

# REGION

## The Journal of ERSA

### CALL FOR PAPERS

#### **Special Issue: CULTURE OF DIGITAL INCLUSIVITY AND INEQUALITY ACROSS SPACE**

The question of regional digital inclusivity regards the level of regional accessibility to socio-economically beneficial digital solutions such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and blockchain. Digital inclusivity is often oversimplified to the question whether one is an AI-enthusiast or sceptic. Yet, there are other solutions, beyond AI, such as blockchain, that exist and hold important complementarities with AI, and together with AI represent a significant digital endowment that will be important for future regional growth. Presently the nature of this relationship and possible implications remains unexplored.

The main focus in this special issue is the concern that places with a similar level of access to digital innovations may share a common cultural pattern in terms of their adaptability to innovation, but that there are between-regional differences in these cultural patterns. If that is true, it will imply that some places will gain enormous economic and developmental advantages in terms of inclusivity in the new digital world in comparison to digitally lagging behind regions due to a neo-Weberian self-selection bias. This cultural bias is likely based on their proactive attitudes and rationale towards digital inclusivity in addition to the advantages created by the higher economic and human resources. Put differently, inequalities in space may soon aggravate due to some places being culturally not sufficiently open and informed for the importance of digital inclusivity for their future growth.

The aim of this special issue is to bring together novel insights on the spatial pattern of adaptability to digital innovation and to compare it with the existing spatial patterns of inequality and poverty, political voting patterns (that may express left-behind feelings) and local cultural attitudes to innovation and change. The reason why this comparative approach is important is the potential of AI and blockchain innovation to either alleviate inherited poverty or alternatively to deepen the divide between affluent and left-behind regions, widening the relative and possible absolute deprivation gap. Thus, to ensure that we prevent the widening of inequality in space and foster the alleviation of poverty through digital inclusivity, we need to consider where the centers of poverty in space lie and how to target and stimulate the digital inclusivity therein. We would like to establish whether this can be achieved by influencing the attitudes towards innovation through the creation of conducive economic incentives and engaging cultural narratives which have a pro-digital inclusivity nature.

The special issue welcomes contributions from different fields, such as, but not limited to, urban economics, economic geography, economics of innovation, (social) psychology, cultural economics, anthropology and regional science. We welcome conceptual papers as well as well-founded empirical papers answering research questions similar to the following:

- How does technological adoption spread through space? What is the role of cultural attitudes and social networks in the spread of digital technologies in different regional settings?
- Does broadband speed-culture increase regional growth? Do differences in broadband speed have an impact on between and within regional growth and productivity differences?

Do differences in broadband speed have an impact on between and within regional inequality?

- What are the economic and social/cultural drivers for technological diffusion, especially from a regional perspective? Is (regional) productivity affected by policy measures that promote a stronger pro-digital-technology narrative?
- What are the differences and similarities in the geographical patterns of political voting and digital inclusivity in left behind areas? Is relative deprivation in digital inclusivity a good predictor of protest-voting? Is it related to polarizing local attitudes?
- What role do spatial factors play for ensuring digital inclusivity (in different countries)? What is the difference in the culture of urban/rural digital inclusivity? What are the effects of centralized or decentralized local institutions, and which are more effective in promoting digital inclusivity?
- What can we learn about spill over effects in digital inclusivity using Narrative Economics and New Cultural Economics approaches? What is the influence of space/geography on the diffusion of digital technology on the regional markets and what is the role of competitive versus cooperative local attitudes?
- What is the relationship with differences in the geography of digital inclusivity and population health, education, investment attractiveness and regional frictions (i.e. migration and redistribution of human capital across space)?

#### **Submission instructions:**

- This special issue aims at being multidisciplinary and is open to social sciences, humanities, economics, and (economic) geography
- All papers submitted will be subject to the normal blind refereeing process undertaken by the journal
- Papers must be analytic and rigorous – Submitted papers must not be under review by any other journal
- Submit your paper via the journals website: <http://region.ersa.org>, where you can find detailed instructions and guidelines for preparing your submission

**Expressions of interest** including the names and affiliations of the authors should be sent to [a.k.tubadji@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:a.k.tubadji@swansea.ac.uk) by October 31st 2021.

**Closing date:** Full papers should be submitted via the journal website until March 30th 2022.

#### **Guest editors:**

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