EDITORS' NOTE

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Making the “new normal” the “new sustainable”

After almost one year of global pandemic, the overlapping crises caused by COVID-19 have worsened in most regions, and people have become weary of both the coronavirus and government measures aimed at limiting its spread and collateral impacts. Many people clamor for a return to “normal.” With the announcement in November 2020 that vaccine tests have shown promising results, it seems that a medical solution to the health pandemic could be a defining feature of the first few months of 2021.

Another reason for optimism has been the critical reflection that has accompanied the pandemic (see contribution by Ernesto Vivares in the Leadership Forum of this issue and Moldes-Anaya et. al. 2021). Through this moment of collective introspection, we can hopefully promote more sustainable and equitable avenues for development. For example, *The Lancet* (Ahmad et al, 2020; *The Lancet*, 2020) has published a series of editorials on vulnerability with specific focus on how our social divisions make people and groups vulnerable. This surely can be extended to the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic as well. These public discussions reflect the underlying arguments of “social construction of risk” theories (see Garcia Acosta, 2018). If there is a silver lining to this pandemic, it revolves around renewed discussions concerning sustainability, equity, and vulnerability.

Regions & Cohesion and the RISC-RISE Consortium are pleased to engage with this important critical reflection. RISC-RISE has opened a blog to engage with “Resilience Regionalism” (<https://www.facebook.com/RISCRISEConsortium/>), which promotes short narratives on how regions can address vulnerability. Also, the consortium is offering community engagement grants linking research to social action. *Regions & Cohesion* has opened a call for articles for its 2021 special issue on “The 2020 paradox: A multisystemic crisis in search of an integral response” (see https://journals.berghahnbooks.com/_uploads/reco/reco-cfp-2021-smcee-en.pdf for details), which seeks innovative proposals for addressing the multi-systemic COVID-19 crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean. All of these initiatives recognize the need to promote continued reflection on the state and nature of vulnerability. Returning to “normality” when vaccines fi-

nally eradicate COVID-19 as a health threat must be considered a missed opportunity for progress. For this reason, *Regions & Cohesion* joins those voices in public debates calling for the “new normality” to be the “new sustainability.” Our optimism for renewed resilience in 2021 is not just a perspective; it is a commitment that we embrace.

The articles included in this first issue of 2021 reflect this position. First and foremost, we welcome the change to open access, which provides the journal with a broader platform for dialogue with authors and readers committed to sustainability throughout the world. We are honored and grateful to have been selected by Knowledge Unlatched for this privilege, and we are committed to deepening our interregional exchanges on vulnerability, resilience, and sustainable development.

Second, we are pleased to present a series of articles that continue our commitment to discussions of the intersection between natural resources and social well-being in three world regions. The first article, by Jayashree Vivekanandan examines conservation of transboundary protected natural areas in South Asia. This is followed by a contribution by Richard Meisner and Jeroen Warner that addresses indigenous paradiplomacy and dam construction in Africa. Our third article, by Erick Alfonso Galán Castro, América Libertad Rodríguez Herrera, and José Luis Rosas-Acevedo, examines socio-ecological securitization of water governance in Guerrero, Mexico.

The last two articles in this issue highlight territorial dimensions of sustainable development. The contribution by Fernando Antonio Ignacio González, María Emma Santos, and Silvia London quantitatively examines economic statistics in Argentina, showing how disparities and territorial disputes increase during periods of economic growth and decrease during periods of stagnation. This is followed by an article by Lucila Zárrega Cano, María del Pilar Jiménez Márquez, Víctor Molina Morejón, and Enrique Corona Sandoval that identifies tour guides as resources for conservation in Quintana Roo, Mexico. We hope that this collection provokes constructive reflection on a more “sustainable normality” and that this selection of articles inspires continued efforts to show solidarity during the new year.

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