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Innovating in peripheries: Comparing North America and Europe

Abstract

This research aims to shed light on how the innovation process occurs in less developed regions by examining whether processes of innovation, and the factors that impinge upon them, differ substantially across heterogeneous peripheral contexts. In particular, it addresses the issue of what makes lagging areas of North America more innovative than their European counterparts, Two related questions lie at the heart of the research: (a) what are the factors, characteristics, and conditions that govern processes of innovation in the economic periphery of North America and Europe, respectively; and (b) how do these factors differ between the two peripheries. A macroeconomic investigation covering 73 peripheral and 81 core regions in Europe as well as 27 peripheral and 34 core provinces and states in Canada and the United States respectively for the period between 2000 and 2010 is conducted to address the two questions.

The results of the analyses suggest that while there are some similarities between the set of factors that governs innovation in the North American and European peripheries, a number of not inconsequential differences in the process of innovation between the two continents prevails. In both peripheries the availability of skilled human capital and the agglomeration of economic activity are key drivers of innovation. Differences relate to the types of R&D expenditure that are significantly linked to regional innovativeness and to the role of R&D knowledge flows for innovation in peripheral areas. In addition, the territorial models of innovation in the North American and European peripheries are more similar to those of their respective cores than to one another.

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has served as Vice-President of the RSAI in 2014 and has also been Vice-President (2012-2013) and Secretary (2001-2005) of the European Regional Science Association.

He has a long track record of research in regional growth and inequality, fiscal and political decentralization, institutions, regional innovation, and development policies and strategies. His research is widely cited in academic circles and has also been frequently used by policy- and decision-makers. In his areas of expertise, he has regularly acted as consultant to several Directorates of the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the Cities Alliance, the OECD, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Development Bank of Latin America, among others. He directed a major World Bank/Cities Alliance report entitled Understanding your Local Economy and frequently acts as advisor to governments. He has also been visiting professor at a number of universities, including the College of Europe (Belgium), Cambridge (UK), Stavanger (Norway), and Hanover (Germany). He has been a holder of a European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant and is the only social scientist to have been awarded the Royal Society-Wolfson Research Merit Award. Other past academic awards include a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship, a Philip Leverhulme Prize, and a Royal Geographical Society Gill Memorial Award. The latter two were awarded for his contribution to our understanding of regional disparities and development.

Among his books, we could highlight The dynamics of Regional Growth in Europe (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), The European Union: Economy, Society, and Polity (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), Local and Regional Development (London, Routledge, 2006 and 2016 2nd edition), Innovation and regional growth in the European Union (Berlin and New York, Springer, 2011), or Technology and Industrial Parks in Emerging Countries (Heidelberg and New York, Springer, 2014). Some of his books have been translated into Chinese, Italian, and Spanish. He has also published more than 150 papers in peer-reviewed journals, is the joint managing editor of Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, an editor of Economic Geography, and sits on the editorial board of 29 other scholarly journals, including many of the leading international journals in economic geography, human geography, regional science, and management.