

Past event:

2023 RSA Annual Conference

Transforming Regions: Policies and Planning for People and Places

14-17 June 2023, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Special Session: Edgy Matters: Centring the Periphery in a Moment of Heightened Regional Inequality

EdgeNet ran a special session, “Edgy Matters: Centring the Periphery in a Moment of Heightened Regional Inequality” at the 2023 annual conference. We also used the opportunity to organise informal networking drinks to celebrate the launch of our network, which we opened to the RSA community.

The Edgy Matters special session ran over two slots in the programme. We welcomed five speakers from the UK, US, Sweden, and Austria.

We were delighted by attendance at our informal networking drinks, with approximately 30 members of the RSA community joining us. Delegates from Austria and Germany were in strong attendance (as at the conference), and we also enjoyed meeting friends and colleagues from the UK, Sweden, Canada, Netherlands, Finland, Lithuania, the US, and Slovenia, amongst others. We circulated an email list sign up and received over a dozen additions.

The Edgy Matters special session was an open session, and advertised along with other sessions at the conference. The speakers and presentations were:

- Peripheral Regions that Act as Risk Capitalists: The Bid for Green Mega Investments - Madeleine Eriksson, Associate professor, Umeå University
- Escape to the Countryside? An Investigation of Migration Processes in a Peripheral Austrian Region in Times of COVID-19 - Carmen Kern, Institute of Geography and Regional Sciences, University Graz
- Rural water (in)security at the peripheries of Water Provision - Diana Valero, MDT Fellow, James Hutton Institute
- Left Behind Feelings: Local Pride after Brexit in Neighbourhoods on the Margins of the UK and Europe - Michael Howcroft, Research Fellow, University of Southampton

The annual conference provided a welcome first opportunity to celebrate our research network award and introduce EdgeNet to the RSA community. This was the third edition of our Edgy Matters special sessions (previously run at Regions in Recovery II online Festival and the RSA Winter Conference 2022), which prompted us to form the network.

The papers submitted to the session once again showcased the diversity of research on peripheries and peripherality within regional studies, and provided a forum for collegial discussion and comparisons between cases and concepts.

At the same time, the popularity of the conference and the large number of special sessions meant that there were multiple sessions of interest to peripheries and peripherality, and multiple clashes between papers. This emphasised for us that many conversations within RSA events remain fractured, and we are interested in exploring the practical role that EdgeNet can play in bringing the “community within the community” together at future conferences.

Our informal networking drinks were successful at providing a space for some of these conversations, although there is clear room for more strategic planning in future. The drinks provided a ‘soft launch’ for the network, and we were pleased to see most attendees signing up to join our EdgeNet listserv. The strong attendance at the happy hour validated our hunch that there is an appetite within the broader RSA community for expanded opportunities for connection among peripheries researchers. Many attendees stayed beyond the allotted time for conversation. Conversations at the happy hour event have prompted organizers to consider opportunities to meet the needs of the RSA peripheries’ community through EdgeNet activities, collaborations, and events. There were also many students and early career scholars in attendance, so organizers are considering creative ways to cultivate opportunity for emerging scholars on peripheral topics.