn University) for their continued work for the regional science community.

If you have any ideas for an upcoming newsletter, be sure to send them an email at newsletter@narsc.org.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in the fun city of New Orleans!

John Sporing
NARSC Executive Director

SEPTEMBER 2024

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Words from the Editors



It is our pleasure to present the first September NARSC Newsletter! In this issue of the newsletter, we start with the intriguing history of the New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area's growth and fragmentation contributed by Matt Fannin. We hope this sneak peak into the regional dynamics of New Orleans gets you excited to attend the upcoming 2024 NARSC Meeting.

Member spotlights and accomplishments are next, followed by the subregional association section featuring the Mid-Continent Regional Science Association (MCRSA). In their section, MCRSA provides us with a recap of this year's conference, award winners, and newly elected members of the Board of Directors. This is followed by sections highlighting publishing in regional science, upcoming meetings, and job openings.

If you have ideas or suggestions regarding content or would like to contribute to the newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact Bonnie and me at the new newsletter email: newsletter@narsc.org.

[Liz Dobis](#) and [Bonnie Bounds](#)
Newsletter Co-Editors

NARSC News

Regional Science in New Orleans

New Orleans – A Dynamic Functional Economic Area

As you prepare for the NARSC meetings, I was asked to provide a regional science perspective on our host city, New Orleans. It is older compared to many cities in the United States, and many of you will enjoy the French (and Spanish) history that gives the city much of its charm and is the allure of many visitors. Whether this is your first or tenth time visiting the city, there is typically a new restaurant or historical attraction you have not enjoyed on a previous trip. (A new gem I found in the last year is a small museum, The Historic New Orleans Collection, located on Bienville Street in the heart of the French Quarter. It is free and I recommend it if you have time between sessions since it is only a 10-minute walk from the conference hotel).

While 17th to 19th century New Orleans is the period most often taught to students in U.S. history, I thought I might evaluate the regional landscape of the city in the past 70 years. The functional economic region of New Orleans, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget's Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) when they were first defined in the 1950s, consisted of Orleans Parish (county) (co-terminus with the city of New Orleans), Jefferson Parish to its immediate west (location of the airport), and St. Bernard Parish (east) (Figure 1). The biggest change for the city during this decade was the establishment of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway. Better known as "the causeway," it became the world's longest bridge over continuous water at 23.85 miles. The completion of this bridge reduced transportation time and cost for New Orleans workers that were living on what is locally referred to as

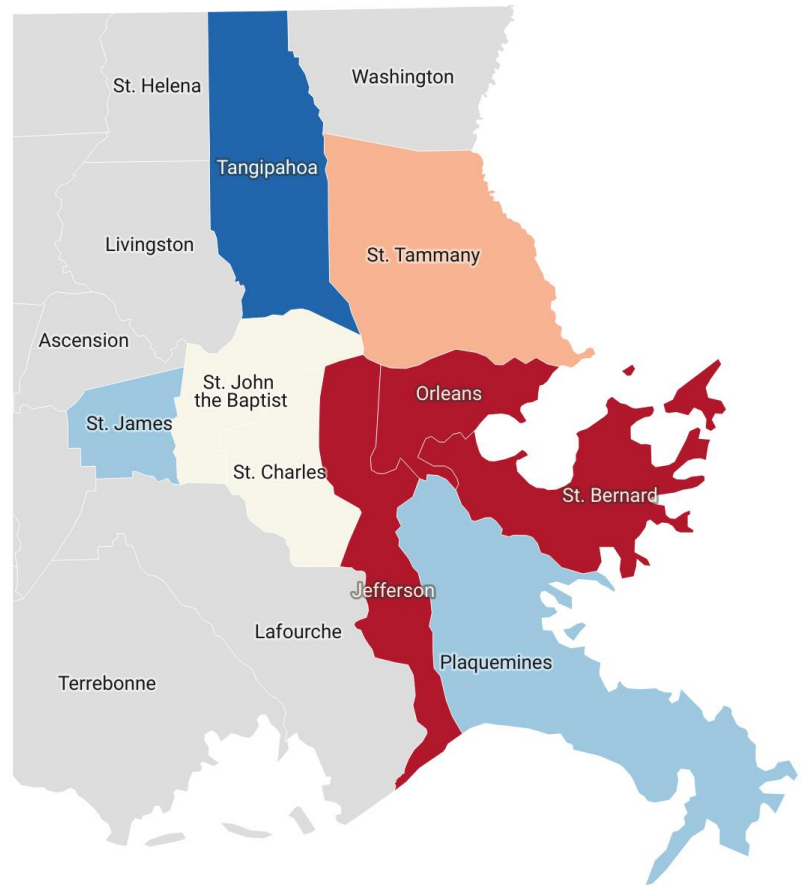
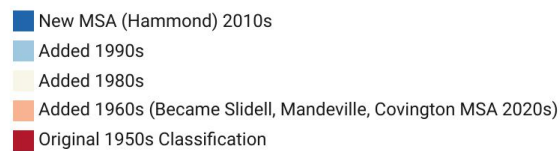
the “Northshore” (St. Tammany Parish). The bridge led to spread effects allowing New Orleans businesses to serve the Northshore more easily. It also allowed for existing New Orleans residents, as well as those migrating to New Orleans for work, to choose the Northshore for their homes. The bridge was the primary reason that when the New Orleans MSA was updated in the 1960s, St. Tammany Parish was added.

Beyond the bridge, the next major event that impacted the region was the oil and gas boom. This boom gained momentum in the 1970s and peaked in the early 1980s, leading to additional spread effects, particularly to the west of New Orleans. Because of the topography of the region, a large percentage of the geographic footprint of the existing metropolitan parishes are in wetlands. As the number of jobs increased in the region, demand for higher ground in adjacent parishes extended the MSA (along with the road and bridge infrastructure to support it). The MSA spread to the west and included bedroom communities as far west as St. James Parish (home to the famous Oak Alley Plantation). These parishes were also linked due to the expanding refineries and chemical plants that sprung up along the Mississippi River, as well as the slowly burgeoning tourism sector. The geographical footprint of the New Orleans MSA peaked in 1990.

Economic forces that would lead the functional region to eventually fragment started to occur in the mid-1980s. Two big events were major drivers of this fragmentation. First, the oil boom that peaked in the early 1980s was followed by a major oil bust that resulted in many blue- and white-collar jobs in this industry either being eliminated or consolidated to headquarters outside Louisiana (particularly Texas). Increased outmigration restrained faster economic and demographic growth that had occurred in the 1970s. While some parishes within the MSA continued to grow, it was generally slower than the national average as natural growth (births minus deaths) was counterbalanced by high levels of outmigration. This slower population growth for the New Orleans MSA (along with other regions of Louisiana) led to the state losing a U.S. Congressional Seat in 1990.

The second (and relatively more recent) event that drove fragmentation of the New Orleans MSA was Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The well-known failure of the levee system in New Orleans led to a forced

Figure 1. Growth of the New Orleans MSA, 1950–2010



Note: Author's work, created using Datawrapper

evacuation and resulting permanent diaspora of residents to other locations of the United States. In 2005 before the hurricane, the City of New Orleans had a population of approximately 494,000. The estimated population a year later was just over 230,000. The population of the city would never recover to its pre-Katrina level, reaching a maximum population of just over 388,000 in 2016 before starting a slow population decline that continues to the present.

Katrina had a sizeable impact, not just on the city's population but also on the Metropolitan footprint and spillover to other regions. In 2010, Tangipahoa Parish (western part of the Northshore region) became the newly defined Hammond MSA. While the parish historically contained a sizeable workforce that commuted to New Orleans for jobs, the percentage of those commuters were under the threshold for the parish to be added to the New Orleans MSA. The parish gained sufficient population after Hurricane Katrina to put it over the threshold for being classified as a new MSA. In 2020, the Slidell, Covington, Mandeville MSA (St. Tammany Parish) was established as another new MSA. This represented the first loss of the geographic footprint for the New Orleans MSA since its peak geographic footprint in 1990. (Figure 1). The establishment of these new MSAs highlight a changing concentration of residential population further north away from the coast combined with relatively weaker labor market linkages to New Orleans.

While New Orleans has experienced a changing regional landscape, it continues to be a place with rich history and new experiences for all that come and visit. As you enjoy socializing with your colleagues at one of city's great restaurants or walk around the French Quarter or Warehouse District, enjoy the sights (and even taken a few pictures). Given its regularly changing landscape, it may look much different the next time you come and visit.

Matt Fannin
Louisiana State University

Member Spotlights and Accomplishments

Member Spotlight: Orsa Kekezi



Please tell us about yourself!

My name is Orsa Kekezi, and I am originally from Gjirokastër, a small town in the south of Albania. After high school, I moved to Sweden to pursue my studies. I completed my Ph.D. in economics at Jönköping International Business School in Sweden in 2020. I am currently working as a researcher at the Swedish Institute of Social Research (SOFI) at Stockholm University and an assistant professor at Jönköping International Business School.

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

I first attended the NARSC conference in 2017 in Vancouver when I was a graduate student and have tried to attend every year since. I really enjoy the conference—it's a great way to stay updated on regional science research

(primarily) in the U.S., and I always get constructive and helpful feedback on my work. The regional science community at NARSC has also always been incredibly welcoming and supportive. I am however not directly involved with any activities at NARSC right now.

Please tell us about your research.

I have rather broad research interests, but my primary focus lies at the intersection of labor economics and economic geography. I explore labor mobility and its consequences for earnings, job matching, knowledge spillovers, and regional development, and I am also interested in entrepreneurship and innovation dynamics.

One of my main areas of interest is understanding the role of regional labor markets in labor mobility, particularly looking at wage compensation for commuting and migration and how this varies across skill groups. I'm also investigating differences in labor outcomes between native-born and foreign-born individuals, as well as disparities in upward mobility across regions with different characteristics. Another area of my research looks at how the segregation of urban amenities impacts social integration, especially for ethnic minorities in Sweden. I'm particularly interested in how access to these urban amenities matters for exogamy (marriage or co-habitation outside one's own ethnic group) and political participation.

How does your research contribute to the field of regional science?

Although I am an economist, my research primarily focuses on how location influences worker and firm dynamics. By combining theories and methods from different disciplines, I believe my work contributes to regional science by examining in-depth how geographic disparities shape economic outcomes. My research on regions, labor mobility, and segregation, helps us understand the opportunities and outcomes of people living and working in different areas. Through these studies, I aim to highlight the spatial dimensions of labor markets and the broader economic and political implications of regional variations. These topics lie at the core of regional science.

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

I believe regional science will grow in significance in the coming years. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed how we work, with many of us now working from home. We still don't fully understand the long-term effects this shift will have on regions, innovation, knowledge flows, segregation, political outcomes, firm productivity, and social connections. This is where regional science can play a key role in analyzing and understanding these changes.

Additionally, developments in AI are disrupting the labor market, but the impact is not uniform across all regions or groups. Certain jobs and skills are more vulnerable, while others are better positioned to benefit. Since jobs are not evenly distributed in space, this geographic dimension of who gains and who loses from technological advancements is key to understanding future labor markets. Some regions will be better equipped to mitigate the potential negative effects of these changes than others.

Lastly, I think the increasing availability of data will push regional science towards new methods. For example, we're already seeing the adoption of machine learning techniques in the field, and I expect this trend to continue.

If you want to learn about Orsa's research, please check her [website](#) or some of her publications.

Kevin Credit., Orsa Kekezi., Charlotta Mellander., & Richard Florida. (2024). Third Places, the Connective Fiber of Cities, and High-Tech Entrepreneurship. *Regional Studies*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2023.2297083>.

Marin Henning & Orsa Kekezi. (2023). Upward job mobility in local economies. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 16(3): 431-44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsad022>.

Mikaela Backman., Johannes Hagen., Orsa Kekezi., Lucia Naldi., & Tina Wallin. (2023) In the eye of the storm - Entrepreneurs and wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practise* 47(3): 751-87. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587211057028>.

Orsa Kekezi., Sandy Dall'erba., & Dongwoo Kang. (2022). The role of interregional and inter-sectoral knowledge spillovers on regional knowledge creation across US metropolitan counties. *Spatial Economic Analysis* 17(3): 291-310. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17421772.2022.2045344>.

Orsa Kekezi & Ron Boschma (2021). Returns to Migration after Job Loss: The importance of job match. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 53(6): 1565-87. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X211004577>.

Member Grant Awards: Nilsson and Delmelle

Funding agency: National Science Foundation's Human-Environment & Geographical Sciences and Human Networks & Data Science programs

Grant Amount: \$382,047

Project participants: Isabelle Nilsson, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and Elizabeth Delmelle, University of Pennsylvania

Project description: *Understanding Processes of Neighborhood Change using Property Text Analytics*. This project investigates the interconnected role of amenities, residential preferences, mortgage lending practices, and real estate advertisements in neighborhood change processes. In this project, the researchers analyze how the language used in real estate advertisement text has evolved over time and varies by the race and income of anticipated neighborhood mortgage applicants. This project uses a combination of novel, theory-guided natural language processing (NLP), machine learning, and classic statistical methods to predict the racial and income composition of anticipated mortgage applicants in a neighborhood over time-based on the words used in property advertisements. It also investigates trends in mortgage denial rates as advertised housing and neighborhood amenities have shifted. Finally, the project develops new methodological approaches for examining housing dynamics at a fine spatial and temporal resolution. The use of real-time real estate listings at a point-level spatial resolution offers the potential to predict changes before they become too entrenched, enabling public policies to adapt timely. The project promotes public engagement and the use of science and technology in public policy by developing an online textbook for integrating NLP in spatial analyses and by teaching K-12 girls enrolled in a STEM Camp about NLP methods and applications.

Regional Spotlight: Mid-Content Regional Science Association

Section contributed by: Jason Jolley



On the left: MCRSA Executive Director Jason Jolley, Richard Cebula, Dean Stansel, and JRAP editor Josh Hall (left to right) posed after the paper symposium honoring the distinguished career and contributions of Richard Cebula. These papers will appear in a special issue of *The Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*.

On the right: MCRSA attendees on a walking tour of downtown Cleveland led by Cleveland State University Professor Emeritus Dennis Keating.

MCRSA Hosts 54th Annual Meeting in Cleveland

The Mid-Continent Regional Science Association (MCRSA) held its 54th annual conference jointly with IMPLAN's 16th National Users Conference on June 5-7, 2024 at the Levin College of Public Affairs & Education at Cleveland State University.



During the conference, the following MCRSA awards were announced:

1. Leadership Award presented to Candi Clouse, President 2023-2024
2. Early Career Award presented to Christelle Khalaf, Associate Director, Government Finance Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago.
3. 2024 Research Impact Award for the Outstanding Journal of Regional Analysis & Policy article presented to Dean Stansel for his 2019 article "Economic freedom in US metropolitan areas."
4. M. Jarvin Emerson Student Paper Competition Award presented to Caroline Welter & Daniel Centuriao, West Virginia University, for "Assessing the Cost of Urban Climate Resilience: An Analysis of the NYC Financial District and Seaport Climate Resilience (FiDi) Master Plan Implementation."

The newly elected members of the MCRSA Board of Directors include: Dagny Faulk, President; Amanda Weinstein, President-Elect; Merissa Piazza, Vice President; and Candi Clouse, Immediate Past President. Jason Jolley continues to serve as Executive Director for MCRSA and Josh Hall as the editor of the *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*. Board priorities for the coming year include adding

historical information to the MCRSA website and implementing a new leadership structure that includes adding an at-large member and a student member to the Board of Directors.

The 2025 MCRSA/IMPLAN conference will be held June 4-6, 2025 at the University of Missouri Kansas City's Bloch School of Management.

Publishing in Regional Science



Article Feature: Canadian Journal of Regional Science

The [*Canadian Journal of Regional Science*](#) is the journal of the Canadian Regional Science Association. It is a bilingual journal, offering authors the opportunity to publish in either English or French. The journal provides a forum for interdisciplinary research on regional and urban issues, encourages academics to undertake research on regional issues and promotes the exchange of ideas across different academic disciplines, both in Canada and beyond.

In this issue of the NARSC Newsletter, I would like to share *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* articles from the past year that I found interesting. Because I do not read (or speak) French, I was a bit limited in the articles that I could read from the journal. However, I find the bilingual nature of the journal a wonderful service to the Canadian regional science community. On that note, I have chosen two articles, that focus on similar themes, local and regional development in Canada. The English article "[Economic development and Canada's gateways: A tale of two regional development agencies](#)" by Khadeja Elsibai, Jean Michel Montsion, Claudia De Fuentes, Peter V. Hall, and Dorval Brunelle uses network analysis to explore the different roles regional development agencies play in forging links between federal economic development priorities and local stakeholders. The French article "[Le rapport aux savoirs des élus des petites municipalités Québécoises: pistes de réflexion et d'action](#)" by Madeleine Lefebvre, Guy Chiasson, and Sonia Racine studies the impact of the relationship between new municipal government officials in Quebec and their community members on local development.

I encourage you to take a look at these or other articles from the *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*.

Liz Dobis

NARSC Newsletter Co-Editor

Upcoming Meetings

North American Regional Science Council (NARSC 2024)



The 71st Annual North American Meetings of the Regional Science Association International will be held **November 14-16, 2024** in New Orleans, Louisiana. The preliminary conference schedule is available [here](#), so be sure to take a look at all the great sessions that will be available!

The conference will be held at the New Orleans Marriott on Canal Street, just steps away from the historic French Quarter. A special conference room rate of \$219 (plus taxes) has been negotiated with the hotel. You can book your room at the conference hotel [here](#). Please join us for a fun-filled opportunity to exchange our traditional scientific content and enjoy the famous New Orleans cuisine and nightlife!

Western Regional Science Association (WRSA 2025)



The 64th Annual Meeting of the Western Regional Science Association will be held **February 12-15, 2025** at the Hilton Lake Las Vegas Resort and Spa in Henderson, Nevada. See you all there!

Southern Regional Science Association (SRSA 2025)



SRSA 2025

April 3–5, 2025

Louisville, Kentucky

We look forward to seeing everyone for the 64th Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Science Association in 2025. The next SRSA meeting will be held **April 3–5, 2025** at [The Brown Hotel](#) in Louisville, Kentucky.

Mid-Continent Regional Science Association (MCRSA 2025)



2025 MCRSA/IMPLAN Conference

June 4–6, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri

The 2025 MCRSA/IMPLAN conference will be held **June 4-6, 2025** at the University of Missouri Kansas City's Bloch School of Management.

Job Postings

For the most up-to-date list, check out the [position openings](#) section of NARSC webpage!

Research Assistant Professor, Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University

The Regional Research Institute (RRI) at West Virginia University is hiring a Research Assistant Professor (RAP) with an 11-month annual appointment who will report to the RRI Director. The RAP is eligible for full benefits (including paid vacation and sick leave) and there is the potential to get up to one month of additional pay (pending successful external funding). The position is also eligible for promotion.

The Research Assistant Professor will help conduct regional economic research on a wide range of topics relevant to the West Virginia University land grant mission. The qualified individual will be

responsible for economic and statistical analyses using a variety of data sources and in developing manuscripts and presentations for use in disseminating the results to both academic and public audiences. The RAP will also supervise graduate and undergraduate students, develop new research projects, and write proposals for external funding. The RAP will have opportunities to collaborate with scholars at WVU and internationally, to attend conferences, and for networking. More details can be found [here](#).