



4. Women in Regional Science (2): A success story

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They exist; their numbers are increasing; and, with Roberta Capello from Politecnico di Milano the Regional Association International now

has a woman serving as its president. A success story.

Indeed, had I written this piece in the late 1980s, when I first attended a regional science conference (Baltimore 1987), I would have started by saying that encountering another woman in regional science is a rare event. To me, the absence of women was not a surprise given that I had studied mathematics in the conservative, hierarchically organized male-dominated German university system of the 1970s and 1980s, where glass ceilings and the deliberate steering away of women from certain fields could barely remain unnoticed. Later, in the early 1990s, when I was in charge of the regional science newsletter, men almost exclusively dominated the news. They were the ones (s)electd for key positions in the organization, who took the lead in conference presentations and publications in our flagship journals, and the ones who won the prizes and awards.

There are many reasons why women may account for such a small share of the Association's membership and activities. The disciplines feeding into regional science, e.g., agricultural economics, economics, quantitative geography, planning and civil

engineering, were/are notorious for being male dominated. All of these disciplines have their own debates on the root causes of female under-representation: exclusion, discrimination, self-selection, and – not to forget – Larry Summers' infamous argument of a gender gap in intrinsic aptitude.

In fact, women were – for a long time – entirely absent from the field. Using citation data, Isserman (2004) identified the intellectual leaders of regional science by generation and time period. For each generation, he identifies some 100 intellectual leaders. There is no woman in what Isserman calls the *pioneering generation* (1955 to 1968) or the *take-off generation* (1969–76). The first women appear in the so-called *spread generation* (1977 to 1989), namely¹ Anna Nagurney, Erica Schoenberger, and Carol West. In the *nineties generation* (1990–1999), the number of female intellectual leaders more than tripled and included Ayse Can, Helen Couclelis, Nancy Ettlinger, Cindy Fan, Barnali Gupta, Maureen Kilkenny, Ann Markusen, Valerie Preston, Christiane von Reichert and myself.

Today, almost a quarter of a century since Baltimore, the female presence in the Association has become quite noticeable. Yet, there are not that many women in star positions, although it is difficult to assess what a 'fair share' could be. The Golden Anniversary issue of *Papers in Regional Science*, which 'consists of a compendium of "thought" papers, authored by a representative sample of the field's leading scholars' (Batey, 2004, p. 1), is a prime example. The selected representative sample of the field's leading scholars is made up of 42 (co-)authors; only two of them are women (less than 5%). Similarly, it took almost 50 years before the Association's

¹ Throughout this article, women may be undercounted as the gender was not always identifiable by a person's name.

Table 2: Women's Representation on Editorial Boards, ranked by % female board members^{a)}

Journal	Number of Board Members	Female Board Members	%
<i>Annals of Regional Science</i>	44	Roberta Capello Janet Kohlhasse Anna Nagurney Karen Polensky Jessie Poon Brigitte Waldorf	14%
<i>Papers in Regional Science</i>	48	S. Chang Alessandra Faggian Kara Kockelman Julie LeGallo Jessie Poon Brigitte Waldorf	12%
<i>International Regional Science Review</i>	40	Patricia Beeson Amy Glasmeyer Ann Markusen Carol West	10%
<i>Journal of Regional Science</i>	56 ^{b)}	Maureen Kilkenny Kara Kockelman Janet Kohlhasse Therese McGuire Carol West	9%
<i>Letters in Spatial and Resource Sciences</i>	57	Anna Alberini Amy Ando Elena Irwin Julie Le Gallo Brigitte Waldorf	9%
<i>Journal of Geographical Systems</i>	30	Suzana Dragicevic Aura Reggiani	7%
<i>Regional Science Policy and Practice</i>	17	—	0%

^{a)} As reported on journals' websites on 17 July 2009

^{b)} Includes advisory board of former editors.

flagship journal, *Papers in Regional Science*, had a female co-editor (Jessie Poon) and a female book review editor (myself), and other regional science journals still do not have a fair share of women serving as editors: Roberta Capello being a co-editor of *Letters in Spatial and Resources Sciences*, Laurie Schintler serving as the book review editor for the *Annals*, and Christine Tamasy as one of the two Asia-Pacific editors of the new journal *Regional Science Policy and Practice* are the exceptions. Women are, however, represented on editorial/advisory boards of all regional science journals, albeit in

very small numbers. In general, the percentages of female board members in the regional science journals listed in Table 2 do not exceed 15%.

Moreover, women are utterly absent from the list of prize winners and recognitions in some competitions, for example the *David Boyce award for Service to Regional Science* and the *RSAI Founders Medal*. These tend to be awards for life time achievements and have, so far, been given to those who have long been members of the Association, thus to members of the *pioneering* and *take-off generations*. It is

Table 3: Women's Representation among Award Winners, ranked by % female recipients^{a)}

Award	Number of recipients	Female recipients	% female recipients
RSAl Dissertation Award (2002 to 2006)	5	Ikuho Yamada Adelheid Holl	40%
Benjamin H. Stevens Graduate Fellowship in Regional Science	10	Rachel Franklin Alison Davis Xiaokun Wang Elizabeth Mack	40%
Geoffrey J. D. Hewings Award	15	Brigitte Waldorf Ayse Can Talen Maureen Kilkenny Kara Kokelman Elena Irwin	33%
Epainos Award for Young Regional Scientist	28	Sari Pekkala Adelheid Holl Claudia Stirboeck Elke Amend Nicola Coniglio Eveline van Leeuwen Theresa Grafeneder-Weissteiner Patricia Melo	29%
Martin Beckmann RSAl Annual Award for the best Paper in <i>Papers in Regional Science</i>	5	Annette S. Zeilstra	20%
Moss Madden Memorial Medal	5	Alessandra Faggian	20%
William Alonso Memorial Prize for Innovative Work In Regional Science	5	Ann Markusen	20%
Special Recognition Award	5	Beth Carbonneau	20%
Walter Isard Award for Scholarly Achievement	24	Karen Polenske Ann Markusen Carol Taylor-West	13%
RSAl Fellows Awards	60	Karen R. Polenske Ann Markusen Anna Nagurney Janice Madden	7%
RSAl Founder's Medal	7	—	0%
European Prize in Regional Science	3	—	0%
David Boyce Award for Service to Regional Science	23	—	0%
RSAmericas Graduate Student Paper Award	2	—	0%

^{a)} As reported at <http://www.regionalscience.org/index.php/Competitions-and-Awards/> and http://www.narsc.org/newsite/?page_id=30 on 17 July 2009. Other competitions such as the Hirotsada Kohno Award for Outstanding Service to the RSAl and the Peter Nijkamp RSAl Research Encouragement Award for an Early Career Scholar from a Developing Country were only recently established and no information on award winners has been published. The list excludes awards of regional RSAl sections, such as WRSA's Tiebout prize.

reassuring, though, that women are well represented among the recipients of awards that are specifically geared towards young scholars, such as the *Geoffrey J.D. Hewings Junior Scholar Award*, the *Epainos Award*, and the *Ben Stevens Fellowship* (Table 3). These patterns suggest that much of women's under-representation may be a generational issue.

Now that we see an increasing number of women who can function as role models, the process of women participating and excelling in the discipline may accelerate. Some of us who have been with regional science for many years have engaged in activities geared towards retaining women. Maureen Kilkenny has, for several years now, organized the 'Women's Happy Hour' during the North American meetings. During the 1990s, the North American meetings also featured the Early Bird Sessions that served as an excellent vehicle to give exposure to young scholars – male and female. And the Europeans have done an excellent job with their *Epainos* sessions at the *ERSA* meetings where young scholars, among them a large number of women, present their work. Moreover, many disciplines now have a much more gender-balanced undergraduate and graduate student population than in the past. Recruiting women into regional science will thus become easier over time.

If the female under-representation is indeed a generational phenomenon, then it has a good chance of disappearing with the younger generations. Being involved in regional science for almost a quarter of a century now, I have seen enormous changes since Baltimore 1987. The membership became so much more diverse – at least with respect to gender composition. I am curious to see the effects of this increased diversity. Will it affect the culture of 'doing business' in regional science? Will it have an impact on the

substantive issues being researched by regional scientists? My gut feeling is that it already has and that the field as a whole has benefited tremendously.

Too bad that I will most likely not witness those changes in the 100th anniversary issue of *Papers in Regional Science*. My prediction is that women will make up about one third of the membership: after all, self-selection is very powerful and is likely to persist, i.e., even in the 2050s, women's self-selection into regional science will be weaker than their self-selection into, for example, art history. Maybe the Association can begin tracking members by age and sex so that we can monitor compositional changes more accurately. I also predict that women will have a strong impact on the topics being researched; if the papers presented at the last North American meetings (Brooklyn 2008) are any indication, then women will be a driving force in people-oriented research centered on migration and immigration, transportation, and health.

References

- Batey, P. 2004. Preface. *Papers in Regional Science* 83: 3–4.
- Isserman, A. 2004. Intellectual Leaders of Regional Science: A Half-century Citation Study. *Papers in Regional Science* 83: 91–126.



5. Meet the Fellows: Karen Polenske

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