

Preface

Regional policies in the form of development, health, education and environmental policies, amongst others, are widespread around the world and constitute a considerable amount of time, effort and expenditure from both local and national policy makers. The evaluation of public interventions should therefore be at the heart of modern evidence-based policy making, both before actions being implemented for projected outcomes (ex-ante evaluation) and following the introduction of a policy, in order to identify its eventual effects (ex-post evaluation). In most of the cases, scholars and evaluators use (or should use) quasi-experimental (counterfactual) designs in which, through statistical techniques, they try to simulate laboratory experiments.

Policy evaluation is also currently gaining wide consensus also among regional policy makers as a part of the tools needed for setting place-based policies. As evidence of this trend, the largest development programme in the world, the European Cohesion Policy, has introduced counterfactual evaluation based on an institutional approach.

This book is a short introduction to counterfactual methods that are useful for regional scientists. As in the spirit of SpringerBriefs, this work has been written from the point of view accepting that readers were already familiar with the econometrics behind formulas and methods, rendering the work's focus more on the interpretation of parameters from a policy perspective. Particular attention is devoted to new methods and applications, whereas classical approaches have been given less space.

The book is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction to policy evaluation and to the linear regression model. Chapter 2 presents the interrupted series approach in the form of regression discontinuity design with a significant focus on heterogeneity. The propensity score matching methodology is discussed in Chap. 3, along with the heterogeneity of the treatment in the form of different regional development strategies. Chapter 4 presents the difference-in-differences

methodology, while the synthetic control approach is presented in Chap. 5. Finally, Chap. 6 discusses an issue of great importance for policy-making, but which has to date received little attention, that is ex-ante evaluation.

This book is dedicated to my wife Sara and my daughter Mariacarla, who make my days full of joy and remind me what really counts in life.



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