

## **Editorial: into a third decade**

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2021 sees the *Journal of Economic Geography* (JEG) enter its third decade of publication, offering an apposite moment to briefly reflect upon its evolution and trajectory. Since the first issue appeared in January 2001, JEG has been on a journey encompassing 92 regular issues, 20 special issues, 731 papers, 13 debates and commentaries pieces, 153 book reviews, seven editorials and six agenda-setting IMPULSES papers (the latter format being only recently launched in late 2017). The regular issues have also been supplemented from time to time by virtual issues highlighting key themes within JEG's output thus far, namely business and economic geography (2011), global production networks (2015), entrepreneurship (2018), and financial geographies (2020).

Looking across JEG's by-now significant oeuvre offers a fascinating window onto trends within the field. On the Geography side of the journal, for instance, clusters, urban and regional development, and global production networks (and cognate frameworks) have been consistent themes over the journal's lifespan and are still going strong, while work on evolutionary economic geography and financial geographies, although always present, seem to currently be in growth phases. On the Economics side, recent evolutions include works on entrepreneurship, on the spatial and distributive impacts of transportation networks, and on the functioning of local labour markets. Other trends are evident too. For instance, and as can also be seen at other journals, book reviews are seemingly a dying or at least declining art: JEG published 95 book reviews in its first decade, and 58 in its second. This likely reflects both the ever-increasing time pressures faced by academics and the precedence placed on journal articles in our field. Reflecting this trend, JEG no longer has a book review editor.

It is safe to say that as of today, JEG is well-established and respected part of the publishing landscape in both Economics and Human Geography. Citation impact factors, while an admittedly imperfect and partial measure of a journal's standing, indicate that JEG has been a top quartile journal in both Economics and Human Geography throughout its history, and in most years sits comfortably within the top ten journals in Human Geography (out of a total population of over 80 journals). JEG is privileged to receive over 450 submissions each year, far more than can be published, meaning that we can consistently select papers of the highest quality within our field. Over time, our intention is to expand the number of articles we publish, while maintaining quality. One strategy to achieve this goal has been to recruit new Editors who will extend the journal beyond its existing boundaries, on which more shortly. Another is to solicit special issues in important and expanding areas of economic geography research. The next year or so, for instance, will see publication of a special issue on the economic consequences of climate change, and another on the intersections of migration and economic geography (building on the 2018 special issue in that area).

The health of the field and the journal's place within it does not mean, however, that challenges do not remain. As we noted in a previous editorial, economic geography continues to be a somewhat nebulous inter-disciplinary field, fragmented into different sub-communities that are perhaps better at talking inwardly rather than more expansively. These 'segmentation barriers' encompass, among others, the persistent challenges of bringing together quantitative and qualitative methodologies, varying reliance on secondary datasets versus field data, different interpretations and measures of causality in analysis, alternative views on the importance of geographical and institutional context, and varied perspectives on the relationship of research to policy-making (Bathelt et al., 2017). These persistent fault lines intersect with, but are not determined by, the different disciplinary cultures of Economics and Human Geography, which mean that the task of building sustained inter-disciplinary dialogue is just as much an ongoing project now as it was back in 2001. Profound flux

in the contemporary economic systems that we study – relating, among others, to the intersecting challenges of an accelerating climate emergency, geopolitical tensions and trade wars, growing inequality within and across national borders, rapid digitization of segments of the economy, and the COVID-19 pandemic – suggest we need to work harder than ever to fulfil the promise of the interdisciplinary exchanges that JEG seeks to embody.

Just as academic fields evolve, so do editorial teams! At the end of 2020, Harald Bathelt – just the second Geography editor after the founder Neil Wrigley – stepped down after serving with great distinction since 2012. Harald’s contributions to JEG are simply too great to list, including being the driving force behind the formation of our IMPULSES section (on which more below), but as fellow editors we would like to record our sincere thanks for his tireless work to develop the standing and reputation of the journal. At the same time, recent months have seen two exciting additions to our editorial team. First, in September 2020, Eleonora Patacchini from Cornell University’s Department of Economics joined as an Economics editor. Eleonora specializes in applied economics and applied statistics, and her recent research focuses on the empirical analysis of networks. This extends our editorial capabilities in new and exciting directions, for example into research in economics that defines proximity not only in a spatial sense but also by other types of links (e.g. culture, gender and personal relations) that matter to economic agents, thus also intersecting with the interests of geographers in this area. We welcome high quality submissions in these areas. Second, we are equally delighted that Simona Iammarino, based in the Department of Geography and Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science, joined the team in January 2021 as a Geography editor. Simona is widely known for her work on multinational corporations, the geographies of innovation and technological change, and local and regional economic development, and brings expertise of a wide range of methodologies to the journal.

As a new editorial team, we would like to make two important points in bringing this brief contribution to a close. First, we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the remit of our journal. In basic terms, that remit is simple, namely to publish original academic research and discussion of the highest scholarly standard in the field of ‘economic geography’, broadly defined. We look to evaluate papers on the basis of their creativity, quality of scholarship, and contribution to advancing understanding of the geographic nature of economic systems and global economic change. Within that broad mission, we offer no steer as to the kinds of economic geography that we would like to see beyond those which seek to uphold the highest standards of academic rigour and analytical clarity. We are open to work from any ontological and epistemological position, and seek to showcase the very best of qualitative, case-study and discursive analyses alongside the strongest causal quantitative analyses. In particular, though we realise this may be a stretch within the word-length constraints of a regular journal paper, papers that are able to demonstrate the synergies of different kinds of methods are particularly welcome.

This breadth also extends to both where our authors and the topics they study are situated. In short, we are looking to continue to expand the global scope of JEG. As with many top journals, we suspect, our submissions are dominated by a relatively small group of countries. Over the five-year period 2015-2020, for instance, the top six countries (US, UK, China, Italy, Germany and Spain) accounted for 58 percent of paper submissions, while the top 10 accounted for 69 percent (adding in France, the Netherlands, Japan and Australia). The main change within this pattern, in dynamic terms, has been the steady rise of submissions from China. To be clear, our vision of economic geography is a global one, and it is our hope that over time, ontological and epistemological diversity across our submissions will be accompanied by an expanded geographical diversity in terms of the provenance of papers.

Second, we would like to restate the rationale and potential significance of our IMPULSES section. While the initiative is off to a good start, and some excellent papers have already been featured, we feel that there is untapped potential. In short, IMPULSES seeks to offer a platform for exchange, debate and ongoing deliberation about the big issues in economic geography. As detailed on the journal website ([https://academic.oup.com/joeg/pages/General\\_Instructions](https://academic.oup.com/joeg/pages/General_Instructions)) we are looking to showcase papers that tackle conceptual debates in the field including:

- new conceptualizations or re-developments of existing concepts;
- reviews and reflections about the field;
- discussion of cross-field methodological integration and challenges;
- discussion of Economic Geography's policy interface.

Two specific points should be made here. First, precedence will be given to IMPULSES papers that have a broad scope and appeal in relation to our readership. Put another way, we are looking for papers that can bridge across different 'camps' within our field and offer significant advancement in relation to significant conceptual and real-world conundrums. More specialised contributions are of course welcome, but can be submitted as regular papers. Second, and practically, we ask that potential contributors reach out to us – and Simona Iammarino in particular, as the editor with overall oversight of IMPULSES ([s.iammarino@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.iammarino@lse.ac.uk)) – with a short synopsis before submitting a contribution. Simona, in consultation with the other editors, can then advise on the potential suitability of the contribution and its framing. When our successors look back in another decade's time, our sincere hope is that the journal will by then have accrued a deep pool of IMPULSES papers that have served to advance and integrate the field in significant ways.

## **References**

Bathelt, H., Coe, N.M, Kerr, W.R. and Robert-Nicoud, F. (2017) Editorial: Economic Geography IMPULSES, *Journal of Economic Geography*, 17(5), 927-933.