



New goals and challenges for Regional Science, Policy and Practice

At the November 2024 meeting of the RSAI Council, the decision was made to appoint a new team of editors for our journal. Before we lay out a plan for the direction we would like the journal to take in the next three years, it is first our pleasant duty to thank the previous board, comprising some of the most committed and hard-working regional scientists globally, and in particular Prof. Tomaz Dentinho. Tomaz managed the journal for eight years, bringing RSPP through a process of rapid development, substantially increasing its attractiveness, attracting more and better submissions, and finally achieving the journal's first indexation on *Web of Science*. As colleagues and friends, we are all indebted to Tomaz and his team for their great work, and we promise we will treat *their* journal with the same care and respect they put into its handling.

The journal is already a success story, which went through two important stages:

- A take-off stage (under Michael Carroll's Editorship);
- A growth and diffusion stage (under Tomas Dentinho's Editorship).

Each stage came with different goals. In the take-off stage, starting in 2008, when the first issue of the journal was published, the aim of the EiC was to kick-start the journal, a difficult task in a highly competitive field with well-established international journals. RSPP took off slowly, as usual with help from some of the big names in regional science, who contributed to the very first issues.¹ The journal was off to a rough start, but took off gradually, with an increase in the papers and issues published up until 2012/2013. During those two years, the number of papers published reached a grand total of 28/year (Fig. 1).

The growth and diffusion stage started in 2017, when the RSAI council passed the baton to Tomaz Dentinho, who acted in the strategic direction of achieving indexation. The first step in this direction was the increase in the number of published papers (with a max of 119 last year). To achieve this goal, Prof. Dentinho invested in special issues, with workshops organized in the Global South to attract submissions managed by dedicated guest editors.

As we write these words, the journal is in a very healthy state. Submissions keep increasing, as do citations and the general quality of manuscripts both submitted and published. This translates into a steadfast growth of the journal's *CiteScore*, with Fig. 2 showing the trend in the journal's impact from 2019 through 2023.²

Yet, there is always room for improvement. In the journal's next stage, we plan to achieve new goals.

Strengthening the journal's identity

Our first goal for the journal is to *strengthen its scientific identity*. We will strive to make *Regional Science, Policy & Practice* more easily recognizable as a forum of discussion on the specific fields of policy and practice. This strategy is crucial to distinguish RSPP from competitors. In the medium run, we will do our best not only to make RSPP the policy journal of the RSAI but, also, to make it the reference journal of the best papers on regional policies, as well as on the regional impacts of space-blind policies, for all disciplines.

Improving quality and bridging gaps

This first goal will also walk hand in hand with a further effort to *raise the bar of the average quality of the papers* published in *Regional Science, Policy & Practice*, to better serve the RSAI community and regional science stakeholders globally. To this end, we will count on the discipline's and association's extensive global networks. We will also welcome proposals on thematically oriented special issues, capable of raising interest and bridging the policy/practice-academia gap.

It is important to stress that these changes will occur gradually, as the journal has a number of previously submitted papers that do not follow the new logic, and will keep being processed for the next few months. Our readers may therefore expect to see a more visible change in the contents from 2026 onwards.

To reach the goals we set, we can rely on two solid foundations.

1. **Our publisher, Elsevier** – With extensive experience in disseminating high-quality research in the social sciences and effectively managing the open access landscape.
2. **Our excellent editorial manager, Ms. Elisabete Martins** – Based at the RSAI branch in Angra do Heroísmo, Azores, Elisabete ensures that submissions are processed efficiently and effectively, giving authors the best possible experience.

¹ Source of raw data used for these analyses: archive of past RSPP issues on the Elsevier portal (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/regional-science-policy-and-practice/>).

² As the journal is being published with a new contract, the number of papers published in 2024 has increased substantially, and we may possibly expect a temporary setback in this indicator for 2024.



Fig. 1. Trends in issues and papers published on RSPP. Note: dashed line indicates when Tomaz Dentinho replaces Michael Carroll as EiC.

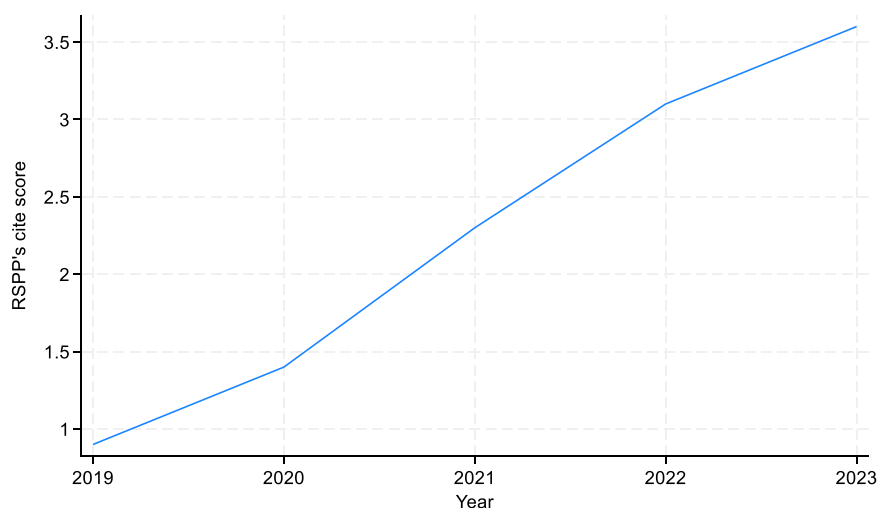


Fig. 2. Regional Science, Policy & Practice's Cite Score.

Source of raw data: Scopus

Transition to gold open access

Recently, the RSAI agreed to publish both its journals with a gold open access status. This decision was made to guarantee maximum exposure and visibility to our authors, as open access articles can be freely accessed everywhere.

While article processing charges (APCs) are now mandatory, several measures are in place to support authors:

- The *Research4Life* program offers full waivers for authors from low-income countries. You may find out whether your institution is eligible for a full waiver [here](#).
- RSAI members receive a 20 % discount on APCs.
- Elsevier has signed transformative agreements with institutions and countries to cover APCs for eligible authors. You may find out whether you qualify for this alternative option [here](#).

The submission platform will automatically identify your email address upon submission, and inform you if your paper qualifies for any of these options. As a very last resort, if you have a good paper that fits the aims and scope of our journal, please do not get discouraged, and submit it to RSPP, as editors have some waivers available for these

specific cases.

Solid foundations for growth

At the same time, we believe that the transition to gold open access will create value for our authors, as your work published this way will become much more accessible. For a policy & practice journal, this is even more relevant, as we plan to contribute to bridging the gap between policymaking and scientific research.

A call to action

As challenging as these goals may seem, we look forward to your support in making them happen. Please send your best spatial policy papers to our journal, and let us all make this the reference journal in the field of regional and urban policies.

Thank you, and a bientot,

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