

R.S.A.I.

Newsletter of the Regional Science Association International

REMINDER FROM THE CO-EDITORS

The co-editors of *RSAI NEWS*, Brigitte Waldorf and Adrian Esparza, have moved the editorial office of the newsletter to the Department of Geography and Regional Development at the University of Arizona. Effective **immediately**, materials for inclusion in the newsletter should be submitted to: Adrian Esparza or Brigitte Waldorf, co-editor, *RSAI NEWS*, Department of Geography and Regional Development, Harvill Building, Box #2, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721, USA. In addition to using conventional mail, materials may be submitted via fax (**520-621-2889**) and electronic mail: (**rsai-news@ccit.arizona.edu**). The use of e-mail is especially encouraged. The editors may also be contacted by telephone (**520-621-1652**).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Regional Science in Crisis

As a contribution to the debate on "Regional Science in Crisis," the collection of articles published in the January 1994 issue of *Papers in Regional Science*, we wish to make the following specific comments on the paper by A. S. Bailly and W. J. Coffey. Although we have tried to make our viewpoint clear in our book review (*Regional Science and Urban Economics* 24 (1994), pp. 631-647), it seems useful to address some specific points in this debate.

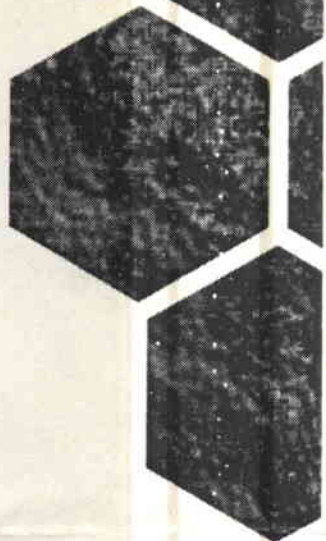
We first examine the issues of the relevance and openness of regional science. Regarding relevance, the relevance of the field is important, but there is no central

theory in regional science. It seems to us that a central theory is a prerequisite to the existence of a scientific discipline, and hence its relevance.

Regarding the openness of regional science to approaches other than the economic paradigm, it seems to us that the role played by variables whose importance can be derived from theories other than economic ones is TESTABLE. In fact, such tests are performed regularly in economic journals, and these variables are often rejected as unimportant. We challenge those

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REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

*An interdisciplinary, international organization
focusing on understanding the growth and
development of urban, regional, and international
systems*

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who advocate the use of non-economic variables to test their models against those that include economic variables, particularly prices and incomes. This is not a philosophical argument as detailed by Bailly and Coffey, but rather a testable proposition. Do these other theories work? Our question to researchers using non-economic theories is dual to the criticism of economic theories advanced by Bailly and Coffey. Don't prices have something to do with where people locate?

In our view, the non-economic approach to regional science has led to models with shaky foundations that are used to get to applications of recent fads in mathematics, as well as models borrowed from other disciplines, particularly the physical sciences, without checking consistency with economic principles such as individual maximization of profit or utility.

Finally, we believe that the rationality postulate used in economics has been misunderstood. The assumption does not state that people behave as utility maximizers, but rather that they behave as if they maximize utility. This merely places some restrictions on the model, such as the so called Slutsky conditions. Once again, this is a testable presumption. In market models, such as urban economic models, and in recent game theory models, only a weaker assumption is used; it is assumed that agents behave on average as if they maximize utility. The aforementioned restrictions are imposed only on the aggregate relationships of the model. Irrational agents are consistent with these theories.

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EURICUR: Comparative Research on European Cities

It was a pleasant surprise to read the contribution of the University of Missouri (St. Louis) in the *RSAI* newsletter of January 1995, on the occasion of the successful introduction of the North American Institute for Comparative Urban Research (NAMICUR). Especially in a period in which the notion "Regional Science in Crisis" is demanding attention, it is very stimulating to see new initiatives like the one in St. Louis. The article referred to the European counterpart of NAMICUR, the European Institute for Comparative Urban Research (EURICUR), that has been in operation for some six years now. Indeed, the idea to establish NAMICUR originates from the excellent relations between the University of Missouri and the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. The successful functioning of EURICUR stimulated the idea to establish a comparable institute with comparable objectives, research methods, etc. focussed on urban development in North America. Reading about NAMICUR, we realized that we never introduced EURICUR to *RSAI* members. We would like to rectify this omission by a short introduction of EURICUR.

EURICUR was formally founded by the Mayors of Barcelona and Rotterdam and the Erasmus University in 1988. The institute is directly related to the Department of Regional, Port and Transport Economics, which also applies to most of EURICUR's staff members. EURICUR functions as the heart and pulse of a network of European cities, and it maintains close cooperation with EURO CITIES, the association of European cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants. The principal objective of EURICUR is to stimulate fundamental international comparative research into matters that are of interest to cities. To that end studies of subjects of strategic value to urban regions today and in the