

**Regional Studies Association  
Development Plan 2015 – 2020**

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**Preface**

This Development Plan is one of a long string of similar documents that have been used by the Regional Studies Association for more than 2 decades to plan its work. It is the culmination of a large number of meetings and consultations both within the Association’s Boards and Committees, with its staff team, its members and with cross sections of non-members. We have taken care to be even handed in our consultations across disciplines and territories and generally to reflect the diversity of our membership. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to all those who reflect, comment and in other ways support the writing of this plan.

The fields of regional studies and regional science are responding to global challenges and no one is harder on us than ourselves. The critical need to address issues of growth and rebalancing weigh heavily as does issues of sustainable development, the management of geopolitical change and increasing urbanisation alongside important questions of equity and equality. In this plan we seek to push ourselves and our community to face these global questions and to add to our knowledge and understanding about how the world works and responds to shocks at different scales and in different places.

There is a continued need for the Association to support its members and wider community and we seek to do that through our research programme, our conferences and events, our publishing portfolio which continues to expand and importantly through our growing knowledge exchange activities.

This document must acknowledge the passing, in Summer 2014, of the Association’s pioneering and charismatic President – Professor Sir Peter Hall. Peter was a founder member of the Association in 1964 and has remained a member throughout the intervening period. He was an active member and a probing, ambitious President. He pushed us to push ourselves while being supportive, engaged, willing to help and quietly, we think, was pleased to see his fledgling creation survive its growing pains through to relative maturity.

In 2015 the Association will celebrate its 50th anniversary. The world has changed much in the past half century but many of the challenges that so taxed Peter Hall and his contemporaries remain today. Our work is not done. We thank you for reading this document and hope that you, the reader, will see the value of this prospectus to map the future priorities for the Association, its Board and staff team and that you will give us any feedback on what you read. We would welcome your views as an Association can only be as good as its community is active and engaged.



Andrew Beer  
Chair  
Regional Studies Association



Sally Hardy  
Chief Executive  
Regional Studies Association

## **OVERVIEW**

The Regional Studies Association was established in 1964 to:

1. Promote education in the field of regional studies by the exchange of ideas and information;
2. Stimulate and aid studies and research into regional planning, development and policy and to disseminate the results of such research.

The Association's vision is to be the authoritative voice of and global network for academics, students, practitioners and policy makers in the study and understanding of cities, regions and regionalism.

The aims of the Association are to:

- Lead the regional research, policy and practice communities
- Develop our members and support our community
- Deliver high quality regional research
- Influence policy debate and practice
- Innovate in publishing
- Acknowledge excellence in our field

## **EXCELLENCE**

As an Association we seek excellence in all our activities and in this plan will seek to build upon and strengthen our already robust reputation.

We operate in a complex and multifaceted environment encompassing researchers in many disciplines but particularly geography, economics, political science and planning and across several sectors – academia, policy and practice.

We are interested not only in empirical work and results but also in the development of theory and practice and the exchange of this knowledge with others working at the regional level.

The Association publishes a range of journals, a book series and a members' magazine. These outlets hold excellence as their key criteria. This is sought through the professional management of the publications, the choice of publishing partner (Taylor and Francis since 1992), adherence to best practice in publishing practices such as appropriate peer review and use of COPE guidelines on publishing ethics. The Association seeks the best qualified editorial teams and resources them for their role. It offers a range of publishing outlets recognising the need for choice and variability for example, the new start journal, Regional Studies, Regional Science offers an open access and on-line only route to publication accepting unconventional articles, regional graphics and offering early career mentoring.

The Association adheres to excellence as the key criteria for all grants but bursaries will recognise career stage and funding difficulty.

Excellence is a cornerstone of the service delivery from the office team to the membership and wider community. The Association is run by its members for its members supported by an enthusiastic and expert team of individuals with varied backgrounds and interests.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

The Association is independent. It is established as a charitable company limited by guarantee in England and Wales. It is run by a Board of up to 12 trustees/directors elected by the membership and they are assisted by a variable number of appointed trustee/directors. The Board is supported by a number of Committees and by a staff team led by the CEO in the office in Seaford, UK.

The Association has a number of memberships to umbrella bodies such as the Academy of Social Sciences and, the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers but has no political affiliations or loyalties. The independence of the Association is strongly valued by its members enabling the Association to speak across researchers' career stages, across disciplines and across institutions.

## **IMPACT**

Part of the Association's charitable responsibility is to seek public benefit from its work. This is taken seriously and knowledge exchange activity is a valued benefit of membership. Not all activities can have immediate impact but the Association seeks to disseminate knowledge, to promulgate debate and to engage with relevant partners globally using all appropriate methods.

## **LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

The Regional Studies Association leads in its field. It works to support regional research and to promote education and understanding of regional issues. In achieving this, the Association collaborates with many interested bodies and individuals. Work at the international level is particularly important with partners such as DG Regio (European Commission), Committee of the Regions, OECD, World Bank, UN Habitat and UN but we also work with national bodies such as the Smith Institute and the UK Academy of Social Science. There is a strong interest in and commitment to comparative work recognising that mixed models and learning from other situations can intelligently inform decision making. The Association seeks to identify areas of research need and to encourage and facilitate engagement in those areas through building communities of knowledge and practice and in some cases through direct funding support.

## **OUR STRATEGY**

The Association faces challenges in two areas – within its academic field and as an Association seeking to grow and thrive.

The global economy is slowly recovering from shock and this process has triggered new questions and lines of inquiry by researchers and the Association seeks a leadership role in selected areas of response.

As an Association we face six critical challenges – growing and maintaining RSA membership and activity levels; leading and serving our increasingly diverse community; responding to new publishing paradigms in terms of both our publishing practices and also securing our income into the future; building and financing our knowledge exchange activities and keeping pace with changes and transitions in the HEI community. As a consequence of this latter change, the role of learned societies is changing and new values and modes of practice and working need to be established across the sector.

## **AREAS OF CHALLENGE**

The notion of “region” is evolving and the Association must work to embrace new conceptions of territory and spatiality and embed them into ways of thinking and working.

The Board has identified a number of themes which will inform its choices in relation to its non-responsive mode activities such as conference themes and the Regional Inquiry. Researchers remain free to propose activities in all areas of regional studies and regional science in our responsive mode areas of support such as the early career and any other grant schemes and research networks.

1. Austerity, risk and resilience
2. Urban and regional sustainability
3. Leadership and governance
4. Geo economy and geo politics
5. City region building and metro politics
6. Territorial politics and policy
7. Urban and Regional theory, methodology and data
8. Developing area studies
9. Socio spatial inequalities, ageing, demography and wellbeing
10. Innovation, agglomeration, evolution
11. Firms, Sectors and Global production networks
12. Local and regional economic development and planning
13. Identity, citizenship and lived differences
14. Cohesion, competition and smart cities
15. Infrastructures and built environment

In supporting research and enquiry into these areas the Association seeks to engage with both researchers and practitioners in differing parts of the world to ensure that lessons can be learnt from and between territories.

In responding to the changing form of higher education and the publishing paradigm, the Association recognises that its twin goals of both increasing the membership and growing its territorial spread will be challenging. Examples of this include the need to serve an increasing diverse membership, contribute to policy and public understanding, the need to engage with new technologies and with new ways of working embracing concepts such as big data and visualisation.

## **AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT**

### **Sectors**

The Association seeks a global footprint. It acknowledges its relatively strong position within Europe and will concentrate on growth in China, North and Latin America and Eastern Europe in the next five year planning period – it values what can be learnt from comparative work. It recognises the inter-relationship between the fields of regional studies and regional science (hence the name choice for the newly launched gold open access journal *Regional Studies, Regional Science*) and will engage more closely with those working in regional science to encourage more collaborative understanding and work. At its best the Association is multi and inter-disciplinary working across the boundaries of traditional disciplines. The Association continues to strive for an impactful role in the policy arena in order to effect public benefit and particularly seeks to work at the meta-level through partnerships with organisations such as DG Regio (European Commission); Committee of the Regions; OECD; World Bank; United Nations; UN-Habitat. The Association recognises that managing a diverse community of interests is complex and will require innovation and some compromise.

### **Within our Membership**

The Association will continue to work to support and encourage the work of its members and to recognise their different career stages, different geographical locations and the advantages and challenges that this can bring. It will seek as far as possible to be inclusive in its organisation of activities taking into account varying abilities to pay.

The Association will offer a trans-disciplinary platform of engagement for academics in all career stages, policy makers and practitioners. It undertakes to consult and inform its members using all reasonable means in order to build not only a community of knowledge and practice but also to better enable the Association to act as a voice in the sector.

### **What will we deliver?**

- Leadership in terms of the key questions for the field including projects addressing these challenges
- A better understanding of what Regional Studies and Science means in different territories to facilitate better comparative and cooperative working and efforts to link across disciplines to involve all relevant thinkers on regional issues
- Policy engagement seeking a public benefit impact from the work of our members and community
- Exciting and innovative networking opportunities including global conferences and events
- A high quality and flexible publishing programme
- A funded research programme responding to the needs of all categories of membership with appropriate funding, clear and transparent criteria for support and a strong commitment to dissemination of the findings
- The reward of excellence in our fields
- The development of our territorial networks to better serve our members
- Further support for our educational programme for students and early career researchers

## The Strategic Priorities

To address its strategic challenges the Association will make choices and planned investments to both build on existing strengths and to work in new areas through its core activities.

## RESEARCH

The recent economic crisis and varied global responses to increasingly insistent voices that climate change will be irreversible if fossil fuels continue to be burnt at the same rate until the end of the century, geo-political shifts in some parts of the world leading to global uncertainty alongside other concerns including demography, migration, health and well being, unequal development, education and skills training and the nurturing of sustainable development underpin the commitment of the Association to its programme of research.

By supporting our members and their opportunities to network, to access the best research and to publish and otherwise disseminate their work, the Association is in part delivering against its research agenda. The Association also directly commissions research through a number of mechanisms.

The Association has recognised the following challenges –

- One effect of the crisis was to reduce the amount of funding available which was ring fenced for early career researchers
- A reduction in HEI funding combined with a tendency for concentration on large grants by many funders meant that even established academics found it difficult to access small sums of money to kick start new projects, to pay for small amounts of research assistance, buy data sets or buy themselves out of teaching
- There remains the need for funding that is geographically untethered to support networking on narrow themes to build communities of interest and develop thinking and understanding
- The tightening of funding available for researchers at all levels to attend conferences and events

## Achievements

- The Association works with leading thinkers and researchers across its disciplinary breadth. It engages with them using a variety of modes – invitations to speak, positions on committees, through project working such as event organisation, editorships and editorial boards.
- Funding was given to 33 research networks since 2008 of which 12 were active in 2014. The financial commitment is £99,000. Most of the 104 network leaders are based in Europe with some presence in the US and Australia. Over 70 meetings were held in more than 25 countries with well over 1,500 participants.
- RSA is committed to increasing research engagement - of the money committed to research networks c.50% was spent on bursaries to assist with attendance
- Since 2011 the RSA has invested £240,000 in 24 Early Career Research Grants of £10,000 each. Grant holders have been internationally located – Germany, Ireland, Sweden, USA. The majority of research has been geography based but Economics, Management and Business Studies, Planning, Political Science and Sociology are all represented.
- The Association committed to stronger dissemination of research – our own and other peoples. To this end a fully searchable content management system is now in place on the website and the landing pages alone for RSA research networks and research grants have attracted over 7000 hits in the last 12 months.

### Research Network Survey Results

- 94% of respondents said their involvement with an RSA research network led to new networks
- 69% said it led to a publication for them
- 50% led working directly with colleagues met during the event
- 32% led to the publication of a book

***RSA Research Network on Leadership and Urban and Regional Development***

The purpose of this research network was to build on existing contacts between earlier RSA Networks leadership (Place Leadership, Sotarauta et al, Citizen driven and collective leadership, Liddle et al, Leadership in Euro peripheries, Sirak et al, Networked leadership and innovation, Sotarauta et al) to create greater understanding, develop further joint publications, and build future research potential and as a consequence develop common theoretical, conceptual and methodological frameworks. This network organised events with international audiences in the UK, Finland, The Netherlands as well as the Czech Republic, Belgium and Australia and will run further events over the next two years. For this growing Network the rolling RSA funding has been critical to its health.

***RSA Early Career Grant: 'It's hard everywhere, but this place is different': regional differences in non-standard work in the UK***

*The RSA Early Career Grant has helped me to secure a tenure post in the UK. This grant was therefore a stepping stone for my academic career. The mentoring element was particularly fruitful in developing new areas of research and networking. I am very grateful to Prof Duncan MacLennan for being so enthusiastic about this research and providing me important networks without which this research would not have been conducted. Based on my research funded by an RSA Early Career Grant I developed ideas for further research which led to new research collaborations and the establishment of a research council funded seminar series.*

*Darja Reuschke; 2014 – Grant Holder 2011*

This project was supported as a pilot using a mixed-methods approach to investigate non-standard work and labour intermediaries, from the perspective of workers in different regions of the UK. It used existing data sources, in particular the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in conjunction with a commissioned nationally representative survey of workers in UK regions, as well interviews with policy makers, third sector groups and unions. The project has shed light on patterns of labour market change since the financial crisis of 2008. In particular, it sought to explore how the robustness of Britain's employment figures relative to the levels of joblessness experienced by other EU member states needs to be understood in the context of uneven geographies of crisis and recovery.

The project led to the principal investigator having articles and e-articles published as a direct impact of the research and has since moved to Canada to further her career.

*Priorities for 2015 - 2020*

- The Association will launch two new research grant schemes – one for mid-career researchers (MeRSA £5,000) and one for established researchers (FeRSA - £7,500). These small grant schemes are designed to offer support for a discrete piece of work in a flexible way permitting teaching buy out, research assistance, data purchase, travel and subsistence and including an Article Processing Charge should any resultant publication go to *Regional Studies, Regional Science*
- The Early Career Grant scheme will continue to be promoted and particular efforts will be made to attract high quality applicants from emerging areas particularly those where the RSA is establishing a presence
- As the first Early Career grants start to end, efforts will be made to ensure the widespread dissemination of research results and to assist the researchers in promoting potential impacts from their work
- The Research Network format will be reviewed and revised. It may allocate a greater sum of money to each network but reduce the number of networks and seek a balance between policy and theoretical foci. The networks would be carefully selected seeking those with international leadership
- A decision will be taken setting the resource envelope for the planning period and its division between funding schemes. Consideration will be given to offering ring-fenced funding for target geographical areas to encourage the development of comparative research
- The Research Committee will be encouraged to innovate while considering the effective expenditure of its budget to ensure maximum value to the community and wider public benefit for example considering the funding of a further collaborative PhD.

### **The RSA Inquiry**

The Association seeks to lead in shaping the research, policy and practice environment into the future responding to changing economic, social and environmental conditions. This multi-disciplinary activity will form part of the celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by making a clear contribution to the fields of regional studies and regional science and to social science globally. It is intended that this Inquiry be independent and address key questions of growth and rebalancing. It will be funded from the reserves of the Association.

Led by a small steering group, the Inquiry will commence by drawing upon key international figures for assistance in defining the core questions to be addressed but its key focus will be to tap into knowledge and understanding across all those active in regional research, policy and practice across the developed and developing world. It will use a range of methods including member and non-member surveys and questionnaires, focus groups at international events, online discussion forums and commissioning of research.

Particular effort will be given to the effective dissemination of the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry throughout its operation to inform and influence policy decision making.



## PUBLICATIONS

The Association seeks to achieve excellence in all its publications and to support its journals, books series and magazine as they evolve responding to the changing demands of the regional studies and regional science communities. The Association recognises the challenge that shifts in the publishing paradigm towards open access publishing present. Its response will address not only education and information to the academic community about new choices but will also realign its own publishing portfolio (e.g. Association journals are now all hybrid with the exception of **Regional Studies, Regional Science** which is fully gold) and will address potential tightening of future publishing income streams by building resilience into budgetary planning. The Association may choose to use commissioning of special pieces to highlight areas of particular importance in the field especially where these have been identified as research priorities within this document. Commissioned pieces will be subject to the normal standards of excellence and subject peer review.

### *Achievements 2008-2013*

#### Portfolio of RSA Publications

In the period 2008-2013, the Association added three new publications to its portfolio:

1. **Regional Studies, Regional Science**, is an online only, gold open access journal launched in late 2013. The journal publishes on regional issues in economics, geography, planning, political science and related fields. With streamlined peer-review the journal accommodates research articles, shorter policy briefings and a new 'regional graphics' section, reflecting the growing importance of data visualisation. The journal adheres to expected standards of excellence and research rigour. It was a rapid response to the paradigm shift towards open access publishing which rapidly rolled out globally from 2012/2013
2. The journal **Territory, Politics, Governance** began publishing in 2013 and has moved to quarterly format from 2015. It is a new interdisciplinary journal from the Regional Studies Association. It is committed to the development of theory and research in territorial politics and the governance of space. This journal creates a platform on which to explore the interface between territory, politics, economy, identity and the organisation of political space. It confronts topical and emergent issues of world economic and political concern
3. **Regional Insights** was a magazine aimed at Early Career Researchers launched in 2010 and which in 2014, became a section within the new start journal **Regional Studies, Regional Science**. **Regional Insights** in both incarnations was designed to make research findings from early career researchers more accessible to a wider audience. Complementing the Association's existing publications, it continues to offer a mentoring service to early career authors helping them to shape their research into a paper which will engage and inform readers drawn from across academia, policy-makers and practitioners in the field of regional studies and regional science.

Other achievements include:

- A change in editorial model for **Regional Studies** from "hub and spoke" to a more internationally dispersed team working on individual contracts thus avoiding whole team changeover in the future but retaining a collective decision making model and an increase in publishing frequency from 9 in 2007 to 12 per annum in 2014
- The inclusion of **Spatial Economic Analysis** within the Web of Science to gain an impact factor and the shift from 2 issues per year to quarterly publication
- The introduction of early career editors to its journals. These mentored roles have proved hugely popular both within the community and within the editorial teams
- A marked strengthening of the brand and reputation of the Regions and Cities Book Series which now publishes 14 books a year as compared with 4 books in 2007 and which has published 106 books since 2008
- When comparing the number of books sold between the periods 2003-2007 and 2008-2013, there is a growth of 233.5%
- In 2008 the member benefits were enhanced by the addition of e-access to the following 8 journals – City; Contemporary Social Science; Entrepreneurship & Regional Development; International Planning Studies; Policy Studies; Planning Practice and Research; Regional & Federal Studies and Space and Polity

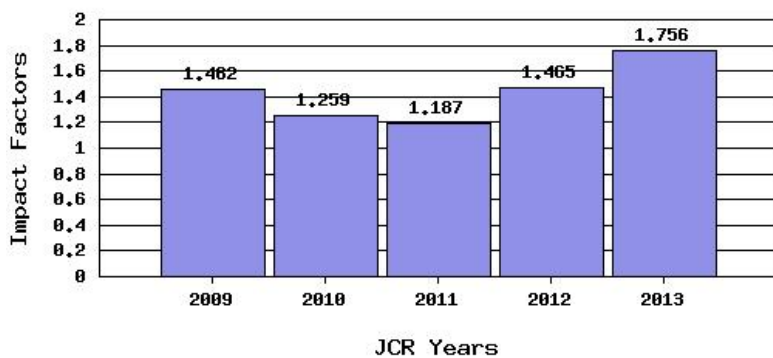
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- An expansion of the philanthropic schemes to which the Association's publications belong – Research4Life incorporating HINARI, AGORA, OARE and aRDI; INASP and the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii); The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL); The Association of Commonwealth Universities Low Cost Journals Scheme; Journal Donation Project (JDP); Special Terms for Authors & Researchers (STAR) which assists individual authors from emerging regions; AuthorAID which provides mentoring for authors in emerging regions

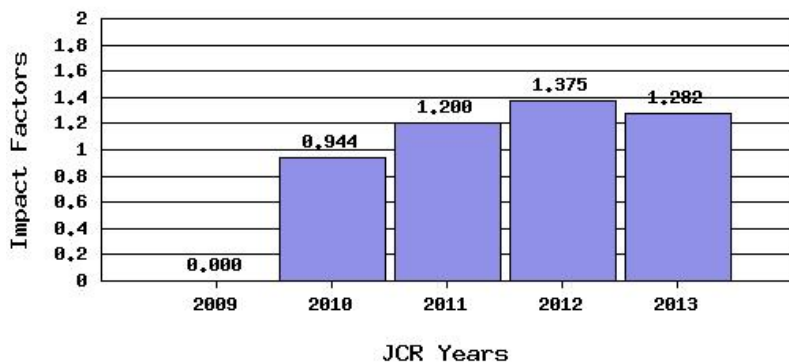
## *Priorities for 2015 - 2020*

- **Regional Studies** will continue to publish core, high quality articles through a mix of predominantly responsive mode but allowing for a more proactive mode incorporating special issues, commissioned articles and editorials. Commissioned editorials may link to Association events including the RSA Inquiry in order to build synergies of effort.
- **Territory, Politics, Governance** will seek its impact factor and to grow its brand and reputation in the field. Further marketing will be undertaken including a clear articulation of the purpose of the journal
- **Spatial Economic Analysis** will continue to publish high quality papers and to seek special issues on key topics
- **Regional Studies, Regional Science** will establish its reputation as the leading Gold OA journal in the field and will publish papers that are submitted under responsive mode but will also commission articles and commentaries to set the scope of the journal while it grows its visibility. The journal will offer a rapid route to publication across the two fields of regional studies and science. It will also remain open to change and will be responsive to best practice developments in gold OA publishing
- **Regions**, the members' magazine, will continue to be the voice of the Association membership and will remain a flexible publication responding to the needs of the membership
- **Regions and Cities** Book Series will continue to be nurtured as a key series for the Association. The series will continue to respond both to offered manuscripts and commissioned works
- The Association will continue to work with and support its large team of editors (43), associate editors (46) and editorial advisory board members (107) both through the provision of appropriate administrative support, institutional support through the RSA Publications Committee, Board and office team and through the provision of advice and technical assistance
- The role of referees in the publishing portfolio will continue to be recognised and celebrated (well over 5,000 referees contributed between 2008 -2014 based on annual counts)
- The relationship with the Association's publisher (Taylor and Francis) will continue to be developed particularly in relation to publishing innovation
- The Association to continue to consider where new publications might contribute to the development both of the Association and the field
- Efforts will be made to provide additional resources to allow for some commissioning of papers or organisation of publication events
- The Association will continue to contribute particularly through the CEO, to the debates on the changing world of academic publishing – both in journals and monographs
- Continue to appreciate and concentrate on the importance of communicating with both the Association's members and the wider community
- Be aware of the need to plan for timely and smooth succession of editors, editorial teams and staff members
- Seek to address the desire of some members to receive on online copies of journal publications only

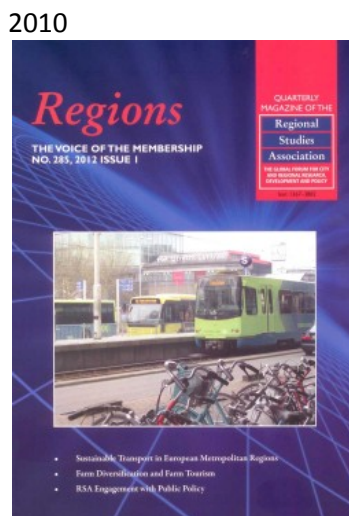
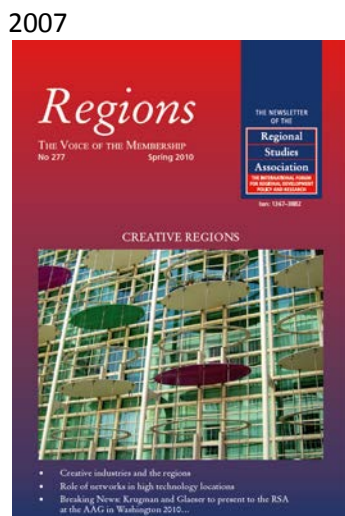
REGIONAL STUDIES



Spatial Economic Analysis



New covers



***Regional Studies, Regional Science***

Launched in late 2013 this new journal is gold open access. It is therefore an innovative addition to the existing suite of hybrid RSA journals. With article processing charges subsidised by the Association it offers an inexpensive route to OA publishing alongside a number of innovations. These include the use of a refereeing panel providing rapid referee responses (only 14 weeks from submission to publication in November 2014); a regional graphics section taking papers demonstrating data visualisation; publishing both unconventionally short and long articles and articles with associated commentaries. Importantly it offers a mentored paper section for early career researchers. In its first 12 months it has published 27 articles including 11 early career mentored route papers and 2 regional graphics. It has attracted in excess of 17,000 full text downloads.

***Downloads on Territory, Politics, Governance and Regional Studies, Regional Science***

*When Territory Deborders Territoriality, Saskia Sassen, Article Views: 5159*

*How Should We Do the History of Territory? Stuart Eldon, Article Views: 394*

*Explaining (with) Neoliberalism, Jamie Peck, Article Views: 2919*

*Territory, Politics, Governance, John A. Agnew, Article Views 2289*

## CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

The Association runs a globally respected series of conferences and events. These benefit the different sectors of our membership – students, early career researchers, academics and policy makers and practitioners. Some events cater for all while others are targeted by geography or theme at particular categories of our membership. Events are run at scales from regional to international. The Association seeks to increase the impact of its events both by running more events and by attracting more people to attend them. Events will continue to be thematically structured and market oriented. The challenges in this area are leadership in terms of topic selection, retention of participants, talent monitoring and community building. Going forward the Association seeks to use its conferences to promote research and debate on the key issues it identifies in our field through the selection of plenary speakers and the organisation of special panels and paper sessions.

In a change to previous strategy the Association will concentrate on a single “Annual” conference each year supported by a number of other events of different kinds and scales such as publishing events, early career, policy and territorial conferences.

### *Achievements 2008-2013*

- In the planning period the Association has run 10 global events in 10 countries including the USA, China, Brazil, Turkey, Finland and UK. The total number of events held is 116 with 104 being held in Europe.
- The Association has innovated. In 2012 a publications conference was run at UCLA, Los Angeles with capped attendance numbers with all Association publishing outlets represented. This event was one of the strongest reviewed conferences in our history
- The policy conference programme has been strengthened partly through the use of collaborative arrangements with organisations such as the Smith Institute. These events often employ a dual strategy of pamphlet and conference which works well with the policy community
- Early Career conferences have been introduced and attendee numbers are growing
- New format web pages have supported the conference programme well with more hits and fewer calls to the RSA office for conference related information

### RSA Membership and Conference Portals

- During the planning period the Association has invested in two conference and membership portals – the technology moved very quickly during this period. These investments have been popular with members as they are easy to use and with the office team as they facilitate the back room functions for events and membership. These are big investments both financially and in terms of planning, specification, delivery, training and implementation.

### Conference Pricing

- In 2009 to assist with equality of access the Association introduced a territorial pricing for its major conferences which uses GDP per capita on a pp basis. This has proved popular with the membership in all territorial bands and increasing numbers of participants are attending from bands B, C and D.

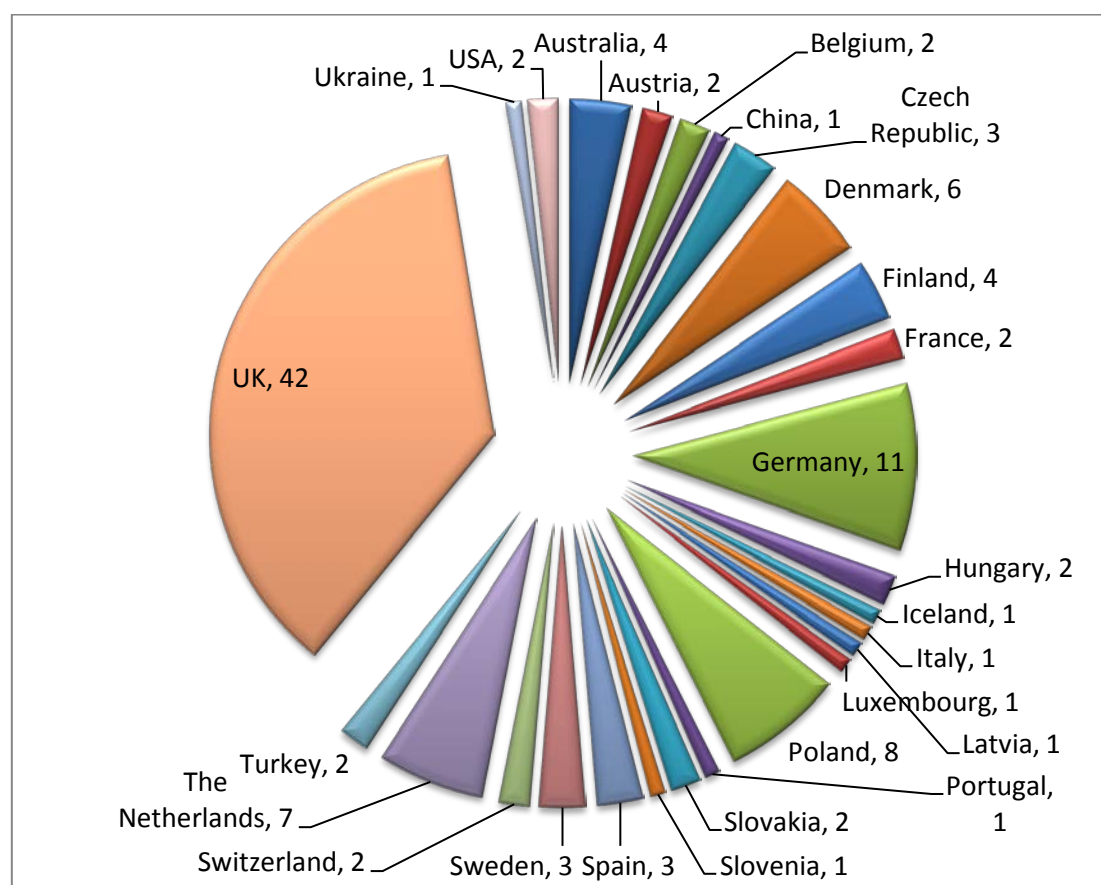
### *Priorities for 2015 - 2020*

- Run events which are innovative and excellent. Seek to innovate through session planning, organisation of plenary programming and the arrangement of fringe meetings and social engagements (including sporting opportunities) allowing for effective networking
- Seek to make our events inclusive and accessible to all through the use of careful pricing strategies supported by a transparent conference bursary scheme and the use of new communication technologies such as web-streaming and social media
- Seek to increase both the number of events that are organised (whether physically or virtually) and the number of individuals that participate in them

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- Pay attention to the geography of our programme to ensure that new markets are properly represented and included in the work of the Association
- Seek to increase the level of sponsorship attracted in order both to allow a better level of provision for the events and / or lower entrance fees and to raise the profile of our events
- Use our conference and events programme as a spring board to building new relationships
- Plan a range of different types of events leading with an annual conference but supplemented by one day, two-day and specialist events such as policy seminars and publications meetings

## Global reach and number of RSA Research Network and other events 2008-2013



### **European Conference - Regional Responses and Global Shifts: Actors, Institutions and Organisations: Pécs, 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

This event was attended by 540 people from 44 countries including Egypt, Mexico, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan and saw 423 papers presented over 3 days in 147 sessions. Plenary speakers included Dirk Ahner, Director-General, EU Regional Policy, European Commission and Gerhard Stahl, Secretary-General, Committee of the Regions were amongst the keynote speakers. The event brought together established policy makers, practitioners from many European regions and all career stages of academics in a vibrant mix of sessions including plenaries, round tables, workshops, meet the editors and discussion groups.

### **International Conference 2012, Global Urbanisation: Challenges and Prospects - UCLA, Los Angeles, USA, 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> December**

This event was an innovation for the RSA in that attendance was tightly controlled with a maximum number of 120 and tightly prescribed themes. Sixty per cent of attendees were by invitation with the remainder being selected from the response to the call for papers. Editors were present from all the Association's publications and presentation slots in all sessions were deliberately long to allow speakers time to develop their arguments. The sun shone on the

Covel Commons Centre and the conference feedback was the most glowing in the Association's history. Plenary speakers included Patrick Le Gales (Sciences Po, France); Richard Florida (Toronto, Canada); John Agnew (UCLA); Michael Storper (LSE, UK), Ananya Roy (Berkeley, USA); Danny Dorling (Oxford, UK) and Andrew Beer (Adelaide, Australia).

***Early Career Conference - Times of Change: Future Directions in Geography, Urban and Regional Studies***

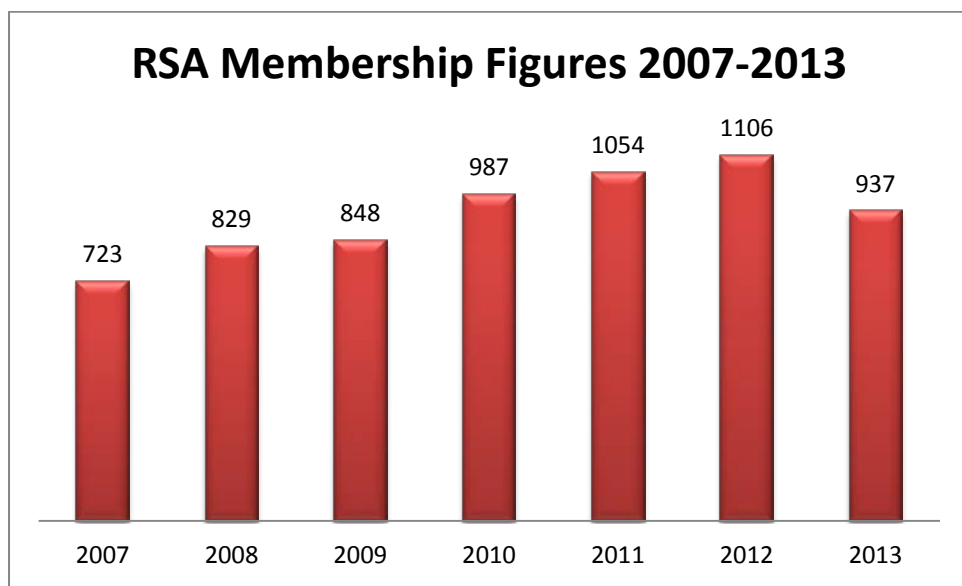
This conference took place at HafenCity University, Hamburg, Germany from Thursday 1 November – Friday 2 November. It was the Association's first non-UK based Early Career Conference and an outstanding success. This two day event had two plenary sessions and 19 sessions with 51 submitted papers. Sixty-seven participants attended. The conference attracted delegates from 19 different countries including Canada, Portugal and Switzerland.

## MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The Association’s core strength lies in the commitment of its members. The Association acknowledges that its activities can only be as strong as its membership are engaged and is determined to continue to offer high quality and differentiated membership benefits. The Association continues its commitment to recognising membership by career stage and geography as does its acknowledgement of the need for inclusivity through appropriate pricing strategies.

### *Achievements 2008-2013*

- Growth in membership numbers – membership will have grown by more than 50% between 2007 and the year-end 2014
- Growth in membership geographical diversity - members in 2013 are drawn from 67 countries
- Change in membership demographic profile – student membership has doubled between 2008 and 2013 and early career membership is now higher than student membership from a standing start of only 15.
- Introduction of membership territorial pricing in 2008 based on GDP per capita on a price parity basis
- Introduction of the early career membership category in 2008
- Increase in membership services especially for the early career and student communities whose numbers were decreasing in 2007 e.g. Facebook community for early career, regional insights, early career researcher grants
- Introduction of two new membership and events platforms during the planning period. This has allowed the introduction of rolling rather than calendar year memberships and the possibility of online renewals and a standard 10% early bird discount.





### Geographical Spread of the RSA members 2007-2013



#### *Priorities for 2015 - 2020*

- To continue a growth trajectory for membership in absolute numbers and in terms of geographical diversity
- To build the strength of the individual category of membership
- To create a network of Regional Studies and Science Centres

The Association wishes to establish a network of centres for the study and practice of regional studies and science. These centres will be corporate RSA members but will form a network within membership and will have some call on the resource within the office to service their activities. The goal here is not to privilege some research centres over others, but instead to provide a forum where comparable entities can meet, network and share experiences. This initiative acknowledges that much regional science is undertaken by teams of researchers working in collaboration across nations.

- Association's Fellowship Scheme

The post nominals MeRSA and FeRSA were respectively introduced in 2010 and 2011 to provide members with immediate recognition of their professional commitment to the field.

The Association's Fellowship Scheme rewards excellence in the field. This status of this award will be raised. New appointees will be welcomed into Fellowship not only through acknowledgement in Regions (the members' magazine) but through announcement and recognition at conferences and events and through invitation to contribute their profile to the Association's website and for social media announcement. Alongside this activity the use of the post-nominals MeRSA will be encouraged for the membership. As part of this process the conditions for fellowship will be reviewed.

- Regions

There will a review of Regions Magazine to see if it is still fit for purpose or if there are different ways in which it could be managed in order to achieve its aims of acting as the voice for members.

## **Community Building**

The Association builds its community in many ways but one of these is through the recognition of excellence and to this end a number of awards are made each year.

### *Achievements 2008 – 2013*

- The Association introduced the Awards scheme in 2009 to celebrate excellence in the field of regional studies and recognised across both individuals and organisations:
  - **Contribution to the field** - the Sir Peter Hall Award
  - **Early Career Award** – the RSA/Routledge Early Career Awards
  - **Taught Master Award** - the Nathaniel Lichfield Award
  - **RSA Best Book Award** - voted for by the Association’s membership
  - **Best Paper *Regional Studies*** – chosen by the editors
  - **Best Referee *Regional Studies*** – chosen by the editors
  - **Best Paper *Spatial Economic Analysis*** – chosen by the editors
  - **Best Referee *Spatial Economic Analysis*** – chosen by the editors
  - **Best Paper *Territory, Politics, Governance*** – chosen by the editors
  - **Best Paper *Regional Studies, Regional Science*** – chosen by the editors

Two new Awards were subsequently created to further represent the field of regional studies:

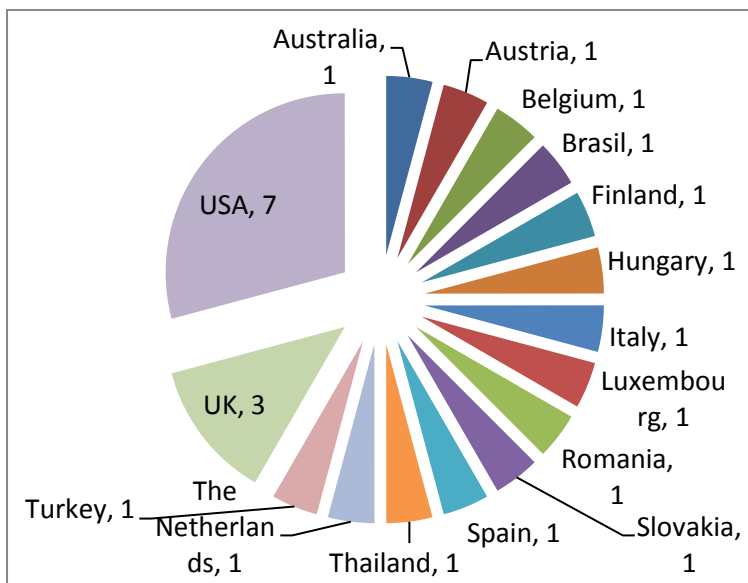
- **The Regional Practice and Policy Award** – this award is to recognise institutional contribution
- **The Social Media/Journalism Award**

### **RSA Travel Grants (2009-2013)**

Since the launch of the RSA Travel Grant in 2009, 25 members have been awarded it and were geographical located as follows



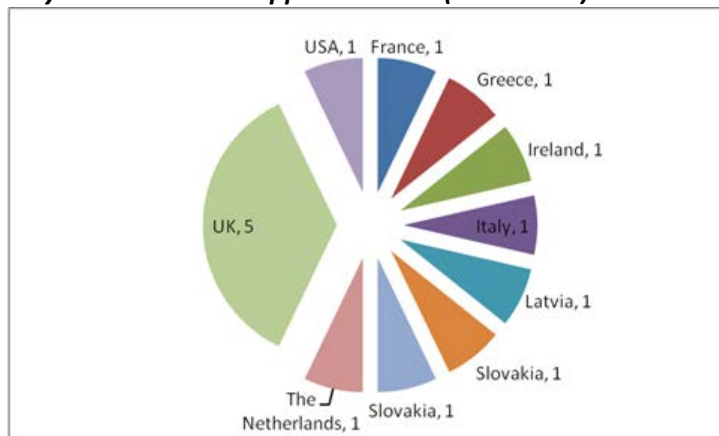
And with this financial assistance they attended events in the following places –



- **RSA Event Support Scheme (ESS)**

The EES was launched in 2010 to support RSA members organise a one-off non-RSA event (from £500 to £1000). Between 2010 and 2013, fourteen non-RSA events were supported via the Scheme with an average of 87 participants per event. Although international in reach this scheme was discontinued in 2014 with the monies reallocated to the Research Networks budget to further support RSA community building activity.

***Location of events supported by the RSA Event Support Scheme (2010-2013)***



## TERRITORIAL NETWORKS

The Territorial Networks are key to delivery of the Association's services and benefits to members in their locality and help to foster networking and communication. They are conduits to grow pro-activity in the membership encouraging submissions to our publications and participation in our conferences and events. They enable many voices to be heard on current debates and have the potential to play a critical role in building impact.

### *Achievements 2008-2013*

- On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the Association launched its RSA China Division. This Division is chaired by Professor Weidong Liu, Deputy Director of the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences where the Division has its base and hosts an RSA Project Office. The section launched with 66 members and this is expected to grow steadily
- In 2012, RSA Country Representatives were renamed RSA Ambassadors and International Sections were renamed Divisions. The Association, as of November 2014 had 9 Divisions, 6 Branches and 42 Ambassadors in 39 countries compared to 2 Divisions, 11 UK Branches and 26 ambassadors in 2007
- There has been growth of 105% of USA members between the period 2009-2013. The bulk of this growth occurred in the months during and following Sally Hardy's placement at UCLA, Los Angeles.

### **Geographical location of the RSA international networks: Divisions and Ambassadors (December 2013)**

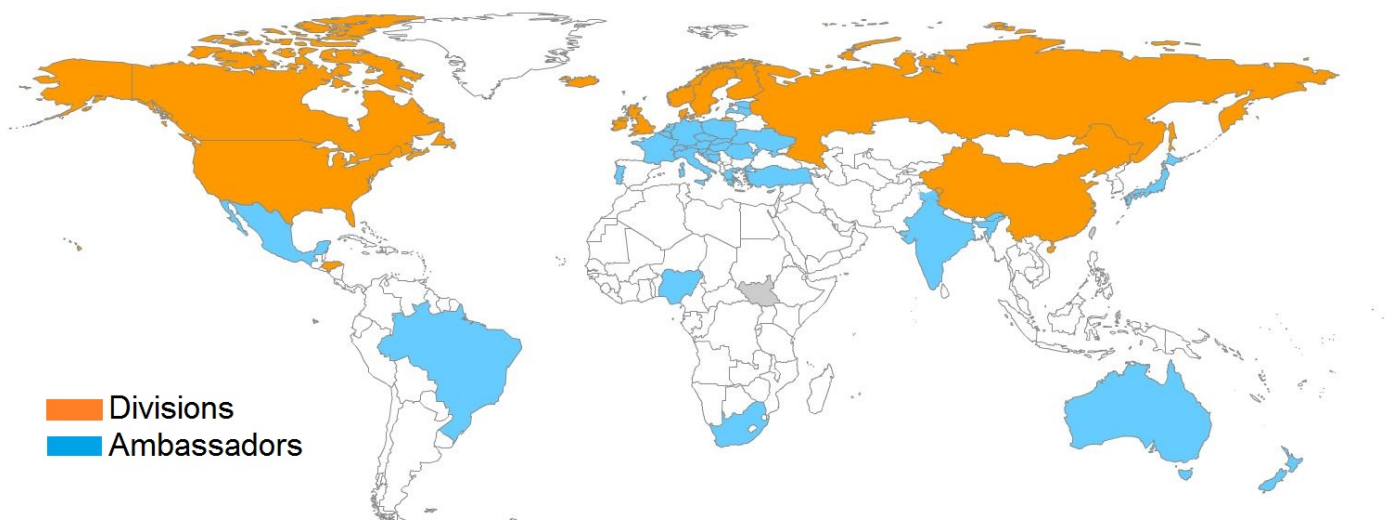
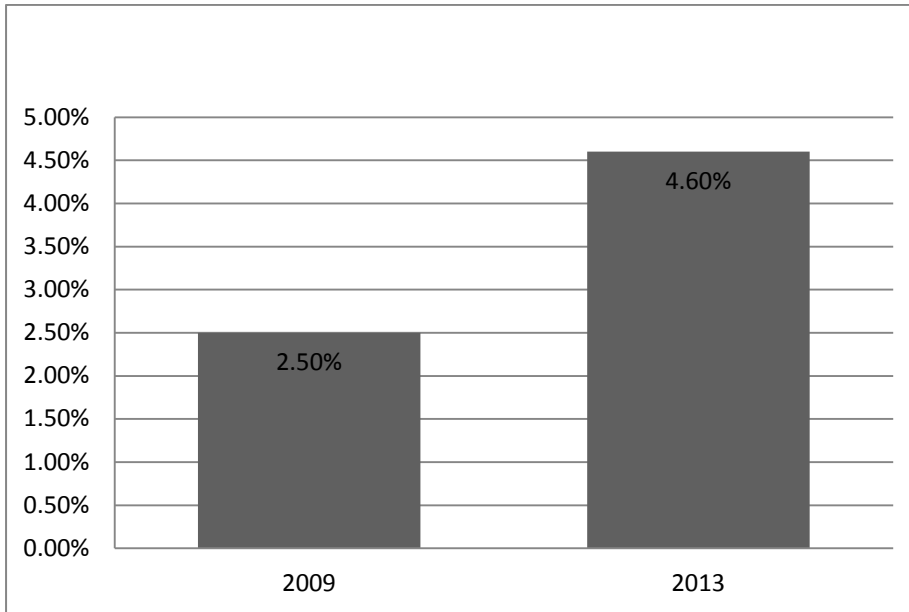


Table shows the recent growth in US members



*Priorities for 2015 - 2020*

- Establish satellite project offices in Beijing, China; UCLA, USA and possibly within Eastern Europe
- Enable the chief executive to move between the RSA centres to lead activity and respond to the need to provide additional resource in the head quarters to allow the time for this developmental activity to happen
- Ring-fence some funding in the research and conference bursary budgets to support applications from target areas
- Work closely with existing Divisions and RSA ambassadors seeking to support them in their work for the Association and seeking where possible to promote Division activity

**RSA NORSA Division**

Norsa was established at a meeting in Umeå, Sweden, in September 2008. It is a collaboration between Association members in Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland with a relationship with Nordregio – the Nordic Centre for Spatial Development. The Division set up with 5 aims –

- a) promote knowledge about regional and local development and governance;
- b) initiate and support studies and research on development and functioning of regional and local structures;
- c) act for the promotion of regional sciences among all subjects participating in social, political and economic life;
- d) establish international cooperation in theoretical and practical approaches to regional development; and,
- e) cooperate with various institutions, organisations and associations with similar goals and objectives.

It successfully operates through bi-annual conferences and the participation and collaboration of its members.

**RSA China Division**

This idea was conceived in 2012 during the RSA global conference in Beijing. It was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and is run by a committee drawing membership from all parts of China and representing the principle regional research centres. The Division has a project office with funding from the RSA to establish itself with a brand and reputation for high quality regional research with the academic, policy and practice communities. A key aim is to foster understanding and collaborative working between Chinese scholars and those working elsewhere in the world. The Division seeks to work through conferences (the next one being held in Hangzhou in 2015), seminars, and a publication.

**RSA Ambassadors**

- **Tom Christoffel USA**

As the RSA Ambassador for the USA, Tom has been active in attending meetings on regional studies subjects such as the Association of American Geographers (AAG), the American Planning Association (APA) or the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), ensuring the Association not only had a voice but was at the forefront of debates in the USA. As a practitioner, Tom Christoffel has used his many contacts to ensure that members could be recruited and that membership benefits such as grants and bursaries were announced at the events he has attended. Tom has been the recipient of RSA marketing materials to support his promotional efforts.

- **Attila Korompai, Hungary**

Attila developed his role to create and lead the RSA Hungarian Division and co-organised the very successful Pécs Conference with the RSA team. He has played a key role in promoting the RSA in Hungary for example he ensured a high quality field of applicants from Hungary for the first Open Days MasterClass.

## **POLICY AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE**

The Association attaches considerable importance to its work in this area where it seeks to debate, inform and lead to change in chosen areas. It works from a position of strength particularly in terms of leading debates and informing in its policy engagement and knowledge exchange work. Its close relationship with DG Regio (European Commission) and the Committee of the Regions on projects such as the European Open Days, the European Master Class, Early Career Poster Competition and recent (and forthcoming) 42 Policy conference continues to offer multiple opportunities for regional studies and science academics to engage with policy makers and practitioners.

The Association also has relationships with organisations such as the OECD, World Bank, United Nations and UN-Habitat at the meta-level as well as with national organisations such as the Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Smith Institute, Academy of Social Science in the UK at the national level. Going forward the Association will seek to monitor its influence in effecting change through its work.

### *Achievements 2008-2013*

- The Association co-hosted with DG Regio and the Slovenian Government, the first academic conference following the publication of the 5th Cohesion Report in Bled, Slovenia
- The Association has been the exclusive partner to DG Regio and the Committee of the Regions in the organisation of the Open Days European Week of Cities and Regions for 5 years. See the case study box for more details of this important knowledge exchange activity
- The RSA has used strategic partnerships to grow its policy influence most notably working with the UK Smith Institute
- Drawing on the experience of board members, Association members and the staff team's experience the Association has responded to 42 consultations and provided expert advice in 2010 to the House of Commons, Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills on their discussion of Local Enterprise Partnerships. Sally Hardy participated in All Party Groups on the topic of Open Access publishing in 2013 and letters were published in the Guardian and Observer newspapers in 2013 on this topic.

### *Priorities for 2015 - 2020*

- Establish an RSA Inquiry in celebration of the Association's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the aim of influencing policy following publication. Seek during the process of the Inquiry to draw upon the experience and reflection of as many members and RSA interest groups as possible in order to reflect on the international nature of the Association and the challenges that the world faces
- Continue to invest in our relationships into Europe and seek influence in other meta-level organisations accepting that to make real impact probably means focussing on a smaller number of topics and organisations
- Develop our role and level of engagement as a United Nations NGO
- Ensure that RSA funded research activity is disseminated effectively into policy and practice circles internationally

#### ***Open Days European Week of Cities and Regions, 2013***

This Europe wide event attracts around 6000 policy makers and practitioners to Brussels to share best practice in regional policy. The Association partners DG Region and the Committee of the Regions in organising sessions within the important Open Days University – in 2013 it organised four sessions on “Building growth in European regions”, “The emerging role of mid-sized cities”, “Leadership and Regions” and “Spatial Justice in Future European Regional Development”. It also co-hosted the prestigious Open Days MasterClass which attracted 71 students from 31 countries over 2 days to learn about cohesion policy with speakers including the Commissioner Johannes Hahn and Director General Dirk Ahner. The event included a hotly contested poster competition seeing Martin Schmidt win with a poster entitled “Agglomeration Literature: A meta-analysis”. The closing event was a highly interactive World Café with tables hosted by Brussels fonctionnaires and academics. This experimental format was deemed to be highly successful and was repeated in 2014 and has a commitment for 2015.

**Smith Institute 2013**

The RSA has collaborated with the Smith Institute on three projects to date involving the writing of 3 policy pamphlets addressing “The Future of Regional Policy” (2009), “Changing Gear” (2012) and “Where next LEPS” (2013) with a pamphlet for publication in 2015 on “Regional Health and Wellbeing” forthcoming. These influential policy documents were each launched within the Palace of Westminster with a parliamentarians’ seminar. This high profile series has attracted a great deal of attention and in all cases the seminars were sell outs.

**Cohesion Policy – What Future for Cohesion Policy? An Academic and Policy Debate, 16-18 March 2011, Bled, Slovenia**

This innovative and DG Regio/Slovenian Government sponsored conference brought together three communities of stakeholders in European Cohesion Policy – academics, Brussels functionaries and the Managing Authorities. The conference brought together 180 people over 2 days to discuss the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report. Over sixty papers were presented from all stakeholder groups and full discussions were facilitated through the use of practitioner chairs, discussion sessions and roundtables. The success of this event can be measured by the commitment to repeat it in 2015.

**United Nations NGO and UN-Habitat engagement**

The RSA has been a United Nations listed NGO since 1989. In 2014 the Association sent its first representative, Board member, Ulrich Graute to attend a UN Economic and Social Council on Sustainable Urbanisation meeting. The Association sought to begin to build networks to the UN and those working in this important area. As is the case in all policy environments the Association needs to make a sustained commitment to this networking activity to build trust and understanding.

Professor Gordon Dabinett represented the Association at the 2014 UN-Habitat series of meetings on the Sustainable Development of Cities. Attending two meetings, held in Paris, France and Fukuoka, Japan, Gordon joined an expert group which has overseen the publication of guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning to complement the International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Strengthening of Local Authorities (2007). The Association has been alerted to a future exercise on regional planning in which our involvement and engagement is welcomed.

**Maximising Impact**

The Association will seek to maximise its impact in achieving its strategic goals by –

- Remaining in touch with our memberships’ needs using a variety of methods of communication
- Continuing to work on our communication with our various other communities – non-members globally, partners and suppliers
- Securing its partnerships with
  - Key partners such as DG Regio, Committee of the Regions, United Nations, UN-Habitat, OECD, World Bank, Smith Institute
  - key suppliers such as Taylor and Francis and Berforts Printing

The Association recognises that through partnership working it is possible to create both the intellectual excitement and gravitas in order for projects and outcomes to have appropriate impact

- Ensuring that the Association resource base (including staffing) is appropriate for the delivery of our international programme of activity
- Regularly revisiting the Development Plan to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and up to date handling challenges strategically
- Striving for smart implementation of plans
- Be always seeking to enjoy ourselves as an organisation. We recognise the enormous amount of volunteer input that we benefit from and we pledge to ensuring that our active members get something from their engagement with us. Volunteer efforts should have some reward.

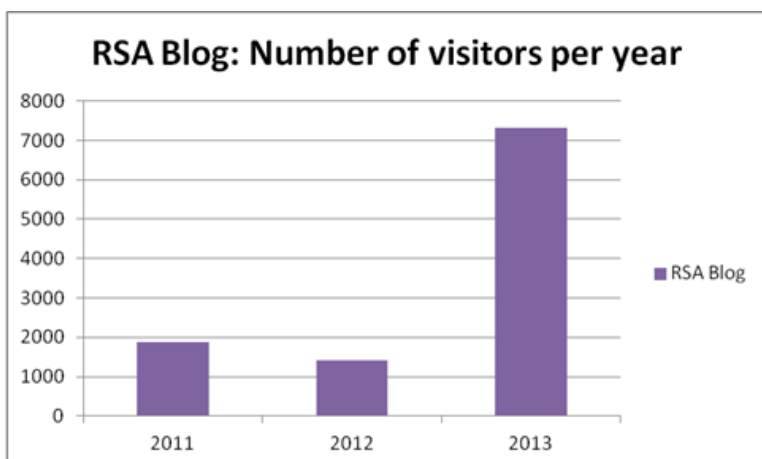
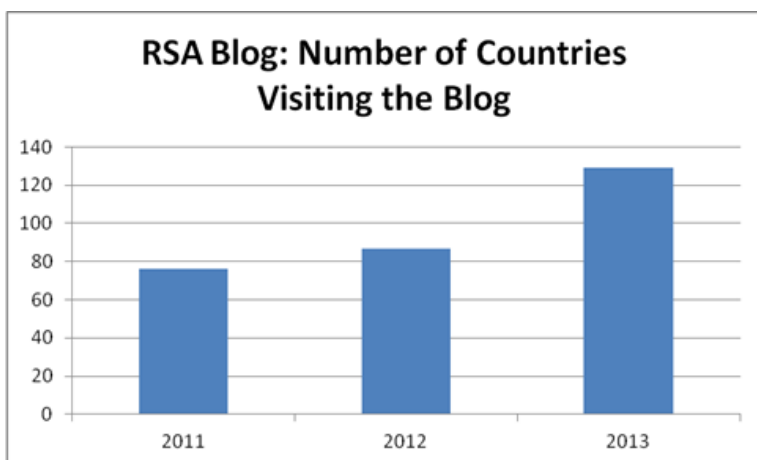


**New RSA Website**

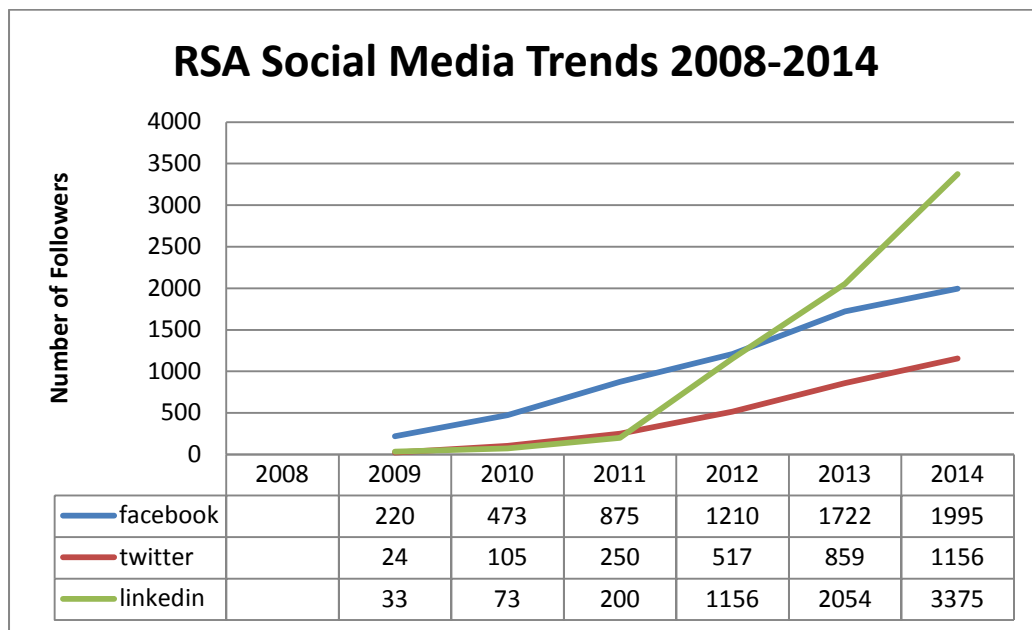
A new Website was designed in 2008 and again in 2012 latterly incorporating both online portal to registration for RSA events and membership and a full content management system. The latest update gives the Association far more flexibility to manage the content of the site and ensure that it is kept up to date.

**Social Media Fact and Figures**

During the last planning period the RSA has worked hard to raise its profile on social media and operates on a number of platforms including two Facebook sites (one specifically run by and for early career researchers); LinkedIn and Twitter. We also host an active blog which was edited by Dr Alasdair Rae (University of Sheffield) but which is now edited by Alexandru Ghita (Consultant, Romania).



According to Google Analytics, the growing presence of the RSA on the social media platforms has resulted in an increase of more than 2600 users visiting the RSA website (around 15% of the total).



## RSA Management

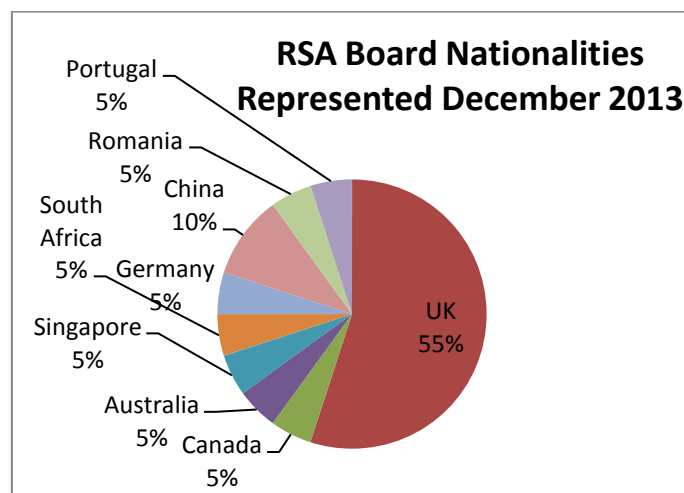
### The Board

The Association is managed by a democratically elected Board of Trustees (who are also the Directors of the Company). They number between 3 and 12 individuals and they are supplemented by a number of co-optees who are also trustees but who are elected by the Board with regard to the need for skills on the Board. These appointments run between AGMs where their appointment is reported.

The Board seeks to fill its number with the appropriate balance of skills and then to reflect the diversity of the membership and wider population of the field of regional studies and science. During the planning period efforts have been made to strengthen the balance of genders on the Board and to ensure that it reflects the very quickly growing international balance of membership while taking into account the need and convenience of having UK Board members to expedite the business of the Association through the UK based staff team.

Managing gender balance in all that the Association does remains a challenge – it seems that women are more likely to turn down invitations to give plenary presentations and to get actively involved probably for well rehearsed reasons. Between 2007 and 2013 our female representation on the Board increased from 6% to 18%. We will continue to seek to put in place conditions encouraging female participation at the highest level in the organisation.

The Board has become very much more international since 2007 when of 14 members 10 were from the UK, 3 were European and one was Australian. The chart below clearly indicates the global shift which parallels the Association's interests and ambitions.



### RSA Office

During the period 2008-2013, the Association Office Team employed thirteen members of staff of various nationalities including American, British, French, German and Italian. In 2006 the staff team comprised 3 people, it grew to 4 in 2007 and in 2014 was 7 of whom four are British and three are mainland Europeans. The Association also indirectly supports employment for an additional four individuals, three working on our journals within the editorial offices and one working for the Chinese Division.

### Priorities 2015- 2020

- The Association will continue to recruit Board members who are engaged, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, representative of the membership and to provide them with appropriate training
- Staffing – the intention is to restructure the office team to better map onto the demands of the new Development Plan for expansion and community engagement. This will require a shift from a traditional learned society form of hierarchical organisation to one which more closely resembles a think tank where there will be team leadership and project officers each managing a portfolio of activity. This shift will require the development of staff capabilities, training and mentoring where appropriate. It is pleasing to note that this shift has been welcomed by the existing staff team.
- Finance – the governance structure of the Association will be reviewed to ensure that the most effective and efficient arrangements are in place. The Association works diligently to ensure full compliance with all relevant legislation whether that be directly financial such as VAT, Health and Safety, Employment Law, Company's or Charity such as the development of an updated risk register.
- Social and Environmental Responsibility – each year in its Annual Report the Association receives a report of direct carbon and other greenhouse emissions. Staff are encouraged to use public transport, travel is minimised with use of electronic meetings where possible. The Association has a well used Bike to Work scheme in place. We seek to use suppliers with appropriate sensitivity to environmental concerns and report this for our publishers and printers. When suitable the Association has worked with the local school to take sixth form interns and we have worked very successfully with interns on degree courses.

## **FINANCES**

The Association is organised around the strategic priorities set out in the Development Plan. Once approved the office team draw up detailed action plans for implementation including timings and lines of responsibility. The annual budget which is approved by the Board draws down from this process. Regular reviews are held of both the budget and performance against the Development Plan during the year. In the case of the planning period 2008 – 2013 a mid-term review was necessary to insert “stretch” targets.

## **Your Feedback**

### **We are keen to hear your thoughts.**

Please tell us if we have covered what you would expect to see in this report and forward look. Have we missed any good ideas or opportunities? Have we got the balance of our priorities right? Have we made sufficient progress in the last planning period? An Association is as strong as its members are active and engaged – please help us to build a stronger and more resilient home for you and others in our field. We would welcome your involvement in helping us to meet our strategic goals.

You may give your feedback in the following ways:

- In person to any member of the RSA Board or Staff Team
- By email to the chief executive – [sally.hardy@regionalstudies.org](mailto:sally.hardy@regionalstudies.org)
- By email to the chair – [andrew.beer@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:andrew.beer@adelaide.edu.au)
- Via our website on the “contact us” link on the home page
- By telephone to the RSA office - +44 (0) 1323 899698

We look forward to hearing from you,



Andrew Beer  
Chair



Sally Hardy  
Chief Executive

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