BEYOND PROXIMITIES
THE SOCIO-SPATIAL DYNAMICS OF KNOWLEDGE CREATION

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Aim and Outline

• Aim
  • Beyond spatial fetishism of TIMs
  • Beyond simplistic death of distance of proximities approach
  • By understanding knowledge creation

• Outline
  • Geography of knowledge creation: background
  • Conversations
  • Geography of knowledge creation: my take
  • Geographical dynamics and conversations
  • Conclusion and implications
Geography of knowledge creation

• Two problematic views
  • Territorial Innovation Models
  • Proximities approach

• Knowledge creation and innovation
  • Knowledge creation is individual interaction
  • Firm innovation is connected to firm resources
  • Often conflated

• Challenge
  • Connecting social space to physical place
Knowledge creation can be classified into two main categories: intentional (purposive) and accidental (serendipitous).

- **Intentional (purposive)**:
  - **CONVERSATIONS**: A form of organized knowledge creation.

- **Accidental (serendipitous)**:
  - **BUZZ**: On-going knowledge creation.
  - **LOCAL BUZZ**: Incidental knowledge creation.
Geography of Knowledge Creation

• Connecting social space to physical place

• Knowledge creation does not need proximity
  • But, continued importance of face-to-face
  • ‘Being there’ matters

  • Why do people bridge distance for knowledge creation?

• More knowledge creation in some places than in others
  • Places differ from one another
  • ‘Being where’ matters

  • What makes places attractive for knowledge creation?
Distance Dynamics
(inclination to bridge distance)

Weak

Strong

Place Dynamics
(quality of place)

Weak

Strong

SINGLE LOCATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Single Local Anchored Conversations

Geographically Concentrated Conversations

MULTI LOCATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Multi Local Anchored Conversations

Geographically Dispersed Conversations

FOOTLOOSE CONVERSATIONS

SINGLE LOCATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

ANCHORED CONVERSATIONS
Conclusion and implications

• Conclusion
  • Wider range of geographical configurations
  • Being there and being where matter differently for different conversations

• Implications: regional innovation
  • Regional innovation is about access to conversations
  • Causal mechanism connected to conversations, not ‘milieu’
  • Generic emphasis on milieu in regional innovation policy is wrong
Typologies

• Multi local anchored conversations
  • E.g. genetics of aging, composite materials and engineering
  • Global reach but dependent on expensive research facilities in a limited number of places

• Single local anchored conversations
  • E.g. aircraft design and manufacturing
  • Involves many different specialists but happens in very few places

• Geographically dispersed conversations
  • E.g. IT and financial services, consumer psychology and marketing
  • Wider global importance but do not evolve around local amenities or spatially sticky investments

• Geographically concentrated conversations
  • E.g. customer loyalty card and local business
  • Evolve around local interests, issues and do not depend on place quality; not very sophisticated knowledge

• Conclusion
  • Multi local and geographically dispersed may be most common
  • Distance dynamics may be more important than place dynamics
  • Key: typologies suggest a wider range of geographical configurations than TIM literature and proximities approach allow for
Summary and implications

• Summary
  • Dynamic explanation of the connection between social space (conversations) and physical place
  • Combines the TIM notion that place matters with the proximities approach’ understanding that there is nothing intrinsically territorial about knowledge creation
  • Being there and being where matter differently for different conversations

• Implications: understanding regional innovation
  • Regional innovation a function of the number of local and non-local conversations that local firms can access
  • Metropolitan regions: social space and physical place are strongly connected
  • Causal mechanism connected to conversations, not milieu
  • Improving local milieu may not matter much for LFRs

• Regional innovation policy
  • Generic emphasis on improving local milieu is wrong
  • Encourage access to local and non-local conversations