

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS - RSA POLICY EXPO 2021

### **Pandemics: Regional Resilience and Regional Policy Responses**

The occurrence of pandemics such as COVID-19, Ebola, Swine Flu, and SARs have devastating health impacts. In addition, the social and economic effects of pandemics are equally profound and negative. These impacts are felt not only globally, or nationally, but at the regional level too.

Indeed, critically, and in the immediate responses to dealing with pandemics, governments and communities have turned to place-based solutions. These include, for example, the closing of borders, the restriction of local travel, an emphasis upon local foundational services (health/education) and on community and neighbourhood solutions to provide both support and an answer to the challenges of infection and economic disruption.

The scale and impact of pandemics often highlights that in times of acute crises, robust place-based policies are required to sustain individuals and the cities and regions in which they live. Questions here arise of the resilience of cities and regions, and the appropriate policy responses to mitigate the long-term scarring effects of pandemics and to restore local economic growth. Indeed, the impact of temporary measures (such as lockdown measures) to reduce infection rates could exacerbate existing regional imbalances, especially between regions more reliant upon manufacturing vis-à-vis regions whose economy is more financed based and can more easily adapt to home-working. There are also concerns about the provision of health and education services, especially where these are shifted to online delivery, and in regions where access to new digital technologies is limited.

More widely, lockdown measures are designed to initiate (temporary) behavioural changes in the context of work, technology and the environment. These, in turn, though have spatial impacts, for instance on mobility, urban centres and the environment. Yet, these temporary responses may also lay the foundations for a longer-term re-imagining of new working spaces, geo-spatial production lines, inter-regional connectedness and the effective use of technologies. Indeed, issues such as food security and the availability of medical supplies are becoming increasingly salient, and there is growing recognition that the future geography of production (such as a reliance upon Global Value Chains), may be very different.

This RSA Policy Expo Call seeks proposals that explore the spatial impact of pandemics, the resilience of regions and the appropriate regional policy responses.

Some key issues that could be addressed, but are not limited include:

- Assessing the socio-economic impacts of pandemics on regions, particularly in terms of its impact on health, education, local economies and regional imbalances.
- The comparative resilience of regions to pandemics and drawing lessons for mitigating the impact of future 'health shocks'.
- Evaluating the co-ordination and impact of International, National and Regional Policy responses to pandemics and/or exploring policy options to revitalise regional economies post-pandemic.
- Managing regional foundational sectors (e.g. health/education) to sustain local services during and after pandemics.
- The short and long-term impact of pandemics for the geo-spatial context, especially with regards to new working spaces, regional and urban centres, mobility, global production chains and utility of new technology.