Author: Richard Shearmur & David Doloreux

Title: Innovation beyond cities: remoteness and slow innovation

Abstract: Much of the geographic research on firm-level innovation is premised on the idea of open innovation. The prevailing idea is that innovation occurs more readily in urban settings or clusters, which benefit from local buzz and from easy access to external actors. However, there is a body of evidence that demonstrates that firms also introduce first-to-market innovations in remote regions. In this paper, building upon work by McCann (2007), we suggest that there are different types of open innovation: slow innovators, relying on publically sourced technological information, infrequent contacts with interlocutors and internal resources, will tend to locate in remote regions. Fast innovators, relying on market information and frequent interactions, will locate closer to cities. Exploratory empirical results that examine information sources (market/non market) and frequency of contacts with service providers (as a proxy for frequency of contact with all interlocutors) Quebec manufacturing establishments validate these ideas.

Keywords: cities, proximity, remoteness, innovation, information types, contact frequency