
Editorial: Attempts to bring knowledge, universities and spatial development together

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Biographical notes: Peter Franz is a Research Fellow and Senior Economist at the Urban Economics Department of the Halle Institute for Economic Research in Halle, Germany. His main research activities relate to development problems of East German cities in the course of transformation, to the role of universities and research institutes as factors of regional economic growth, and to the use of knowledge and knowledge transfer in processes of regional economic growth. His publications have a strong focus on urban development problems. His personal website is <http://www.iwh-halle.de/d/Abteil/REGO/pfr/pers.htm>.

The perception of an upcoming knowledge-based economy has achieved nearly a ‘common sense’ status. However, this agreement is just one on the lowest common denominator as the heterogeneity of the approaches, trying to catch this socio-economic master trend theoretically shows. Even if we restrict our focus to potential *spatial* implications we have difficulties to keep track with the variety of models and theories. With the concept of ‘learning regions’ a paraphrase was created for the hypothesis that certain regions can be characterised by predominating ways of knowledge diffusion and communication. ‘Clusters’ stand for the conviction that the economic exploitation of technological knowledge and the instalment of value chains will become more successful when suppliers and producers concentrate in spatially agglomerated form. Network and communication specialists trace the spatial reach and nodes of information and knowledge flows between firms, labs and universities.

The Richard Florida ‘fan group’ lays stress on the working and living conditions for ‘high potentials’ and brain workers. The triple helix advocates primarily look for the interplay between science institutions, private firms and governmental institutions.

Consequently, no simple answer can be given yet to the question concerning the spatial implications of the knowledge-based economy. In spite of this lack in clarity concerning theory urban and regional policy makers have undertaken practical steps in trying to improve their city’s or region’s position in the global competition for knowledge resources. The first-sight plausibility of the ‘creative class’ approach (Florida, 2002) has lured several city governments to invest in measures aiming to heighten the attractiveness of their location. “This policy can be classified as economisation: public investments in quality of life (in the form of culture, parks, public space) are being justified in economic terms: they help to attract or retain knowledge workers to the city” [van Winden, (2010), p.101].

New realignments of urban policies can also be observed in relation to the role of universities and research institutes for urban development. Recent strategic concepts and inter-city-competitions referring to ‘knowledge-based urban development’, ‘knowledge

city', 'creative city', 'science city' or 'entrepreneurial university' indicate that urban planners and politicians are beginning to search for strategies to take advantage and to make use of this potential. Two, frequently overlapping, mainstreams can be differentiated in the context of this political strategy:

- 1 Efforts to transmit the knowledge and human capital created 'in situ' into economic results for the local economy. Concrete measures in this context range from initiating business-science networks to traineeships for students in local firms, from integrating managers of local firms as lecturers to the organisation of recruitment fairs for university graduates by companies of the region, or from setting up patent exploitation offices at universities to specific spin-off programmes for the university staff.
- 2 Measures involving an urban planning and/or architectural dimension: e.g., the transformation of distressed urban areas into location opportunities for the creative industry, the installation of science and technology parks, the closing down of a university's former peripheral campus location in favour of a reintegration of university departments in the inner city, the attraction of new research institutes, or the expansion of buildings and capacity of existing universities.

Frequently measures like these are combined with marketing activities in order to change a city's external perception. In numerous cities, the creation of 'a new 'knowledge-identity' through branding' [van Winden, (2010), p.103] is on the agenda.

The special topic of this *IJKBD* special issue refers to such cities that already dispose of institutions creating and disseminating knowledge resources estimated as especially valuable in an upcoming knowledge-based economy. The six papers in this *IJKBD* special issue deal with the question in what ways this kind of endowment will be used and qualified for the cities' positioning in the global inter-city competition.

Tim May, the author of the first article 'Urban knowledge arenas: dynamics, tensions and potentials' starts an ambitious 'tour d'horizon' examining the interrelations of a globally expanding knowledge-based economy and diverse efforts on the regional and city level to keep track with the new challenges originating from this master trend. In his empirical part, he draws from political and planning processes in the British Manchester region. The rich endowment of this city-region with higher education institutions encouraged its policy makers to brand Manchester as a 'knowledge capital'.

The Dutch city of Delft serves as empirical base for the second article 'Delft blues: the long road from university town to knowledge city'. Arie Romein, Ana María Fernández-Maldonado and Jan Jacob Trip develop an integrative framework for being able to assess a city's capabilities to initiate processes of knowledge-based development. Part of the criteria they use in their analysis is deduced from the popular triple helix approach. By applying their framework to the case of Delft, they have become in a position to specify the deficits of the local policy aiming at knowledge-based development.

The third article of this special issue directs attention to the changes taking place in a university city at the European periphery. In her paper 'Changing from a univer(s)city to a knowledge city: the case of Coimbra', Paula Casaleiro compares the development of Coimbra with other Portuguese cities of similar size and provides an assessment of how far the city managers, up until now, have exhausted the knowledge potentials for the development of Coimbra as a knowledge city.

In the fourth article 'City-regions, innovation challenges and universities: (new) shifts in the UK urban governance institutions', Fumi Kitagawa and Susan Robertson explore the changing ways of region-building and the changing ways of inclusion of science institutions as political actors in regional governance constellations in the UK. They unfold their arguments on the background of policy changes in the Bristol city-region where quite a number of successful universities are located.

Harald Bathelt and Ben Spigel focus their research on entrepreneurial effects of North American universities. In their article, 'University-spin-offs, entrepreneurial environment and start-up policy: the cases of Waterloo and Toronto (Ontario) and Columbus (Ohio)' they point to the fact that support programmes for academic entrepreneurship have a bias for nascent firms exploiting university research (spin-offs). Academic entrepreneurs with a different strategy tend to be overlooked. The authors also investigate to what degree the new firms are embedded in the regional entrepreneurial culture and consider this matching as an important factor for firm survival. Their empirical database allows them to compare the entrepreneurial policies of two Canadian universities with that of a university in the USA.

The sixth and last article of the issue 'Concepts of pride, brand, and communication: architecture, urban design, and knowledge production: Berlin from 1810 to 2010' traces changes in history, architecture and urban planning of higher education institutions in the German capital. Berlin is the cradle of the Humboldt style university and houses the largest number of science institutions in comparison to all other German cities (Franz, 2008). For their analysis, Klaus Brake and Celina Kress select Berlin's three largest universities. They reflect in what ways historical events and a changing 'Zeitgeist' affect the locations, architectures, expansion planning and self-image of these universities. In their conclusion, the authors also point out to the deliverables the political actors in Berlin still have to come up with in order to develop the city as a prosperous knowledge city.

References

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