



REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Early Career Grant Scheme

Application Form for Final Round

1. Applicant information details

Principal Investigator			
Title: Dr.	Name: Thomas		
	Surname: Skuzinski		
Early Career RSA membership number: 15305	Post held: Assistant Professor		
Address for correspondence:	140 Otey Street NW #202		
Town:	Blacksburg, Virginia	Postcode:	24061
Country:	United States		
Telephone:	1-540-231-1801	Fax:	n/a
Mobile	1-734-277-0496		
E-mail address:	skuzinsk@vt.edu		
Date on the PhD certificate: May 1, 2015	Institution awarding the PhD: Name: University of Michigan Address: 500 S. State St., Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA 48109 Telephone number: 734-764-1817 Name of PhD supervisor: Scott D. Campbell E-mail of the PhD supervisor: sdcamp@umich.edu		

Legal Applicant			
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University			
Contact:	Office of Sponsored Programs		
Address:	300 Turner Street NW, Suite 4200		
Town:	Blacksburg, Virginia	Postcode:	24061
Country:	United States		
Telephone:	1-540-231-5281		
E-mail address:	ospdirector@vt.edu		
Signatory:	Linda R. Bucy Assistant Vice President of Sponsored Programs		
Signature:	_____ Date: _____		

2. Higher Education Institution (HEI)

Name of the Institution		Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	
Name of the Department		Urban Affairs and Planning program School of Public and International Affairs	
Name, surname and contact details of the head of the department		Dr. Thomas W. Sanchez	
Address:	1021 Prince Street		
Town :	Alexandria, Virginia	Postcode:	22314
Country:	United States		
Telephone:	540-231-5425	Fax:	n/a
E-mail address:	tom.sanchez@vt.edu		

3. Title of the research project

Reimagining metropolitan fragmentation: The Local Autonomy Project

4. Timings of the research

Expected duration of the research	One year (twelve months)
Expected start date of the research	13/11/17
Expected end date of the research	12/11/18

5. Summary details of research and the advances it is hoped to make

A. Summary of the main aims (max 200 words):

Metropolitan regions vary greatly in the level of fragmentation they exhibit, with some having only a handful of general-purpose local governments and others having hundreds. Regional scholars have long debated the consequences of fragmentation for effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. Many studies position measures of fragmentation as key explanatory variables for a wide array of metropolitan outcomes. However, fragmentation alone is a hollow measure: what truly matters is the actual and perceived autonomy—defined here as initiative, immunity, and capacity—local officials have to make choices that prioritize local interests above regional ones. The proposed research fills a critical gap by developing *local autonomy indices* that can promote more rigorous exploration of the connections between autonomy and regional outcomes, such as transportation equity, disaster resilience, infrastructure quality, and affordable housing geography. The research aligns with RSA's Development Plan, specifically the priority areas on *Territory, Politics, and Governance* and *Regional and Urban Policy* by significantly furthering the understanding of how the institutional construction of local government impacts regional governance and public management of regions. The indices developed will also promote advancement of knowledge about policy outcomes in other priority areas in future research by the applicant and, hopefully, other scholars.

B. Summary of why the research is important and timely (max 150 words):

In an increasingly urbanised world, metropolitan regions continue to face chronic problems and sudden shocks that manifest at a large scale. However, in most regions decision-making authority in key policy areas is highly fragmented both territorially and politically among public officials in dozens or hundreds of general-purpose local governments incapable of independently addressing such issues. The indices produced for the Local Autonomy Project will afford exploration of (1) the function and formation of regional governance organizations and (2) outcomes in policy domains where local-regional tensions and non-participation by local units is common (e.g., public transportation, land use, housing). After the study outlined below, the work will be scaled to 150 regions, allowing for robust quantitative analysis. The measures developed through this study will be tracked over time to account for incremental changes in the institutional landscape and linked to a GIS to enable mapping and spatial analysis.

C. Summary of the research methods (max 200 words):

The research will produce both objective and subjective indices of local autonomy. In a given metropolitan area, each general-purpose local government will have two autonomy scores. These indices will be aggregated across a metropolitan area in two ways: (1) average with each local government index score weighted by estimated 2016 population; and (2) average with each local government index score weighted by land area.

The *objective index* will rely on data from content analysis of local plans and regulations, regional organization bylaws and norms, and state constitutional, statutory, and common law, supplemented with key informant interviews of administrative staff. Data will be linked to a polygon shapefile for each local jurisdiction. Variable coding will reflect to what extent the operation of the rule promotes regionalism or localism. The *subjective index* of local autonomy will focus on perceptions of local administrative and elected actors. Data will come from large-*n* surveys (online and face-to-face).

The indices will be developed and validated for local governments in most likely the following eight regions—Detroit; Washington, D.C.; St. Louis; Chicago; Dallas-Fort Worth; Atlanta; Los Angeles; and Phoenix—which collectively contain nearly 2,000 local governments. Localities within these regions vary substantially in dimensions relevant to autonomy.

D. Timetable for the research (max 150 words):

Phase one: Research preparation

Activities: final case selection from short list; institutional research approval; interview list preparation; survey frame preparation; survey instrument preparation; GIS shapefile preparation

Period: Month 1 (November 2017) through Month 2 (December 2017)

Phase two: Data collection

Activities: primary and secondary legal research (state constitutional, statutory, and common law; local regulations; scholarly commentary); key informant interviews (regional association actors, local government organization actors, state governments actors); survey administration (local elected and administrative officials); interview transcription; data cleaning

Period: Month 3 (January 2018) through Month 9 (July 2018)

Phase three: Data analysis and outreach

Activities: content analysis of legal documents (statutes, cases, regulations); content analysis of interviews; survey response coding; local autonomy index and other indices preparation and validation; peer review article(s) preparation; Virginia Tech summer workshop planning

Period: Month 10 (August 2018) through Month 13 (November 2018)

E. Summary of who might benefit from the research outcomes and how (max 150 words):

Both policymakers and academics will benefit from using in their own research the measures I develop. The indices of local autonomy, taken together, will provide a foundational base for future research into how formal and informal institutional variation in the construction of local governance shapes regional governance and outcomes in metropolitan areas. The indices will be designed to promote data collection and analysis in any federal system in which regions are comprised of multiple, legally independent units in part defined by limitations imposed by higher-level state, regional, or federal governments. The indices I construct, and all data used to develop them, will be maintained in open access files with instructions for downloading and use.

F. What contribution would the grant make to your career (if awarded) and what you would hope to achieve next (max 200 words):

My research explores local and metropolitan governance through a sociological institutionalist lens in which decisions are a product of actors seeking regulative, normative, and cultural legitimacy—i.e., that actors make decisions based on the institutions (rules, norms, and ideologies) that animate the organizational settings in which they function. I have published a book with Routledge on the topic (online and printed publication: October 2017) and have several articles under review advancing this theoretical framework. The Local Autonomy Project I have proposed above provides an essential empirical foundation for understanding the role of regulative legitimacy—in the form of the rules that shape local autonomy—in regional outcomes. Future research would then be able to explore how regulative legitimacy compares as a determinant of regional outcomes with normative legitimacy and cultural legitimacy. Overall, the work would substantially advance the field by allowing nuanced identification of which policy levers under which institutional circumstances would best advance regional governance capable of producing desired regional outcomes.

G. Provide a statement setting out the support given by your department/institution to your career development (max 200 words):

The School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) and Urban Affairs and Planning program have provided support in the form of early career start-up funds (USD \$7,000), desktop and laptop computers and necessary support softwares, and graduate assistance of approximately 40 hours per week across three doctoral students and one masters student for the coming two academic years. They have also provided course releases, allowing me to teach only three courses each academic year rather than four since my start in 2015. Virginia Tech has provided additional support through my affiliation with its Global Forum on Urban and Regional Resilience (GFURR), where I am a faculty fellow. Both SPIA and GFURR have enabled travel to multiple conferences for research presentations. As the attached letter indicates, I have full institutional support for the Local Autonomy Project.

6. Regarding your research proposal

A. Is your related research currently being supported by any agency other than your employer?

No.

B. Are you currently applying elsewhere for support of work that forms part of this proposal? If so, to which organisation and by what date is a decision expected?

Yes. I have applied as a co-investigator for funding from the Department of Transportation's Centers for Transportation Equity funding scheme. Funding would be approximately £51,000 per year, renewable with satisfactory progress for three years, and would support the scaling of the indices I have outlined above to 150 regions or more, and the connection of it to transportation accessibility measures. We have been selected as finalists already, and will be notified of a decision in early September.

C. Is the proposed research likely to lead to commercially exploitable results? Briefly outline the nature of the possible intellectual property.

No.

7. Research proposal

Research proposal:

See attached Microsoft Word document.

8. Research Budget

A budget plan with detailed justification of the financial support requested.

Total: £9,954 (USD \$12,241) *Note: all conversions based on £1= USD \$1.23 as required by RSA.*

Please see the summary below and the attached Excel spreadsheet.

Item 1: Graduate research assistant (wage position): £4,993 (USD \$6,141)

Support over approximately 28 weeks (280 hours) of data collection from January to July of 2018. The assistant will aid with content analysis of legal documents (statutes, cases, regulations); interview scheduling; content analysis of interviews; and survey response cleaning and coding.

Item 2: Qualtrics survey administration / management (contractual service): £4,878 (USD \$6,000)


Quote based on prior negotiation with Qualtrics for the return of sufficient completed surveys for the development of the subjective local autonomy index.

Item 3: Website domain purchase and maintenance: £83 (USD \$100)

Based on domain purchase pricing for 3 years of Wix web services with necessary functionality to support graphic display of findings.

I have read the Terms and Conditions stated in the EC Handbook applying to the RSA Early Career Research Grant Scheme and, if my application is successful, I agree to abide by them.

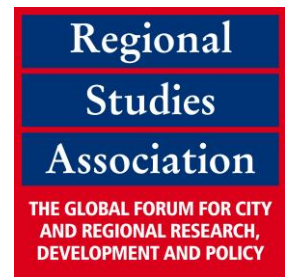
Signature of applicant



Date

August 11, 2017

Thomas Skuzinski
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Office of Sponsored Programs
300 Turner Street NW, Suite 4200
Blacksburg, Virginia
24061 USA



8th November 2017

Dear Thomas,

Ref: RSA Early Career Grant Scheme May 2017 Round

Title of the research project: Reimagining metropolitan fragmentation: The Local Autonomy Project

We are pleased to inform you that your application for a Regional Studies Association Early Career Grant has been successful subject to the terms and conditions set out below.

This letter forms an agreement between you, as the researcher on this project and the RSA. Your application to the scheme and our document – **RSA Early Career Grant Scheme Guidelines**- form part of this agreement. Both of these documents are attached to this letter.

Any special clauses that this grant is subject to are listed in this letter. If you have any queries about the conditions, you should raise them immediately, and prior to work commencing, as monies incorrectly spent may not be refunded.

The Grant

Please read this document carefully prior to signing and returning one copy of this agreement as a contract between yourself and the Regional Studies Association.

You must remain a paid up member of the Regional Studies Association throughout the duration of the grant. If your Early Career member status expires during your research, you must then join as an Individual member.

Grant – The maximum sum awarded is **£10,000** maximum. Grants are cash limited to the Sterling value and expenditure against the grant must not exceed the value awarded. Your Higher Education Institution (HEI) must bear any exchange rate fluctuation. The Association's commitment is in GB Pound Sterling.

Period of the Research – The start date of the research is **13th November 2017**. The end date of research is **12th November 2018**. The research should not last longer than 18 months.

Reporting

Three reports are required to comply with the grant scheme.

- Your midterm activity narrative report is due on the **13th July 2018**.
- Your final report (narrative and financial) is due on the **17th December 2018**. Your financial report is expected to be completed by the HEI and returned to the RSA Office by that date.
- Your impact report capturing the direct impacts of your research is due on the **12th November 2019**.

Information provided in any submitted report may be used in part (extract) or entirety to publicise the research within Association publications but in all cases this will be in consultation with the grant holder.

Reports should be submitted using the appropriate form which can be downloaded from the Association's website.

Any other relevant updates, in forms of brief reports, news items, pictures, pieces for the RSA Blog, RSA website, Facebook or Twitter, and the members' e-zine – *Regions* or the RSA's Journals (*Regional Studies; Spatial Economic Analysis; Territory, Politics, Governance; Regional Studies, Regional Science*) are strongly encouraged.

Financial guidelines

Eligible Costs

Funds may be spent to cover the direct expenses incurred in planning, conducting, and developing the research, including, but not limited to:

- Project planning and development costs (cost of travel nationally and overseas) Travel and subsistence for the researcher
- Up to a non-negotiable maximum of £2,500 teaching or research buy-out.
- Up to a non-negotiable maximum of £5,000 for research assistance.
- Up to £1,000 of the Early Career Grant may be used towards attending an RSA Conference (travel, subsistence and conference fees at the applicable country band fee) to present a paper and/or run a workshop that will include acknowledgment of the grant.
- Consumables – purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms etc and any minor items that will be used during the course of the project.
- Costs of interpreters in the field and transcription costs of interviews.
- Costs of preparing camera ready copy, copy-editing, proof reading, indexing where this is not borne by the publisher. • Cost of setting up the research website.
- Costs of deposit of digital material in a suitably accessible repository may be considered.
- Cost of reproduction rights will be considered provided that there is a contract for publication in place.

Ineligible Costs

Applicants registered with special needs may consult the Association about possible exceptions.

- Institutional overheads
- Payment to the principal researcher in lieu of salary or for personal maintenance at home
- Equipment including computing, printing, cameras, telephones of any type, recording equipment
- Software – of any description
- Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc)
- Books
- Childcare
- Insurance
- RSA Membership Fee

Payment Schedule

A first payment of £5,000 will be paid at the commencement of the grant with any remainder of the grant up to a maximum of £5,000 to be invoiced by the HEI. The final payment will be made only on acceptance of the end of award report by the RSA Research Committee. In case the Research Committee finds the report unsatisfactory, resubmission will be requested and funds will be withheld until the report is acceptable.

For the purpose of clarity the Association will pay a maximum of **£10,000** sterling in respect of this award or the total sum awarded in pound sterling if lesser. Exchange rate fluctuation must be borne by your Institution. Where transfers are made by bank transfer the cost must be borne by the HEI.

Recognition / intellectual property / knowledge transfer

Recognition

Copies of any publications should be given to the Association. Receipt of the grant should be acknowledged in all publications.

Where possible and appropriate the Association will expect that datasets arising from the research will be deposited in a public repository and that the whereabouts of the dataset will be made known.

In addition to the formal end of award report the Association may require short contributions that may be published in any one or more of our membership publications - *Regions* and *Regional Insights* and/or on the Association's website, blog, Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook or through other channels, as appropriate and agreed with the grant holder.

The Association wishes to have the opportunity to support all its early career researchers and therefore if any events or promotions are to be organised as a part of the research, the Association should be alerted so that they can assist with marketing.

The support of the Regional Studies Association should be acknowledged in the normal way when the research results are presented.

Intellectual Property

The RSA requires the right to access all unpublished papers, records, data or collections resulting from the work carried out under an RSA Early Career Grant scheme, some of which may be required for Annual Reports and Board Meetings.

The RSA may, at any time, require detailed information on the results of work funded through the scheme for use in reports and financial audits.

Knowledge Transfer

The RSA recognises and encourages knowledge transfer and actively supports partnership and other schemes that enable this. Recipients of the RSA Early Career Grant scheme are encouraged to ensure that the outcomes of research investment are used to the benefit of regional studies in the international community and grant holders should inform the Association where research materials are deposited.

Ethics, misconduct and liabilities

It is the responsibility of the HEI to ensure that the research is organised and undertaken within a framework of best practice that recognises the various factors, including rigour, respect and responsibility, that may influence or impact on a research project. Grant holders will be required to comply with their HEI's ethics code and this will be referenced in the document signed off by the HEI.

It is the responsibility of the HEI to have ensured that all necessary permissions are obtained before the application is sent to the Association and that the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the research are clear.

The grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any matters arising out of the process of an applicant's research, the institution holding the grant or from the results of the research.

The grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any human resources related issue or health and safety issue (the HEI health and safety regulations will apply). The Regional Studies Association accepts no responsibility for issues directly or indirectly resulting from the funded research, the applicant or other organisations and individuals involved.

Please do not hesitate to get back to me if you have any questions about this grant and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and to wish you success with your research and its outcomes.

With best wishes,



Sally Hardy
Chief Executive

I have read and understand the guidelines and accept the conditions of the Early Career Grant Scheme

Applicant

Name:

Signed:

Date:

HEI

Name:

Signed:

Date: