

Answers Questionnaire to Jouke van Dijk as new RSAI Fellow

How and when did you know you wanted to make a career in research? What made you choose the regional science field?

As an economics student at the University of Groningen I discovered that regional and labour economics were much more interesting than e.g. macro and monetary economics and I was also interested in multidisciplinary issues beyond economics. Therefore, I chose Regional Science as Masterstudy, a new master initiated by Jan Oosterhaven and Cees Bartels with besides economics also courses in economic geography, planning and law. During this study I became more and more interested in research and after graduation I was offered the opportunity to do a PhD-project on the topic Migration and Labour Markets. After completing my PhD I held several positions at the Department of Spatial Economics at the Faculty of Economics. In 1991 I moved to the Department of Economic Geography at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, first as Associate Professor and since 2000 as Full Professor of Regional Labour Market Analysis. Since 2009 I am the chair of the Department of Economic Geography.

How did you begin taking part in Regional Science and in ERSA activities?

During my first year as PhD I participated in the ERSA Conference 1982 which took place in my hometown Groningen. I was immediately addicted because since then I attended almost all ERSA conferences and missed only three. My regional science colleagues in Groningen introduced me in the ERSA network, but also in the worldwide RSAI network. In 1982 I took part in a migration conference organized by Andy Isserman in Washington and there I met Walter Isard for the first time, which was very inspiring! From then I attended besides ERSA conferences numerous conferences of ERSA sections, but also many conferences outside Europe like NARSC, WRSA and PRSCO.

What were some of your first thoughts when you learned about this prestigious recognition as RSAI fellow?

I was very pleasantly surprised when I was informed about my election as RSAI fellow together with my good friend Juan Cuadrado Roura and one of the first things I did is write an email to him. I spend my whole working life and academic career in the field of Regional Science and also served in various organizational positions at the Dutch section, ERSA and RSAI and as Editor-in-Chief of Papers in Regional Science and then it is a great honor that this is recognized by the regional science community by the appointment as RSAI fellow.

Your contributions to regional science are significant and numerous, if you should cite only one paper, a book or a contribution you are very proud of, which would you choose and why?

As a PhD you must learn a lot and one thing is to get your work published in renowned international journals. I am still very proud that with the help of my co-authors Jan Oosterhaven and Henk Folmer I was able to publish the chapters of my dissertation on Migration and Labour Markets in the beginning of my career as articles in the prestigious journals The Review of Economics and Statistics, Regional Studies, London Papers in Regional Science and Papers of the Regional Science Association (now Papers in Regional Science). During my whole career migration has been and still is one of the most important topics in regional science, but also in the policy debate how to manage international migration flows is nowadays a hot topic in Europe and the US. Besides my work on migration and regional labour markets I am also very proud of my publications on firm relocation in the field of Firm Demography to which I was introduced and published together with Piet Pellenberg my colleague in Economic Geography.

You have a long history with the RSAI network with key responsibilities like Editor of the PiRs, ERSA President, ... Can you say a few words about your rich contribution to the network and the future inside the network?

In the 90s I became active member of the Board of the Dutch section and secretary of the LOC of the ERSA conference 1994 in Groningen. After that I served as Executive Secretary of ERSA and European Organizing Committee from 1996–2001 working with the Presidents Borje Johanson and Juan Cuadrado Roura. Later on, I became involved in the organization of ERSA Summerschools in Groningen in 2001, 2006 and if corona permits in 2021 and fulfilled several other functions in the EOC and RSAI Council. But the highlight of my career was serving as Editor-in-Chief of Papers in Regional Science from 2005-2012 and of course as ERSA President from 2014-2018. During my presidency I visited many annual conferences organized by the ERSA sections and I became impressed about the large number of attendees and very high quality of the papers presented and last but not least the very friendly atmosphere.

What is your vision of the network regarding its key roles for scientists, society?

The corona crisis clearly shows how desperately we need networks to meet each other in persons within sections, within Europe and worldwide. Of course, now we learn a lot of how to interact in a virtual way and this is very valuable, and this experience can be used more intensively in the future. But it cannot substitute for physical personal contacts during a dinner and drinking a beer which lead to lifelong friendships and productive cooperation in writing joint articles and research proposals. These networks are also important for the interaction between scientists and policymakers at the regional and national level, but also with DG REGIO and the OECD.

What guidance might you give to a young researcher willing to build his/her career in regional science?

Exchange of ideas is important for science and researchers and this is especially true for young researchers. They need to meet each other frequently to build their own network, but also need interactions with senior scientists and policy makers. Therefore, my advice to young researchers is to go to Summerschools, master classes, conferences, research visits at other universities and policy institutes as much as possible. Supervisors and senior researchers should facilitate this as much as possible and ERSA and RSAI together with the sections and policy institutes can help to offer and organize opportunities to meet each other.