# Publishing Qualitative Research in RSRS

Danny Soetanto
Adelaide University, Australia

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# What do editors look for at proposal stage?

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**We look for promising research, not a perfect paper at the proposal stage.**

- **A clear research question**

  What regional issue or puzzle are you trying to understand?

- **A clear regional rationale**

  Why does this place/region matter to your research?

- **Sound methods and evidence**

  Do your methods and findings support your main points?

- **What does your study add to regional research and debate?**

  What can readers learn from your study?

# 5,000 words: one clear story

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A short paper should not be a smaller version of your whole PhD chapter.

**ONE QUESTION · ONE STORY · ONE MAIN CONTRIBUTION**

### Example word budget (a guide, not a journal rule)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Introduction | **650** | Literature and framing | **750** |
| Methods and regional context | **850** | Findings | **1,500** |
| Discussion | **850** | Conclusion | **300** |

**Give your findings enough space. Let readers see the evidence.**

# What Makes a Study Relevant to Regional Research?

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A strong qualitative regional paper connects three things.

1

## PLACE

**Why does this region matter?**

The features of this region help frame the question.

2

## EVIDENCE

**How does your evidence reflect the region?**

Link regional data, actors and context to each claim.

3

## INSIGHT

**What new regional insight emerges?**

Show a regional process, pattern or explanation.

**Why regional context alone does not guarantee publication**

**Place is not just where research happens. It can help explain the findings.**

# One region. Two ways to frame a question.

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Example: 25 interviews with business owners in one Indian region

STUDY A

## Regional challenges

Identifies issues reported by firms:

- Access to finance
- Skills in the region
- Regional business support

How the region shapes their problem?

STUDY B

## Regional relationships

Studies links between firms,
regional institutions and networks.

How do regional ties
shape access to resources?

**Both questions are valuable if the findings offer novel insights into the region being studied.**
**A strong paper demonstrates a clear contribution to knowledge. It is not enough to reproduce findings reported a decade ago simply because the study is conducted in a different context. Authors must show what is new and how the study deepens or extends our understanding of regions, regional dynamics, or regional development.**

# One policy. Two regions. Different access.

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**Same national business support policy**

## REGION A

Connected business networks
Strong regional support organisations

**Broader access to support**

## REGION B

Limited links among firms
Weak regional support networks

**Narrower access to support**

**Research question: Why does the same policy work differently across regions?**

# Why might the outcomes differ?

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- **Same policy, different results**

  Firms in two regions may have different access to support.

- **Look beyond the list of barriers**

  Ask why some firms know about the programme and others do not.

- **Local relationships may matter**

  Business groups, public offices and local history can affect access.

- **Use place in your explanation**

  Regional features help us understand the outcome.

**For RSRS, a qualitative study should do more than tell an interesting story about a region. It should use that story to generate new knowledge.**

**The value of the paper lies not only in the richness of the empirical evidence, but also in its ability to explain broader regional dynamics and contribute to debates in regional research.**

# A published RSRS example: “Take it easy”

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## Porras-Paez (2023) | Entrepreneurial ecosystem in Atlántico, Colombia

- **Research focus**

  How does a local cultural attitude shape business activity?

- **Methods**

  Interviews, direct observation and secondary material.

- **An unexpected finding**

  The “take it easy” attitude can help some activities and limit others.

- **Contribution**

  A local cultural practice helps explain how a regional business system works.

Porras-Paez (2023), Regional Studies, Regional Science. DOI: 10.1080/21681376.2023.2206887

# A published RSRS example: Innovation districts

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## Anderson (2026) | Two innovation districts in the Adelaide region

- **Research focus**

  Does putting firms in the same place lead them to work together?

- **Methods**

  28 interviews across two sites, supported by site visits and documents.

- **An unexpected finding**

  Being nearby can help, but lasting links often need planned and ongoing support.

- **Contribution**

  Explains how building connections helps planned innovation spaces serve regional development.

Anderson (2026), Regional Studies, Regional Science. DOI: 10.1080/21681376.2026.2625605

# Three questions before you submit

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**1**

## WHERE DOES PLACE MATTER?

Which regional features help explain the findings?

**2**

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT REGIONS?

What regional process or difference do we understand better?

**3**

## WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE IT?

Does the evidence support the regional explanation?

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# Practicalities

# Is your proposal a good fit for RSRS?

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- **Start with a regional research question**

  What does your proposal/study contribute to our understanding of the region?

- **Make the regional contribution explicit**

  A region should be more than the context for your study. Show how your findings contribute to broader knowledge about regions and regional dynamics.

- **Position your paper in the right journal debate**

  Topics can overlap with other journals such as Cities or Local Economy. For RSRS, the main contribution should speak to regional studies or regional science.

# What happens after you submit?

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**1** **Proposal review**

**2** **Invitation**

Selected authors write a full paper. You will work with the editor to develop the paper

**3** **Mentoring**

R&R with the appointed editor

**4** **Submit your manuscript through the journal's online submission system.**

**5** **Normal Review Process**

**RSA membership is required for the full paper (Journal's online submission system). Deadlines: 31 March and 30 November.**

# How to send your research proposal

Regional Studies Association

Send a brief enquiry or your proposal to:

**danny.soetanto@adelaide.edu.au**

There is no need to have a complete 5,000-word manuscript at this stage. We only require a proposal and a short author bio.

**Official Early Career Section call**

regionalstudies.org/special_issue/rsrs-phd-ec-papers-section/