

Introduction to Special Issue

Economic Development Beyond the Periphery: Re-Thinking Remote Frontiers in Developed Nations

Economic Development Beyond the Periphery: Re-thinking Remote Frontiers in Developed Nations, a special issue of the Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government, examines the particular challenges and approaches to economic development in remote parts of Australia, Canada, the United States and Europe's north. These areas have traditionally been conceived as 'frontiers' which are valued for their natural resources more so than their sparsely settled human populations. The continued failure of many of these areas to thrive economically at the local level, despite their substantial contributions to national and regional economies, presents ongoing challenges to policy makers, investors, community advocates and researchers. The papers contributed to this special issue reflect investigations by economists, sociologists, demographers, anthropologists and management theorists into the reasons why remote areas may fail to thrive and the new approaches that might be taken to address seemingly intractable problems.

The special issue will be of interest to researchers, policy makers and practitioners. It has been inspired by the Beyond Periphery Symposia in Darwin and Whyalla in Australia in October/November 2010. The Symposia brought together over 150 researchers, policy makers and practitioners from around the world to engage in discussion about improving the connection between research, policy and practice as it relates to community development in sparsely populated regions.

The purpose of this special issue is not only to provide a vehicle for researchers focusing on economic development in remote areas, but also to inspire international collaboration into the future. Each of the papers in this issue raises questions about methods, processes and applications which will benefit from comparative and collaborative investigation. Huskey asks how small economies work, and the relationship between economic development and population growth in remote contexts. Skerratt's reflections on leadership and Harwood and colleagues' reflections on planning processes encourage us to think in new ways about how communities are engaged and processes of change facilitated. Martel questions the applicability of standard models of population ageing in isolated communities subject to high levels of in and out migration and "splits" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. Cartan and Carson and Eilmsteiner-Saxinger examine two of the larger economic drivers in remote areas – tourism (Cartan and Carson) and the resources sector (Eilmsteiner-Saxinger). They both demonstrate the tensions arising from distant profiteering from local activity.

In selecting papers for this issue, then, we have focused on some of the bigger issues that require better understanding and that challenge accepted social and economic models. It is around these sorts of issues that "re-thinking" needs to occur, and is occurring across the developed world and beyond.