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The Geography of Networks and R&D Collaborations

Springer

Editor

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Preface

The spatial dynamics of the web of interactions between organisations conducting joint Research and Development (R&D) activities – referred to as R&D networks – has recently evolved to one of the ‘hot topics’ in modern research of the *Geography of Innovation* literature. After the era of mainly focusing on direct, dyadic relations between actors performing joint R&D, emphasis is nowadays increasingly shifted to a network perspective. The latter extends the focus on dyads to the structure of indirect relations in a network of actors and its systemic implications. Recognising the importance of indirect ties and their potential role as channels for knowledge and information flows, the structure of these indirect ties is of major interest to understand and describe knowledge diffusion processes. Special interest is devoted to the interplay between spatial effects and structural effects at the network level in explaining the development of collaborative R&D and knowledge production activities.

In this context, network analytic methods and tools have increasingly come into play for the investigation of the spatial dimension of R&D interactions. By this, the field has become much more interdisciplinary, particularly in methodological terms. The more traditional spatial analysis techniques, spatial econometric approaches and spatial interaction models – which are without doubt still essential to investigate the spatial character of R&D networks – are increasingly augmented, sometimes merged with network analytic approaches, mainly comprising a set of tools stemming from graph theory. The realms of Complex Network Analysis (CNA) and Social Network Analysis (SNA) are essential to meet the aspiration of taking into account network structural effects that influence the spatial structure of R&D collaborations. In recent spatial studies of R&D networks, such network analytic methods are often combined with most recent advances in spatial analysis and spatial econometric modelling, for instance, by relating network structural effects – as captured by network analytic indicators – to spatial effects within a spatial econometric modelling framework.

In essence, the present volume explicitly reflects this recent development in spatial studies of R&D collaborations and networks. It constitutes a joint product of scholars analysing the geography of R&D networks from different angles, from distinct disciplinary backgrounds, using a diverse set of methodologies and producing a range of policy conclusions in diverse spatial and sectoral environments. By this, it

represents – on the one hand – a quite unique collection of articles presenting methodological advancements for the analysis of R&D networks from different disciplines and – on the other hand – a distinguished anthology of novel empirical contributions on the relationship between geography and network structures as well as the impact of such networks on knowledge creation and innovative performance of firms, regions or countries.

The initial stimulus for the preparation of this volume was given at the congress of the European Regional Science Association (ERSA) in Bratislava in 2012. The emphasis on the geography of networks and R&D collaborations has been highlighted in various presentations and sessions of the congress. This volume is mainly the outgrowth of works that have been presented there, extended by an exclusive selection of invited works. The contributors come from all over the world and from a range of different disciplines, including economists, physicists, geographers and sociologists. They provide fresh ideas on the analysis of the geography of networks and R&D collaborations, both from a theoretical and a methodological perspective.

At this point, I would like to thank Folke Snickars and Manfred M Fischer for suggesting to propose such a volume to the *Advances in Spatial Science* series of Springer. Further, my warmest gratitude goes to all contributors of the volume, not only for their fine contributions in their chapters, but also for their motivating encouragement, stimulating discussions and smooth collaboration. My thanks also go to Barbara Fess, senior editor for economics and political science at Springer, for her ongoing support during the production process, and to Ramya Prakash, project manager at SPi Content Solutions – SPi Global, for her fine editing and production work.

Vienna, Austria
December 2013

Thomas Scherngell

Contents

Part I Editorial Introduction

- 1 The Networked Nature of R&D in a Spatial Context 3**
Thomas Scherngell

Part II Analytic Advances and Methodology

- 2 Network Formation and Geography: Modelling Approaches, Underlying Conceptions, Recent and Promising Extensions 15**
Corinne Autant-Bernard and Çilem Selin Hazir
- 3 Recent Developments of Complex Network Analysis in Spatial Planning 29**
Andrea De Montis, Simone Caschili, and Alessandro Chessa
- 4 Determinants of Cross-Regional R&D Collaboration Networks: An Application of Exponential Random Graph Models 49**
Tom Broekel and Matté Hartog
- 5 A Novel Comprehensive Index of Network Position and Node Characteristics in Knowledge Networks: Ego Network Quality . . . 71**
Tamás Sebestyén and Attila Varga
- 6 Network Autocorrelation and Spatial Filtering 99**
Yongwan Chun
- 7 Assortativity and Hierarchy in Localized R&D Collaboration Networks 115**
Joan Crespo, Raphaël Suire, and Jérôme Vicente

Part III Structure and Spatial Characteristics of R&D Networks

- 8 Observing Integration Processes in European R&D Networks:
A Comparative Spatial Interaction Approach Using Project
Based R&D Networks and Co-patent Networks** 131
Rafael Lata, Thomas Scherngell, and Thomas Brenner
- 9 The Community Structure of European R&D Collaboration** 151
Michael J. Barber and Thomas Scherngell
- 10 Determinants of International R&D Activities: Evidence
from a Gravity Model** 175
Sandra Leitner, Robert Stehrer, and Bernhard M. Dachs
- 11 Joint Knowledge Production in European R&D Networks:
Results from a Discrete Choice Modeling Perspective** 201
Florian Reinold, Manfred Paier, and Manfred M. Fischer
- 12 Multilateral R&D Collaboration: An ERGM Application
on Biotechnology** 221
Çilem Selin Hazir
- 13 The Structure and Geography of Collaboration Networks
in the European GNSS Industry** 239
Jérôme Vicente, Pierre-Alexandre Balland, and Raphaël Suire

Part IV Impact of R&D Networks and Policy Implications

- 14 Proximity and Stratification in European Scientific
Research Collaboration Networks: A Policy Perspective** 263
Jarno Hoekman and Koen Frenken
- 15 The Embeddedness of Regions in R&D Collaboration
Networks of the EU Framework Programmes** 279
Iris Wanzenböck and Barbara Heller-Schuh
- 16 Local Buzz Versus Global Pipelines and the Inventive
Productivity of US Cities** 299
Stefano Breschi and Camilla Lenzi
- 17 Research Collaboration and Regional Knowledge Production
in Europe** 317
Slavomir Hidas, Martyna Wolska, Manfred M. Fischer,
and Thomas Scherngell

18	Policy Induced Innovation Networks: The Case of the German “Leading-Edge Cluster Competition”	335
	Uwe Cantner, Holger Graf, and Susanne Hinzmann	
19	Effects of Competence Centres on Regional Knowledge Production: An Agent-Based Simulation of the Vienna Life Sciences Innovation System	353
	Manuela Korber and Manfred Paier	
Part V Epilogue		
20	Synopsis and Outlook	375
	Thomas Scherngell	

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