

Notes from the Editors

‘Towards the Future: Emerging Priorities in Regional Policy and Practice’ in 2016, the Australian and New Zealand Regional Association International (ANZRSAI) set this as the focus for its annual conference, held in Melbourne in December 2016. In conjunction with its partner, the Bureau for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economies (BITRE), the Association wanted to identify the key issues would become the focus of regional research and policy in the next five years or more.

The articles in this issue, bar one, were presented at the Conference, and provide a picture of the diversity of emerging priorities that were raised. They come from different parts of Australia; most focus on non-metropolitan Australia except for two. One of these looks at a transport in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, while the other focuses on place branding in the United States. The sixth, by Meredith and Baxter, was submitted separately, and adds to our understanding of the characteristics of accounting firms in non-metropolitan city-regions.

The collection reflects the pattern of the broader conference, revealing a field of study with very broad research interests and quite diverse methodologies. The papers evoke again questions about how concepts such as ‘region’ and ‘place’ are understood and applied across disciplines and national boundaries. Some projects focus on very specific empirical topics, others address key policy questions, while yet others are interested in more systemic approaches. These papers are written also by researchers working from different disciplinary perspectives, adding further to the apparent complexity of regional studies.

Each of these papers, notwithstanding the diversity, is very timely, in that it addresses a topic that has significant policy implications: urban transport, the international student experience, housing affordability, innovation, regional economic strategies, and policy formulation itself. Achieving relevance was a key objective of the ANZRSAI Conference; did it succeed also in highlighting emerging priorities in regional policy and practice?

The various topics covered here might be seen as current priorities, pointing to issues which need to be addressed in the next few years. The challenge remains, perhaps, to identify the priorities for policy attention that will be focusing decision-makers’ minds in 5-10 years. Contributions to this challenge would be welcome in future issues of this Journal.

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For the Editors